

# **School governing bodies' support of schools to promote quality academic performance**



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# DECLARATION

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I the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation/thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# ABSTRACT

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School governance in South Africa is the single most important factor in education that seems to experience apparent insurmountable challenges. Although more than a decade has passed since the enactment of the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) (SASA), it seems that efforts to have effective school governance fall far short of their intended outcomes. Despite various attempts aimed at training and capacity-building of school governors, including financial resources having been expended for these purposes, studies abound with reports of numerous challenges of school governance in South Africa.

According to section 20(1)(a) of the SASA, the major role of the school governing body (SGB) is to promote the best interests of the school and to strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education. The SGB, standing in a position of trust towards the school, must furthermore act in good faith and not engage in any unlawful conduct or conduct that may jeopardise the interests of the school. This implies that all SGB members must synergise their operative efforts towards the provision of quality education for learners.

Serving and promoting the best interests of the school also finds expression in roles detailed in section 20(e-j) of the SASA, which include supporting the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the execution of their professional functions. To this end, there is substantial evidence to suggest that parents' involvement in the education of their children can make a significant difference in the educational attainment of those children.

Research has consistently shown that, with the increase in parent partnerships in the governance of schools, there is a concomitant increase in student achievement. Numerous studies have found links between parent partnerships and student variables such as academic achievement, sense of wellbeing, school attendance, attitude, homework readiness, grades and educational aspirations. While these studies may not be linked directly to schools in South Africa, the findings are universally significant in terms of parent-school relationships. These studies further maintain that nothing motivates a child more than when learning is valued by schools and communities working together in partnership. They note that parent partnerships lead to greater achievement, irrespective of factors such as socio-economic status, background, level of education, and whether or not parents are employed.

The aim of the study was to investigate the perceptions of SGB and non-SGB members regarding the support of SGBs to schools to promote quality academic performance in the Kgetleng River Area Office' schools in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District of the North West Province. A qualitative research paradigm was used in this study. In-depth individual and focus group interviews were conducted to collect data from 12 participants from two selected schools. Findings revealed that the relationship between SGB members is healthy and that SGBs are doing their best to promote the best interests of their schools by supporting the principals and educators with the aim of promoting quality academic performance.

The recommendations were made based on empirical findings. It is recommended that principals discuss the quarterly results and school improvement plans (SIP) in detail at SGB and general parent meetings. It is further recommended that all SGB members and principals should be properly trained and that the Department of Basic Education and Sport Development should seek the professional assistance of the North-West University.

**Keywords:** school governance, school governing body (SGB), relationship, mutual support, academic performance and development, trust, support, principals

# OPSOMMING

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Skoolbeheer in Suid-Afrika is die enkele belangrikste faktor in die onderwys met skynbaar onoorkomelike uitdagings. Hoewel meer as 'n dekade verloop het sedert die inwerkingtreding van die Suid-Afrikaanse Skolewet (Wet 84 van 1996), blyk dit dat pogings tot effektiewe skoolbeheer nie aan die beoogde uitkomstesvoldoen nie. Nieteenstaande verskeie pogings wat gemik was op opleiding en kapasiteitsbou van skoolhoofde, ingeslote finansiële hulpbronne wat vir hierdie doeleindes aangewend is, is studies ryk aan mededelings van verskeie uitdagings in skoolbeheer in Suid-Afrika.

Kragtens artikel 20(1)(a) van die Skolewet is die hoofrol van die skoolbeheerliggaam (SBL) om die beste belange van die skool te bevorder en om daarna te streef om die skool se ontwikkeling te verseker deur die voorsiening van gehalte-onderwys. Die SBL, wat in 'n vertrouensposisie jeens die skool staan, moet voorts in goeie trou optree en nie betrokke raak by enige onwettige gedrag of gedrag wat die belange van die skool in die gedrang bring nie. Dit impliseer dat alle SBL-lede hul operasionele pogings tot die verskaffing van gehalte-onderwys vir leerders moet verenig.

