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M. Ed

**RESEARCH REPORT
ON**

A STUDY OF THE PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOL GOVERNING
BODIES OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE DISADVANTAGED
COMMUNITIES OF GEORGE.

Submitted In Partial Fulfillment Of The Master's Degree

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The complexities and difficulties of preparing and writing a report of this nature can be overwhelming at times. It can become insurmountable without the help, support and encouragement from good people. Therefore, I wish to thank my wife, Mufedah, and our children, Zaakirah and Maseeg, for their support and sacrifice. My family, especially my parents, Abduragiem and Moefiedah Cerfonteyn, deserve a warm expression of gratitude for the much needed inspiration that they continually offered.

May Allah bless you all.

ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF THE PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES (SGBs) OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES OF GEORGE.

After the first democratic elections in 1994, the Department of Education, through amendment of existing legislation and the adoption of new Acts, developed a new legal framework for the administration of education in the country. The effect of the change in education was not limited to the areas of the curriculum and staffing, but included a different approach to how schools will be governed and managed. In its efforts to democratise the country it was the intention of the government, through legislation, to devolve the powers of decision-making to the people.

This study explored the phenomena that impact on the effective functioning of SGBs. The central phenomena identified were narrowed down to the role of the various stakeholders, their understanding of the functions of an SGB and the factors that hamper effective functioning. Furthermore, an exploration was made into the involvement of members of the SGB in the daily activities of the school.

Research into the success of the second round of elections was conducted in 1999 by the Centre for Education Policy Development

(CEPD). The Ministerial Review Committee on School Governance undertook research into the effectiveness of SGBs and issued a report of the study undertaken in 2004. Both these efforts were initiatives by the state.

A phenomenological research approach was adopted for the purpose of the study. The rationale being that the researcher wanted to extract from the respondents their experiences as related during conversations. To lay the foundation for these interviews (conversations), a two-part questionnaire was developed. The first part of the questionnaire prompted the respondents to relate their experiences as members of the SGB. The second part elicited demographic and personal details from the respondents.

The results of the study would be advantageous to various role players striving to improve the effectiveness of SGBs. The role players include all those involved at school level, the officials from the Education Management and Development Centre (EMDC), members of community-based and non-governmental organizations. The report would serve as a guideline for those individuals who are charged with the training and empowerment of SGBs.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this mini dissertation is my own original work. All sources used and referred to have been documented and acknowledged.

This mini dissertation has not previously been submitted for an equivalent or higher qualification at any other educational institution.

M.G. CERFONTEYN

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ABBREVIATIONS

- CEPD** – Centre for Education Policy Development
(A government institution tasked with the research and development of educational policy)
- EPU** – Education Policy Unit
(A division of the University of Natal that has the function of formulating and interpreting educational policy)
- DoE** – Department of Education
(A ministry in the cabinet of the South African national government)
- EMDC** – Education Management and Development Centre
(The district office of the Provincial Department of Education)
- EMGD** – Education Management, Governance and Development Directorate
(A division operating as part of the office of the Minister of Education)

- PTSA** – Parent, Teacher and Student Association
(An association of parents, teachers and learners that perform various functions on behalf of the school)
- SGB** – School Governing Body
(An institution of the South African Schools Act (1996) that consists of various stakeholders in the governance of a public school)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

TO

**A STUDY OF THE PERFORMANCE OF SGBS OF PUBLIC
SCHOOLS IN THE DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES OF GEORGE.**

1. 1 BACKGROUND

Formal education was introduced in South Africa in 1652 with the establishment of missionary schools. A variety of models were introduced by the missionaries from the Netherlands and Great Britain. During the period 1652, with the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck and his entourage, and until 1947 education was provided in integrated settings where black people and white people were taught together. Control of the education system was completely in the hands of the providers of education at that stage.

When the Nationalist Party came into power in 1948, the education system introduced was characterised by racial and ethnic segregation and non-participatory, top-down, management. The mission of the government at the time was to foster their ideals of apartheid, which resulted in the oppression of black people. This mission was supported and sustained by apartheid laws like the Group Areas Act and the Bantu Education Act. As a result the Education Ministry was set up strictly according to race and culture with seventeen separate departments, catering for the needs of the white-, coloured-, Indian - and African people. To entrench the policy of segregation the government established a number of "self-governed" homelands each with its own education department. The impression could have been created that through the tri-cameral parliament and homelands system of governance a policy of selfgovernance was maintained. However, this was definitely not the case as all major policy decisions were introduced by the all-white cabinet.

In the mid-seventies through to the mid-eighties South Africa experienced a phase of political struggle earmarked by the student

uprisings in 1976 and 1985. The situation prevailing created an opportunity for the formation of a democratic movement fighting for the liberation of the oppressed people of the country. The uprising became so intense, with battles being fought locally and internationally, that the apartheid regime had no alternative than to constructively engage the major role-players in the liberation movement to redesign the political dispensation for the country.

Since 1993, South Africa has a new democratic Constitution as the highest law in the country. The final Constitution (1996) sets out certain basic values, such as human dignity, equality, non-racialism and non-sexism, to underpin the principle of democracy. The Constitution, in effect, required the transformation of education in order to promote the core values of democracy. In 1996 the South African Schools Act, 1996, No. 84 was promulgated. The Schools Act is aimed at the creation and management of a school system ensuring basic human rights and broader participation.

The Schools Act requires that each public school should have a SGB that is representative of all the stakeholders. The Act stipulates meaningful powers and functions to SGBs. It also allows the Head of Education in each province to devolve further powers and functions to governing bodies as their expertise and experience develop.

This study is intended to determine to what extent the powers and functions alluded to in the previous paragraph are successfully and effectively managed and performed. The researcher's experience in education management as a teacher, principal and government official, suggests that there remains a number of inequities and inefficiencies leading to the underperformance of some SGBs.

The assessment explored the possibility that local site governance had not been adequately conceptualised prior to its introduction. Whilst the ideals remain noble, the study hypothesized that perhaps too much has been expected from the simple transfer of power to the local school communities. This study further aims to provide constructive recommendations to address these problems.

It appears to the researcher, based on the school governance disputes managed by the EMDC, as if former Model C schools, where local school governance has been the order of the day in the form of Parent Teacher Student Associations, have been more successful with the implementation of SGBs. These schools have managed to perform their functions with a greater measure of effectiveness. This could be ascribed to those involved being more adept to the phenomenon of local school governance. Although some schools that had resorted under the Department of Education and Culture of the House of Representatives and the Department of Education and Training in the previous political system presented a higher level of effectiveness with

reference to school governance. The researcher's experience indicates that the majority of those schools are finding the system difficult to maintain.

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The success of school governance is determined by the willingness of the principal, the staff and the school community to adapt to the change process. It is the researcher's understanding that an effective communication approach, using school newsletters, regular parent meetings and memoranda enhanced the standard of the work of the SGB. The attitude of the principal towards the ideals of democratic participation in school governance contributes to effective management and governance.

Mda and Mothata (2000) state, where inter-personal conflict, unwillingness to accept change and parent apathy existed, schools found it to be a strenuous process to involve all stakeholders in the governance of the school. Introducing the ideals of the Constitution in the running of the school implied that the attitudes with regard to race, culture and equality, of stakeholders had to change. It is not enough to suffer from active inertia and even more so for the principal of the school who is required to act as the change agent for the process of democratising school management and governance.

According to the South African Schools Act, 1996, the role of school management for which the principal is primarily responsible has changed from being directive and control-oriented to a role that ensures participation and creating an environment of empowerment. The role of the principal should include facilitating a high degree of involvement, the training and support of the School Management Team, staff, learners and members of the SGB as well as liaising between those stakeholders and the Department of Education.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

The study adapted an ethnographical research method that best lends itself to the purpose of this study. A phenomenological approach, whereby the conclusions will be deduced from the narratives of the experiences of members of the SGBs has been determined to be the best methodology for this study. Respondents selected from the sample frame will be required to relate their experiences to the functionality and effectiveness of the SGB. Two major themes, namely the features of a successful SGB and that of a poor performing one will be the main guidelines for these interpretations. The themes will be dissected into the factors that allow for effectiveness and the factors that hamper the effective functioning of SGBs. Issues such as the

roles of the various stakeholders, effectiveness of educational legislation with specific reference to the South African Schools Act, 1996, cultures, values and beliefs of the school community and the constitution of SGB will be explored.

The town of George seemed a suitable area in which to conduct the research in as it relatively small, whilst hosting a broad spectrum of the different racial and socio-economic groupings in the country. There exists the full spectrum of public and private schools, former Model C schools and public schools situated in close proximity to each other. The EMDC that serves as the district office of the Western Cape Education Department is centrally situated and easily accessible for all schools.

The selection of sample schools was determined by the perceived level of functionality of each school, based on the information available at the EMDC, the inputs from Circuit Managers, information provided by other education officials and the researcher's experience. The schools possess similar features and are located in communities bearing the same type of social, economic and racial characteristics. The infrastructure of the schools and the suburbs in which they are located are identical. The afore-mentioned implies very little distinction between the schools in terms of the external factors that could have a bearing on their performance.

1.4 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

A **governing body** is a group of people who govern the school. They are either elected or appointed. Members of governing bodies represent the school and its community (DoE, 1997: 11).

School governance refers to the institutional structure that is entrusted with the responsibility and authority to formulate and adopt school policy and a range of issues, for example: the mission and ethos of the school; school uniform and colours; budgetary and development priorities; code of conduct for students, broad goals on educational quality that the school strives to achieve; school-community relations; curriculum programme development (Educational Policy Unit – Natal, 1998: 106).

School Management is responsible for the management of the day-to-day administrative and instructional functions of the school by ensuring effective teaching and learning, and the efficient use of the school's human and material resources (Educational Policy Unit – Natal, 1998: 106).

Public Schools in South Africa are organs of state (DoE, 1999: 8) and are to a large extent funded by the government.

Inclusivity implies that everyone, irrespective of race, gender, academic standing and physical disability will be treated equally. Chapter two of the Constitution (1993), the Bill of Rights, prohibits any form of discrimination against anyone on the afore-mentioned ground and states that all citizens shall be treated equally.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

This study was initiated by the researcher to attain a higher degree of insight into the functioning of SGBs and the factors that enhance or hamper their effectiveness. The insight gained will place the researcher, as an official of the EMDC, in a position to play a more meaningful role in the training and support of SGBs. The investigation was sanctioned by the Western Cape Education Department with the proviso that they are able to obtain a copy of the report. A further condition is that the department could use the findings and recommendations to develop an improved strategy towards the training and support of SGBs.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Firstly, when the researcher was not required to act in his professional capacity he ensured that the participants in the study understood that he was acting independently as a researcher. This point was

emphasized during the initial meeting with the school principal as well as in the letters to the school and each respondent. The researcher adopted a passive role, only concentrating on his task as researcher, during the observation of the election meetings and the general meetings of the SGBs. For this reason the observation was conducted for a contracted period.

Secondly, most of the schools in the sample area are Afrikaans medium. To make provision for the language barrier, the questionnaire was translated for the respondents who preferred to answer the questions in their mother tongue. This would ensure that their responses are as accurate as possible.

Thirdly, however great the advantages of this form of data recording, it is a financially costly method to employ. Cost constraints prohibited the extended use of this form of data collection. Thus the researcher had to compare the value of audio-visual recording to the financial implications it would pose for the research project. It was therefore decided to limit the use of this facility to only one meeting.

