

Research Portfolio

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ABSTRACT

The move towards greater democracy and participation in our education system is legislated quite succinctly in our South African Schools Act. The Act furthermore, and more importantly for this case study, posits that decision-making should be democratic in nature and our schools should eventually become governed in a collaborative and co-operative manner. Other policy texts such as the Labour Relations Act and the South African Constitution canonise the demand for a democratic South African society.

This study investigates how democratic decision-making practices are taking place in an East London Secondary School namely Ebenezer Majombozi High. Even though distinct links exist between management and governance arms of schools, this study concentrates predominantly on decision-making within the school governing body and touches briefly on management thinking trends as a theoretical background to the kind of management at the school.

What makes the school interesting as a case study is its rich history and its location in a deprived and impoverished township environment. The school was also part of the ex-Department of Education and Training, the black educational department of the past apartheid state.

The kind of research undertaken was in the form of unstructured personal interviews with influential stakeholders at the school. Some of these stakeholders form part of the school governing body and the questions asked probed forms of governance at the school and how decision-making impacted on the overall school governance.

The research findings acknowledges that decision-making does occur democratically at the school but that the practical implementation of positive consensual decisions are rarely realized. The school governing body only meets to deal with crises underpinned by a lack of learning and teaching and has not even debated the policies within the South African Schools Act. The study also argues that only by building capacity within the school and empowering the stakeholders, can constructive participation by all become a reality.

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ACRONYMS

ANC	AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS
CACE	CENTRE FOR ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION
CODESA	CONVENTION FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA
COSAS	CONGRESS OF SOUTH AFRICAN STUDENTS
DET	DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
DoE	NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
ECDoE	EASTERN CAPE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
EDT	EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT TRUST
EMASA	EDUCATION MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA
ERS	EDUCATION RENEWAL STRATEGY
GDP	GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT
GEAR	GROWTH, EMPLOYMENT AND REDISTRIBUTION STRATEGY
GNU	GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY
IDASA	INSTITUTE FOR A DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE IN SOUTH AFRICA
IIEP	INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

NASSP	NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS (UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)
NECC	NATIONAL EDUCATION CRISIS COMMITTEE (LATER KNOWN AS - NATIONAL EDUCATION CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE)
NEPI	NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY INVESTIGATION
NP	NATIONAL PARTY
PAC	PAN AFRICANIST CONGRESS
PTSA	PARENT, TEACHER, STUDENTS ASSOCIATION
RDP	RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
SANCO	SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL CIVIC ORGANISATION
SGB	SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY
WP1/2	WHITE PAPER 1 / WHITE PAPER 2

CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE OF CASE STUDY

Introduction

The ushering in of our democratically elected Government of National Unity (GNU) in 1994 has on an educational front, realised a plethora of policy texts that sought to radically transform the previous education system.

Some of the different policy proposals that were released by the Department of Education (DoE) were the Education White Paper One (DoE: 1995), the Education White Paper Two (DoE: 1996a), the South African Schools Act (DoE: 1996b), Green Paper on Further Education and Training (DoE:1998a) and the recent Education White Paper Four (DoE:1998b). Each of these policy formulations share similar sentiments regarding a new co-operative educational governance framework, a fully democratic educational system that reflects participation throughout from national to local or school level and a collaborative and integrative management system that will hopefully realise quality education.

1.1 The Rationale

It is with the above in mind that one clearly perceives how this case study opens a very small window into the complex and multiple realities that form part of our education system. My research seeks to determine how decision-making takes place within an urban historically black

school. My emphasis will predominantly be on the functioning and decision-making practices of the school governing body (SGB) and how it impacts on schooling at Ebenezer Majombozi High.

The main reason for my wanting to do this kind of research is that SGBs are relatively “new” phenomena - they became part of educational legislation in 1997 - in the majority of schools in our country. Historically, however, (See Chapter Two) public schools were controlled and funded by the South African state with help from school management councils. It was a highly centralised, opaque, top-down, extremely hierarchical and autocratic system. The apartheid system, an endemic part of our country since 1948, generated national educational crises and struggles in the forms of school boycotts, student unrests, violent uprisings and increased government oppression and repression. Demands for radical education change became a reality. As a consequence of these demands, school governance structures have to be democratically elected by the community that the school serves (See Chapter Two). The call for participation by all roleplayers in schools has thus become paramount.

This study looks at the democratic decision-making processes at a local urban “Black” school. The South African Schools Act (1996b) legally sets out the need for schools to become democratic in their decision-making and that SGBs have to provide the atmosphere for schools to practically implement these processes.

1.2 An overview

My thesis will take on the following format so as to create a logical investigation of democratic decision-making in the case (Ebenezer Majombozi High) under study.

Chapter Two traces, in the form of a literature review, the social, political and economic trends in our country since the birth of the apartheid regime in 1948. Furthermore, this chronological/historical perspective of important factors within our country will be related simultaneously to types of governance in our educational system. The chapter discusses educational governance every decade since 1948 to the present. I will try throughout to relate how the three different trends are intertwined and have a lasting effect on education itself.

Chapter Three contextualises the research I undertook to analyse the case being studied. My research is theoretically underpinned by interpretive social theory. A qualitative research approach and a case study method was used as a tool to determine the kind of decision-making at Ebenezer Majombozi High. Unstructured but focused interviews were used to illuminate decision-making practices occurring in the SGB and staff at the school.

Chapter Four delineates the methodology I undertook in a chronological manner to set up appointments, create trust and eventually interview the principal, two parents of the SGB and two pupils of the SRC. Additionally I interviewed an ex-principal of the school to determine decision-making in the school since its inception in 1942 and the Reconstruction and Development (RDP) Manager of the East London Municipality for the social and political

scenario of the Duncan Village area - the informal settlement that borders the school under study and provides pupils annually to the school.

Chapter Five is the actual analysis of my study. This analysis looks at themes such as decision-making, democratic participation, parental involvement in the SGB, forms of leadership and its impact on decisions. It tries to answer the question: Is the school being totally democratic in its decision-making and as a result being successful ? Chapters 3-5 are actually part of the methodology of this study. I deemed it fit to separate them and to develop a logical thread throughout these Chapters.

Chapter Six is a reflection of the strengths and limitations of my study, some future research possibilities stemming from this study, as well as recommendations for the school pertaining to more effective decision-making within the governance structure of the school.

Chapter Seven is a look at recent developments at the school as well as the conclusion.

1.3 Conclusion

There are two structural arms to decision-making within schools: the SGB and school management which administers the daily functions. The emphasis in this study will be on school governance but the study will also look at managerial decision-making that impacts on governance (See Chapter Five).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The demand for democracy and participation in South African education has a long history stretching from the flight of the first slaves from their colonial masters in the early seventeenth century to the intense and bitter student protests of the 1980's. Central to these struggles were two key ideas; that decision making in schools and school governance structures should include all sectors/roleplayers/stakeholders: that greater representation would ensure educational accountability, legitimacy and democracy (Sayed 1997:722).

My study of an ex-Department of Education and Training (DET) school explores whether the learners and stakeholders - parents, teachers, and members of the community - are actually contributing to and participating in effective structures within the school and the surrounding environment so as to effect the process towards quality education. Morrison (cited in Morrow 1988:250) remarked that "...good will and commitment are hardly the only criteria for effective decision-making. Efficient structures are needed as well."

A dynamic relationship exists between school governance where there is a requirement for the "...involvement of a number of interested parties, including parents, teachers, learners, non-teaching staff and people from the community..." and management which is a "... widely perceived need to place decisions on the day-to-day teaching and learning in schools almost solely in the hands of teachers and principals" (Report of the Committee to Review the Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools 1995:52).

The following chapter will trace the trends of public school governance in our country since the ushering in of the insidious apartheid system in 1948. Secondly, the Chapter will look at recent, since 1950, theories on educational management and review the current South African school governance and management scenario. The reason for my wanting to theorise about governance in schools initially, stems from the notion that decision-making practices occur within the structures that influence overall school governance.

2.1 School Governance: Background

Changes in the education system during the past fifty years have to be contextualised by linking education to the broader social, economic and political changes in our country (Kallaway 1991). Educational policies during this period reflect the outcomes of power struggles between social groupings and the actions taken by individual people (Archer 1984).

It is with the above in mind, that I will try to construct a thread of school governance in our country these past five decades. The latter part of the chapter will look at school governance in other countries and compare it with our own, as well as offer a brief critique of current school governance trends in our country.

2.1.1 School Governance: 1948-1960: Birth of Apartheid State

A. Political scenario

The political state of the country saw the accession to power of the Afrikaner Nationalists in 1948. The apartheid state with a divide and rule mentality was thus borne. All other racial groups had their own political decision-making structures but were excluded from the most important political governmental structure of the country. The Group Areas Act of 1949 ushered in racial segregation and a separate voters role entrenched political and social seperateness (Behr 1988). Conservative political organisations of the African petty bourgeoisie - particularly the African National Congress (ANC) - in the 1940's began the long process of transforming themselves into mass movements (Davies and O'Meara 1985).

Major measures by the apartheid state during this period (1948 to 1960) were to enact laws to confine and restrict movements of militants and leaders within the national liberation movements and workers and other anti-governmental progressive organisations, outlaw any strikes by African workers, and to intensify overall control using pass laws (Davies et al. 1985). However, "despite the poverty, hardships and a repressive state politics, in urban African Society there was a richly tumultuous process" (Stadler 1985: 34).

B. Economic and social dimensions

Movement by farm labourers to the urban areas as a result of rapid and extensive industrialisation of the manufacturing sector occurred during the 1940's. The result of this migrant labour created social crises within families left behind on the farms (Hartwig and Sharp cited in Kallaway 1991). Furthermore, Hartwig and Sharp intimated that:

The path of capitalist development in South Africa generated both rural impoverishment and intense urban poverty... generated conflict not only over wages but over all facets of urban and rural life...this structurally induced conflict centered on cheap labour, bringing into question the structure of the system of exploitation (Hartwig and Sharp cited in Kallaway 1991:310).

Class distinctions arose between the different racial groups as "real white wages rose" and "black wages fell" in the 1950's and sustained economic growth of the country fell from 7 % in 1948/9 to 3.8 % in 1956-1960 and aligned recession during 1958-1961 (Kallaway 1991).

As a result of extreme exploitation and oppression by the Afrikaner Nationalists and their allies - industrial capital, capitalist agriculture, Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie and sections of white labour (Davies et al. 1985), "...African opposition merged into a movement articulating a much more radical nationalist ideology" (O'Meara cited in Kallaway 1991:312). Mass action, strikes and civil disobedience became the order of the day and this massive mobilisation culminated in the adoption of the Freedom Charter on 26 June 1955 (Davies et al. 1985).

The massive upsurge in resistance to the apartheid state sadly led to the Sharpeville massacre of 21 March 1960 and the eventual imposition of a state of emergency where anti-state sentiments were ruthlessly suppressed.

C. Educational policy and black schooling

Crises in the educational system became prevalent as a direct result of social, economic and political upheavals indicated previously. The apartheid government appointed the Eiselen Commission in the 1950's, whose recommendations acted as a precursor to the Bantu Education Act of 1953 with Hendrik Verwoerd's "stress on segregation in education and the education provided for whites as forbidden pastures from which Africans must be prohibited" (Unterhalter et al. 1991:35- emphasis in the original).

Mission schools were then placed under the governance of Bantu Local Authorities which changed the schools into Bantu community schools (Hartshorne 1992: 34-36). The Act granted extreme powers to the Minister of Education who "... with due regard for the principle of providing for active participation of the Bantu people in the control and management of Government Bantu Schools, establish such regional, local and domestic councils, boards or other bodies as he may deem expedient" (Rose and Tunmer cited in Smith 1998).

Centralised control of Bantu schooling by the state removed decision-making and participation of parents and communities in the schooling of their children. As a result of the appointment of

Black local controlling bodies for schools, their illegitimacy - due to the school community not electing them - created unnecessary stresses and tension.

Mass schooling of black South African youth during the late 1950's had an exceptionally racist and class discriminatory character which sought to solve new labour needs, control urban youth, establish ruling class political hegemony and the reconstruction of the working class family (Hyslop 1987). The imposition of a new educational order by the apartheid state had the desired effect of racially separate schools and consequently ideologically and racially determined governance structures (Smith 1998).

Control and governance of schools during this period went hand in glove with government funding. Legislation by the state restricted finance for Bantu Education (Unterhalter et al. 1991), and sources of school funding came largely from direct Black taxation (Smith 1998:6) which provided meager resources for the schools. Parents thus shouldered the heavy burden of the cost, with an obligation to pay fees, provide books and stationery and assist the schools with the costs of buildings and salaries for additional teachers (Unterhalter et al. 1991). Black parents worked in the lowest-paid sectors of the economy and their small contributions to schooling germinated the debilitating irregularities that still exist in schools of different racial groups. Economic constraints currently have seen the demand for parents being taxed increasingly to fund the education of their children. Deprived schools are thus beginning to "feel the pinch" and becoming increasingly disadvantaged.

2.1.2 School Governance: 1961-1970: divide and rule

A. Political scenario

During Hendrik Verwoerd's term of office (1958-1966) as Prime Minister, the massive Tomlinson Report (1955) provided a blueprint for Verwoerd's scheme of independent self-governing Black Homeland states (Behr 1988). Racial separation and separate development were part of the report which argued for the rapid industrialisation of Black areas together with the modernisation of agricultural methods (Behr 1988).

The main objective of the apartheid state was to deny political rights to Blacks in the so-called "white areas" (mainly urban) of the country by granting them political rights in their own homelands (Behr 1988).

The aftermath of the Sharpeville massacre (see page 3) led to a "reign of state terror" (Davies et al. 1985:27) with the banning of the ANC and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) followed by the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe (a militant combative arm of the ANC) in 1961. The oppressed masses then launched a sabotage campaign with the main anti-government movements going underground, i.e. leaving the country. This period was characterised by heightened political unrest and upheaval.