Die bevordering en dien van die beste belange van die skool vind ook uitdrukking in rolle soos uiteengesit in artikel 20(e-j) van die Skolewet, wat die ondersteuning van die skoolhoof, onderwysers en ander skoolpersoneel in die uitvoering van hulle professionele funksies, insluit. Daar is sterk bewyse wat daarop dui dat ouers se betrokkenheid by die opvoeding van hul kinders 'n beduidende verskil kan maak in daardie kinders se bereiking van opvoedkundige doelwitte.

Navorsing toon deurgaans dat leerderprestasie toeneem namate ouervenootskappe in skoolbeheer toeneem. Talle studies het 'n verband gevind tussen ouervenootskappe en leerderveranderlikes soos akademiese prestasie, welsynsgevoel, skoolbywoning, houding, huiswerkgeredheid, skoolpunte en opvoedkundige aspirasies. Hoewel hierdie studies nie direk met skole in Suid-Afrika verbind kan word nie, is die bevindinge algemeen betekenisvol in terme van ouer-skool-verhoudings. Hierdie studies meld voorts dat niks 'n kind meer motiveer as wanneer leer waardeer word deur skole en gemeenskappe wat in 'n vennootskap saamwerk nie. Die studies toon dat ouervenootskappe aanleiding gee tot beter prestasie, ongeag faktore soos sosio-ekonomiese status, agtergrond, opleidingsvlak, en of ouers werk al dan nie.

Die doel van die studie was om die persepsies van SBL-lede en nie-SBL-lede rakende die ondersteuning van SBL'e aan skole te ondersoek om gehalte akademiese prestasie te bevorder in die Kgetlengrivier-skole in die NgakaModiriMolema-distrik van die Noordwes-provinsie. 'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsparadigma is in hierdie studie gebruik. In-diepte individuele en

fokusgroeponderhoude is gevoer om data van 12 deelnemers van twee geselekteerde skole in te samel. Bevindinge het getoon dat die verhouding tussen SBL-lede gesond is en dat SBL'e hul bes doen om die beste belange van hul skole te bevorder deur skoolhoofde en onderwysers te ondersteun ten eindegehalte akademiese prestasie in hul skole te bevorder.

Die aanbevelings is gebaseer op die empiriese bevindinge. 'n Aanbeveling is gemaak dat skoolhoofde kwartaallikse resultate en die skoolverbeteringsplan by SBL- en algemene ouervergaderings breedvoerig bespreek. 'n Verdere aanbeveling is dat alle SBL-lede en skoolhoofde behoorlik opgelei moet word en dat die Departement van Basiese Onderwys en Sportontwikkeling die professionele hulp van die Noordwes-Universiteit moet ontbied in die kapasiteitsbou van SBL'e.

**Slutelwoorde:** skoolbeheer, skoolbeheerliggaam (SBL), verhouding, onderlinge ondersteuning, akademiese prestasie en ontwikkeling, vertrouwe, ondersteuning, skoolhoofde

# LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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ANA	Annual National Assessments
ANC	African National Congress
DoBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
ELAA	Education Laws Amendment Act, 2007
HoD	head of department
NECC	National Education Crisis Committee
NEPI	National Education Policy Initiative
PTSA's	parent-teacher-student associations
PTAs	parent-teacher associations
SASA	South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996)
SDP	school development plan
SGB	School governing body
SIP	school improvement plan
SMT	school management team

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# CHAPTER 1

## ORIENTATION

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### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the study was to explore school governing bodies' (SGBs) support of schools to promote their quality academic performance. There are many variables and factors related to school performance in general. For example, educator and learner discipline, cleanliness of the school, punctuality of educators and learners to school and classrooms, participation in extramural activities, lesson preparation and presentation, and good working relationships between educators and school management teams (SMTs). However, the presence or absence of these factors has specific influences on academic performance, hence the rationale for the study to specifically look at the relationship between SGBs' support of schools and how it may influence their academic performance. Furthermore, Heystek (2011) believes that the pressure on governing bodies to improve the quality of education for all is considerable because many schools have very low academic achievement levels. The standard of South African education is well below par, when compared with that of other countries. It may be argued that governing bodies, and specifically the majority of parents, may be able to do something to improve the quality of the education, if that is considered one of the important aims of the self-managing principles (Caldwell, 2010). Two specific functions mentioned in section 20(1) of the SASA that may be powerful for governing bodies to improve the quality of education are:

- (a) to promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school;
- (e) to support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions.