1.7 SYNOPSIS OF THE REPORT

Chapter One introduces the report to the reader, providing a background to the study and imaging the setting against which the

change process was introduced. It details a brief history of education in the country and refers specifically to the change in policy from centralized to decentralized education management and school governance specifically. It stipulates the intent of the researcher and the benefits of the study to the Education Department and the local school community.

Chapter Two provides a detailed review of the literature sourced to guide the study. The literature used covers a wide spectrum of information ranging from the research methodology to the views and insights of various authors on the topic of school management and governance. The literature used provided a review of the historical background to the phenomenon of local school governance, under the spotlight in this study.

Chapter Three covers the research design, explaining to the reader how the study will be conducted. Specific reference is made to the research methodology. The researcher elected a simplified phenomenological approach as it was regarded as the most suitable method to substantiate the research problem and sub-problems identified. In this chapter the researcher describes to the reader in detail the selection of the sample sites, data collection strategies, data analysis techniques and how the report will be drafted.

Chapter Four offers the reader insight into the strategies used to collect the data required for the study. The chapter starts with a description of the sample frame chosen by the researcher. The data collection instruments, consisting of questionnaires, interviews, audio and video recording, minutes of meetings and official documents are described in detail.

Chapter Five contains the analysis of the data. It sets out to introduce the research sites to the reader with a descriptive situational analysis of each site. The situational analysis describes the physical structure of the school, its infrastructure and its organizational structure. To assist the reader to conceptualize the four sample sites a comparison is drawn between them. In this chapter the researcher stipulates the findings of the investigation.

Chapter Six is used to bring together in a synoptic format the previous chapters. The recommendation for the improvement of the effectiveness of school governance is contained in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

OF

A STUDY OF THE PERFORMANCE OF SGBS OF PUBLIC
SCHOOLS IN THE DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES OF
GEORGE.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

It was inevitable that with the change in South Africa's political landscape, the educational philosophy would undergo a great deal of change. This is because education forms the cornerstone of the socio-economic development of any nation. At the base of the change process in education was the introduction of a culture of democracy, leading to greater participation of all stakeholders from the macro, meso and micro levels.

This literature study focuses on an aspect of the reform process in education, the introduction of SGBs as a vehicle to give effect to democratic participation in school governance. The functions of SGBs are prescribed by legislation.

2.2 THE NEED FOR REFORM

South Africa has a long history of unfair discrimination in education. In the past, there were different and unequal education systems based on ethnicity, race and colour (DoE, 1997: 6). Education Policy Units (EPUs) were established in the 1990s at Higher Education Institutions such as the Universities of the Western Cape, Durban Westville and Fort Hare for the purpose of rationalising and maximising the development of alternative education policies. The establishment of the Centre for Education Policy Development

(CEPD) in 1992 as the focus for educational policy research and development for the ANC also marked another milestone in the development of progressive educational policy work in our country (EPU - Natal, 1998: xix).

The advent of the new political dispensation in South Africa heralded a change in the political, economic, social and education spheres. The underlying principle for this change process was the democratisation of all levels of society, also extending to the micro level of school governance (CEPD, 2001: 1). Educational institutions, like all other human organizations, function in and are shaped by a web of external and internal expectations (Razik & Swanson, 1995: 1). Leaders and those intellectuals spearheading the change process had to be guided within the context of this complexity in their efforts to determine an educational policy that would provide for the needs and expectations of all the people of the country as well as the educational philosophy of the new government.

Razik & Swanson (1995) state that leaders must also act strategically to bring that vision to fruition, shaping new schools and institutions from an amalgam of the useful old and the desirable new. This conceptualisation guided the formulation of the legal framework within which education in the democratic era would be administered.

Petrozzo and Stepper (1994: 4) describe re-engineering as being the concurrent redesign of processes, organizations, and their supporting information systems to achieve radical improvement in time, cost, quality and customers regard for the company's products and services. The definition stresses two points that are critical to successful implementation, namely the interplay between processes and structures that support them and the need to redesign all aspects of the business concurrently.

Since the inception of SGBs researchers have been involved in studies assessing the success of these institutions in schools. Research into the success of the policy of democratic school governance as well as the successful implementation of this policy was commissioned by the government and undertaken by students in their private capacity for academic purposes. In 1999 the CEPD, embarked on an investigation into the second round of SGB Elections. In 2004 the Ministerial Review Committee on School Governance issued a report of a study undertaken to measure the success of SGBs. Both these efforts were funded by the state. Many individuals have of their own accord, mainly for study purposes, embarked on a research study of the phenomenon of school governance.

2.3 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATIONAL REFORM

In April 1994, South Africa became a democratic country with a new Constitution. The Constitution added a new dimension to the politics of South Africa, given the history of apartheid where governance was not part of society (CEPD, 2001: 1). It provides the broadest framework within which all laws and policies operate. Legislation, such as the National Education Policy Act, states that the State must do everything in its power to transform education, or change it for the better. These changes in education must be in accordance with the values and principles of our Constitution. Part of transforming the education system is making it democratic (DoE, 1997: 5/6). The democratisation of education includes the idea that stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, learners and members of the community should be able to participate in the activities of schools (DoE, 1997: 5/6). National Education Policy Act (1996) stipulates that community participation in the development of an education policy should be realised as one of the guiding principles in education and that all interested parties must be involved in all aspects of the education system (Van Der Westhuizen, 1994: 167).

The South African Schools Act, 1996, sets out the legal framework for schools. An important aspect of this Act is the principle that there must be a partnership between all stakeholders who have an

interest in education. The Schools Act provides for each public school to have a governing body that is representative of all the stakeholders (DoE, 1997: 7/8). The Minister of Education therefore formulates policies and laws for implementation at national, provincial and local level.

2.4 DECENTRALIZATION OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Cistone as cited in Dimmock & O' Donoghue (1997) stated that educational restructuring is taking place in much of the world, with a deregulated, decentralized system replacing central planning, control and supervision. There are various reasons why restructuring in education has been introduced. Lawton (1992) as cited in Dimmock & O' Donoghue (1997) found that in the United Kingdom, for example, while administrative changes reflect the deregulatory, market-oriented solutions economists might dictate, concurrently a core National Curriculum has been introduced. Australia has been no exception to the general international trend towards restructuring in education. Dimmock and O' Donoghue (1997) highlighted that two related policy initiatives were shaping change in Australian schools. The first policy initiative involves a shift from centralized to decentralized, school-based governance. The second policy initiative concerns school restructuring in order to reform the technical core activities of teaching and learning (Dimmock & O' Donoghue, 1997: 1). Thus, the developments in

South Africa since 1996 seem to be in line with the international trend.

In South Africa the restructuring of education is aimed at achieving the goals of the political ideology of the new government. The reason for this restructuring is to introduce a system that has as its starting point a set of core values and principles which promote democracy, a people-centred and people-driven approach to development, sustainability, accountability, stakeholder participation in decision-making, nation-building, equity, efficiency and effectiveness (EPU (Natal), 1998: 116).

Decentralization is not primarily an issue of control by government of individual citizens. Instead it is a question of the distribution of power among various groups in society (Razik & Swanson, 1995: 453). As a result of the devolution of power to the local community, educational regions and schools will have to bear some responsibility for their own performance and integrative actions. The responsibility, authority and power to formulate policy and to secure its implementation are passing increasingly into the hands of local school managers and communities (Dekker & Lemmer, 1993: 367). This necessitated the establishment of a body at local school level to perform those functions emanating from this development.

2.5 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SGBs

The previous system, where great power was located primarily at one particular level and within the hands of a few people, no longer exists (EPU – Natal, 1998: 116). The South African Schools Act, 1996, promotes democratic practices in school education. It foresees that each public school should have a governing body that is representative of all the primary stakeholders (DoE, 1997: 7). The inclusion of the various stakeholders stems from the premise that they all have a significant role to play in the governance of public schools.

2.6 THE FUNCTIONS OF SGBs

The South African Schools Act, 1996, gives meaningful functions to governing bodies (DoE, 1997: 7). According to Section 20 of the Act, SGBs are able to determine the schools admission policy as well as its curriculum and language policy. Furthermore, it is in a position to draw up a code of conduct for learners and to discipline learners accordingly, even to the extent of suspension from school activities. They are tasked with the responsibility of controlling the school's finances, nominating applicants to fill staff vacancies and to determine school fees payable by the learners.

It is very difficult to separate the tasks of the governing body from those of the school staff. The partnership between the school and

the governing body is very important. For example, the principal and staff are responsible for creative and effective teaching and discipline. However, the governing body also has a role to play in serious disciplinary matters, including suspension or expulsion of learners, and it is their responsibility to develop a code of conduct and disciplinary policy for the school (Morrison, 1998: 6).

The Governing Body is involved in school policy-making, school development, school administration and school finance. These are the basic functions, according to the South African Schools Act, 1996, allocated to all public schools. However, it is the vision of the national Department of Education that all public schools should in future become self-managed schools. This vision is enshrined in Section 21 of the South African Schools Act, 1996. Governing Bodies may apply to the Head of Department of Education in a particular province to be allocated the additional functions as stipulated in Section 21. A governing body may then be responsible for the maintenance and improvement of the school's property, determination of the extra-mural curriculum, purchasing textbooks and other education material and equipment, paying for services rendered to the school and other functions consistent with the Act.

Although democratic school governance structures can contribute a great deal to restoring the physical infrastructure of schools and

creating a culture of learning, their mere establishment is not enough to ensure their success. There are a number of pitfalls that could lead to their failure to function properly (EPU – Natal, 1998: 134).

2.7 THE ROLE OF THE VARIOUS CONSTITUENCES IN THE SGB

The SGB consists of ex-officio, elected and co-opted members.

The ex-officio member is the principal, who by virtue of his position as the head of the school, is an automatic inclusion in the SGB.

The South African Schools Act, 1996, designated certain groups from which representatives may be elected to serve. Co-opted community members are non-voting members and have been selected because they possess certain skills and knowledge that can add value to the vision of the SGB. Thus, it is imperative that they clearly understand the contribution they are expected to make to the effective functioning of the governing body and the school.

The parent community's relationship with the school does not primarily spring from financial considerations. According to Barnard (1984) as cited in Van der Westhuizen (1994), parents are concerned with the school because their children are helped to develop more fully and more quickly than at home, while in turn, the

school is dependent on the protection and support of parents.

Johns et al. (1972) as cited in Van der Westhuizen (1994), state that the financial support of parents provides them with more say in education than would otherwise be the case.

The principal is an “ex-officio” member and is regarded as a representative of the education department on the SGB. Other than being at the helm of school management and keeping the SGB members informed in this regard, the principal should also ensure that all members remain informed with regard to educational policy and departmental communication. He therefore serves as a liaison between the school and the education department.

Teachers and learners, by virtue of their delegation as representatives of their respective bases, have the responsibility to ensure that their respective constituents have a voice in the SGB by presenting the views of their constituent members. They further have the role of reporting important decisions taken in governing body meetings back to their members.

2.8 THE PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY SGBs

The CEPD was requested by the Education Management Governance and Development Directorate (EMGD) to support the

national and provincial Departments of Education to plan, organize, monitor and evaluate the elections of SGBs in 2000 (CEPD, 2001: ix).