B. Economic and social milieu

Between 1960 and 1963 South Africa experienced a net outflow of foreign capital of between 60 and 134 % which had the effect of creating a crisis of confidence among foreign investors (Davies et al. 1985:27).

The state, however, convinced foreign investors that the highly profitable apartheid state was not about to collapse (Davies et al. 1985). The arrest of much of the leadership of the ANC at Rivonia in 1963 and their subsequent conviction suppressed mass action by the people for nearly a decade.

Conditions were thus created by the ruling class for a period of uninterrupted economic boom from 1963-1972. The "real golden age of apartheid" saw growth rates of between 6 and 8 % per annum (Davies et al. 1985:28).

Use of underpaid and minimally-educated (Hyslop cited in Unterhalter et al. 1991) migrant labour saw their "...resettlement in many emergency and permanent housing schemes, where they could be more readily subjected to administrative and police controls" (Stadler 1985:107), had the advantageous effect of spectacular capital accumulation as well as the consolidation of monopoly or ruling class capitalism (Davies et al. 1985).

Successful squatter movements to the urban areas turned "...working class settlements into autonomous communities..." (Adelman 1985:107). Strike action by the ever-increasing trade union movement became more prevalent during this period (Davies et al. 1985, Adelman 1985). A consequence of cheap black labour was the erosion of settled family lives of the majority of our peoples and its corrosive effects (See Chapter Three) are still with us to this day.

C. **Educational policy and black schooling**

Ken Hartshorne (1992:68) lamented that:

The stagnation of secondary schooling in this immediate post- Bantu Education Act period was to have serious consequences, both for the economy in the early 1970's when the private sector first came to a realisation of the shortage of skilled persons, and also for the quality of teaching in the schools because of a shortage of well-qualified applicants for training.

Separate schooling for the blacks and whites took on grossly unequal proportions during this period as state expenditure for Black Education departments rose from 19.5 - 66.3 million rands and Whites from 79 - 366 million rands (Unterhalter et al. 1991:57). Comparatively, it was obvious that the apartheid government spent approximately five time more on white than black education. This grave injustice sowed seeds of dissent among black pupils that came to a head in the late nineteen seventies and throughout the nineteen-eighties.

The government's educational policy of this period found expression in racially separate schools and consequently ideologically and racially determined governance structures (Smith 1998:8). Ownership of their schools by the Afrikaner ethnic group entrenched the need for these schools

“...to be places where our children are steeped and nourished in the Christian National spiritual culture of our nation. We wanted no language mixing, no culture mixing, no religious mixing nor racial mixing” (van Rooy, Afrikaner Volkskongres Chairman cited in Smith 1998:7).

The Christian character of schools mentioned above found further expression in the National Education Policy Act of 1967 (Act 39 of 1967) that stated:

- 2a. the education in schools maintained, managed and controlled by a department of state (including provincial administration) shall have a Christian character...;
- 2c. the mother tongue, if it is English or Afrikaans, shall be the medium of instruction...;
- 2h. the parent community be given a place in the education system through parent-teachers associations, school committees, boards of control or school boards or in any other manner...(cited in Behr 1984:376).

The educational authorities of the apartheid state thus saw the need for school communities to take ownership or control of their school even though the state had overall centralised influence on school funding and legislating policy changes. The current education dispensation in the form of the South African Schools Act (1996b) also reflects that schools become owned by their communities.

Black Education, however, was controlled administratively by two authorities viz:

- a. schools in white areas under control of Department of Education of Bantu Education (later the Department of Education and Training), and
- b. schools in self-governing states or homelands under control of their own education department (Behr 1984:184).

The governance of the majority of the schools in the country were similar to that of the 1950's (See page 9). However, stricter control of the running of these schools was brought about by Education Departments especially in the homelands.

The majority of schools (75 %) were state-aided community schools and their supervisory functions were carried out by school committees and school boards whose members were drawn from the parent community (Behr 1984).

After the hiatus or slow growth of Black schooling prior to 1966, considerable expansion in secondary schools and their enrollments occurred after 1967 and the time had now come for the department to place the emphasis on the development of secondary schooling as its new priority (Hartshone 1992:70). Mass education in our country intensified and black schooling in particular suffered from underdevelopment and dependency (Kallaway cited in Young and Burns 1987).

2.1.3 School Governance: 1971-1980: black/white dichotomy boils over

A. Political scenario

There was an "apparent political tranquility" (Davies et al. 1985:32) during the period preceding the 1970's as a result of heightened levels of state oppression and the economic boom (see page 6). The ruling class and its capitalist allies held the initiative while the oppressed masses had been placed on the defensive during this period (Davies et al. 1985).

Increased demands for black political rights perpetuated moves by the apartheid state to reform its policies (Muller 1987). Commissions of Inquiry by Wiehahn into labour relations and Riekert into influx control during 1977 started a process to make the South African state one which could begin to satisfy its diverse ethnic groups (Muller 1987).

B. Economic and social dimensions

The economy's over-dependance on foreign investment, imported capital equipment and skilled immigrants made it highly susceptible to changes in the world system. The world accumulation crisis of 1973 threw the economy into recession...alarming features being vast structural black unemployment and climbing inflation. By 1977, the country was in its worst recession since the 1930's and the growth rate was down to zero (Muller 1987:86).

The stern imposition of the apartheid Verwoerdian model by the John Vorster-led government caused major problems for industrial capital in our country (Hyslop 1987). Maximising the numbers of blacks in the homelands and limiting flight to the urban centers hindered management in finding adequate numbers of semi-skilled and skilled black workers (Hyslop 1987 6:2).

Popular struggles in the 1970's "...were not confined to the trade union front... other forces among the oppressed - particularly students and sections of the petty bourgeoisie - began to organise and engage in various forms of struggle" (Davies et al. 1985:33).

C. Educational policy and schooling : “The Soweto factor”

“Between 1970 and 1975, the numbers of secondary school students rose from 122489 to 318568” (Bundy cited in Hyslop 1987b:3). The larger black school population showed increasing levels of politicization and this created an explosive situation (Hyslop 1987 b:3). A new generation which Mannheim (cited by Bundy 1985:3-4) termed a “...sociological generation, a group with its own generational consciousness...” was born.

The Education Department’s insistence on using Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, the preponderance of Black youth under the age of twenty-one within schools, and more students with working class roots led to the climactic confrontation between students and security police on 16 June 1976 in Soweto (Bundy 1985).

Shootings of the students led to countrywide student uprisings, riots and many deaths. This students’ revolt also marked the beginning of a new phase in the educational sphere as Bantu education as a policy had failed (Samuel 1990). Black Consciousness ideology then emanated from the “political conscientisation” (Freire 1970) of university students belonging to SASO (South African Students Organisation) and SASM (South African Students Movement). This ideology informed the “People’s Education” philosophy of the mid-1980’s.

As a direct consequence of the crisis in the majority of our schools, the Nationalist regime responded by tabling the Education and Training Act of 1979, (Act 90 of 1979) which came into legal effect on 1 January 1980. Certain tenets of this Act were:

- 3b. that the universally accepted educational principle of the use of the mother-tongue as the medium be observed,
- 3c. that it shall be the aim and objective with the co-operation of the parents to introduce compulsory school attendance and free tuition (including free school books) in all areas,
- 3f. that recognition be given to the active involvement of the parents and committees in the education system... (cited in Behr 1984:382).

An interesting observation is that the ruling class saw the need to increase funding of black schools to try and quell or dampen the strong feelings of discontent. By increasing state expenditure for Black Education, more money could then be used for building more classrooms in urban areas and more money allocated for maintaining schools (Samuel 1990).

The reformation process of education by the state did not satisfy many people involved in black schooling. A former principal stated that "...real improvement in the quality of Black Education could only be achieved by the total scrapping of Bantu Education and the introduction of an integrated system for the whole South African Society..." (Molope cited in Samuel 1990:22/23).

The lofty and quite short-sighted ideal of Afrikaner politicians and educationists to fit black persons into "an ordered society" was rapidly crumbling and disintegrating.

2.1.4 School Governance: 1980 - 1989 - "The Total Onslaught"

A. Political scenario

Due to the pervasive crises within our country, stemming from the cataclysmic Soweto 1976 riots, the "new" Republic of South Africa Constitution Act (Act 110 of 1983) was tabled in Parliament on 9 September 1983.

A Tricameral Parliament with Councils consisting of 50 Whites (House of Assembly), 25 Coloureds (House of Representatives), and 13 Indians (House of Delegates), became part of the country's legislature in 1985 (Behr 1984). Two concepts have to be defined in order to understand the "grand design" of the supposed "verligte" Nationalist Party (Behr 1984). The "own affairs" concept was defined as "...those matters which specifically or differentially affect a population group in relation to the maintenance of its identity and the upholding and furtherance of its way of life, culture, traditions and customs" (Behr 1984:364). Secondly, "general affairs" however, was "...entrusted to a Cabinet Minister who presents it in the form of a Bill to each of the three Houses for consideration...if the Bill is adopted by the three Houses...it becomes an Act of Parliament" (Behr 1984:366). The Afrikaner Nationalist was not willing to give up its power and privilege that easily. Blacks were still excluded from the most important decision-making body of the land.

Due to government reforms, this period precipitated a heightening of mass struggles on a number of fronts - armed struggles, the trade unions, struggle by community, womens', students' and

other organisations (Davies et al. 1985:38). This united counter-hegemonic mass of people introduced new forms of intensified repression and an insidious escalation of state terror. Intensified levels of struggle between oppressor and oppressed were symptomatic of this period.

B. Economic and social dimensions

Economic performance in South Africa has been on a declining trend since the 1970's average annual rate growth of the gross domestic product (GDP) fell from 4.9 % in 1947-74 to less than 1.7 % in 1975-92 (Blumenfeld cited in Cole 1994). At the same time, the rate of job creation in the formal sector was less than 0.6 % per annum between 1975-1992 (ibid 1994:15). The consequence of the slow growth rate of the economy was unemployment levels of up to 50 % (ibid 1994:16), estimated to be more than 1 million in the 1980's (Katzen cited in Cole 1994:50).

Katzen also alarmingly stated that:

The striking thing about this record of decline is not merely its depth but also its length. Whatever may have been the precise impact of sanctions, it is abundantly clear that the onset of South Africa's downward economic spiral long predated the sanctions era (ibid 1994:16)

A dramatic flight of capital overseas as well as unemployment and falling wages contributed to the growth of opposition (Brooks and Brickhill 1980 cited in Unterhalter et al. 1991). The Total Strategy (Davies et al. 1985) by the apartheid regime was to broaden its base of support among the dominated classes by allowing a form of union organisation, extend residence rights and home ownership in townships outside the bantustans, and some expansion of the jurisdiction of African local authorities.

C. Educational policy and schooling: "The pot boils over"

Major demands for full political participation by the oppressed masses compelled the regime to increase spending on African education, ban student organisations which demanded greater education provision and detain leading activists in the NECC (National Education Crisis Committee that later became the National Education Co-ordinating Committee) which campaigned for a transformed education system (Unterhalter et al. 1991).

Funding of Black Education increased from 5.8 % to 7.6 % between 1985-1988 (Unterhalter et al. 1991:67). Even though black students had to purchase all their own school materials, equipment was in short supply (Graham-Brown 1991). Extensive school boycotts of the early 1980's became an integral part of students' rejection of the educational system (Samuel 1990).

Reaction by the state to the educational crisis was to direct the Human Sciences Research Council (HRSC) to re-investigate the South African Education system in a more extensive manner than ever done previously. This eminent group of educationalists under the chairmanship of Prof J.P. de Lange presented their findings in July 1981. Certain guiding principles of the report were:

Principle 4: The provision of education shall be directed in an educationally responsible manner to meet the needs of the individual as well as those of society and economic development, and shall, inter-alia take into consideration the manpower needs of the country,

Principle 6: The provision of formal education shall be the responsibility of the State provided that the individual, parents and organised society shall have a shared responsibility, choice and voice in this matter, and

Principle 9: In the provision of education the process of centralisation and decentralisation shall be reconciled organisationally and functionally (HSRC (1981:14/15).

These guiding principles then formed part of a framework of 11 principles legalised in the National Policy for General Education Affairs Act of 1984 (Act 16 of 1984) (Cited in Behr 1984:369/370).

Governance structures according to the HSRC report (1981:88) had to ensure the following:

- (i.) Centralised forms of participation, negotiation, co-ordination and control that involve joint decisions on matters relating to national policy, the allocation of resources, the teaching profession, the broad curriculum, standards and certification; and
- (ii.) Decentralised forms... that can accommodate diversity in culture, religion and language, permit the right of “free association” and offer the greatest possibility of freedom of choice to parents and children. Such decentralisation must result in equal educational opportunities and the establishment of facilities of equal quality.

Furthermore, on a localised level the report recommended that the greatest possible degree of autonomy should be given to schools and that parents and teachers should have a major share in decision-making at this level (HSRC 1981:201). Accordingly, school governing bodies (SGB's) had to be set-up with functions such as:

- (i.) ...to mediate between the local community and professional staff in establishing the character and ethos of the school,
- (ii.) to encourage parents to regard themselves as partners in the task of education,
- (iv.) to take joint responsibility... for the curriculum of the school...,
- (v.) to take major responsibility for the appointment of professional staff...,

- (vi.) to accept responsibility for co-operation with other schools in the local community on matters of common concern, and
- (vii.) to accept responsibility for the raising, administration and allocation of local school funds (HSRC 1981:202/203).

The principles, guidelines and recommendations of the HSRC report shows marked correlations to our current South African Schools Act (1996). P.W. Botha's National Party accepted most of the recommendations of the HSRC report but the single education ministry idea was rejected in favour of various ethnic ministries for education (Hyslop 1987:11). The same old forms of control and separateness were still in place.