Therefore there is a strong link between support of SGBs to schools and their quality academic performance. SGBs support is part and a process to improve academic achievement but it is not the purpose of this study to have evidence that it is happening exactly in these schools,

However, the purpose of the research was not to prove that the support is leading to academic achievement but it was an interpretive study which I try to understand if the kind of SGB support may be a potential influence on the academic achievement.

Whereas the title is specific about the role of the SGB in promoting academic performance, the statement of the problem emphasizes the challenges of limited participation/marginalization of SGBs in school matters in general vis-a-vis the free participation of school principals. The implications or impact of such marginalization is not marred to school quality academic performance. Because of this shortcoming, the statement of the problem fails to highlight specific

issues around the role of the SGB in school academic performance in particular. Therefore, the researcher is not completely successful in presenting a convincing rationale for the study or a description of the manifestation of a problem that warrants investigation.

School academic performance straddles both school management and school governance. This makes the research question which this study sought to answer very relevant and topical given the debate regarding the influence of the SGB on the school's day to day teaching activities and management vis-a-vis their policy formulation role. However, the researcher does not refer to this tension in justifying the focus specific of this study.

According to section 16 of SASA 1996, there is a difference between governance and management. The day to day management of the school is a professional matter and the responsibility of the school management team. SGBs are not required and expected to be involved in the professional teaching and learning matters. However, section 20 of SASA stipulates that SGB support can be and must have an influence on the teaching and learning without directly being involved in it.

## **1.2 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION**

### **1.2.1 Mutual support**

Mutual support refers to the assistance provided by parties to each other, especially in the face of common adversity. This implies that SGB members and principals co-exist and are dependent on each other for executing their roles for the benefit and success of their schools. In addition, section 20(1)(e) of the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996)(Republic of South Africa [RSA], 1996b) (hereafter the SASA) states that the governing body of a public school must support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions, while section 16(3) state that the principal must assist the governing body in the performance of its functions and responsibilities.

For example, stakeholders in the study emphasised the fact that both teachers and SGB members co-exist and depend on each other for school development and quality academic performance. SGBs supports the management mutually through the procurement of teaching and learning resources, mobilising parents to support the school activities and volunteer their time to clean the classrooms and grounds before schools reopens. At school A, SGB members supervises late coming of learners and the teachers arrange meals for the SGBs.

## **1.2.2 Relationship**

A relationship refers to the state of being connected or related (Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2017). As partners in schools, SGBs and principals are bound by their roles and mandates to work together for the common good of the schools. Both share the responsibility for the total welfare and success of the school and therefore, they are interdependent on each other because of the nature of their membership composition. Their relationship is therefore one of the most significant variables that determines success in their roles and the school performance (Bush & Heystek, 2003: 134). Power play between role players may have a detrimental effect on the relationship of trust and mutual support (Heystek, 2004:310) and impacts negatively on the participation of all in school governance (Mabasa & Themane, 2002:11). The relationship between principals and SGB members is significant because of the interdependence. Both parties need each other for the success of the school. However, power play may derail the work of governors and principals and needs to be kept in check at all times.

## **1.2.3 School governing body**

A school governing body (SGB) is a democratically-elected body, charged with the governance of public schools, that is regarded as the mouthpiece of parents of the learners, educators and learners of the school on all matters apart from the administration and management of the school (Mothata, 2000:152). According to section 19 of the SASA, there is a role distinction between governance and professional matters. In terms of section 23 of the SASA, the membership of the governing body of an ordinary public school comprises –

- (a) elected members;
- (b) the principal, in his or her official capacity;
- (c) the parent component constitutes one more than the rest of the number of the SGB whose chairperson should be a parent. This stipulation places parents at the forefront of educational change in schools. As a majority and occupying key positions, parents are well placed to make a meaningful contribution to the education of their children and the improvement of academic performance in their schools.