The CEPD reviewed the provincial regulations which, barring some contradictions, were found to be largely in line with the provisions of the South African Schools Act, 1996. The report further deals with factors which were found to have an influence on the elections, viz. the apathy factor, procedural matters, the measure of understanding of the provisions of the Act and provincial regulations, the role and representation of the various designated role-players and training of elected SGBs (CEPD, 2001: ix).

Research conducted into the operation of governing bodies showed, however, that the reality – what was happening on the ground – was not necessarily the same as envisaged by the legislation (Lumby & Foskett, 1999: 101). Another disturbing factor is that most existing Parent Teacher Student Associations are beset by a number of serious inconsistencies, especially in terms of how they perceive and execute their roles, functions and powers. The problems experienced by the Parent Teacher Student Associations (PTSA's) are of two basic types: those of an internal, organizational nature and those arising from the context in which PTSA's operate (EPU – Natal, 1998: 42).

The value and the need for training of SGB members cannot be over emphasized. There are several ways in which governing body members can be trained to do their job effectively. In the Western Cape, the local EMDC, have been running workshops for governing body members for several years, some lasting a half or a whole day, others spread over a weekend, or comprising a series of sessions spread over a longer period. Courses are sometimes offered for governing body members over a whole region, or mounted specifically for one or two governing bodies (Wragg & Partington, 1995: 72).

2.9 ENSURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SGBs

EPU – Natal (1998) states that the responsibility for the implementation and success of the government's policy of democratic governing bodies and the need to develop their capacity to govern rests squarely on the shoulders of the education departments. To this end, the departments will need to establish a division for school governance, staffed with governance support officers. However, there are various other organizations and bodies, like non-governmental organization, churches, sports clubs and others, in the local community who will stand to benefit directly or indirectly from the success of a school. It is thus imperative that

these groups make a meaningful contribution to the success of SGBs.

Some educational institutions, particularly independent schools and those of the former House of Assembly, have experience of local school governance. This has enabled them to develop expertise in the functions of administration, maintenance and financial management. Such schools are far removed from previously disadvantaged schools where these functions and processes still have to be put in place. EPU – Natal (1998) states that capacity-building programmes should be structured and coordinated in such a way that such schools are able to share their expertise and assist neighbouring schools. It further explains that democratic school governance emphasizes that decisions must be made on the basis of consultation, collaboration, cooperation, partnership, mutual trust and participation of all affected parties in the school community. Since the essence of democracy is the principle of equality, parties that constitute democratic school governance have equal status and participate on an equal footing, having the same right to deliberate on any policy issue affecting the school (EPU – Natal, 1998: 107). The researcher is of the opinion that this is however not the case where SGBs include co-opted members who are not eligible to vote.

An important and valuable function for SGB members to fulfill is their collective role. If a governing body is to be effective then a group of individuals, some of whom may never have met before, must become a team and set out to work for the good of the school and its community. This implies keeping up to date about what is going on in education generally and in the school in particular, and pooling the talents and knowledge of politicians, parents, teachers and others in the locality to facilitate the successful running of the school (Wragg & Partington, 1995: 64).

Education has become complicated as a result of the highly differentiated needs of modern clients. These needs arise from the many different kinds of training required in the changing world. The complexity of education makes educational management an indispensable function and naturally imposes special demands on it because the more complex the organization the more complex and difficult its management will become (Dekker & Lemmer, 1993:366).

The South African Schools Act, 1996, ensures that all stakeholders are duly represented on the governing body of a school. Members of governing bodies can only serve if they have been elected as a representative by the constituency or co-opted as a member due to them being knowledgeable in a particular field or their affiliation to a particular organization.

Obviously representatives will feel a degree of loyalty towards the group that made them a member of the governing body, be it the staff of the school, the parents or the local community. However, once elected onto a SGB, members are there in their own right and not a delegate. This means that they are free to act, think and vote as they see fit on any issue in the interest of the school, even if on occasion this may run counter to the interest of the group which put them there (Wragg & Partington, 1995: 47).

An important element of a strategic approach to school governance is to build partnerships with stakeholders. Governing body members and parents have an obvious stake in the school while the local community has varying interests vested in the school.

2.10 THE PRINCIPLE OF INCLUSIVITY

The Bill of Rights, Chapter 2 of the Constitution, accords certain basic rights to all citizens of the country. It further promotes values that are important to ensure a democratic nation. Two of the values propagated in the Bill of Rights and therefore also the South African Schools Act, 1996, are inclusivity and representivity.

Discrimination in various forms has been the basis of the previous political dispensation in South Africa. Citizens of the country were discriminated against on the basis of their race, gender, culture,

religion and physical ability. It is true that even in the field of education there were varying degrees of discrimination. Education always reflects the interests of those who are in control – those who decide what kind of knowledge is selected, how it is taught, by whom and to whom. Education is seen as a powerful weapon that has the potential to impact on its socio-economic and political context (EPU – Natal, 1998: 33).

The principle of representivity stems from the need to move away from the asymmetrical relations of power and domination that were prevalent in the management of schools before 1994.

Representivity and inclusivity are principles of fundamental value in reconciling the respective responsibilities of government and the community. They are the basis for reconstructing the system of public education in a way that creates a partnership between government and the community, between the community and the school, and between the school and its stakeholders (Mda & Mothata, 2000: 73).

SGBs should guard against any form of discrimination and should give careful consideration to the principle of inclusivity when policy is formulated, recruitment takes place, appointments are made and when decisions with regard to travelling, accommodation and improvements to physical structures at the school are made. SGB members acting on the notion that only females are able to teach in

the foundation phase or only women are able to play and coach netball could be acting illegally.

Increasing attention is being brought to bear nowadays on what the law calls “indirect discrimination”. This refers to discrimination that is quite unintentional and totally unforeseen. If a school were to advertise for a “Teacher of Science – applicants aged 30 or lower, able to sing bass in the staff choir, are preferred”, this would be said to exclude women and older teachers. It would point to gender and age discrimination, and there would be a great fuss about the former and only slightly less noise about the latter (Wragg & Partington, 1995: 53).

The literature read provides the researcher with an insight into the historical setting of the education sphere in South Africa prior and post the democratic elections of 1994. Further insight is gained into how School Management Teams, PTSA’s and SGBS of good performing schools are functioning, the problems encountered in terms of school management and governance as well as the legal framework within which SGBs are operating.

The literature reviewed assisted the researcher to determine the essential data that should be collected to provide meaningful responses to the main research problem. The researcher was able to exploit the knowledge gained from the literature review to set

appropriate questions in the questionnaire and during the interviews.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

FOR

A STUDY OF THE PERFORMANCE OF SGBS OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES OF GEORGE.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The philosophy of the new government is that the principle of democracy should be a central focal point in governance on all levels. This ideology and that of inclusivity and representivity as stipulated in the Bill of Rights contained in the Constitution of the country extends to the field of education. Representivity and inclusivity are principles of fundamental value to reconciling the respective responsibilities of government and the community. They are the bases for reconstructing the system of public education in a way that creates a partnership between government and the community, between the community and the school, and between the school and its stakeholders (Mda & Mothata, 2000: 73). To what extent the various stakeholders have effectively participated in the governance of the public school has been explored by this research study. A further aim of the study was to determine whether the change in the governance of public schools, envisaged by the South African Schools Act, 1996, brought about the intended outcomes of democratic involvement of all stakeholders and higher levels of efficiency and self-management.

To best explore the experiences of those involved in on-site school governance, the researcher used a phenomenological research

approach. The educators, parents, learners, staff and community members were granted the opportunity to relate their experiences. A range of techniques was employed by the researcher to gather the evidence required to support the central problem of this study. In this chapter the demarcation of the sample frame as well as an explanation of the data collection techniques and the manner in which they were used are provided.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to identify precisely the conditions and factors that facilitate or inhibit the effective functioning of SGBs, this study followed a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological method starts with the theory that people normally make certain assumptions about their experiences (World Book, 2000). These assumptions were extracted from one-on-one interviews that were conducted with various role players responsible for the governance of public schools.

One of the most influential approaches in the human sciences over the last few years has been associated with phenomenology. The philosopher Edmund Husserl is usually associated with phenomenology. This is a philosophical position, which describes the phenomena of consciousness, that is the foundation of our commonsense taken-for-granted assumptions about the social world. In order to achieve this, Husserl, in his famous phrase, argued that we

had to go “back to the things” themselves. The way to achieve this for Husserl was to adapt the method of “epoche” or bracketing the phenomena, that is to free ourselves from all presuppositions about the phenomena in order to see what they are made up of (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995: 176). In its broadest meaning, phenomenology is a theoretical point of view that advocates the study of direct experience taken at face value and which sees behaviour as determined by the phenomenon of experience rather than by an external, objective and physically described reality (Cohen & Manion, 1997: 29).

Individuals can best make sense of their experiences by relating it to others in a conversation. Talking about events that occurred at a stage after the occurrences helps individuals to better understand their experiences. The researcher created a situation where those involved in school governance could talk about their experiences. Events, specifically related to the central phenomenon of this study, were used to explore the research question and related sub-questions identified by the researcher.

3.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

This study revolved around the main research question: ***How effective are the SGBs of a group of schools in the George area in terms of***

the South African Schools Act, 1996, No. 84? To elucidate this question the following sub-questions were addressed:

3.3.1 SUB-QUESTIONS

- a) What did the members of SGBs understand in terms of the role and function of school governance?
- b) To what extent were members of the SGB involved in the activities of the school?
- c) What did these SGBs understand in terms of their legal position with respect to the South African Schools Act, 1996?
- d) How could these schools improve the functioning of their SGBs?

The research methodology applied, sought to provide an insight into how the sub-questions would be answered. Questions posed as part of the questionnaires and the interviews were centred around these questions, which were set to extract information that would support the central phenomenon of the study.

3.4 ASSUMPTIONS

As a result of the researcher's personal experience as a departmental official responsible for empowering school management teams and governing bodies certain critical assumptions are embedded in this study. Firstly, a large percentage of the non-educator component of the SGBs of public schools in disadvantaged communities is illiterate and poorly skilled in elements of educational administration. Secondly, in order to implement effective school governance all stakeholders must be well-versed in educational legislation and thirdly, all stakeholders need to fully comprehend the rationale for their involvement and the importance of their role in school governance.

3.5 THE SAMPLE FRAME

The sample selection focused on the SGBs of four schools in historically disadvantaged communities in the George area. The sites that were selected would be from those where SGBs have only been operational since the new political dispensation in South Africa.

Permission, in writing, to conduct the research at the sample schools was obtained from the Western Cape Education Department. The sample schools were selected after consultation with Circuit Managers, School Based Management Advisors and other departmental officials who are responsible for training and supporting SGBs. The consultation process would lead to the grading of schools in terms of the functionality of its SGB.

At each site one representative from each designated group on the SGB (according to the South African Schools Act, 1996) was interviewed. All the members of each sample SGB were asked to complete a questionnaire.

At least two SGB meetings were observed. It was the intention of the researcher to spend at least one week at each sample site for observation purposes.

3.6 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

A variety of data collection methods were employed as a means of extracting information necessary to elucidate the critical questions at hand. The major source of data collection was one-on-one interviews, which took place on site. The interviews were preceded by the completion of questionnaires and the study of official documents and minutes of meetings held by the respective SGBs and the EMDC.