Widespread school boycotts, beginning in 1984 (even though the source thereof was during the uprisings of 1980), rejecting the Tricameral Parliament elections, embraced the slogan "Liberation before Education" (Hyslop 1987:15). Student and youth movements "...contained problems which were extremely dangerous to the future of the battle against apartheid" (Hyslop 1987:20/21). Some of these problems were organisational weaknesses, lack of leadership (after the banning of COSAS- Congress of South African Students), divisive conflict between certain ethnic groups in Durban, poor relations between students and their communities and sharp divisions between rural (where schooling was relatively peaceful except in the Ciskei) and urban youth (Hyslop 1987: 19/20/21). This false sense of power by pupils is still very much part of our present reality in black Schools.

A pamphlet issued by the Athlone Student Action Committee in Cape Town during 1985 expressed a very short-sighted view of the gains of the student resistance:

Yes, the boycott is temporary. But we cannot end it now - not now when we have got the government on its knees. If we end it now, the government will be able to get onto its feet again (Bundy 1985:20).

The educational crisis of the early to mid 1980's forced parents to pick up the cudgels and become involved in the schooling of their children. Out of the mass democratic movements emerged the call for "Peoples Education for Peoples Power" in 1986 as a counter to apartheid education and a vision for an alternative education system (Kruss 1988:8, Cross 1991:36). The NECC played a pivotal role in the formulation and promotion of People's Education (Kruss 1988:8).

An important goal of this counter-hegemonic education strategy was to equip and train all sectors of our people to participate actively and creatively in the struggle to attain People's Power in order to establish a non-racial democratic South Africa (cited in Kruss 1988). Organisationally, at local school level, the NECC called for the formation of parent-teacher-student associations (PTSA's) and community based structures .

A regional report from the Border region, where the school I have used as a case study is situated, to the National Consultative Conference on the Crises in Education during December 1985 alluded to the following:

- students regional structures have been affected by the banning of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS),
- we feel that COSAS must now also organise the rural areas and the so-called Coloured and Indians.
- parents and teachers have also formed committees and organisations in order to assist and support the students in the struggle against Bantu Education.

- we should consider whether these parents structures should be permanent or more like crisis committees...they must be politicised,
- school attendance in 1985 was very poor indeed and ... Duncan Village schools (area where my case study school is found) have been totally burnt down, and
- pockets of teachers co-operated with parents and students and worked toward a PTSA draft constitution. (Center for Adult and Continuing Education - CACE - 1988: 22/23).

From the report, students thus perceived themselves as the prime decision-makers (see fourth statement) or leaders of the struggle against Bantu Education. All other community stakeholders had to play second-fiddle to student aspirations.

It is important to note that school management councils (in existence since the 1950's) - legal controlling bodies appointed by the DET - which were deemed to be illegitimate by the school communities, operated in direct opposition to PTSA's - the real "organs of peoples power" (Sayed 1997:722). Tensions and conflict thus arose as a consequence of the struggle for governance within the majority of our schools. The exacerbation of the schools crises continued unabated and effective learning and teaching became a remote possibility.

2.1.5 School Governance: 1990-1998...: A post-apartheid transition to the new South Africa

A. Political scenario

Pressures and crises, both intrinsic and extrinsic (already sketched previously in this study) to our country, rapidly perpetuated the demise of the capitalist apartheid state during this current period.

A chronology of political events between 1990 and 1998 includes the following:

1990- F.W. de Klerk unbans ANC, PAC and Communist Party, Nelson Mandela released from jail; Namibia obtains independence

1991- Repeal of the Group Areas, Land and Population Registration Acts; Convention for a democratic South Africa (CODESA) formed to negotiate a democratic constitution, Government backing of Inkatha vigilants against ANC

1992- White referendum supports CODESA negotiations which break down and Inkatha-ANC conflict intensifies

1993- Multiparty negotiations to form interim government (Nigel Worden 1994:ix)

1994- Entire voting community of country votes for Government of National Unity

1995/1996- Ratification of the new South African Constitution, local elections in all urban/rural cities and towns

1997/1998- South Africa takes over leadership of the global Non-Aligned Movement .

The past eight years have seen many sweeping political changes, as our country moves out of its transitional phase to a more entrenched form of democracy. Mzwanele Mayekiso (1996), the leader of the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO), tempered any feelings that democracy is a future reality by stating that "...politics seems to have become more top-down in character". Is this tendency akin to our not-too-distant political past ?

B. Economic and social dimensions

Claudia Mutschler warned us :

The post-apartheid government is faced with the enormous task of giving substance to the Constitution's provisions for economic and social justice. South

Africa ranks one of the most unequal societies in the world - the highest 10 % earning 47.3 % of total income, while the lowest 10 % earn 1.4 %. The mammoth transformation task is constrained by the exigencies that globalisation has placed in the South African economy (Daily Dispatch, 28 August 1998:10).

However, the Government of National Unity has maintained the level of social services and infrastructure inherited from the past, many children receive school meals, pregnant women can obtain free medical attention, a growing number of our people have access to electricity, clean, running water and telephones (Ginsburg 1996:83).

Many of these social service interventions alluded to previously were under the ambit of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), which evolved since 1994. The RDP base document contained five key programmes: meeting basic needs, developing our human resources, building the economy, democratising the state and society and implementing the RDP (ANC 1994:11). Between 1994-1997 this programme was allocated R15 billion for social needs such as:

- * primary school nutrition in 16 000 schools,
- * ten year programme for extension and upgrading of municipal infra-structure,
- * building of clinics,
- * primary health care,
- * presidential projects on urban renewal,
- * rural water and sanitation,
- * electrification of households and schools construction mainly in the Eastern Cape, Northern Province and Kwa-Zulu Natal,
- * rebuilding schools and democratizing school governance (R300 million),
- * free health services at 600 hospitals,
- * 300 housing projects,
- * upgrading rural roads,
- * Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Disease (AIDS) awareness,

- * Sports centers, community service centers and 486 public works projects (Stewart 1997:11-13).

Many of these projects failed to become a reality due to a lack of skilled development management both in government and among many non-government organisations (NGO's) (Peter Stewart 1997).

A new economic strategy of the GNU, the brainchild of Thabo Mbeki, called the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR), germinated at the end of 1995 which emphasises growth as a prerequisite for redistribution as a proactive response to international and domestic economic constraints.

C. Educational policy and schooling: The road ahead: Is transformation possible ?

The dawn of the 1990's saw the announcement by Mr Piet Clase, (The Education Minister) of three governance models that white schools could choose in order to enroll black pupils. A fourth model was announced in 1991. By 1992, all white schools had to convert to Model C - semi-private and state-aided schools (Sayed and Carrim 1992).

The implementation of this strategy was widely criticised by non-governmental groups as a "...unilateral last ditch attempt to ensconce local protection of privilege and save White-only schools by virtually privatising them" (Smith 1998:10). Furthermore, semi-privatising white education has the effect of insulating white schools from further redistribution of educational resources (Sayed and Carrim 1992).

Concurrently, the government released a discussion document called the Education Renewal Strategy (1991) which recommended that management councils be established at all schools and necessary steps be taken to devolve to such councils decision-making and executive functions (DoE 1991).

These executive functions were:

- (i) responsibility for the provision and/or financing of electricity, water sanitation and sewerage,
- (ii) minor capital works and maintenance costs as well as additional capital works beyond that allocated by the state,
- (iii) charging other persons or organisations for use of school facilities,
- (iv) acquisition and utilisation of education aids such as media, stationery, textbooks and other aids,
- (v) economic management of school hostels and transport schemes,
- (vi) appointments of teachers to the school and other persons for extra-mural activities,
- (vii) subvention of teacher salaries,
- (viii) extra-mural remuneration,
- (ix) schools admission policy within a broad policy framework (DoE 1991:75-76, Smith 1998:10-11)

The strategy provided differing management models to allow schools to gradually grow into greater decision-making autonomy and embark on programmes through which parent communities were educated as to the role and responsibilities of management councils. Councils were also entrusted with a significant degree of financial autonomy (ibid:76-78).

Criticisms of the ERS were quickly forthcoming. The NECC (press statement of NECC: 4 June 1991) acknowledged and welcomed the recognition by the State for free and compulsory basic education up until standard 5 (currently Grade 7) and the linkage needs between formal and

non-formal education. According to the NECC critique decentralisation in the ERS proposal tallied with deregulation and was fundamentally geared towards reducing pressures in the central state and relocating pressure to the local rather than the central level (NECC 1991). One can correlate this proposal to the current education dispensation. Additionally, the NECC perceived that the question of financial responsibility and accountability was not adequately addressed.

A press statement was also released on 4 June 1991 by the ANC education department on the ERS. It stated:

Key questions are avoided or missed or both. These include who is going to control the process that the ERS envisages, who is going to make the decisions; how are these decisions going to be made, etc ? The conspicuous silences in the report, could indicate a modified education system that continues to perpetuate privilege, exclusivity and separation under the guise of "diversity and the principle of freedom of association" (ANC 1991:1-5).

Entrenched disparities and irregularities thus remained part of status quo as a result of National Party policy interventions since 1990. But, the counter-hegemonic educational forces, NECC and ANC Education department, developed initiatives that sought to totally restructure the education system. These initiatives were reflected in reports by the National Education Policy Investigation (a project started by the NECC under direction of the Education Development Trust - EDT) made public during 1993 as well as the ANC Policy Framework for Education and Training released at the end of 1994.

The NEPI report on Governance and Administration noted the following distinctive features of educational governance in our country. It

- is a “system of systems” structured unequally on the basis of apartheid ideology,
- is a complex mixture of centralised and decentralised forms of education governance,
- there are 19 separate departments of education, differentiated along racial/ethnic and regional lines,
- extensive white and black bureaucracies,
- policy functions are unco-ordinated and frequently duplicated due to many different departments,
- policy processes are bureaucratised, top-down and opaque
- political accountability is limited,
- interest group participation is limited,
- governance structures are lacking at district level, and there is a network of discredited and largely powerless bodies at the school level, and power relations have changed with resultant shifts in policy (1992a:15/16).

Additionally, the system had not facilitated the participation of parents, students and teachers in decision-making structures. A dichotomy thus exists between those in higher levels of the system (from regional level upwards) and the lower levels (districts and local schools) where actual forms of participatory democracy need to be realised.

The report highlighted a few key issues for further debate:

- capacity building needed at school, local and regional levels to begin the participative process and hopefully release accountability among stakeholders,
- introduction of governance at local and regional levels,
- school boards and authorities having access to resources,
- role of PTSA's, as policy formulators or governing school councils, and
- begin the process of democratic participation to bring efficient and meaningful change to the governance system (ibid: 57-58).

The ANC Policy Framework (1995:4) echoed the sentiments of the NEPI report by stating that “...the realisation of democracy is that ...responsible and productive citizens will be enabled to

participate fully in all facets of life of their communities and the nation at large.” It also alluded to the notion that participation should be based upon the principles of co-operation, critical thinking and civic responsibility.

The Policy Framework also reflected forms of governance in the different ethnic educational departments. Predominantly white schools had parents having considerable management powers such as the prescription of compulsory school fees, determination of admission policies, selection of staff and appointments of additional staff while teachers and pupils had no formal powers in school governance. In so-called Coloured and Indian schools, innocuous matters such as school uniforms and collection of funds were the decisions implemented by committees elected by parents. In African schools however there was little organised contact between parents and teachers. This characteristic is still prevalent today. Furthermore, decision-making by parents and pupils was non-existent with the concomitant struggle to establish and maintain democratic PTSA's. The Policy Framework then lamented 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”(ibid:22).

Some policy proposals distilled from the Policy Framework were:

- a single national education and training system with four levels of governance: national, provincial, local and institutional,
- local governance and management structures to plan and co-ordinate education at district or local level,
- role and powers of local structures still had to be clarified,
- parents, teachers and students as the elected representatives of proposed School Boards,

- democratic participation in school governance must be distinguished from the responsibilities for the management and administration of the school principal as a leader in the educational transformation of their schools (ibid:23-28).

In the years since 1994, new educational legislation culminated in the release of the South African Schools Act (DoE: Act 84 of 1996) during 1996. The 1995 White Paper on Education and Training noted that:

Change must now be managed by the new education authorities in a systematic, inclusive and fully participatory way. Many schools already reflect good, accountable management, with huge levels of community participation despite the inequalities and distortions inherent in the apartheid-based organisation and funding structures. The Ministry of Education is therefore committed to an inclusive process of negotiated change toward the full democratisation of school organisation and governance (1995b: 69, paras 18,24,26).

The GNU thus saw the need to devolve decision-making to the institutions that will begin to process democratic thought and action in our country. The 1995 White Paper also cited the role of parents as having the biggest stake in the education of their children. Principles set forth in this paper were:

- schools should be governed by SGB's,
- relationships between SGB's and provincial education structures needed definition,
- main stakeholders in secondary schools should comprise parents, teachers and students, with parents accounting for the bulk,
- composition of SGB's should show sensitivity to racial and gender representations,
- state involvement in school governance should be based on participative management,
- decision-making power of governing bodies should reflect their capacity to render effective service,
- capacity building programmes for SGB's, principals and inspectors to ensure a smooth transition to a new school governance system (ibid:70).