## **1.2.4 School governance**

According to section 16 of the SASA, the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body. On the other hand, the professional management of a public school must be undertaken by the principal under the authority of the head of department (HoD). The distinction between the role of the governing body and the principal is distinguished by sections 16 and 20 of the SASA. School governance has different names in international literature. For example,

school-based management is also referred to as self-managing schools. The important factor is that these names show the significance and role played by school-based structures in school governance, such as the SGB in South Africa. Furthermore, Caldwell (2008:235) believes that self-managing schools have been one manifestation of a general trend towards decentralisation in public education in many countries since the late 1960s.

School governance is about creating, implementing, supervising and evaluating policies and rules which guide and govern the actions of the school and its members. In other words, school governance is concerned with the creation of policies for the school and making sure that the school is run according to the set policies (Motimele, 2005:5). This definition is supported by Mncube (2009:84), who sees school governance as the institutional structure entrusted with the responsibility or authority to formulate and adopt school policy on a range of issues, which include: school uniforms; school budgets and developmental priorities; endorsement of the code of conduct for learners, staff and parents; broad goals on the educational quality that the school should strive to achieve; school community relations; and curriculum programme development. School governance structure creates an opportunity for all stakeholders to develop a sense of ownership of the school and thus take responsibility for what is happening in the school. According to the Business Dictionary (2017), school governance is about the establishment of policies and continuous monitoring of their proper implementation by the members of the governing body of an organisation. It includes the mechanisms required to balance the powers of the members (with the associated accountability) and their primary duty of enhancing the prosperity and viability of the organisation.

Although there is a “lack of a uniform and accepted definition” (Dor, 2012:921) of what parental involvement actually means, there appears to be some consensus in the literature on the conflation of activities that together represent effective parental involvement in their children’s schooling. The context of parental involvement has been used in this study to describe a situation in which parents are perceived as active partners in the process of educating their children. Makgopa and Mokhele (2013:220) perceive parental involvement as “a combination of supporting student academic achievement and participating in school-initiated functions”. Mncube (2010:234) notes that the “concept entails awareness of, and achievement in, schoolwork, an understanding of the interaction between parenting skills and learner success in schooling, and a commitment to consistent communication with educators about learner progress”.

Governance can be defined as the combination of processes and structures implemented by the board to inform, direct, manage and monitor an organisation’s activities in the pursuit of the organisational objectives (The Institute of Internal Auditors, 2012:5). School governance refers to the involvement of relevant stakeholders, such as parents, educators, learners (Grade 8 and

higher) and non-teaching staff, in making decisions about the way in which the school should be governed according to the provisions of the SASA (Mavuso & Duku, 2014:454). School governance is about creating, implementing, supervising and evaluating policies and rules that guide and govern the actions of the school and its members. In other words, school governance is concerned with the creation of policies for the school and making sure that the school is run according to the set policies (Motimele, 2005:5). This definition is supported by Mncube (2009:84), who sees school governance as the institutional structure entrusted with the responsibility or authority to formulate and adopt school policy on a range of issues, which include: school uniforms; school budgets and developmental priorities; endorsement of the code of conduct for learners, staff and parents; broad goals on the educational quality that the school should strive to achieve; school community relations; and curriculum programme development. School governance structure creates an opportunity for all stakeholders to develop a sense of ownership of the school and thus take responsibility for what is happening at the school. According to the Business Dictionary (2017), school governance is about the establishment of policies, and continuous monitoring of their proper implementation, by the members of the governing body of an organisation. It includes the mechanisms required to balance the powers of the members (with the associated accountability) and their primary duty of enhancing the prosperity and viability of the organisation.