3.6.1 INTERVIEWS

Informal interviews consisting of a series of open-ended questions were conducted in a setting that resembled an ordinary conversation. The interviews focused on the chronology and implementation of school governance, its form and context and its impact on general school improvements. Officials of the EMDC in George concerned with the training and support of SGBs, the principal, staff members, learners, parents and members of the broader school community were drawn as subjects for these interviews.

The purpose of naturalistic interviewing strategies is to keep the informants talking and to express the researcher's interest in what they have to say. Furthermore, the informal interview allows a structure so that the persons being interviewed tell the interviewer their information in their own terms (Vockell & Asher, 1995: 199). The researcher created a setting with an informal ambience and the interview resembled a conversation. Keeping the central themes of the study in mind, the researcher prompted respondents to elaborate on these and the sub-themes.

Prior to the on-site studies, a meeting was held with the principal and a representative of each SGB to inform them of the intended study and research methodology. After the initial meeting, interviews were conducted with stakeholders to gather preliminary information about

the school and the SGB. These included interviews with the headmaster, the chairperson of the SGB as well as officials from the EMDC in the district. Individual schools were not to be identified at any time. Individual interview and survey data are strictly confidential.

3.6.2 QUESTIONNAIRES

In addition to the interviews, all the members of the SGBs of the schools in the selected sample frame were asked to complete a short survey in the form of questionnaires (Appendix 1). The purpose of the questionnaires was to elicit biographical data about each respondent in order to inform the study of the composition of each SGB, the type of work, interests and academic level of each member of the SGB. The information provided also allowed the researcher to gain access to individual respondents.

3.6.3 DOCUMENTS

A valuable source of information in qualitative research can be documents (Creswell, 2002: 209). In support of the information extracted from the interviews, documents such as minutes of meetings, school and departmental reports, records and letters were analysed.

During the on site visits by the researcher, field data was collected using field notes and a diary. Selections of verbatim transcripts of conversations, anecdotes recounted in the field, or sections from diaries by way of illustrations are the usual ways in which these “raw” materials find their way into the “polished” finished report (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995: 131).

3.6.4 OBSERVATION

To facilitate review and analysis of the interviews, audio recordings of these were produced. An audio-visual recording was also made of a governing body meeting.

Using the afore-mentioned methods of data collection, the data assembled facilitated a situational analysis of each sample site. The situational analysis served to conceptualize the setting in which the central phenomenon of the research study was explored. The relevant variables of the setting that are described comprise the staff, learners, the environment in which the school is situated, social and economic conditions within which the school operates, the community, school culture and physical resources.

The researcher planned to spend a week at a sample site to observe the various stakeholders in their natural environment. Of particular

interest to this study was the participation of governing body members and officials of the department in the daily activities of the school.

3.7 DATA PROCESSING, ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

In a qualitative study, initial data management consists of organizing the data, transcribing interviews and typing field notes, and making the decision to analyse the data by hand or by computer (Creswell, 2002:281). For personal convenience, the hand-analysis method as suggested by Creswell was used for the analytical processes of this study.

A preliminary exploratory analysis of the data obtained from the interviewing process entailed transcribing the audio recordings of the data into text form. The typographical layout of the text is in tabular form to make provision for space to record the researcher's analysis thereof. Creswell (2002) suggests that the analysis of the text should be preceded by a process of reading to obtain a general sense of the data, jotting down ideas, organizing the data and considering the need for additional data.

A detailed examination of the data, using a process of coding, took place to develop broad categories of major and minor themes based on the research question and sub-questions. The process of coding was manipulated further to connect inter-related themes. Correlation of

themes was explored to determine a chronology or sequence of events, generate a conceptual model of ideas and report stories of individuals elicited during the interviews.

The number of days spent at each sample site did not yield a large volume of field notes. An essential step is coding the information to help structure and report the field data (Vockell & Asher, 1995: 201). During the observation process the researcher made analytic notes to aid the conceptualization of the occurrences in the cultural setting at each sample site.

Documents were analysed through a process called content analysis, whereby the researcher looked for themes and concepts in the natural language. Variables can be both conceptually and operationally defined, as well as illustrated with examples from the documents themselves (Vockell & Asher, 1995: 200).

Reliability addresses the question of whether the results of measuring processes are consistent on occasions when they should be consistent. In qualitative research where the researcher depends on the narratives of the respondents, in response to a set of open-ended questions, to provide an ample amount of data for exploration the measurement can never be one hundred percent accurate. This view is strongly supported by Vockell & Asher (1995: 92) as they state that the reliability of educational measurement can never be perfect. They

go as far as to say that the concept of reliability is sometimes ignored in qualitative research (1995: 205).

The following guidelines were implemented to improve the reliability of the measuring instruments: standardization of the administration procedures, careful consideration of each item or aspect of the data collection process, standardization of the analysis process. Merriam (1988: 167), as cited in Hitchcock and Hughes (1995: 324) stated, "...underlying ethnographic-naturalistic data collection is the assumption that reality is holistic, multi-dimensional and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered and measured". A major concern of the researcher is the fact that it has transpired that, for various reasons, the composition of the SGBs of two of the samples changed during the research period. A further concern is that internal conflict, in the SGB, may have created a situation whereby the narratives provided by the respondents may not be completely objective. These occurrences were monitored during the data collection process.

The validity of the researcher's findings was checked throughout the process of analysis and interpretation of data. Validating findings means that the researcher determines the accuracy or credibility of the findings through strategies such as member checking (Creswell, 2002: 280). During the interviews statements made by other respondents were validated by posing similar or related questions in subsequent

interviews. The researcher corroborated the evidence of each respondent during the process of coding and theme analysis by comparing it with the identified themes.

3.8 SUMMARY

In summary, the primary methods of data collection were interviews, questionnaires, audio recordings, observation and the analysis of documents. Information was gathered to expand on the research problem and sub-problems identified. A data analysis system whereby the data was sorted into two major themes with a number of sub-themes was employed.

In the following chapter a detailed explanation is provided on how the necessary data was collected. A description of the sample frame, the methods of data collection employed as well as the research period is offered.

CHAPTER 4

Comment [JL1]:

COLLECTION OF DATA

DURING

A STUDY OF THE PERFORMANCE OF SGBS OF PUBLIC
SCHOOLS IN THE DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES OF GEORGE.

4.1 THE SAMPLE FRAME

This study set out to explore the performance of SGBs of public schools in the disadvantaged communities of George. A quota sampling strategy, as a form of non-random sampling, was employed by the researcher in order to target those research sites possessing specific characteristics to support the basic inferences of the study. In qualitative inquiry the intent is not to generalize to a population, but to develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon. In this study the central phenomenon was the performance of SGBs. Thus, to best understand this phenomenon, the qualitative researcher purposefully or intentionally selects individuals or sites (Creswell, 2002:193).

Of great value to the sampling process was the researcher's experience in dealing with the sample sites as part of his professional

duty as an official of the local district office of the Department of Education. Records, pertaining to the SGBs, such as minutes of meetings, and EMIS forms, held by the district office on each school provided the researcher with much information that supported the classification of the sites. In addition to the afore-mentioned, the nomination of sample schools was solicited from Circuit Managers, School Based Management Advisors and other departmental officials, responsible for training and supporting SGBs. Hence this created a “convenience sample” as described by Cohen and Manion (1997).

For this purpose the researcher elected to focus on the SGBs of four schools in the historically disadvantaged suburbs in George. The latter being a suburb of predominantly black, Xhosa-speaking, residents while the former are all coloured areas where Afrikaans is the predominant mother tongue.

The sites selected have only introduced SGBs after it became compulsory for each public school in South Africa to have such a governance institution. Thus, the sites have an equal amount of school governance experience in terms of years.

According to legislation, learner representation on SGBs is only allowed at secondary schools and not at primary schools. Of particular interest to this study was the experience of a broad spectrum of the school population including the learners. Thus, in order to

accommodate the research design of this study, the research focused on secondary schools only. Apart from the typical introduction of SGBs, schools were selected to represent a spectrum of varied standards of performance.

The Western Cape Education Department's circular number 249/2003 required that a prospective researcher had to obtain permission in writing from the department's research directorate to conduct any form of research in any of its institutions. Before the actual data collection such permission was obtained by the researcher after an abbreviated research proposal with specific reference to the sample sites was submitted for scrutiny.

At each site one representative from each designated group, viz. the principal, and educator, a parent and a learner were identified to be surveyed for the study. The experience, in terms of school governance, of these respondents varied from having being involved in the school's governing body since the inception of SGBs to having been involved for a few months. A limited number of the parents and educators, excluding the principal, had served on the governing body of another school. The experience of the learner representatives was restricted in most instances only to a maximum of two years due to an internal policy at most schools to only allow senior learners on the governing body and to further exclude the election of Grade twelve learners from serving as learner representatives. The reason for the

latter is that the matriculants should be granted the best opportunity to prepare for their final Senior Certificate examination and should therefore not be distracted by being involved in a task of such magnitude demanding time and dedication.

Having carefully identified and selected the sample frame for this research study, the next step in a most logical sequence was to determine the most appropriate methods of data collection. The outcome is to produce an understanding of the people involved in the study as well as creating an opportunity to gather useful information that would support greater insight into the central phenomenon.

4.2 THE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

Prior experience of the researcher and reviews of a broad spectrum of relevant literature enabled the researcher to develop an understanding of the type of data collection methods best suited for this type of study and allowed for preplanning and the tentative organization of the data collection in the field. According to Vockell and Asher (1995: 198) qualitative research data generally falls into four classifications: observations, interviews, documents, and research instruments of various kinds. Many of these qualitative data collection methods are available to teachers, counsellors and administrators, who could use them to understand the educational milieu. Following this advice the researcher elected to manipulate a variety of data collection methods,

as indicated in section 3.6, to extract information necessary to elucidate the critical questions at hand. The study benefitted from the use of audio and video recording of interviews and critical events taking place during the research period.

4.2.1 THE SETTING

Considering that the individuals chosen as subjects for this study would have had no or very little exposure to providing data for research purposes the researcher went to great lengths to ensure that they experienced a fair amount of ease and comfort throughout their involvement in the study. To ensure the reliability of the data it was essential for this study that the respondents were truthful and displayed “normal” behaviour during the period of data collection. The obtrusiveness or unobtrusiveness of these observations must always be a consideration. Here, the emphasis of qualitative research leans towards observations and measures that are as unobtrusive as possible. Reactivity of the participants being observed or interviewed is a major problem for qualitative researchers. They want to see behaviours essentially unmodified by their own presence (Vockell & Asher, 1995: 198).

4.2.2 THE RESEARCH PERIOD

The major part of the data collection took place during the examination period towards the end of the third quarter of the school calendar. It was also the time that all the schools involved in the study were involved in trial examinations for matriculants and the initial stages of the assessment for the grade nine learners. It was important to ensure that the participants did not view their involvement as a burden but as a means to an end. To ensure this the data collection process was determined according to the programme of the sites and the individuals involved. This situation was exploited for the purpose of the study as it provided for an extra dimension to be observed, that is, how organized these sites and individuals are and what the level of cooperation is between the various stakeholders. Seidman (1991) as cited by Vockell and Asher (1995: 198), points out that effective qualitative interviewing and observation must take into consideration the power of the social and organizational context of people's experience.