A Committee to Review School Organisation, Governance and funding was then appointed by the Minister of Education, under the leadership of Prof. Hunter, to recommend a proposed national framework of school organisation and ownership, and norms and standards on school governance and funding, in accordance with the requirements of the Constitution to improve the quality and effectiveness of schools (White Paper 1995). Principal recommendations from the Hunter Report were the following:

- R2 Each public school should have a governing body comprising of the principal and representatives of the parents (to be numerically the strongest), the teachers, the learners (in secondary schools only), non-teaching staff and the local community.*
- R3 All SGB's should have the same basic powers. These include decision-making on school times, codes of behaviour, subject choices, community use of school facilities, school-community relations, ethos of the school and fund raising.*
- R4 Final decision on teacher appointments should rest with the provincial educational authorities.*
- R6 District-level governance structures should provide professional support to schools.*
- R9 A partnership funding approach is recommended for public schools to hopefully attain equity, redress past imbalances, advance quality and improve efficiency.*
- R21 A well co-ordinated capacity-building programme should be implemented and developed that provide schools, SGB's and district education offices with the knowledge, skills, information and material resources necessary to sustain governance functions (1995a:xiii-xviii).*

Guidelines that stemmed from the Hunter Commission led to the gazetting of Education White Paper 2 (WP2:DoE:1996) on the Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools in February 1996. In WP2, the DoE spelled out the need for “decisive action by the national and provincial governments to introduce a new pattern of school organisation and ensure that it takes root and must go hand in hand with the empowerment of SGB’s to assume responsibility for their schools

within national and provincial policy frameworks" (DoE:1996a:13). The government also sought, after negotiations in terms of Section 247 of the 1993 Interim Constitution, to bring all state and state-aided schools (both urban and in rural ex-homelands) within a single category of public schools (ibid:13). However, WP2 (1996a) recognised that not all public schools will be the same. Some SGB's will take on wider responsibilities, especially financial, depending upon their capacity and inclinations (DoE:1996a:14, Smith 1998:14).

The South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996), consistent with the constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996), acted as the legislative arm for recommendations alluded to in WP2 (DoE:1996a). Section 29 of our Constitution, with regard to education, mentioned that:

- everyone has a right to basic education and accessibility must be ensured for any further education,
- educational institutions should take account of the principles of equity and redress the results of the past racially discriminatory laws and practices, and
- independent educational institutions should not discriminate on the basis of race and maintain standards comparable to public educational institutions (RSA 1996:14).

In summarising school governance, WP2 (1996a) made the following provisions:

- governance policy for public schools should reflect core values of democracy (p.14),
- SGB's will have legal authority to formulate and adopt policy in terms of national and provincial regulations (p.17),
- each public school was to have a fully representative SGB before 1 January 1997 (p.17),
- All stakeholders of an SGB would encourage rational discussion and collective decision-making (p.16),
- SGB's were to be supported by SRC's, parents associations and teachers (p.17),
- Provincial education departments had to build capacity in those schools which were underdeveloped or deprived (p.16),

- A flourishing partnership, among the different school constituencies based on mutual interest and mutual confidence was needed for good school governance (p.17),
- SGB's will be responsible for basic functions ("basic powers") agreed upon in tandem with provincial guidelines. SGB's can then negotiate for additional "negotiated powers" with the provincial education department as their expertise increases (p.18).

Responsibilities of SGB's are clearly elucidated in a book entitled "*Understanding the South African Schools Act*" released by the DoE in 1997. The information from the book is an excellent resource for public schools governors. Important SGB responsibilities (DOE 1997:14) were to:

- promote the best interest of the school,
- ensure school development by providing quality education for all school learners,
- adopt and accept a constitution,
- develop a mission statement for the school,
- adopt (accept) a code of conduct for learners and staff,
- support the principal, educators and other staff in carrying out their professional functions,
- decide on school times,
- control and maintain school property, buildings and grounds,
- encourage parents, learners, educators and other staff to render work willingly for the school,
- recommend and advise the head of the provincial education department on the appointment of educators and non-teaching staff,
- decide on the extramural curriculum, that is after school hours,
- decide on choice of subjects according to provincial curriculum policy,
- buy textbooks, educational material and equipment for the school,
- try to add to the funds supplied by the State to improve the quality of education in the school,
- start and administer a school fund,
- open and maintain a bank account,
- prepare an annual budget to be submitted to parents,
- ensure that school fees are collected according to decisions made by stakeholders,
- keep school financial records,
- meet with or consult parents, learners and educators where required by the Schools Act,

- provide community services for children and youth such as social, health, recreational and nutritional programmes (WP2, DoE 1996a:19-20), (Schools Act 84 of 1996, DoE 1996b: sections 20-21).

A manual of the Eastern Cape Education Department (ECDoE:1997) released in May, 1997 depicted how SGB's should be established in our province. Regarding representation on a SGB the manual reflected that, at a secondary school with more than 629 pupils (the case study), there should be:

- 9 parents, one of whom should be chairperson (DOE 1996b:22),
- 3 educators/teachers,
- 3 learners,
- 1 non-teaching member - all of the above should be elected (ECDoE 1997:16),
- the principal, and
- community members elected or co-opted by the SGB with no voting rights (DoE 1996b:22).

In addition:

- Diverse constituencies should be represented, being proposed and agreed upon by school-based constituencies,
- respective constituency roles should be specified, eg. students should not participate in discussions concerning teachers' performance,
- terms of office are three years (and renewable) except for learners and office holders that is one (Smith 1998:16, DoE 1996b:22).

Devolving power from the centralised DoE to the more localised SGBs in schools is to:

...give pupils, parents and teachers responsibility for their own affairs, to the point of enabling them to administer the educational system on their own within the context of natural or contractual communities. This assumption of responsibility must necessarily embrace three indispensable areas: participation in design and decision-making processes, regular structured involvement in the processes of management and evaluation and ...financial accountability with regards to income and contributions (Ki-Zerbo 1990 cited in Cole 1994:185).

Affordability is a very important consideration when analysing our new education dispensation. Total costs of education were estimated as R22.6 billion in 1990 or 9 % of GDP (NEPI 1992b:32). Currently education takes 6.5 % of GDP, 92 % of the education budget is spent on personnel, pupil enrollment had increased 10 % since 1994 and there were about 12 million pupils in schools, one-third of our population. (Daily Dispatch: 12 May 1998). Too little money is thus available for resources and school infrastructure which are critical components needed by SGB's in trying to provide quality education in their schools.

2.1.6 Comparative analysis

School governance in our country can be compared in its development to three other countries - Canada, India and Zimbabwe - reflecting important commonalities. Some of these commonalities are:

- the need to fully democratise the education systems of these countries
- very little pupil representation in the governance of schooling (though in an infant stage in SA)
- the intention to bring about a devolution of decision-making to the local institutional level
- the complex and hazardous nature of implementing new governance initiatives when contextualised historically eg. glaring inequalities in South Africa and Zimbabwe and India vis-a-vis relative stability of Canada
- mass schooling generates complex problems of governance organisation and funding as well as being under pressure from increasing globalisation
- 75 - 90 % of funding for schools taken up by teachers' salaries (Hunter 1995).

It is important to contextualise developments in educational governance in our country by relating it to similar trends in other countries. One realises that the call for the democratisation of education and the devolution of decision-making has impacted on the type of educational governance in many countries including our own.

2.1.7 Critique of current school governance policies of South Africa

The majority of our communities have very high levels of unemployment (eg. Duncan Village in which the school under study is located) and these deprived environments house communities that cannot help finance education in their schools. Our country is beset with different schooling realities which seems to contradict the community ideals of our South African Schools Act (1996b). Crain Soudien, in his paper *School realities in the Western Cape: Some observations*, presented at a Western Cape Summit on education in September 1998 lamented that :

With white and middle class parents able to subsidise their children's education and working-class and black parents unable to do so, there is a wide difference between what goes on inside them (The Teacher, October 1998:14)

Our education Deputy minister also added his concerned voice on the incipient crisis in education by decrying that "...if the situation in our schools is not corrected...we are on a path to self-destruction. In your church and community meetings you must develop ways in which you can participate in the governance of your schools" (Smangalis Mkhathshwa in Daily Dispatch, 28 September 1998:6).

The DoE, through the South African Schools Act 1996, also did not take cognisance of how the community would be represented on SGB's. The co-opting of community members can be fraught with abuse (1996b:Section 24). The proposal that SGB's be recognised as a "juristic person" implies that "...they may make decisions as a corporate body" (Sayed 1997:725) but the grave consequence is that the SGB's "...can be sued and they are legally responsible for the decisions they make based upon the functions and powers devolved" (ibid:725).

Decisions that may be controversial such as suspension and expulsion of pupils or teachers, changing language policy, not giving pupils access to schools for not paying schools fees, the kind of religious observances at school, accepting cultural traditions such as circumcisions rites etc. will still be subject to national and provincial regulation. Are SGB's thus, really autonomous as the Schools Act purports ?

Many more shortcomings and positive spin-offs from the South African Schools Act regarding decision-making within SGB's will become evident later in this study (see Chapters 5/6).

2.1.8 Trends in management thinking

Even though this study focusses on democratic decision-making from a school governance viewpoint, it has depicted, albeit briefly, the dynamic links between the governing and managing arms. The two arms of a school are mutually dependant, and I will as concisely as possible, look at certain management trends that have a bearing on this particular study.

An important consideration from the business community was that "...managers in today's constantly changing world unwittingly have been shaping a new model of what managing in the "new" South Africa must become (Durst 1988:26). A leading management theorist, Bush (1986), in his seminal *Theories of Educational Management*, developed different management models to try and explain organisational functioning. I will look at the main features of two of his models for they impact on the kind of management and organisational life of the school I studied.

Formal models possess the following features:

- ♦ organisations are treated as systems,
- ♦ prominence given to the official organisational structures where formal relationship patterns exist between members of institutions,
- ♦ organisations are structurally hierarchical and bureaucratic,
- ♦ institutions are goal-seeking and have common purposes,
- ♦ managerial decision-making is thought to be objective, detached and intellectual,
- ♦ authority of the leaders are as result of their official positions, and
- ♦ emphasis on accountability of the organisation to sponsoring bodies (Bush 1986:22-23).

Ebenezer Majombozi High has structural and organisational features that are of a formal nature.

A hierarchical order exists where pupils are at the lower rung and principal at the top. The principal is the authority as a result of his being appointed by the provincial department.

The second model I would like to describe is the collegial or democratic model which is the one envisaged in the South African Schools Act (1996). This model includes those theories which emphasise that "...power and decision-making are shared by some or all members of the organisation" (ibid:48). The central features of this model are the following:

- ♦ there is full participation by all members in an organisation regarding decision-making,
- ♦ an authority of expertise exists within organisations with significant staff members,
- ♦ an assumption of a common set of values guides managerial activities,
- ♦ an assumption that staff have formal representation within various decision-making bodies, and
- ♦ decisions are reached by a process of consensus or compromise rather than division and conflict (ibid: 49-50).

Limited theoretical insights into organisations are provided by models as they do not give a complete analysis of the complex nature of organisations and the forms of management therein. Consensual decisions are reached by the staff at Ebenezer Majombozi High but these decisions are arrived at as a consequence of conflict predominantly (see Chapter Five).

An African management approach which was first described came into being about five years ago stressed that information be made available to all members of the organisation, managers be approachable at all times, there is co-operation and solidarity throughout the organisation (termed UBUNTU) and that "...a person is a person through other human beings..." (Khoza cited in Christie, Lessem and Mbigi 1994:121-124). This management approach, even though ideal, does not permeate Ebenezer Majombozi High (see Chapter Five).

The Labour Relations Act of 1995 promoted participation management as an effective organisation feature (Munentsi 1998) and a report of the South African Team on Education Management Development (1996:30) proposed an integrative and collaborative educational management approach which "...involves all staff and stakeholders...decisions related to concerns such as student learning, resource management and staff amanagement and

development, derive from premises found on common agreed principles...founded upon consent and consensus”.

Other research, according to Smit and Cronjé (1992) in their book *Management Principles - A South African Perspective*, has shown that groups tend to make better decisions when facing complex problems, seek more alternative solutions to all these problems, facilitate acceptance of decisions by all those who participate, and those at the lower rungs of the hierarchical ladder normally accept the rationale behind the arrival at certain decisions. A shortcoming of the group decision-making process however, is that “...persons may dominate or control the group...” (Smit and Cronjé 1992:152). Groups dominating or having influence over other groups exists at Ebenezer Majombozi High (see page 69). This kind of situation has to be resolved before decisions can truly be reached and acted upon consensually.

Good management trends can eventually lead to the formation of democratic communities. These communities according to Sergiovanni are schools and classrooms with administrators, teachers and pupils sharing ideas and leadership roles, forming authentic relationships with each other and being receptive to new ideas (cited by Manning and Saddlemire 1996). This kind of community waits to become a reality at Ebenezer Majombozi High (see page 73)

The modelling theory of Bush and the other approaches, including our own national educational authority, are ideal in theory. Practical implementation thereof is problematic as I will attest to later in this case study (see Chapter Five). Words in a governmental political act do not

necessarily lead to the practical end result, and my case study proves this conclusively (see Chapter Five).

2.1.9 A brief synopsis

Decisions regarding educational policy and change are thus inextricably linked to the political, social and economic forces that were integral to our country since 1948.

I have tried to indicate the dynamic relationship between the different forces and their impact on the type of schooling and concomitant governance that the majority of our pupils had to endure in the fifty years since the inception of the apartheid state.

The following two Chapters reflect the methods I employed in acquiring the data needed to answer the research question.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RESEARCH

Human beings are never seen as passive recipients of information...truth and objectivity are seen as nothing but human products and man rather than nature is seen as the ultimate author of knowledge and reality (H.A. Giroux 1981:11, emphasis in original).

3.1 The paradigm

Thomas Kuhn's definition of the key concept paradigm was "...the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques shared by members of a given scientific community" (Kuhn 1970 cited in Usher and Scott 1996:15). A paradigm could also be perceived to be a model of how to do research, what problems to focus on and to work on.