### **1.2.5 Principal**

A principal means an educator appointed or acting as head of a school, who plans, organises, leads, controls and delegates the teaching and learning activities in the school organisation (RSA, 1996b). The principal plays a pivotal role in a school and is responsible for the professional educational services. According to Mncube (2008:85), principals are responsible for the day-to-day running and administrative duties of a school. The principal can also be seen as a professional manager.

### **1.2.6 School academic performance and development**

According to Dictionary.com (2017), the word academic is defined as relating to a college, academy, school or other educational institution, especially one for higher education. Performance is defined as accomplishment. Development, on the other hand, is defined as the systematic use of scientific and technical knowledge to meet specific objectives or requirements. In other words, academic performance and development is the outcome of education and the extent to which a student, educator or institution has achieved their educational goals (Wikipedia, 2017).

School academic performance refers to the achievement of academic standards and targets by both educators and learners as set out by the curriculum unit of the Department of Basic Education (DoBE). Performance will also be evident in external examinations, such as the Annual National Assessments (ANA) for grade 3, grade 6 and grade 9 learners, as well as in preliminary and final examinations for grade 12 learners (DoBE, 2013). Although academic performance is important, general school performance could also be measured by learner and educator discipline, attendance of classes and punctuality, teaching and learning, good human relations, maintenance of school buildings and grounds, cleanliness of the school, extracurricular activities, and parental involvement in school activities and meetings. Academic performance is the way the curriculum is presented, the way learners are supported to learn, catering for learners with special needs and socio-economic needs, creating an environment conducive to learning (which includes infrastructure, equipment, facilities, discipline, etc.), and whether learning and teaching takes place in a school.

School development, on the other hand, implies and hopefully will lead to improved academic performance. The study does not try to say and prove that governing body support will automatically lead to school improvement. SGB support is part of the process for school improvement but the study is not trying to directly prove that governing body support will lead to academic achievement. The study is merely trying to indicate that it is a process and it suggests that if this is improved then there may be better academic achievement. This is an interpretive study and we are understanding and interpreting how the people indicated it to us during the interviews.

### **1.3 HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

It is important to trace the origins of parental involvement in school governance in South Africa before 1994 – the year in which South Africa became a democratic country – and beyond, and to look at how the support of governors to schools have evolved over this period.

Before 1994, school governance and management in South Africa was the responsibility of the school principals and educators. Parents of learners from rural and township schools were marginalised, less involved and uncertain about their roles as opposed to parents in Model C schools who played a more significant role in school governance. Prior to the legislation of the 1990s, governing a school was a much less demanding activity. Governing bodies or management councils played a supportive role with restricted powers and functions (Lemmer, 2000:136). These councils or structures were not democratically elected and existed in some

schools, did not advocate stakeholder participation, and were dominated by school principals reporting directly to the government bureaucracy responsible for education (Mabasa & Themane, 2002:112).

The dream of having an inclusive governance system was realised when the SASA was passed shortly after the advent of a post-apartheid government in 1994 (Mabasa & Themane, 2002:112). Two important principles of the SASA are concerned with inclusivity and decentralisation. Inclusivity, as used in the SASA, means the participation of parents, educators, non-teaching staff, learners and other people who are willing and able to contribute to the school. Decentralisation means that decisions ought to be made by people who are closest to the school situation, such as SGB members (Motimele, 2005:4).

#### **1.4 SCHOOL GOVERNANCE IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA**

South Africa's first democratically-elected government took power in 1994. The new government promulgated the SASA, which mandates the establishment of SGBs comprising parents, educators and non-educator members of staff. According to Pampallis (2002:9), the Act replaced the multiple school modes of the various apartheid education departments, which were racially divided, with two legally recognised categories of schools, namely public schools and independent schools. Furthermore, parents form the majority on SGBs and thus have potentially been placed in a powerful position, because they are in the majority to influence decision-making processes. The SASA also provides an opportunity for the establishment of new relationships between the state, represented by principals and parents. The intent and spirit of the SASA is to foster a workable and healthy relationship between all stakeholders represented in the SGB, with each stakeholder safeguarding the interests of its constituency, while at the same time ensuring the smooth running of teaching and learning in schools.