4.2.3 THE SAMPLE

It is important to note at this stage that of the four sample sites, only two had a SGB that was fully functional. Having served for the prescribed period of three years since 1999, the governing bodies at two of the sites had to be replaced late in 2003 or early 2004. The replacement of the last serving governing body could not be realized as

the schools failed to attract a quorum of parents (the reasons for this are discussed in the chapter dealing with the analysis of data) to the meetings where parent representatives were supposed to be elected onto the new governing body.

This failure of the schools to properly constitute a new governing body presented the school with a series of problems that resulted in the SGBs not being able to perform their prescribed functions and to conduct the organizational activities such as meetings.

As a result this placed a restriction on the observation that could be done by the researcher at these sites. Nevertheless, this provided this study the opportunity to explore in greater depth the link between the lack of coherence and the performance of the SGB.

4.2.4 GROUNDWORK

Prior to the launch of the on-site studies the principal of each sample school was telephonically informed of the intended research and the permission granted by the Department of Education. The telephonic conversations with the principals were followed up with a personal visit to their offices. The purpose of this visit was twofold. Firstly, to develop a rapport with the head of the institution and secondly, to clarify any concerns they may have had with the research design or programme.

To adhere to the policy of the provincial department of education with regard to visits to their schools, it was necessary to inform the office of the director of the EMDC and the circuit manager assigned to each of the elected schools.

A detailed letter (Annexure ii) requesting permission to conduct the research at their schools was handed to each principal during the initial visit to the school. The letter gave a clear indication of the period of the data collection process as well as the methods of data collection that was used. In the letter principals were requested to identify one member of each of the designated groups to form part of the bank of respondents.

4.2.5 OBSERVATION

The researcher intended to spend a week at a sample site to observe the various stakeholders in their natural environment. The time allocated to each site was reduced to three to four days as a result of researcher's expanded responsibility at work and the programmes of the various schools. The researcher was unable to spend continuous periods of time at a particular site and therefore had to arrange for intermittent visits.

The nature of the researcher's professional responsibility to a large extent revolves around the effective management and governance of

public schools. As a primary function he is responsible for the continued training and support of SGBs in management aspects related to school and hostel management, financial management and procurement administration. By virtue of this responsibility the role of the researcher in the schools is that of advisor and supporter which demands developing a bond of cooperation and trust. Considering his role and the resultant relationships formed, the researcher was presented with a dilemma in terms of his participation during the observations at the sample schools.

Actively engaging with these schools in his daily task accorded the researcher the role of participant observer, providing an opportunity to observe the participants involved in their acquired duties and related activities in a natural setting. Simultaneous with the observation process for the purpose of this study, it was at times required of the researcher to fulfill his role as advisor to the school. Members of the school management team or the governing body would seek advice with regard to school administration or the researcher was called upon to perform functions for or on behalf of the school or the Department of Education. A situation of note is the meeting called by the director of the EMDC and held at the offices of the Department of Education where the researcher was involved in a dual role as the advisor to the school and the minute secretary for the meeting. Being actively involved in these and other activities granted the researcher a vantage point to develop a perspective from within the physical milieu of the

sample site as well the actions transpiring as a natural occurrence. A participant observer is an observational role adopted by researchers when they take part in activities in the setting they observe. As a participant, the researcher assumes the role of an “inside” observer who actually engaged in activities at the site being studied (Creswell, 2002: 200). Due care had to be afforded to the credibility of the study which could have been negatively affected by the extent to which the researcher acted in his role as participant observer. This compounded the dilemma as the reliability of the study depended on the researcher being able to extract and aim at an independent result. Assuming the role of a non-participant observer in addition to the role of participant observer seemed to be a logical approach to eradicate this possibility. In many observational situations, it is advantageous to shift or change roles, making it difficult to classify your role as strictly participatory or non-participatory (Creswell, 2002: 200).

Observation of governing body meetings, which took place on site, was limited to three rather than the intended four. Observation took place at a scheduled general meeting of one of the sample schools and at special governing body meetings that were convened by the director of the EMDC at two sites.

Three meetings, that involved two of the sample sites, were convened by the director of the EMDC to investigate complaints submitted to her. These complaints revolved around the non-compliance of the SGBs

with specific aspects as stipulated in the Regulations for SGBs as promulgated by the Western Cape Education Department.

In addition to the afore-mentioned meetings two consecutive meetings, held approximately four weeks apart, were held by one of the schools to elect the parent representatives on the SGB. It should be noted that this meeting was overdue by five months according to the prescription of the South African Schools Act, 1996.

Observation of these events was critical to the study as it could provide vital answers as to how the election process is conducted, the turnout of enfranchised parents and the participation of the various stakeholders in the organization of the meeting as well as the election process. The Provincial Government Gazette, no. 5497 dated 12 April 1996, stipulating the measures for SGBs clearly defines the election process and the role of the various stakeholders therein.

The participation of members of the SGB in the day-to-day activities of the school was of particular interest to the study. Furthermore, the study showed interest in the involvement of officials of the EMDC in the daily activities of the school.

4.2.6 SURVEY

Care was taken to ensure that a fair representation of the cross spectrum of representatives was enlisted to form part of the core of respondents. One circuit manager was responsible for two of the sample schools and the other two were serviced by two circuit managers respectively. From the four schools, three of the principals agreed to participate in the study. Hence the participants comprised three members of each of the educator and learner representatives. One member of the non-educator constituency and two parents agreed to form part of the study.

All the members of the SGBs elected as members of the sample were asked to complete a short survey in the form of a personal questionnaire (see Appendix I, Section B). The questionnaire served to elicit biographical data about each respondent in order to inform the study of the composition of each SGB, the type of work, interests and academic level of each member of the SGB.

All the members of each sample SGB were asked to complete a questionnaire (see Appendix I, Section A). The latter consisted of a series of open-ended questions that led into topical areas including their interest in the functions of governing bodies, their level of understanding of the legislation with regard to school governance and a framework of the strengths and weaknesses of SGBs.

The structure of the questions was such that it solicited a response not limited to a few options. This type of questioning allowed the respondents to elaborate on issues mentioned and to support their responses with actual experiences as members of a governing body.

Provision was made for the respondents to be as open and honest in their responses to the questions posed in the questionnaire by guaranteeing them anonymity, ensuring confidentiality and giving them the assurance that the data collected would be used in an ethical manner. These assurances were established in the introductory paragraph of the questionnaire. The questionnaire, accompanied by a letter as well as the letter from the Department of Education, was given to each respondent in an envelope. They were asked to seal the envelope after the completed questionnaire had been inserted therein for delivery. The questionnaire allowed the respondents to carefully consider their replies to each of the questions and to express accurately what they felt, knew or experienced.

The number of questionnaires returned did not tally with the number issued. A few reasons, ranging from time constraints to it being misplaced, were established. Those individuals who had not returned the completed questionnaire, however, agreed to participate in the planned interview sessions. The responses provided in the questionnaires later served as the basis for the one-on-one interviews.

4.2.7 INTERVIEWS

Progressing to a higher level of reliability the next logical step in the data collection process was to conduct an informal interview with each of the respondents. The interviews were guided by a series of open-ended questions based on the questionnaire that they had completed. The interview was designed to serve a dual purpose. Primarily it served to explore the respondents' experiences, attitudes and feelings with reference to the major themes derived from the problem statement. Secondly, its purpose was to further probe issues mentioned in the questionnaire by each individual respondent and to clarify obscure responses. The interviews focused on the chronology and implementation of school governance, its form and context and its impact on general school improvements.

All the questionnaires were collected and analyzed prior to engaging an individual in an interview. Phenomena as stipulated in Chapter 5 were explored in greater depth during the interviews. Cross-referencing with the responses from fellow respondents was done to investigate common experiences, feelings and attitudes as well as to verify information provided.

The interviews were conducted by the researcher at the respective sample sites. Arrangements were made with the principal of the school for the allocation of a room where the interviews could be conducted in private and with minimum disturbance. The comfort of the interviewee was given careful consideration and thus the interview was conducted in a setting that resembled an ordinary conversation. The interviews with the officials of the EMDC in George were conducted after official work hours in their respective offices.

The logistical arrangements of the interviews as well as other research related visits to the school were managed in conjunction with the school secretary, at the respective schools, who acted as a liaison between the researcher and the sample site. The secretary, being in a vantage position of knowing the calendar and diaries in operation at the school, could arrange the appointments for the visits and the interviews accordingly. The collegial relationship between the researcher and the Circuit Managers made the logistical arrangements less cumbersome. Appointments were finalized during the normal course of work. The research diary kept by the researcher ensured that all appointments were scheduled well in advance.

To facilitate the process of analyzing the data accumulated during the interviews an audiotape recording was made of each interview. This allowed the interviewer the opportunity to listen more attentively to the

responses of the interviewees and to record incidental notes during the interviews. These recordings were transcribed in typographical format to allow for the process of coding.

4.2.8 DOCUMENTS

Documents consist of public and private records that qualitative researchers can obtain about a site or participants in a study and include newspapers, minutes of meetings, personal journals and letters (Creswell, 2002: 209). A rich bank of information was provided for the purpose of this study by the records kept in the registry department of the EMDC. Information of particular value to this study related to the size of the institution in terms of number of learners and staff establishment as well as the size of the physical structure and grounds of the school. Detailed information of the names, addresses, sphere of employment and position on the SGB was extracted to give insight important to this study. Other files visited contained letters and e-mail correspondence between sample schools and the Education Department, financial records and matters relating to governing body matters such as minutes of meetings, election results and reports of disputes. Copies of various pieces of legislation and educational policy held on file were studied to provide the researcher with a higher level of understanding of the legal framework encompassing school governance.

4.2.9 FIELD NOTES

Vockell and Asher (1995: 201) are of the opinion that field jottings serve as a source for field notes, which are summaries of field data collected during the day or over another designated period of time. The researcher, during the on-site visits, interviews and meetings, assembled data using field notes. Essential information provided by discussions and incidents occurring at the sample sites between the various stakeholders at the school and between the respondents and the researcher were jotted down in the form of brief anecdotal notes. The same process was used when discussions providing useful information were held at the offices of the EMDC. The notes were supplemented by all other information collected, including recordings, documents and notes about the overview and understanding of the social scene as the participant observer sees it at that time. The notes are compiled immediately, at least on a day-to-day basis, so that the data are fresh and other activities do not interfere with recollections (Vockell & Asher, 1995: 201).

4.2.10 AUDIO-VISUAL RECORDINGS

To facilitate review and analysis of the interviews an audio-visual recording of one of the general meetings held by a sample SGB was

made. The recording provided the facility to develop a visual record of the proceedings of the meeting as well as an audio record of the matters entertained. The audio-visual recording was useful in providing the researcher with the opportunity to observe attentively the actions and input of the various stakeholders in the meetings. Furthermore, the researcher had the chance to make notes in writing of his personal interpretation of the actions and verbal input of all the members in attendance. An additional advantage of this form of data collection is that it allowed the researcher space and time to analyze the data in a peaceful setting after the event. Such a record could be reviewed continually if the need arose. This particular recording was reviewed prior to the one-on one interviews conducted with the respondents attached to this specific sample site.