My research paradigm encapsulates the interpretive approach which has a deep-seated interest in understanding how the communicative and symbolic patterns of interaction can contribute to understanding each other and the world around us (Giroux 1981). This approach has a concern to understand the world as it is, to understand the fundamental nature of the social world at the level of subjective experience (Burrell and Morgan 1979). This social world according to interpretivists is created by the individuals concerned. The social reality that these individuals create gives meaning and understanding to their social worlds.

This approach is involved with issues such as the nature of the status quo, social order, consensus, social integration and cohesion, solidarity and actuality. These issues all tie up with

the democratic concept of this research topic. The assumption that all human actions are meaningful has to be interpreted and understood within the context of social practices, and is intrinsic to this research paradigm (Scott and Usher 1996).

Furthermore, interpretations are always circular and "...the interpretation of part of something depends on interpreting the whole..." and vice versa (ibid:19). My research sought to uncover how the thinking and decision-making practices of individuals within Ebenezer Majombozi High (the case) impacted on the school as a whole. I uncovered and understood the essence of the everyday world that the school is part of, through the research. Brian Fay's intellectual and revealing *Social Theory and Political Practice* alluded to the notion that:

An interpretive social science uncovers the connections which exist between parts of people's lives, thereby allowing one to see these lives in the whole and enabling one to grasp the significance of particular behaviour in terms of this whole. The result of this sort of analysis is thus a kind of enlightenment in which the meanings of actions, both of one's own as well as of others, are made transparent (1975:80).

This form of inquiry is said to be dialogous and subjective in approach as it seeks to understand the meaning that people give to their actions and the actions of others who share their world (Goodman 1992). By looking at how humans interpret their social worlds, we can then uncover the relations between social theory and practice by making explicit what is tacitly assumed by the practitioners (Fay 1975).

Some of the criticisms of the interpretive social theory or paradigm is that it leaves no room for the examination of the conditions which give rise to the actions, rules and beliefs which it seeks

to explicate, does not provide a means whereby one can study the relationship between structural elements of the social order and possible forms of behaviour and beliefs which such elements engender, neglects to explain the pattern of unintended consequences of actions of individuals within societies, does not broaden our understanding of structural conflict within society, and lastly does not provide an explanation of historical change (Fay 1975). I do not agree with these criticisms for the respondents I interviewed have certain belief systems that guide their actions and behaviours. Ebenezer Majombozi High has a particular social order that has led to extreme forms of conflict and dissent by many individuals therein (see Chapter Five). Conditions within the school most certainly gives us an understanding of the ethos that is Ebenezer Majombozi High.

I have looked at both the positive and negative factors of the interpretive paradigm. This paradigm was used to inform my research of Ebenezer Majombozi High. The social practices within the school was interpreted by my respondents in particular ways (see Chapter Five). These interpretations however, made more transparent the kinds of decisions that were made and how these decisions were acted upon.

3.2 The Type

Qualitative research is an approach rather than a particular set of techniques, and its appropriateness derives from the nature of the social phenomena to be explored (Morgan and Smircich 1980:491)

The word quality in the Webster Comprehensive Dictionary is "...that which makes a being or thing such as it is, a distinguishing element or characteristic... the characteristics of anything

regarded as determining its value, place, worth, rank, position etc..." (1992:1031). Qualitative research is perceived as value-laden, subjective, biased, personal, private, dependant on the observer or researcher, partial, seeks meanings, embedded in individual consciousness, dynamic or ever-changing and local (Kvale 1996). Furthermore, Morgan and Smircich (1980) gave a detailed analysis of the qualitative research approach as having the assumption of reality as being a projection of human imagination, reality as a social construction, man as a pure spirit creating particular social realities or symbols, and the need to understand the creation of social reality. The research for this case study is qualitative in nature and the social reality that is Ebenezer Majombozi High has individuals within it having their own particular social realities. By understanding their social realities one is able to comprehend the kind of school my case study really is.

3.3 The Technique or Strategy

The function of research is not necessarily to map and conquer the world but to sophisticate the beholding of it. "Thick description", experiential understanding, and "multiple realities" are expected in qualitative case studies (Denzin and Lincoln 1994 cited in Robert Stake 1995:43).

Robert Yin (1989) stated that case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context. Yin then proceeded to define the case study as a research strategy to illuminate a decision or set of decisions, why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result. Additionally, case study research

is said to give insight into specific instances, events or situations on what institutions mean to individuals and to the realities of human life.

Certain positive characteristics or properties of case studies are that these studies are public documents about individuals and events with consequences for the lives of those portrayed as well as for the reader, that these studies are identifiable to those involved and to wider audiences, that there is a commitment to feed back information quickly to participants under study, that these studies are totalities, they have a holistic or systematic quality, that there is use of long term participation or fieldwork in order to get more successful results, that the emphasis is towards multiple representations of different situations leading to multiple interpretations, and that it attempts to portray the world as it appears to the people in it giving the reader a feeling of vicarious experience (Hammersley 1993). From the positive factors mentioned previously, the multivariate nature of case study research is evident.

But this kind of research has its shortcomings: Meaning-centred, qualitative data collection and analysis is sometimes not seen as pure research, it is sometimes considered an immature science due to its non-technical mode of inquiry (Hamilton 1980). Case-study workers are “anti-intellectual” (sic), making generalisations from single cases can be flawed, and case studies can remain isolated with no sense of cumulative knowledge (Hammersley 1993). Current case-study research reflects a move away from “...the quest for universal knowledge...replaced by a focus on local knowledge, thus shifting from generalization to contextualization” (Kvale cited in Van der Mescht 1999:2). Ebenezer Majombozi High has its own forms of knowledge

constructed by its inhabitants. The uniqueness of its social world will allow other readers' of this case-study "...to vicariously experience...and draw their own conclusions" (Stake cited in Vander Mescht 1999:3).

Case-study research however, needs data to give it meaning and understanding. The data or information that will act as a foundation for this study was accessed from a specific tool that I will now describe.

3.4 The Tool

I used the unstructured interview as a tool for data collection for this case-study. This kind of interview has a "certain cutting edge" for it allows for the overlap of "areas of knowledge and expertise" (Hammersley 1993:190). If properly used it helps to bring out the affective and value-laden aspects of respondent responses and determines the personal significance of their attitudes (Selltiz et al, 1976). During the interviews I used "open-ended questions" that were "...designed to permit a free response from the subject rather than one limited to stated alternatives ...respondents were given the opportunity to answer in their own terms and their own frames of reference" (ibid:312). Responses from the participants in this kind of interview are spontaneous, highly specific and concrete, self-revealing and personal.

Steinar Kvale postulated that through conversations we get to know other people, get to learn about their experiences, feelings, and hopes and the world they live in and "...if conversations did not exist, there would hardly be any shared knowledge about the social scene" (1996:8). The

use of this kind of research tool brings better theoretical conceptualisation and more consistent practices to qualitative research (Giorgi 1994 cited in Kvale 1996).

A deeper and more detailed understanding of the qualitative research interview reveals the following characteristics:

- it looks at the lived world of the subjects/participants/respondents and their relation to it,
- it is theme orientated,
- it seeks to describe and understand the meanings of central themes in the life world of the subjects,
- it works with words and not numbers and seeks precise descriptions and stringent meaning interpretations,
- it aims at obtaining uninterpreted descriptions,
- it seeks to describe specific situations which could lead to the arrival of meanings,
- it focuses on certain themes or categories,
- it tries to eradicate ambiguous statements from the subjects or respondents,
- the interviewer shows sensitivity towards the knowledge base of the interviewee,
- it reflects a reciprocal influence between interviewer and interviewee, and
- it can be a rare and enriching experience for both parties (ibid:29-36).

The main theme of this study was to look at the experiences of my respondents within Ebenezer Majombozi High. These experiences reflected on kinds of decision-making taking place at the school. By using the words of respondents themselves, one can then determine the lived experiences of these individuals. It was an illuminating and enriching experience for me as I come from a similar educational background.



My impression is that conversations lead to the production of stories that can depict how people live in and respond to their environment. We are all on a constant search to find truth and meaning in our world and hopefully create new kinds of knowledge in the process. My research also tries to open a window into the different social realities within a particular case through the use of unstructured interviews. The interviews themselves reflect interesting interpretations of decision-making in the school, by my respondents. Some of the respondents that respected and carried out the instructions of the principal held a certain view about the school. Other respondents that deemed the principal to be weak, held a totally different viewpoint (See Chapter Five).

3.5 **A brief synopsis**

My study is thus interpretive, reflecting qualitative research and the data or information gathered for my case study will come from transcriptions of unstructured interviews I had with important role-players within the school or case. The theory I have alluded to in the previous two chapters will now make more practical sense as I turn my attention to the the data analysis of my case study.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CASE

EBENEZER MAJOMBOZI HIGH SCHOOL

4.1 Methodology

4.1.1 Why Ebenezer Majombozi High ?

I chose this schools because it is an ex DET school found in an urban township. This century has seen the school achieve levels of success and provide important members to our society. It is located in a deprived environment and is a rich source for different types of research.

The school is a relatively new building even though it was housed in three different locations this past century (see next chapter). As a result of its having a rich history, I found it intriguing to use the school as a source of information. This is why I chose the school for my case study.

4.1.2 Research Ethics

The persons I used for my interviews all indicated their acceptance of using their names in the case study. They felt that it was necessary for transparency to become part of their school and did not want to be anonymous.

I understand that confidentiality is important when doing case studies. It is magnanimous that these individuals deemed it necessary to use their names in the analyses of the study.

4.1.3 Data application

The theoretical foundation of my methodology is elaborated on in more detail in Chapter Four. My first contact with Ebenezer Majombozi High School was through a telephonic conversation with the Principal, Mr Ntlabathi, on 15 March 1998 to set up an appointment for interviews with three teachers, two pupils from the the SGB, two parents from the SGB and the principal himself.

Interviews were held at the school on 29 April 1998 with the following persons:

- a. **Mr Tiyo Tonisi** - a teacher at the school for the past ten years and a past pupil of the school,
- b. **Ms Thembisa Fihla** - teacher at the school for the past six years and an important administrative officer at the school,
- c. **Ms Vatiswa Simelela** - at the school for the past twenty years and the incumbent Deputy Principal,
- d. **Mr Ntlabathi** - current principal of the school since beginning of 1997,
- e. **Ms Nokothula Mhlontlo** - pupil at the school for the past five years and the secretary of the SRC at the school (18 years old) and,
- f. **Ms Thatiswa Skweyiya** - pupil at the school for the past two years and the SRC chairperson (37 years old).

The interviews were then recorded and subsequently transcribed. Parents, according to the principal, and school secretary were reticent to be interviewed by me as a result of crises surrounding learning and teaching at the school . This was mentioned to me on interviewing these parents. They were reluctant to hold any conversation whatsoever with me.

After many attempts and false promises to seek an appointment with the parents since April this year, I finally got to converse with two parents at the school on 7 October 1998. The parents interviewed were:

- a. Ms Ntombikayise Mangaliso - a parent with a pupil in Standard 6 at the school - 29 years old,
- b. Mr Mandisi Jamela - the chairperson for 1998 of the SGB - 46 years old.

I also had the pleasure, on one of my many visits to the school, to interview Ms Wanda Timothy (school secretary and SGB secretary) on 11 August 1998. My visits to the school occurred at least once a month since the first interview and my observation of a steady decline in actual schooling made me feel sad, helpless and disillusioned. The reason for saying this was that on all those visits I observed pupils leaving the school at 11h00. Many more reasons for the decline in schooling are stated in the next chapter.

Two other interviews were held on firstly 19 September 1998 with Mr Lapple Sontshi, at his abode. As a result of being a past principal and student, he gave me an impression of the school's history since its inception in 1942 and how the decision-making practices during this period impacted on the actual functioning of the school. The second interview occurred on 30 September 1998 with Mr Andrew Wiseman (RDP Manager of the Greater East London area) at the East London Town Planning offices to discuss the kind of infra-structural projects being implemented in Duncan Village (feeder area of pupils for the school) and to glean the social, political and economic factors influencing the decision-making of the school. These interviews were not recorded, but I tried to pen their thoughts onto paper.

Questions that I put to all the respondents/stakeholders included the following:

- Is decision-making democratic at the school ?
- Do you play a role in decision-making at the school ?
- Are decisions acted upon by roleplayers in the school ?
- Is the SGB an effective governance structure at the school ?
- Who holds the power at the school ?

From the above questions, I gathered a considerable body of information regarding the decision-making practices at the school (See Chapter Five).

4.1.4 Theory for Data Analysis

The analysis of this study focused on the following:

- the social, political, economic and historical factors that impacted in decision-making and concomitant quality education in Ebenezer Majombozi High (See Chapters 2 and 5)
- collection of data by means of unstructured interviews
- transcribing the “voices” of the interviewees ,
- perceiving similar themes and categories such as decision-making, management modes, types of participation (whether democratic or not), by stakeholders, leadership etc. and
- analysis of the data using techniques such as patterning - looking for anything that occurs more than once, looking for the unexpected (Mathison cited in Unterhalter et al. 1991), acted as a means of identifying the themes mentioned in the previous sentence.

4.2 Where to next ?

The following Chapter deals with the theory underpinning my research and it includes the reasons behind my doing this particular type of research. I also reflect on the strengths and limitations of my study as a vindication of this type of research.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS OF DATA

INTRODUCTION

Ebenezer Majombozi Secondary School is a three-story face brick institution nestled between Gompo Town, a semi-affluent middle-class housing establishment, and Duncan Village, a huge informal settlement that is home to approximately 80 000 persons , beset with poverty and deprivation.

According to one of my respondents :

This school is one of the most fortunate schools I have ever seen in the Eastern Cape. We have got everything here. We got a good school in terms of facilities. We've got plenty of classrooms, some of which are not being used. We got a library that is not being used...we have a number of brand new text books...we got machines here, photostat machines and scanners, computers, 2 or 3 televisions. We have got everything here unlike other schools in our area or in East London.