4.2.11 SUMMARY

Following the data collection process, the data assembled will be used to facilitate a situational analysis of each sample site. The situational analysis will serve to conceptualize the setting in which the performance of SGBs will be explored. The relevant variables of the setting that will be described will comprise the staff; learners; the environment in which the school is situated; social and economic

conditions within which the school operates; the community; school culture and physical resources.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF DATA

IN

A STUDY OF THE PERFORMANCE OF SGBS OF PUBLIC
SCHOOLS IN THE DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES OF GEORGE.

The situational analyses conducted with reference to the four schools are based mainly on information extracted from the “snap survey” that is conducted annually on the tenth school day of the year. The annual Educational Management Information System (EMIS) survey is a more comprehensive census and provides greater detail.

5.1 PROFILE OF THE SCHOOLS

From the information contained in each of these surveys respectively, the four sample schools are depicted as presenting very similar characteristics. Except for one, they are all relatively new schools that do not have a long history. All four were established in the latter part of the twentieth century. Three of the schools were established during the period when the political turmoil began in the mid-seventies. At this stage the older school was well established in terms of history, staff establishment, academic performance, ethos and culture.

Comment [JL2]:

The numbers of learners at the four schools are in the same range. The learner population ranges between 1200 and 1500 with between 30 –40 educators catering for their educational needs. The age cohort of learners ranges between 13 – 21 years. This being the norm, there are a minimal number of learners beyond this category at a particular school. The four schools offer their learners similar bands of subjects. Emphasis is placed on the primary languages spoken by the respective communities. Afrikaans is the most prominent language followed by

Xhosa. English is offered as an additional subject for examination purposes. Learners are able to choose between an academic stream where Mathematics and Physical Science are compulsory subjects; a commercial stream where Accounting, Economics and Business Economics feature strongly and a practical stream where practical subjects such as Woodwork, Needlework, Typing and Domestic Science feature strongly. The results obtained in the Senior Certificate Examination, at the end of the matric year, ranged from below average to excellent. Over the years two of the schools have managed to annually feature amongst the schools with a number of “A” aggregate passes and matriculation exemptions. One of the other two schools has, due to the poor performance in this examination, been adopted by the Department of Education as a “high intervention school”. This label implied that the local district office had to develop a programme to assist the school to achieve better results.

The governance and management structures at the four schools are identical. The organogram conforms strictly to the prescriptions of the Department of Education. The SGB is at the head of the organizational structure and is responsible for the governance of the school. The management of the school is the responsibility of the school management team (SMT) of which the principal is the most senior official. The principal is supported in his management functions by two deputy principals responsible for the management of the school administration and the curriculum respectively. The rest of the SMT

consists of a number of heads of departments who are responsible for the curriculum management of a subject stream.

ORGANOGRAM OF THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM

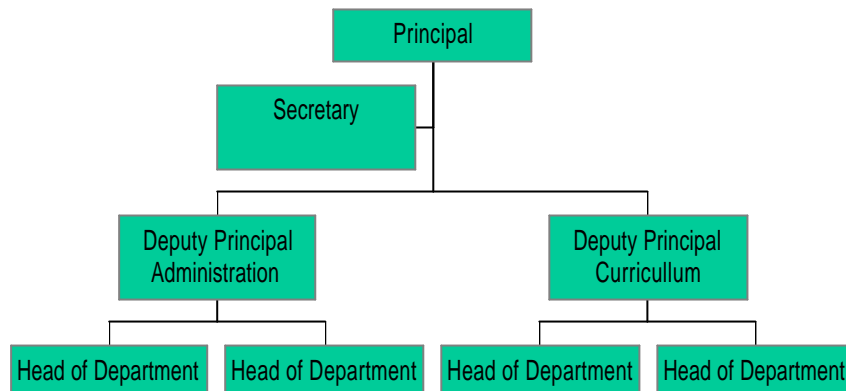


Diagram 1

The schools are all located in areas that have been racially demarcated to accommodate coloured and black communities respectively.

Therefore they cater mainly for the learners from the racial grouping comprising the local community. One of the schools located in the coloured area, because of its proximity to the township, is continually experiencing an influx of African learners. Although learners have to cross the national road to get to the school they are finding it to be a more attractive proposition than the school in their township.

The Circuit Managers attached to the sample sites indicated that the schools all serve poor communities with a below average economic standing. As a result of the high level of unemployment the income levels of the inhabitants in these communities are very low. In the

majority of cases the only income received by an individual family is a social grant provided by the government. These amounts allocated to provide subsistence and accommodation for the incapacitated, aged and orphaned children are minimal. The social conditions in these communities are in a state of neglect with drug and alcohol abuse being rife. Due to the HIV and AIDS pandemic in these communities a growing number of child headed households are prevalent.

The design and structure of the school buildings are very similar. Double story structures of brick and plaster have been provided for all the schools. Provision is made for an administration block, staff rooms, ablution facilities for staff and learners, classrooms, practical rooms and storage facilities. Two of the schools have hostels in which learners from out of town are accommodated. All the schools have adequate open space where learners are able to enjoy their breaks from the academic programme. Fields for sports purposes have been demarcated but these are not properly maintained due to insufficient funds.

The situational analysis provides the researcher with extended insight into the governance and management of each school. Why and how certain actions are taken are made clear to the researcher. Furthermore, it expounds the findings of the study as stipulated in the paragraphs to follow.

5.2 PROFILES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The researcher used the data provided in the personal questionnaire (Appendix I, section B) to draw up a profile of the participants, with particular reference to the grade in which they were, the length of time served and the portfolio they hold on the SGB, whether they have formal training to perform the functions of an assigned portfolio, their motivation for serving on the SGB, how they have been elected and their involvement in community-based and non-governmental organizations in their community. The following is a summary of the profiles of the learners, educators and parents.

5.2.1 THE LEARNERS

All three of the learner participants always lived in the community in which the school is located and they were placed in the school nearest to their home. At the time of the study one out of the three was in the junior secondary phase, another in the senior secondary phase. A peculiar situation existed in as far as the other learner representative, who has already matriculated, is concerned. Even though he was no longer attending the school, he was co-opted onto the SGB when the school could not find a suitable candidate from amongst the ranks of the current learners. This situation is in contradiction to the prescriptions of the South African Schools Act, 1996, which stipulates

that the learner representatives must be elected from the current enrolment of the school.

All three of the learners were very popular amongst their peers and were actively involved in other learner activities at their schools.

According to them, they accepted the challenge to serve on the SGB, to “fight for the rights of the learners”. They found the nomination as a learner representative to be a challenge that they could manage as they have previously served on other organizations in their respective communities.

The effective functioning of the SGB is further hampered by the regular change at yearly intervals of the learner representatives. The response to the question on their time served on the SGB indicates that the learners are very seldom active for two or more years as members of the SGB. It was indicated by two of the respondents that an unwritten rule that suggests that only learners from the senior secondary phase, excluding the matriculants, are allowed to serve on the SGB.

5.2.2 THE STAFF REPRESENTATIVES

The educators who represented their colleagues on the SGB were all graduates who taught senior grades at their respective schools. Two of them have been established members of the staff which they served as they taught at the school for a number of years. The other staff

representative came from another province and recently took up his current post at the school. He believed that he was accepted by his peers and nominated as staff representative because of his achievements as a shop steward and his outspokenness. He was newly elected when the current SGB was elected at the beginning of 2004. One educator served on two consecutive SGBs since 1999 and the other replaced a colleague towards the end of the term of office of the previous SGB at his school. He continued to serve in this position as the school failed to have the third round of elections to constitute the new SGB.

All three educators held important portfolios, although they had no formal training other than that provided by the EMDC. Two of them held the position of secretary of the SGB and the other served as the chairperson of the Disciplinary Committee. According to them they accepted their nominations on the understanding that they will be able to fulfill their duties as they have served on other organizations before.

5.2.3 THE PRINCIPALS

The principals who participated in the survey are all highly qualified academics with an extensive amount of experience between them. They are all graduates. One of them holds an honours degree, whilst another has a doctorate in philosophy.

The South African Schools Act, 1996 determines that the principal of a school shall be an ex-officio member of the SGB. The three participants have been serving on the SGBs of their respective schools since the inception of SGBs in 1996. They all indicated that they would have continued to serve on the SGBs as staff representatives if they were not principals and if elected by their colleagues. One of them has served on the SGB of another school.

Their involvement in other community-based organization stems from their inherent nature to serve their communities. Two are keen sportsmen and serve on the sport committees in the community. The other principal is an active member of the Community Police Forum. According to him he was instrumental in the establishment of this forum.

5.2.4 THE PARENTS

Two parents participated in the study. They are both active members of their communities. One is a qualified nurse and the other is a member of the clergy. Both serving in social service positions made them ideal choices as members of the SGB.

The nurse recently became a member of the SGB when her child was enrolled at one of the participating schools. She indicated that she was

approached by the principal of the school, as there existed a vacancy for a parent representative. Although this procedure was not in accordance with the South African Schools Act, 1996, which stipulates that parent representatives shall be elected at a properly constituted parent meeting, the nomination was however accepted by the SGB. The other parent respondent was a long-serving member of the school. He started serving the school as a member of the School Committee, which acted as the parent body prior to the inception of SGBs.

5.3 PHENOMENA

The following phenomena were established from the responses to the questionnaire (Annexure i. Section A) and during the interviews. The audio-video recording of one of the SGB meetings at one of the sites provides further evidence to support the existence of these phenomena. The questions posed to the participants in the questionnaire as well as the interview revolved around the phenomena of the commitment of parents, the role of learner representatives, understanding one's role on the SGB and the factors hampering effective functioning.

5.3.1 COMMITMENT OF PARENTS

The study found that SGBs are more effective when parents who truly care and are committed to the effective functioning of the school are

involved. Parents who are generally involved in the activities of the school and naturally understand the interactive role between the community and school are the most effective governors. It was mentioned by a parent that it is “her commitment to the school and the broader community that motivated her to become a member of the school’s SGB. One of the Circuit Managers highlighted parental commitment as one of the deciding factors for the success of an SGB. Reflection on the audio-video recording of a SGB meeting of one of the sample schools, who have experienced a greater measure of effectiveness of its SGB, will indicate that the parents on the SGB participate actively in the daily activities of the school. One of the parents serves on the school’s “dagbestuur” which is responsible for incidental management on a daily basis. One of the issues dealt with during the time of the study, as the audio-video recording will show, was the disciplinary hearing of three learners at the school. The parents are also involved in the management of the tuckshop and assisting some of the sport codes with fundraising.

During the meeting held at the EMDC it transpired that one of the reasons for the breakdown of the functioning of the SGB was that members would, without sufficient notice, withdraw from the activities of the SGB because they had lost interest in its functions or they were unhappy with the outcome of certain decisions taken in meetings. Other reasons cited for the non-attendance at meetings were work pressure and financial constraints. Members of SGBs are not legally

obliged to become or remain as members and therefore they find it easy to relinquish their duties. This situation leads to a lack of continuity in terms of the functions of the institution. The minutes of the meeting of one of the SGBs at one of the sample sites will serve to prove that the decision-making process is retarded if the SGB cannot obtain a quorum to hold a meeting. It transpired during the meeting that the SGB in question could not complete the nomination process for the filling of two vacancies.