The building is relatively new in structure, about eight years old, with all the necessary teaching and learning resources housing 1 300 pupils and 37 teachers.

Pupils admitted to Ebenezer Majombozi come from from Duncan Village and Scenery Park (40%) - a new low cost housing suburb about 10 kilometers from the school as well as Mdantsane (60%) - the second largest township, after Soweto with more that 500 000 persons about 25 kilometers from the school.

Before making explicit the themes/categories I mentioned in Chapter 3, I would firstly peek into the social and economic factors of the schools' environment as well as the kind of infra-structural development taking place in Duncan Village, and secondly trace the historical trends that impact on the current ethos of the school.

5.1 Social and Economic Factors

Andrew Wiseman, the RDP manager of the Greater East London Municipality alluded to the following with regard to the township called Duncan Village - on the border of Ebenezer Majombozi High:

- * the type of dwellings are mainly shacks interspersed with two-roomed structures
- * the current housing waiting list is 15 to 20 thousand,
- * the proportion of single parent families is approximately 30 to 40 %,
- * 200 people use one communal toilet,
- * most shacks house eight to ten people, and
- * unemployment figures (not quantitatively proven) for formal employment range from 60 - 70 %.

He also stated that infrastructural development programmes under the ambit of the Presidential Project Initiative numbers 56 in Duncan Village alone at a cost of R140 million. These projects have been in progress since 1995 and includes road upgrading, electrification, building of clinics, stormwater drainage systems, bulk piping for sewage and sanitary services as well as trying to make the township ecologically friendly, e.g. replanting trees. Main problems according to Andrew Wiseman are the lack of payment for services, continuous political strife within Duncan Village Community Forum where strong leadership is lacking and predominantly

ANC-driven as well as tensions between the NGO's in the township, the community of Duncan Village and the Local Municipality authorities.

Many social problems are thus extensions of the ghetto-like environment that is Duncan Village. Some of these problems are gangsterism, youth that do not have a vision and goal-led future, lack of a work ethic at school, drug dependency, unstable families and a whole host of other related problems.

My next step is to peer into the history of the school itself and trace the decision-making trends that still have ramifications within the school today.

5.2 Historical Factors: "It was better then"

A striking point made by Tiyo Tonisi, an ex-pupil at the school during the 1970's, during the interview sums up the roots of Ebenezer Majombozi High. He said: "This school has a great history".

Similar sentiments were echoed by the other teachers, the school secretary, the principal and Mr Sontshi, an ex-pupil, teacher and principal of the school. The bulk of information gathered for this historical analysis is distilled from the voice of Mr Sontshi .

Originally, the school was known as Welsh High School with its roots in the Peacock Hall of Duncan Village (1940) under the guidance of a German gentleman called Dr David Wollheim.

The school was built in 1942 and acted as the first educative environment for Mr Sontshi who nostalgically stated that "...those were the good old days... children wanted to learn..." . Parental involvement was minimal, the principal was a strict disciplinarian with corporal punishment used widely, a prefect system was in place and the school functioned properly. The school later became a fully-fledged Secondary School (1976) in East London.

On becoming an assistant teacher at Welsh High School in 1966, Mr Sontshi was impressed by the team work ethic at the school, strict pupil discipline and "...up to this day we still boast...every teacher became something...professional men and women...some lawyers". The period from 1942 to 1970 saw mainly white principals (5 of them) and Mr Sontshi is still flummoxed as to why they were removed from their posts but "...there was a motive why they left" .

The year 1971 saw the appointment of the first Black principal, Mr C.L. Zubelwana, as well as the renaming of the school to that of Ebenezer Majombozi Secondary School. An authoritarian management style ensured strict discipline, a peaceful school environment, and as a result many of the teachers did not have to apply corporal punishment.

The period 1976-1979 reflected Mr Sontshi's tenure as principal of the school and one incident highlighted in the local newspaper, was an indication of how he tried to instill discipline:

The pupils claimed they had been expelled by the principal, Mr L. Sontshi, after they had refused to accept punishment for failing to attend classes. They did not write the full end of year examinations following the incident (Daily Dispatch supplement called Indaba, 8 December 1978).

The school housed 700-800 pupils and 25 black teachers during this period and had very few problems to deal with. The 1976 Soweto-led riots saw most schools in the Duncan Village area being burnt down except Ebenezer Majombozi. Mr Sonthsi became a “target” on many political fronts and was perceived to be in cohorts with the Ciskei Education department. Post 1979 saw his appointment to principalship of a school in Lennox Sebe’s village, called Bisho today, followed by becoming an inspector (1982) until his eventual retirement.

The 1990’s saw Ebenezer Majombozi being led by five different principals and their removal from the school according to the teacher respondents from the interviews was mainly as a result of strong lobbying and pressure by a “group of teachers” who are still employed at the school .

The strong discipline, good results, conducive learning and teaching environment of the pre-1990’s period has rapidly been replaced during the past two to three years by extremely poor results. “Teachers are the main problem...”, very little or no co-operation among all the roleplayers at the school, good decisions not being implemented, a startling erosion of the culture of learning and teaching as “...pupils come to school at 9.30am and leave by 10.00am...” and “...even our teachers do not come to class...” , with a complete breakdown in effective schooling.

Cronyism among the teachers had its roots before the beginning of this decade (1985-1990) as one principal “...divided the staff... we were fighting...actually went straight to Parliament... you will never understand...it was terrible” and the sad legacy thereof has had a debilitating effect on schooling in Ebenezer Majombozi ever since.

Last year saw the following events arising and I have tried to place these in chronological order:

- a meeting with all stakeholders, called by the ECDoE in January to seek solutions to the poor matric results (8 % pass rate in 1997) realised a Discussion Document on School Policy at Ebenezer Majombozi released on 17 February 1998,
- a second collective meeting on 17 March 1998 could only discuss one aspect from the Discussion Document, namely decisions surrounding punctuality,
- two follow-up meetings were scheduled for the rest of the year but these did not materialise due to the lack of a quorum,
- teachers being forced to leave the school premises twice this year, once in May 1998 and on 18 August 1998,
- This state of affairs became news in the local newspaper which stated that "...angry Ebenezer Majombozi High School pupils forced their teachers out of school yesterday claiming they were not doing their jobs...the pupils took the action in protest of alleged failure by 12 teachers to give them the type of education they feel they deserve" (Daily Dispatch 19/20 August 1998),
- as a result of the action of the pupils, 12 teachers were displaced and told to report to the District educational offices every day,
- the ECDoE then started an investigation and "all parties including teachers, pupils and parents were required to give inputs" (Daily Dispatch 20 August 1998), and
- this Department intervention has been ongoing since the beginning of September with the appointment of a three-person Task Team to try and seek solutions to the grave irregularities at the school.

The day of my interviewing the two parents of the SGB (7 October 1998) coincided with the Task Team having discussions with parents and teachers of the school. These meetings between the Task Team and school stakeholders would have brought forth a decisive plan for changing the school by the end of the fourth term (9 December 1998), but my last conversation with Mr Ntlabati on 23 November 1998 reflected very little communication and concrete future steps for the school from the Departmental Task team.

It is apparent that the school's stakeholders are grappling with decisions to address the multitude of problems at the school. Solutions to these complex problems need to come from the deliberations and civil discussions between all concerned. Decisions that were reached, such as the very insightful Discussion School Policy Document have to be implemented and vigilantly evaluated so as to remove the teaching and learning ills of the recent past. Some of the decision-making practices that were authoritarian or top-down in nature during the pre-1980's period, have to be revisited to help kick-start the fledgling democratic order that is waiting to be created in the school.

The social, economic and historical overview of the school depicts the overt and covert problems bedeviling schooling at Ebenezer Majombozi High. I will now look at certain themes/categories, elicited from the interviews, to give more meaning and understanding to the research topic.

5.3 Democratic Participation

Before delving into the kind of participation by the different role players at the school, I would like to pause and unravel the concept of democratic participation in schools. The call for democratic participation by all stakeholders in schools, enshrined in the South African Schools Act (1996) is extensively covered in Chapter Two.

A desirable goal of maximum participation by all people cannot always be attained and this is also symptomatic of the school I studied. John Stuart Mill, one of the foremost proponents of the democratic ideal, two centuries ago argued that people within a democratic state should be

willing to carry out the functions and duties imposed by that state (cited in Wringe 1984). This ideal is most certainly not happening currently in Ebenezer Majombozi High. I will argue why this is so later in the Chapter.

My contention is that a divisive dichotomy exists between individual rights and actions vis a vis group right and actions. A bedrock of democracy is group representation and aligned collective decision making and action but this ideal is always in conflict with individual feelings and actions. This dichotomy is strikingly evident at Ebenezer Majombozi High. The parents, principal and deputy principal share similar views on the democratic forms of decision-making at the school .

Teachers and pupils on the other hand have completely different sentiments. Even though twelve pupils were democratically elected by the representatives from the different classes to serve on the SRC, a meeting had not been held with the principal of SGB to map a joint course for the school by 29 April 1998 (2 months into the school year). Both girls interviewed mentioned the problems they had with the rest of the pupils who did not like the chairperson for "...I am very straight..." . My perception is the age of the chairperson counts against her for the pupils probably see her more as a mother figure than a young dynamic leader who can adequately convey their goals and aspirations for the school. A question from me regarding the functioning of the SRC led to the following response:

We had no meetings. We cannot organise. We wanted to discuss: How is the School ? How can the school be a better school ? We wanted to tell them how the school can be, how the students should be and how can the teachers be .

From what was mentioned in the historical overview of the school (see page 60), it is painfully obvious that the pupils cannot even deliberate or participate in discussions on the road forward for the school as a result of the breakdown of basic schooling. A laissez-faire situation thus exists at the school.

One of the teachers commenting on the democratic nature of the school, said that:

I would not use the word democratic in this scenario. The school is chaotic...there is absolutely no discussion about the running of the school except the meeting called by the SGB on the school policy. Actually, there is no continuous interaction...around governing of the school .

Furthermore, the teacher added that the culture of discussion among teachers that was highly prevalent at the school not too long ago was not occurring as "...only a few teachers will come out and speak..." . Thembisa, the other teacher interviewed, also mentioned that the democratic ideal is misused at the school. The reason why she feels democracy will not take root at the school and really blossom is that a group of teachers caucus before entering meetings and oppose any legitimate decisions that are taken in those meetings. The direct consequence of this situation is "...that at the end of the day nothing has been done...it is terrible, it is terrible...I don't know what is the solution..." .

Both teachers also reiterated the feelings of the principal, deputy principal and parents regarding the non-functioning SGB as a result of the same group of teachers disrupting meetings and causing extreme dissension and stalling effective decision-making at the school. One respondent

uttered: "...I have never seen the SGB functioning...parents are illiterate...they are scared to be involved in any educational issues...they don't want to mingle with educated people" .

One of the parents, on the other hand, in response to the functioning of the SGB criticised the teachers for being the main problem at the school. He also added that within the SGB "...we make all decisions as a unit...we sit down as a SGB" . He also praised the pupils for castigating the teachers by removing them from the school twice this year. As a solution to these crises, the demand for all to participate in the consultative process became imperative. Out of these meetings where all role-players were present the assurance by "...teachers to go back to their classes..." was seen as a victory for the school, as a whole. That "victory" quickly reached hollow proportions when, not long after these teacher lock-outs, the majority of teachers returned to their non-teaching state. This state of affairs prevailed at the school in the period after my final interviews of the parents during October.

The parental interviews also alluded to the SGB not being able to workshop the South African Schools Act, emphasising the roles and responsibilities of members of the SGB, due to the incipient learning and teaching crises at the school. It is indeed sad and frustrating that all important educational policy texts cannot be looked at by the stakeholders at the school due to a small band of disruptive individuals. I do feel however that the problems at the school are much more covert than I can ever hope to uncover. My interviews have uncovered information that only scratches the surface regarding the multifaceted and complex Ebenezer Majombozi High.

There are, in my estimation, positive aspects in connection with democratic participation at the school. Some of these are the following:

- meetings are called by the different roleplayers, especially the parents of the SGB, to look into, and seek effective solutions for, the many problems of the schools,
- a very impressive and detailed Discussions Document for a School Policy that was the culmination of a collaborative and co-operative commitment by the many stakeholders,
- the Task Team of the ECDoE being able to question all the roleplayers at the school, and in that way try and plot a successful and participative future course for the school,
- that the work of the Task team will hopefully make transparent those contentious issues that have been hidden to all the roleplayers, and
- that link between the school and the ECDoE will become a strong one to hopefully sustain the process of seeking joint solutions for the school.

I have looked at the perceptions of the different interviewees regarding democratic participation at the school. My impression is that this process is only just starting. The more the different roleplayers sit down and make a concerted commitment to seek solutions, the easier the process of participation will become. In order to delve even deeper into the psyche of Ebenezer Majombozi High, I will now turn my attention to forms of decision-making at the school.

5.4 Decision-making: "Who benefits ? Is it me or us ?"

The school policy reflects many decisions arrived at by all the stakeholders earlier this year. One of those decisions is:

Violations of rules under school attendance, class attendance and punctuality will constitute a misconduct on the part of the staff-members (i.e. educators and non-educators). Educator and non-educator members of the school who persistently and continuously violate the rules ...after two warnings must be

brought to the management council. The latter must take a decision which must be relayed to the staff-members in a staff meeting for purposes of transparency .

The decision in the school policy is a very noble and right one, but the implementation thereof has not taken place at the school given the non-teaching and disruptive nature of some of the staff. The Employment of Educators Act (Act No 76 of 1998) which was legislated in October this year, stipulated misconduct of educators as:

17.(1) An educator shall be guilty of misconduct if the educator -

- (b). performs or causes or permits to be performed or connives at any act which is prejudicial to the administration, discipline of efficiency of any department of education, department official or educational institution;
- (c). disobeys, disregards or willfully defaults in carrying out a lawful order given to the educator by a person having the authority to give it, or by word of conduct displays insubordination; and
- (d). is negligent or indolent in the carrying out of the duties attached to the educators post (RSA 1998:18)

The SGB thus has the legal right to rid the school of teachers which are guilty of misconduct but the lengthy process can reach a trial stage that could bring more harm than good to the school.