5.3.2 THE ROLE OF LEARNER REPRESENTATIVES

The SGB will function at its best when all stakeholders are integrated into its various structures. Members, especially the learners, feel that the learner representatives are not regarded as full members. The regulations pertaining to SGBs prescribe that learners should be exempted from certain decision-making processes. In response to the question on the relationship between the learner representatives and the adults on the SGB, a principal replied that according to him parents and teachers do not always speak their minds in the meetings for fear of negatively impacting on the learners present in the meeting. He went as far as to say that if it were up to him learners would be excluded from the SGB completely. Learners feel that the democratic dispensation in South Africa affords them the right to, as one of them put it “bring die leerderinsig”.

Parents are of the opinion that together with the learners they are not accepted as equal partners in the governance of the school. The perceived difference in status and cultural traditions have been cited as reasons for this situation. Citing the parents' ignorance of educational law and management as a restraining factor for the effective functioning of the SGB, a parent indicated that parents do not fully comprehend their legal right as members of the SGB. He continued to say that the value of the SGB is undermined by the inability of its members to effectively fulfill the functions allocated to them. In most instances members do not have the required skills and qualifications to perform the duties assigned to them. This is when the allocation of these duties to the educator members is opted for. This view is supported by the incident shown in the video recording where the principal took over the chairpersonship of the meeting due to the incumbent not feeling well. The South African Schools Act, 1996, clearly stipulates that a parent should act as the chairperson of the SGB. The principal, educators, non-educators and learners are exempted from this position.

5.3.3 UNDERSTANDING ONE'S ROLE ON THE SGB

Developing an unambiguous understanding of the respective roles of each representative will enhance the effectiveness of the SGB. The Circuit Manager and an educator at the same school expressed similar views about the role of the SGB as opposed to that of the principal.

They stated that, “the principal should manage the implementation of decisions made by the SGB”. An example of this is how the principal manages the school’s budget that is approved by the SGB. All the respondents, except one, could not expound on the difference between management and governance. In most cases the response was limited to the definition as provided in the various pieces of legislation and training manuals dealing with this subject.

The principals and the educator representatives were able to extensively distinguish the roles of the principal and SGB.

Representatives of the remaining constituencies could not provide the same level of distinction. This result in conflict and leads to a situation where not all members perform their functions effectively. Evidence thereof was found in the minutes of the meeting, called by the director, to deal with grievances of some of the SGB members at one site. The minutes reflect that the parents were unhappy because they felt that they were undermined by the principal who acted ultra vires (beyond his legal powers). It is mentioned that the principal would, without the consent of the SGB, approve unauthorized expenses and appoint substitute teachers.

5.3.4 FACTORS HAMPERING EFFECTIVE FUNCTIONING

The effective functioning of SGBs is hampered by a number of factors as provided by the respondents. Firstly, the literacy level of parents,

and to a certain extent that of learners, is a major contributing factor to poor performance. Reflecting on the role of the representatives of the various constituencies a principal described parents and learners as ill acquainted with educational legislation and regulations and therefore they are seldom in a position to make a meaningful contribution when matters requiring legal insight are discussed. He added that it is in instances like this when the views of the educators and the principal are accepted without being contested, as these individuals are perceived to be better informed.

Secondly, the socio-economic conditions of the communities that the parents and the learners represent, implies that they are financially impaired. So said one of the respondents in reply to the question on the factors hampering the effective functioning of the SGB. He stated further that many parents do not possess a vehicle and are therefore reliant on public transport or that of a friend or neighbour to attend meetings or functions of the school. This results in meetings that are usually scheduled for after normal working hours at night, being poorly attended. In reply to the same question one of the parents stated that the low level of income earned by many parents in the community does not provide them with the liberty to afford the school fees demanded by each school. As a result, many parents feel that due to a lack of financial contribution they are disenfranchised.

Thirdly, particular values have hardened into dogmas amongst the communities served by the four sample schools. One of the respondents, a clergyman in one of the communities, related that the town of George was established as a missionary focal point. Missionaries would come to the town and as a means to persuade the inhabitants they would provide them with food and clothing. This made the people dependent on handouts and unable to provide for themselves. This culture of dependency, referred to by one of the respondents as the “sendeling mentaliteit”, continues to exist which as a result prevents the people from making a contribution to the upliftment of their own communities.

Fourthly, fear of losing the identity and culture of a community remains a real threat to members of governing bodies. A respondent from the school situated in the African township mentioned that in the African culture it is unheard of that a woman would be sitting in the meeting of elders (imbizo). Women folk will not speak in the presence of elderly men of her tribe. These cultural traditions and ideologies present a dilemma for members of the SGBs. Females and learners are not completely free to speak their minds in the presence of senior male members and the notion of a male member as the head of the organization persists. The latter part of the last statement is proven by the fact that the position of chairperson at each of the four sample sites are male and that the position of acting chairperson was not given to one of the females during the incident mentioned in paragraph 5.3.2.

Fifthly, inter-personal conflict and a lack of trust have been highlighted as contributors to the poor performance of the SGBs at three of the sample schools. A newspaper article (Annexure iii) suggests that a lack of clearly delineated roles and responsibilities leads to conflict between the members. Individuals who use the opportunity to serve on the SGB to foster personal interest and to promote themselves have been the cause of conflict within the ranks of the institution. An educator representative highlighted the fact that the conflicting lines of authority, for example when an educator is part of committee dealing with a disciplinary matter involving a colleague, results in a lack of trust between members.

Lastly, members of the SGB are not elected purely by virtue of them being part of a designated constituency. All the respondents were found to play a significant role in one or more organizations in the community. The most prominent affiliation is to the church or a subsidiary of the church such as the ward society or the women's society. As indicated in paragraph 5.2.2, from amongst the educator component the favourite choice as a representative is the shop steward in the teachers' union or the staff spokesperson. The effectiveness of the representative is hampered by he or she being overworked. It could also lead to a narrow view, from a union's perspective, being projected during deliberations. Learners are either academically high

achievers or they feature prominently in extra-mural activities at the school. In these cases it may not be the best choice of representative. The following table briefly provides a summation of the findings at the four sample sites.

Phenomena	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4
1. Commitment of parents	v	v	X	x
2. The role of learner representatives	x	x	X	x
3. Understanding one's role on the SGB	v	v	X	x
4. Factors hampering effective functioning	v	v	X	X

Key: v - Adequate x – Inadequate

Table 1

The *first* phenomenon refers to the involvement of the parents in the daily activities of the school they serve. Where there is greater commitment on the side of the parents, they spend more time at the school assisting with various activities. At one of the two schools, where the SGB is performing well in comparison to the other two, parents are involved in conducting assembly, assisting with fundraising events and serving as members of the disciplinary committee.

The *second* and *third* phenomena combined reflects on the role of the stakeholders and the extent to which they understand their participation in the activities of the SGB. The role of learners is determined to a large extent by the stipulations of the South African Schools Act, 1996

and the degree of participation the school will allow. The principal of one of the schools, where the SGB was virtually non-existent, made it clear how he felt about the learners' inclusion in the affairs of the SGB. He stated "dit was 'n dwase besluit van die departement om leerders in te sluit as volle lede van die beheerliggaam". There seems to be general agreement amongst the educators interviewed that as a result of the parents' lack of knowledge of the legal framework for school governance, referring inter alia to the South African Schools Act, 1996, they are unable to fulfill their role on the SGB.

How the SGBs at the four sample schools manage to deal with the factors hampering effective functioning is considered in the *fourth* phenomenon. As stated earlier in this chapter a number of reasons for the underperformance of SGBs was elicited by the participants. Using strategies such as open communication, parental and community involvement and a willingness by the principal to share the domain of management of governance, two of the schools have adequately managed to limit the effect of those negative influences. At the remaining to schools the latter was more prevalent.

5.4 SUMMARY

The level of parent commitment has varied amongst the schools. Only two of the sample sites were supported by the parents to the extent that it made a positive impact on the effective functioning of the SGB.

Parents were however faced with a number of challenges that undermined the level of contribution that they are able to make to the school. The democratic ideal of inclusivity is noble, but with regard to the inclusion of the learners as members of the SGB there appears to be a weakness that needs to be addressed by all stakeholders. The educators who served on the SGB, including the principal, have proven to be equally committed.

Most of the members, including the staff representatives, usually only gain insight into the legislation and regulation pertaining to SGBs when they are elected to serve on this body. Prospective members are not adequately conscientised about the role they need to fulfill prior to making themselves available for selection. The incumbents only receive training from departmental officials and trainers appointed by the department once elected. Notwithstanding a large volume of training resources to support the empowerment of SGB members, there continues to be a need to improve the quality of service rendered by them to the school and their respective constituencies.

When formulating their policy for the revised education system in South Africa, the EPU-Natal (1998) was of the view that training programmes will be necessary to inform all stakeholder representative of their powers and functions and to ensure that school officials do not restrict or inhibit others from exercising their powers and functions.

Responsibility for the implementation and success of the government's

policy of democratic governing bodies and developing their capacity to govern rests squarely on the shoulders of the departments (EPU – Natal, 1998: 123). The provision for training and support primarily remains the responsibility of the Department of Education.

The EPU – Natal (1998: 123) promoted the idea of establishing a division for school governance, staffed with governance support officers. The functions of these support officers should be to coordinate the delivery of capacity building programmes; ensuring the establishment of SGBs at school; provision of information and advice; assist in the use of media for reporting back to constituencies; act as liaison between the department and the SGB; ensure that accountability to stakeholders and the department is structured and regular; act in consultation with the head of department and in accordance with departmental regulations in the event of governing body failure.

CHAPTER 6

Comment [JL3]:

CONCLUDING

A STUDY OF THE PERFORMANCE OF SGBS OF PUBLIC
SCHOOLS IN THE DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES OF GEORGE.

The intention of this study was to determine to what extent the outcomes, envisaged by the government with the policy of democratic

school governance, were achieved by the sample schools. It also investigated to what level schools were able to involve all the stakeholders in the management of its daily affairs. Lastly it looked at how parents, educators, learner, non-educator staff and community members used the opportunity to charter the direction the school embarked, on and to be instrumental in planning its success.

6.1 FINDINGS

Responses to prompts with reference to the role of the principal versus that of the SGB and the difference between management and governance revealed a lack of understanding of these topics. The majority of the respondents' replies were limited to the role of the SGB being that of "governance" and the principal being responsible for "management". An educator elaborated that the SGB has the responsibility to see to it that the school functions effectively. The parent and learners members of the SGB agreed that the principal should act as a link between the school and the SGB.

The role of the principal and the school management team as opposed to the role of the SGB remains a contentious issue that needs urgent clarification. The study found that schools are still grappling with the dilemma of how to involve the community in their activities. Clearly demarcating the boundaries of school management and school governance is a challenge and the unambiguous definition of these

phenomena respectively would go a long way in alleviating the problems experienced by schools.

SGBs are faced with a quagmire of problems. The indications are that as the school population will become more integrated in terms of race and culture, schools will continue to be faced with social problems. The economic condition of individual families and therefore communities will not drastically improve in the near future. These problems will not disappear and will not be resolved by returning to the traditional way of school management. Neither, will the exclusion of the stakeholders from partaking in the governance of the school help to resolve the situation.