Decision-making, according to the 2 parental respondents is normally reached by consensus among the 16 members of the SGB but "...because the other SGB members got bored with all the problems, so many things that are wrong...teachers are so raw at that meeting...do not want to come again" . The meeting Kayise was referring to, occurred earlier this year, where teachers (not members of the SGB) disrupted the meeting and swore at the other individuals present. Many of the teachers do not respect the members of the SGB and have no recognition of their

own elected members that serve on the body. It is a state of anarchy. The consequence of this meeting was a decision by the SGB to write a letter to the Department (28 May 1998) seeking its assistance and the transference of a group of teachers to another school. I do not agree with this decision for I feel that solutions within any institution must be sought by all the members within it.

Another important decision that was controversial at the school, was the appointment of the deputy principal, Ms Vatiswa Simelela (one of my interviewees) during July last year. This teacher was promoted from a post level 1 position to that of a post level 3 position (deputy principal). She has more than twenty years experience but the main gripe amongst teachers was that she had not even fulfilled the role of head of department of a specific subject before her appointment as deputy principal. In an article in the Daily Dispatch during August, the principal stated that "he thought the main problem at the school lay in the teachers refusal to recognise a newly appointed deputy principal" (Daily Dispatch 19 August 1998). In his interview, Mr Ntlabati (the principal) also mentioned that objections by the teachers were around the interviews conducted for the deputy principal's post as well as the representative panel set up by the school to conduct those interviews. Lack of respect by the staff for the deputy principal will only exacerbate the problems of the school. There needs to be candid debate and discussion around her appointment so as to effect the kind of transparency needed to hopefully clear the air. It is important that teachers are informed in a detailed manner regarding teacher appointments and promotion posts with the criteria that the elected SGB panel follows in order to make decisions regarding particular appointments.

An extremely frustrating phenomenon at the school currently is the lack of a fully representative SGB at any meeting since the first one in February 1998. One teacher stated that "...we normally get 3 to 4 members at meetings..." , which is an indictment on all the roleplayers at the school. Crises at the school cannot be effectively eradicated if the major decision-making body cannot even get 10 or more of its 16 members to a meeting. This kind of apathy bodes ill for the future of the school.

My perception of decision-making at the school is that the different stakeholders are grappling with the implementation of important decisions to their logical conclusion. The Discussion Document on a School Policy for the school reflects consensus among all the stakeholders. The key to future success for the school is in the practical implementation of decisions within that document.

The next step will be to determine how the leader of the school allows, or does not allow, effective democratic decision-making to be grounded at the school.

5.5 The Leader : "I have no power"

In response to a question on his understanding of democratic decision-making at the school, the principal Mr Ntlabati, responded "...we have come to some decisions...we do have staff meetings where everybody participates maximally...the decisions that have been taken are not followed." My understanding is that if a principal of a school does not have total co-operation of all his/her

staff members, deterioration of functioning of a school ensues. This is what Mr Ntlabati is saddled with at Ebenezer Majombozi High.

His appointment to the post of principal less than two years ago was a culmination of the school not having a designated principal since 1995. He was met with infighting among teachers, lack of discipline of both teachers and pupils, simmering power struggles between the different teachers "camps" and extremely poor academic results of pupils. Two years into his tenure, he lamented that "...they just don't co-operate...they are not obeying...these troubles that happened in 1993 and 1994, they had a terrible effect on the school". This lack of co-operation between leader and his staff will only worsen an already disturbing situation.

The two parents interviewed, however, feel that Mr Ntlabati is a good leader and that the major problems at the school can be placed firmly at the feet of the majority of the teachers. Ntombikayise said that "...what I am seeing, they don't see the principal and the deputy...everybody says the principal is nobody...I don't think they are afraid of him . By not recognising the authority figure at the school, teachers have thus begun to do as they please.

The two teachers interviewed have very different viewpoints to that of the parents regarding the leadership qualities of Mr Ntlabati. Thembisa categorically stated that in an answer to a question on the leader at the school: "I am sorry to say that he is a weakling...especially this one...this one is just a puppet, who just comes here to get paid and then go home" . Tiyo, on the other hand, said the following: "Well, Mr Ntlabati is democratic enough when calling meetings...there is a rumour that he is siding with a certain group of teachers...everything is being caucused before it

goes to the staff meetings” . Perceptions of the leader differs markedly between the two stakeholder groups at the school. It is important that parents, teachers and pupils have a similar positive impression of the leader so as to effect a co-operative, consultative and collaborative decision-making environment at the school. Lack of trust and respect for the principal can break down the need to collectively create solutions. The daily running of the school is in stark contrast to the approach of the stakeholders within the SGB. There has to be synergy between management of the school daily and the important governance decisions ratified by the SGB. Mr Ntlabati is the key actor. His ability to link all the diverse strands into a tapestry is extremely important for the future of Ebenezer Majombozi High.

Vatiswa, the deputy principal, in response to a question on how she, the principal and the HOD's work together mentioned that “...we don't work as a team with the HOD's as well...we just sit in meetings and just keep quiet” . The kind of leadership that develops teams is remote at this school due mainly to endemic conflict. Mr Ntlabati and all stakeholders will have to find, and soon, means to deal with and eradicate conflictual situations at the school.

My perception of Mr Ntlabati is that he comes across as a likeable, determined, committed and disciplined man who cares deeply about the school but seems powerless to effect the change needed to place Ebenezer Majombozi High on a course for success. Strong and continuous support by all the schools stakeholders is not evident at the school and this has had a debilitating effect on his being able to lead the school effectively. My final question to the principal as well as his response was the following:

Do you feel that there is a commitment by everybody to make this school a better place?
Well, I don't know, I don't know.

The response by the leader of the school indicated resignation to defeat. He has most certainly tried to be part of the process to address the school's ills but the magnitude of the problems has simply become overpowering. He is, however the pivotal individual around which the school has to be restructured. High school principals in the United States of America released a report called *Breaking ranks: Changing an American Institution* during 1997, which singled out principals as having to maintain a vision for High Schools, build capacity within others, refine their skills to lead and manage change, create risk-taking climates within their schools and share their leadership skills with those they serve (Cited by Holland 1997). It is a responsibility that Mr Ntlabati will have to internalise and vigorously implement at Ebenezer Majombozi High.

5.6 The school and community

Vitually all those interviewed reflected on the lack of community involvement in the school. Vatiswa acknowledged that the community only responds to crises at the school. She mentioned as an answer to a question on the community reaction to teachers generally not teaching, that "It is quiet now ... nobody is saying anything ...it is just quiet...I don't know ... everybody's quiet now..." It is glaringly obvious that very little or no relationships have been inculcated between prominent members of the surrounding community and role players at the school.

The South African Schools Act sees schools as becoming autonomous institutions and that decisions of importance for the school have to be taken in tandem with members of the local

community. Ownership of the school by the community is the desired ideal. Is the community of Ebenezer Majombozi High capable of owning it ? At this point in the schools' history, I do not think so. A sense of community where the school can develop into a place of trust, mutual obligation, togetherness, duty, pride, respect, a sense of belonging, teamwork and strong leadership skills will most certainly not occur overnight. It is a process and in this school will be an arduous task to eventually attain. A positive school environment will reflect a sense of community but all the interviews iterated a negative environment at the school. None of the respondents feel that they are part of something worthwhile and are disillusioned. The school is being literally torn apart and the links of yesteryear to a vibrant and helpful community are something of the past.

5.7 South African Schools Act revisited

Ideals laid down in the South African Schools Act (1996) have not really taken root at the school I studied. I have already alluded to some of the problems the SGB has had to deal with at the school and as a result of the many crises, guidelines depicted in the Act could not be genuinely carried out.

School governing bodies have parent representatives as the majority, which I foresee as problematic. Teachers and pupils, who deal with teaching and learning on a daily level will feel undermined if their proposals or recommendations are not met. Another point of concern is whether all representatives on SGBs have sufficient capacity to carry out their responsibilities efficiently. The "cart before horse" syndrome will bedevil the majority of SGBs in future. My

understanding is that the need to empower and build capacity within SGB's was needed before the education officials legislated the new policies.

Firstly, the SGB seems to be a toothless committee of the school. According to the South African Schools Act, a school's governing body should be the most powerful appendage of the institution. The SGB of Ebenezer Majombozi High seems to have very little or no power at all. Neither pupils nor teachers acknowledge the influence and leadership of the school's SGB. As previously mentioned, the letter by the SGB to the Eastern Cape Education Department regarding the dismissal of a group of teachers from the school did not bear much fruit. If decisions by a school's SGB can not be heeded, accepted and carried out by its immediate superior body, the principles or guidelines laid down in the South African Schools Act will just remain theory.

The Schools Act (1996b) also embellishes on the need for parents to become more involved in the schooling of their children. A range of studies has concluded that parental involvement generally benefits the learning of children and the success of schools (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler 1997). A lack of parental involvement at Ebenezer Majombozi High has seriously undermined the positive decision-making capacity for the school. Competent, committed, knowledgeable and forthright parents are not coming to the fore at the school. As a result, there is a paucity of effective parental leadership and influence at the school. Teachers do not heed the decisions made by the majority parental core within the SGB. This kind of disrespect is a recipe for conflict and discord. Parents at Ebenezer Majombozi High have generally abdicated their responsibility towards their children as well as the school. In his book *Educational Leadership*

for School - An African Perspective, R.G.P. Ngcongco (1995) listed reasons as to why parents find it difficult to play leading roles in schools, difficulties in attending meetings or visiting schools due to lack of transport, many parents being illiterate and not being able to appreciate the experiential problems of their childrens' education, a lack of a democratic culture, and tolerance for different views at the schools and the poverty of the community making financial support for schools improbable. These kinds of parental problem also exists at Ebenezer Majombozi High.

Practical implementation of the Governmental policy in the South African Schools Act (1996) is a fairly slow process at Ebenezer Majombozi High. Support from all quarters of the Ebenezer community is a necessity. This study has also earlier reflected on certain policy initiatives within the South African School's Act being problematic. One realises that only through trial, error and new decision-making practices will schools make the Act workable. Ebenezer Majombozi High is also still in the process of trying to make the theory in the Act more practical and effective for its educational needs.

5.8 Comparison with similar institutions

An unpublished study by Smythe and Gordon carried out in October/November 1996 - interviewing members of SGB's in five Eastern Cape Schools - revealed that democratisation where parents, teachers and learners have equal power in decision-making takes a long time before being realized and should be a process rather than an event (1996). Problems initiating democratic decision-making practices within these schools all stem from distinctive unequal

power relations between the stakeholders. This phenomenon is part and parcel of Ebenezer Majombozi High. I have already mentioned that disrespect exists among the various stakeholders at the school. A small group of teachers is the most powerful decision-making entity at the school.

Another correlation between these schools and Ebenezer Majombozi High is the notion of levels of representivity by the different stakeholders in the SGB. Major parental numbers in the SGB's creates discriminatory and prejudicial decision-making in the meetings ensuring that "...participation in meetings is not always full and free" (ibid:4). Many of the "voices" of the SGB are thus not being heard and taken cognisance of.

The study also laid claim to lack of discipline among pupils and teachers being a root cause of school mediocrity. My respondents echoed the same sentiments. This lack of discipline leads to the disintegration of positive learning and teaching and has the knock-on effect of stifling effective decision-making practices. One particular school Giyana High School (King Williams Town), have decisions which are categorised or classified, "...we have professional decisions and then we have managerial decisions..." (ibid:12). Collective decisions are realized by consultation and through collaborative decision-making by all the relevant role players. The study processes caused conflict and in some cases disbanding of the SGB's. Could the disbanding of the SGB solve the manifold problems of the Ebenezer Majombozi High ?

Some schools, however, like Mbilwi Secondary School in the Northern Province (1998) are in stark contrast to the dismal picture I have sketched thus far. The headmaster glowingly

acknowledged that “ The only things we really have here is commitment and the fact that when we decide on things we make sure they are followed up. That’s discipline” (Phillipa Garson 13 September 1998). He further credits his teachers with doing a wonderful job by constantly competing against each other to perform more extra-ordinary academic feats. Pupils are thus provided with the desired atmosphere to really excel in their studies.

As a consequence of disempowering the different stakeholders at the majority of our schools, decision-making becomes fraught with problems. Many schools cannot effectively cope, e.g Majombozi High, with the complete management and governance tasks that beset these schools on a daily basis.

Finally, a lack of transparency and accountability also permeates these schools, as well as Ebenezer Majombozi High. Both transparency and accountability are practical properties/values of democratic institutions. Even though these schools aspire to be democratic, one realises that the schools are on a journey to true democracy where collective decisions are constantly reviewed and evaluated in an atmosphere of openness. I think that most individuals are grappling with the need to be more transparent and more accountable or answerable to each other.

5.9 A Brief Summary

I have tried, as holistically as possible, to make transparent the complex world that is Ebenezer Majombozi High. This chapter looked at social, economic and historical factors impacting on the current school ethos.

Decision-making at the school happens on many fronts currently - in the SGB, SRC, parent and teacher corp - but the implementation of effective decisions is being hampered by the lack of teaching and learning. The onset of democratic thought and practice through policy documents such as the South African Schools' Act, even though these participatory practices have been part of the school's milieu for many decades, has brought even more problems as individuals have been given license to renege against decisions by the collective school body.