Too soon after the advent of the new political dispensation in South Africa have communities been charged with the vital task of decision-making in connection with, in most cases, possible life altering issues. There exists a great difference between being able to affect the processes of change and democracy and being part of a population who elects the individuals or parties who will manage those processes on your behalf. This study found that a process of re-engineering is required to facilitate reorientation of formerly disenfranchised communities in the principle of democratic school governance. The review of legislation that will ensure that all roleplayers in the SGB are more accountable and greater involvement of community based organisations in the activities of the school has been mooted as

possible means to improve the effectiveness of SGBs. Principals and educators should not be excluded from this process.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The outcomes of the studies imply that a number of changes will have to be introduced if school governance is to be exploited to its full extent and to attain the ideals of democracy. Petrozzo and Stepper (1994) state that Shewhart suggests that the authorities should use the data provided by the various studies to formulate their own understanding of the factors that influence the successful implementation of school governance. They should continue to check whether the data collated by these studies correlate with the existing model and introduce a process of modification if new evidence, that suggests change, has come to light. To this end the following recommendations of this study are provided.

6.2.1 CHANGES TO EDUCATION LEGISLATION

The first of these changes will definitely have to be a review of current educational legislation pertaining to school governance. All the problems highlighted by the studies previously completed should inform the revised legislation. The Regulations Pertaining to SGBs as promulgated by the various Heads of Education in the provinces will have to be extended to address issues such as the continuity,

accountability and efficiency of these institutions. These issues are expanded in the following sub-sections.

6.2.1.1 DISCIPLINING OF MEMBERS

The education authority should devolve greater powers to the SGB. They should be in a position to deal with disciplinary issues of their members and be in a position to introduce penal measures if required. Under current legislation members are able to withdraw themselves, without proper notification, to the detriment of the SGB. Members are not held accountable for non-delivery of tasks assigned to them. The SGB should be empowered to act in accordance with a penal code against such members. A Code of Conduct for members of SGBs should be developed by the Department of Education.

6.2.1.2 EXPULSION OF LEARNERS

These powers should be extended to allow SGBs to exercise the final decision in terms of the suspension and expulsion of learners. Under current legislation, this power resides with the provincial head of education. The officials of the EMDC, the principal, educators, fellow learners and parents as a result of their proximity to the situation and

those involved are most certainly in a better position to exercise such a right.

Legislation should be amended to grant the school the jurisdiction to suspend or expel a learner in appropriate circumstances, eg. after being convicted of serious misconduct. The Circuit Manager, representing the EMDC, should act as the presiding officer. The right to appeal a decision should be reserved. Appeals should be decided by the Director of the EMDC as the head of the district.

6.2.1.3 SGB ELECTION MEETINGS

Current regulation does not place a limit on the number of unsuccessful efforts to constitute a meeting for the election of members of the SGB. As a result thereof the continuity of the institution is affected. The current regulation should be amended to ensure that the process of election is completed prior to the expiration date of the current SGB and in the event of a non-quorum at three successive parent meetings the director of the local district office should constitute an ad hoc committee consisting of the circuit manager, the principal, a member of the School Management Team and two parents to facilitate a process of co-opting the required number of parents. The principal should never be placed in a position where he is solely responsible for electing the co-opted members.

6.2.1.4 CO-OPTED MEMBERSHIP

Members of the community who are co-opted onto the SGB have, by virtue of the skills they possess or the professional position they hold, an important role to play. Such members are, under current legislation, not able to exercise a vote even in the event of a decision related to their field of expertise. In most cases they have a higher educational qualification as well as a greater wealth of experience than most of the elected members. Thus, it is argued that they should be allowed to exercise their vote on any matter dealt with, in meetings of the SGB.

6.2.2 THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL

The role of the principal in ensuring the success of the SGB cannot be over emphasised. He is the custodian of the rights of the Department of Education at school level and should thus ensure that he acts on its behalf and not in contradiction to it. In order to improve the effectiveness of poor performing SGBs the principal should act as liaison between the department and the SGB and between the latter and the school. He should, by virtue of his expertise, be in a position to conduct training workshops on issues related to school governance for the members of the SGB and parents in general.

Whenever change is required he should act as the change agent for the school on behalf of the department. He will be the first to be

trained and informed when new policies and strategies are introduced by the department. It will be his responsibility to embark on an advocacy and training campaign to introduce new and revised policies and strategies.

Part of the principal's responsibility should be to spearhead the school's public relations mission. He should develop strategies to communicate effectively the school's vision and mission statements, fundraising ventures, academic and sporting prowess, community support efforts and departmental news to the school community as well as the external social and business communities. It is his role to foster strong bonds with persons and organisations that are able to make meaningful contributions to the school. According to Petrozzo and Stepper (1994: 37) it is necessary to have a public relations person on the re-engineering team. This person should be dedicated to spreading a positive message about re-engineering and the benefits of the programme in particular.

6.2.3 INTEGRATING VALUES AND CULTURES

As a result of the State's policy of redress and equality, schools are increasingly admitting learners from all cultures and racial groupings. The implication of this is that SGBs will also become more integrated. The EMDC should facilitate a series of teambuilding exercises with a focus on integrating cultures and values.

In conclusion, the findings of this study serve to prove that school governance is a dynamic influenced by a wide range of philosophies and ideologies and that it will never reach a stage of perfection. However, legislation and a programme of continued advocacy and training would ensure that the mindset and skills of individuals are improved.

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LIST OF ACTS

1. Constitution of South Africa, (1996)
2. Education Policy Act, (1996)
3. South African Schools Act, 1996.

Annexure I

SECTION A

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Respondents are kindly requested to provide suitable answers to the following questions. Respondents are encouraged to highlight incidents, anecdotes and events to strengthen their input.

The questionnaire consists of 20 questions.

All responses to this questionnaire will be treated in the **strictest confidence**.

QUESTIONS

1. What portfolio on the governing body do you currently hold?
2. What is it that inspired you to become a member of the governing body?
3. How did you get involved in the governing body?
4. How do you see your role as a member of the governing body?
5. Why do you think have you been elected to serve on the governing body?
6. What is your understanding of the role of the governing body at a school?

7. How does educational policy assist in introducing democratic practices in school governance?
8. Give your perspective of the role of the various constituent representatives on the governing body, i.e., the principal, parents, learners, teachers and community members.
9. Describe the relationship between the adult members and the learners on the governing body.
10. How would you distinguish the role of the principal from that of the governing body?

11. According to you, how did the introduction of governing bodies affect the control of the principal over school administration?
12. What role does community based-, non-governmental- and political organizations play in the governance of the school?
13. If you need to give feedback to your constituency, how does it occur and how often does it occur.
14. Highlight the strengths and weaknesses, if any, of your governing body?

PERSONAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Each Governing Body member is requested to answer the following questions that will serve to provide background information of each respondent.

All the information provided by the respondents will be treated in the **strictest confidence**.

Questionnaire

1. Name: _____ AGE: _____
2. Address: _____
3. Contact Details: Tel. (Home) _____ (Office) _____
4. Occupation: _____
5. Name of Employer: _____
6. Highest Standard Passed: _____
7. Did you attend the school on whose SGB you serve: _____
8. Qualification: _____
9. Name of the school on which governing body you serve: _____

10. Are you a Parent/Guardian of a learner at the school mentioned in 9?

☐ YES

☐ NO

11. Which constituency do you represent?

☐ Parents

☐ Learners

☐ Staff

☐ Principal

☐ Community

12. Are you an ☐ Elected ☐ Co-opted ☐ Ex-Officio member?

13. How long have you served on the present governing Body: _____

14. What portfolio (eg, treasurer) do you hold on the governing body?

15. Do you have any formal qualification in the portfolio mentioned in 14?

☐ YES☐ NO

16. If you answered "yes" to 15 state the highest qualification obtained:

17. Did you have any formal training as a member of the governing body?

☐ YES☐ NO

18. If your answer was "yes" to number 17, name the type of training:

19. By whom was the training mentioned in 17 offered?

20. Have you previously served on the governing body of any other school?

☐ YES☐ NO

21. Are you involved in any other community based-, non-governmental- or political organization?

☐ YES☐ NO

Thank you for your time and effort.

Annexure ii

18 August 2004

The Principal
High School

Dear Sir

**RESEARCH: A STUDY OF THE PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOL
GOVERNING BODIES OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE DISADVANTAGED
COMMUNITIES OF GEORGE**

Your co-operation is requested in the above-mentioned study that will be conducted over the period 10 August to 23 September 2004. The enclosed letter serves to inform you that permission for the study has been granted by the Western Cape Education Department.

Principals are requested to identify at least one representative from each designated group, that is, teachers, learners, non-educator staff, parents and co-opted members to be interviewed. All the members of each sample School Governing Body will be asked to complete a questionnaire. Each school is requested to complete a questionnaire that will inform a situational analysis of the school. The researcher will spend at least one week at a sample site. If necessary, identified respondents may be re-interviewed.

For the purpose of observation the School Governing Body is requested to schedule at least two meetings during the research period. These meetings and the interviews will be recorded on audio and videotape for analysis. The researcher will during his time at the site observe the involvement of the members of the governing body in the daily activities of the school.

The final research report will be submitted to the Western Cape Education Department. The names of schools and individual respondents will not be mentioned in the report and all participants are ensured of the utmost confidentiality.

Your co-operation with this study will be appreciated.

Yours in Education,

M.G. CERFONTEYN

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Wahl 30 advertise? Tel: 044-9742433/5 Fax: 044-9742434 E-mail: info@georgehoof.co.za George Hoof is Het Suid-Weerend, Thursday July 15, 2004

VROU STAMP TEEN BORS GEGEE

Raadslid betaal boete

Die Stadsraad van George gaan 'n oorsake van 'n voorval 'n ondersoek waarin 'n DA-raads- lid en voormalige Speaker van George, me [redacted] die sekreta- resse van [redacted] 'n stamp voor die bors gegee het en toe 'n aanranding aangekla is.

[redacted] het verlede week 'n skul- derkeningsboete van R150 betaal na aanleiding van die voorval, het kapt Ed- die Cronjé van die Suid-Kaapse medi- asentrum bevestig.

Sy is 'n lid van die betrokke skool se be- heerraad en het vol- gens me [redacted]

[redacted] die klaagster, by haar kantoor "Ingebars", haar "ingevlieg" en vals beskuldig dat sy [redacted]

"goed" oor die raad- slid sou kwytgeraak het tydens 'n beheer- raadvergadering.

[redacted] was nie by die vergader- ing teenwoordig nie.

[redacted] het die raadslid blykbaar gevra om haar kan- toor te verlaat, maar sy het geweier.

Volgens die sekre- taresse het [redacted] haar met die hand voor die bors gestamp en in die proses kwytgeraak: "Ek kan doen wat ek wil."

Die skoolhoof, [redacted]

het gesê die bespeek- ing waaroor [redacted]

[redacted] so ontstoke was, het gegaan oor "seker dinge in haar besit wat ons wou teruggehad het. Dit is sekere toerust- ing wat ons voel by die skool moet wees."

"Ons het op 'n or- dentlike manier oor die saak gesels. 'n Mens verwag nie sulke godrag van 'n leiersfiguur in die gemeenskap nie," het [redacted] net ná die voorval gesê. Volgens [redacted] sou die skool die voorval ook by die Onderwysdeparte- ment aanmeld.

[redacted] van die plaaslike kantoor van die Wes- Kaapse Onderwys- departement kon Dinsdag nie bevestig dat dit wel aan- gemeld is nie. Die direkteur, [redacted] wat ingelig behoort te wees indien 'n klag ingedien is, is tans met verlof, het [redacted] gesê. [redacted] wou geen kommentaar lewer nie.