Participation by all stakeholders is the key to steering the school into a different and more successful millennial course. The leader at the school cares deeply about the kind of education being conveyed at the school but his decisions are being scuppered by teacher groups that have formed even before his tenure. Certain cliques at the school have bedevilled the smooth running of the school.

Community involvement at the school only happens during crises. It is imperative that the SGB begins to own the school and its decisions bear the fruit that will make Ebenezer Majombozi High a force in the 21st century. The concluding chapter will look at my recommendations that will help to transform the institution progressively in the years to come.

CHAPTER 6

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Research findings

Decision-making at Ebenezer Majombozi High is predominantly democratic in nature. Most of the decisions, however are not successfully carried out. As a result of the non-implementation of important decisions, levels of respect for the SGB and school management by most stakeholders have deteriorated. This has had a knock-on effect of creating an extremely dysfunctional school.

Chapter Five looked at the historical, social and economic factors that have impacted on the school. The school was once a proud and successful educational institution (see 5.2) but the period 1990-1998 saw the appointment and demise of four principals. Changing leadership of the school so suddenly broke continuity and brought in different styles of leadership and management. This kind of situation can only realise insecurities and create problems for future decision-making. Powerful and influential teacher groups (see 2.1.8) at the school led to the resignation of many leaders at the school and hopefully this will not be the case with the present incumbent.

Some of the social and economic factors, already alluded to in 5.1 (page 59) of this study, have had an adverse effect on the overall functioning of the school. The improverished community that surrounds Ebenezer Majombozi High impacts negatively on the school in a variety of ways namely:

- * parents not being able to finance their siblings more extensively,
- * general illiteracy of the majority of parents which leads to inadequately skilled persons becoming part of the SGB,
- * a pervasive drug usage by many pupils in the school exacerbating an already poor work ethic problem,
- * many pupils becoming part of communal gangs that wreak havoc with their peers at the school,
- * a major number of pupils coming from single parent homes has led to them not accepting authority and discipline too easily, and
- * an environment, whose marked deprived state mirrors that of the school.

An extreme lack of co-operation and inter-dependancy among the different roleplayers ensures that good decisions are not implemented timeously. Even though meetings of the entire school community have been held to deal with crises at the school, some of the teaching corps have reneged against those decisions that were reached via concensus. Lack of civil communication among all the roleplayers creates disrespect and this leads to heightened levels of dissent and conflict. There is little or no accountability that members of Ebenezer Majombozi High have for each other and this results in strong groups actually doing as they please. (see pages 66/67).

6.2 My recommendations

I find it difficult to be prescriptive as I am an educational practitioner in a school just eighty metres from Ebenezer Majombozi High. Most studies warn against the researcher losing a sense of objectivity in reporting on the ethos of institutions under study. I have already mentioned, even during the interviews, that the people within Ebenezer High school have to find the necessary corrective decisions and measures to right the epidemic wrongs that are crippling the once proud and successful educational institution.

My recommendations for this case are:

1. Decisions that are collectively decided upon need to be followed through. An evaluative appraisal system needs to be put in place at the school to test whether decisions are practically being acted upon.
2. Forms of accountability, sadly lacking at the school, have to be implemented at the school as a matter of urgency. Questions such as who is accountable to whom, have to be addressed by all role players and final decisions have to be abided to by all stakeholders.
3. Levels of respect and discipline have to be rekindled at the school. The principal/leader of the school, whose leadership has been disregarded in many instances, has the characteristics - even though his peers at the school may disagree - to steer the ship and devolving responsibility to teachers and pupils through consultative decision-making on a whole range of issues i.e. learner participation in disciplinary procedures, teacher involvement in subject improvement and continual discussion on new methods to improve their teaching practice as well as stimulation of learners to achieve increasing academic success, allowing parents through capacity-building programmes - the responsibility of the DoE - involve themselves more completely in decision-making and helping to create the atmosphere necessary for good school governance and management etc. Mr Ntlabati, through giving responsibility to different stakeholders on many different tasks, will hopefully win the respect of the school community and help generate effective learning and teaching at the school. He also has to be transparent by providing information to all the role-players on both daily administrative duties as well as decisions on governance issues such as teacher appointments, staff promotions, budgetary/financial

provisions, pupil misconduct, teacher misconduct, policy proposals both provincially and nationally etc. Communication channels have to be open at all times between teachers/pupils/parents and Mr Ntlabati so as to engender trust, honesty and feelings that everyone is part of the process to make Ebenezer Majombozi High a better school.

4. Even though one of my respondents felt that meetings at the school was there to destabilise the school, it is vitally important, especially in times of uncertainty and transition, that all roleplayers meet more regularly to determine the road forward for the school. Everyone has to come to the realisation that the school only seems to decide together when it is faced by crises which generally pertains to teachers not teaching. A culture of tolerance can only prevail in an atmosphere where there is trust and a knowledge that my point of view is going to be accepted. In meetings where stakeholders are present, can decisions be ratified or mandated and prioritised so as to be effected over consensual time frames.
5. Pupil respondents from interviews were not really part of decision-making processes at the school. They flexed their powers, both in 1998 and 1999, by locking out teachers and management due to the erosion of the learning and teaching culture. Leadership skills partially generated through the SRC, has to be nurtured through the SGB. It is a completely new and exciting way of practically implementing forms of democratic thought and action. It is important that the more mature representatives of the SGB allow more pupil input, not happening to a great extent at the school, on aspects that affect them personally.
6. Parents, due to a whole range of factors such as illiteracy, poverty, unemployment and feelings of inadequacy; have not played influential roles at the school. They seem to be

passive recipients of decisions - mainly made by teachers. They do not seem to have a "voice". Teacher group dominance has slowly obliterated the role of the majority parental grouping in the SGB and left them demoralised to the point of wanting twelve teachers axed from the school. A study by Bui Gia Thinh (1991) a director of Educational Science in Vietnam espoused that parents can contribute to a schools and families, help to improve the quality of learning, improve teachers' material and spiritual lives, preserve and promote the traditional respect for teachers and provide physical facilities for teaching and learning. Our South African Schools Act (1996) has placed parental involvement in schools at the top of the totem pole by granting them the majority representation on SGB's at schools. Parental influence has to become increasingly evident at Ebenezer Majombozi High School.

7. Most of the teachers at Ebenezer Majombozi High are not committed to their professions. Any decisions that can bring success to the school are thus undermined by a group of teachers which have become salaried workers. Thabo Mbeki (1998), our current President, at the 4th National SADTU conference called them "teachers who live by the rules of criminals" (Sunday Times: 13 September 1998:25). He further lambasted teachers who generally are unprofessional, come late to school, are drunk during school hours, leave school early, disrupt the school programmes and are allowing the prestige of the teaching profession to disappear (Sunday Times 1998). Some of his feelings are evident at the school I studied and need to be addressed before the school sinks further into the mire. A code of conduct for teachers needs to be drawn up and decided upon by all teachers and management of the school. This code should be mindful of the policy in the Employment of Educators Act No. 76 of 1998 regarding incapable educators and

those who blatantly disregard decisions laid down by the SGB and school management, The Act further allows for the establishment of the South African Council for Educators (SACE) which will have powers to look into a code of professional ethics for educators. It is hoped that this body, to be established in 1999, will bring the clout to hire or fire educators.

8. Finally, partnerships between the different constituencies at the school have to be forged, This will create forms of participation both vertically, from pupil to management and vice-versa as well as horizontally through the SRC or sporting codes or class groups and teachers groups via their subjects or those teaching in a particular standard. These kinds of partnerships do not occur at the school currently. By working together throughout the school community and sharing ideas with each other will consensus be reached and decisions arrived at democratically be followed through.

6.3 Respondents' Impressions

The respondents' from the interviews all echoed similar feelings regarding the way forward for the school. I have already penned some of those ideas in the previous Chapter.

One of the solutions proposed by all the respondents as well as the SGB was to remove a group of teachers from the school. This will be extremely difficult when looking at labour legislation in our country at present. Policy demands that the school engage on a long process before one can decide on the firing of educators. I find it extremely disconcerting that the crises at the school was allowed to escalate to such an extent. A means must be found, through decisions reached by

the entire school community, to reverse the trends of the not-so-distant past and generate trust, respect, honesty and love through deciding and working together to solve the seemingly insurmountable problems facing the school. I am not part of the school on a daily basis and cannot support the merits of axing a few colleagues. But decisions reached by the majority in any institution needs to be abided by. I do not know if this kind of action will eradicate the root causes of the problems at the school.

Individuals within organisations or institutions usually form part of groups which can influence decision-making positively or negatively. The respondents also lamented on dominating teachers and pupils groupings at the school. These groups have a negative impact on democratic decision-making at the school. These groups having strong leadership tendencies, have to be made aware of the folly of their actions. The school community has to find ways of harnessing the negative energies of these groups and re-direct their focus onto making the school a successful one.

6.4 Strengths and weaknesses of study

A very distinct strength of this study is that, even though national policies are being enacted to be implemented by public schools, little or no research is being carried out to see how practical these policies really are. This study of how a local school grapples with certain specific issues within our South African Schools Act (1996) is very revealing and indicates whether the policy is being practised successfully in a local school.

Another strength is that this study is of a school in an urban township and gives a “voice” to those who are marginalised and are located in a school that is within an impoverished environment. By also looking at how democratic decision-making is actually taking place within the school under study, one can extract the positive aspects and apply them to institutions dealing with similar problems.

Many schools are making decisions daily that eventually impact on them being successful or not. This study tried to uncover how individuals within a specific educational institution make decisions and give practical intent to carrying out of those decisions.

One of the shortcomings of my research is that the data gathered from my respondents took a long time to be analysed by me. As a result of the time delay, I could not relay my perceptions and recommendations back to the respondents to help them seek solutions to their problems. I feel that this is the main reason why case study research is done. The research has to bring meaning (see page 45-47) to the experiences of my respondents and hopefully solve some of their problems. One of my respondents (Thembisa) actually perceived me, through the interviews, to bring solutions to their problems once analysing their responses. I felt it necessary to timeously provide them with my analysis, but even after two years, this has not been realized. It is a major flaw of this study.

A second weakness is that different representations by the respondents could have been false in certain instances. I was not part of the decision-making processes at the school for a long period and only reflected on specific and instantaneous interviews.

Few or no similar case-studies have currently been completed in the country and this made it more difficult to make comparisons or generalisations with other schools both provincially and nationally.

More time had to be spent by me at the school before carrying out this study so as to be more objective in the choice of my respondents. The reason for this impression is that I might not have spoken to the even more influential persons at the school. I would have loved to interview this who really made Ebenezer Majombozi “tick”, whether in a positive or negative way.

6.5 Future research possibilities

Some further future research trends stemming from this case-study are:

- * the roles that parents play in governance of the majority of our schools,
- * whether teachers play really influential roles in the governance of management of schools,
- * a look at leaders/managers at our schools and how they have to change their styles of leadership in overall school governance to meet new and challenging demands,
- * is democratic school governance the one type of governance that will bring the desired educational success in most of our schools,
- * whether our pupils today have the ability to play, and are playing, crucial decision-making roles in management and governance within school,
- * do national school policies impact negatively or positively on schools and how can local stakeholders help to change the undesired policies so as to realise a policy that is universal and generally acceptable,
- * exploration of the links between national departments, provincial departments and local schools to determine whether the democratic ideal is really taking root, and
- * a look, by using interviews and/or questionnaires, at many schools in our region to really determine how these schools can be radically transformed to meet the needs of the new millennium.

It is obvious that some of the research trends mentioned previously are just a tip of the ice-berg. Intense debate and wide-ranging research needs to be practically implemented before our schools can hope to become successful and dynamic organisations.

CHAPTER 7

RECENT DEVELOPMENT AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Recent Developments

One of the most glaring shortcomings of this study has been the period I have taken to complete my analyses of decision-making within the Ebenezer Majombozi High. A report of my study should have been available to the main roleplayers at the beginning of 1999.

What has transpired at the school during 1999 however was relayed to me by Mr Ntlabati (principal) during the June holidays. The school is currently faced with the following:

1. redeployment of seven teachers, a national educational rationalisation initiative to place teachers in schools where there are exorbitant pupil numbers with too few teachers, to other schools in the Eastern Cape Province by the end of the third school term in September,
2. a learning and teaching crisis that has carried on unabated since my interviews in April 1998,
3. strong lobbying by the "problem" teachers to retain their "friends" on the staff at their school even though these teachers were democratically selected to be placed on the redeployment list,
4. decision-making by both management and SGB being marred and disregarded by the cronyists on the staff,
5. the report of the Eastern Cape Provincial/Task Team into irregularities at the school not being released and acted upon even though the process had to be completed during January/February 1999,
6. continual pupil "lock-outs" of teachers and school management throughout the year not having the desired educational results, and finally
7. lack of a work ethic that pervades the entire fabric of the school, with a few expectations, creating the perception that a lot of the good decisions will be undone by the bad human factor.

7.2 CONCLUSION

Ebenezer Majombozi High is a school with a rich reservoir of human and physical resources. Historically the school has drunk from the chalice of success and its political and social disadvantages have been overcome by the creative and innovative human persons that have imparted knowledge and those recipients which have brought the successful academic results to the school.

Today, we see a complete reversal of the trends that have characterised the school prior to 1980. Democracy, even though applied generally correctly in the decision-making structures of the school, have not been accompanied by a large slice of responsibility by many influential individuals at the school. This has led to a breakdown of the most important learning and culture ethic of the school. Corrective and urgent decisions, by the entire school community, has to be acted upon and through continuous transparency and accountability, the school will become more successful.

The SGB has to undertake capacity building workshops with outside help so as to acquire skills needed to deal with the complex problems at the school. Democratic decision making is a very long process but the individuals that matter will have to grapple, even though painful at times, with its tenets and principles to place Ebenezer Majombozi High at its rightful lofty place both locally, provincially and nationally into the new millennium.

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