The aim of SASA was to democratise school governance and to devolve more authority over education to local communities. Lemmer (2000:129) maintains that decentralised school governance is considered to be a more effective and appropriate form of governance, especially in this day and age. It presupposes a devolvement of power from the national government level down through the system to the local level. It is also a democratic form of governance based on the principle of representation, equity and participation. Decentralisation in South African school governance is aimed at giving greater control to SGBs (Karlsson *et al.*, 2001:141). Karlsson *et al.* (2001:141) further maintain that decentralisation often means the shift of power from the school district to the school, or a shift from national to a provincial or state government.

In keeping with the international trends on decentralisation of school decision-making power to local governing structures in education in America and self-managing schools in Britain, South African schools have moved towards greater parental involvement in school governance. The rationale for the establishment of representative SGBs is to ensure that educators, parents, learners and non-teaching staff will actively participate in the governance and management of their schools, with a view to provide better teaching and learning environments (Lemmer, 2000:137). In short, the sweeping changes that took place in education are best summarised by Pampallis (2002:2), who said that the process of change away from the apartheid education model has resulted in a very different structure for the schooling system at all levels, from the national Department of Education (DoE) to the individual school. This process was strongly linked with the school-based management or decentralisation of decision-making trend in the world.

### **1.5 GOVERNING BODIES' ROLE TO IMPROVE QUALITY EDUCATION IN THEIR SCHOOLS**

From the above discussions about school governance, it seems that the concepts of support, collaboration and involvement remain the biggest challenges facing members of SGBs and principals and in the process, hamper the academic performance in schools. Principals are no longer mere ex-officio members of the SGB. The SASA was amended with the insertion of section 16, which places the principal as a representative of the department in the SGB. The amendment puts principals in the position of power and they could use this power to suppress the voice of parent members. This situation may hamper the trust and cooperation relationship between the two parties. Nevertheless, the SGB should always strive for the best interests of the school, while at the same time, the best interests of the child are paramount in all matters concerning the child and also in education. Failure of SGBs and principals to work together to fulfil the objectives of the concepts underlying their functions defeats the aims and spirit of decentralised education as envisaged by the SASA. The focus of members of SGBs and principals have shifted to petty politics of class and power relations as opposed to cooperative governance characterised by shared decision-making, mutual respect, trust and collaboration.

Furthermore, sections 16 and 20 of the SASA lay the foundation for cooperative governance and encourage strong partnership between the governing body and other role players. This partnership is said to be characterised by mutual trust and respect, shared decision-making, common vision, open communication and good teamwork.

### **1.6 SUPPORT AS A GOVERNING BODY: ACTIVITY AND AIM**

Support is defined as providing comfort, encouragement, or financial assistance to someone (YourDictionary.com, 2017). Macmillan Dictionary further defines support as approving an idea or

a person or organisation and helping them to be successful. From the literature on school governance, the concept of support is commonly used to refer to parental involvement, collaboration and partnership.

A partnership is defined as an association between groups or individuals in some activity in which the expenses, profits and losses are proportionately shared (Matlin, 2001:11). Relationships are partnerships that depend on mutual trust. Parental involvement in the school is very important. It is seen as a mechanism for simultaneously raising education standards, developing new partnerships between schools and parents in the local community, and promoting social inclusion (Brain & Reid, 2003:291). Parents are invited to take up a variety of roles as co-educators of their children, governance of schools, responsibility for their children's attendance and behaviour, and to provide practical help to schools.

In return, schools are expected to support the involvement of parents through providing the necessary support and opportunities for parents to become involved in schools and act as a resource in promoting the wider inclusion of families and the local community. Parental involvement is about linking the school and the community and fostering good relationships. It provides schools with a way of contacting hard-to-reach parents. It extends the school's capacity to develop its services for parents in the community and to provide learner and family support. Parental involvement may be one way of helping to improve attendance and behavioural change as well as learner and school performance (Potgieter, 1997:8).

Joubert and Bray (2007:18) consider this mutual trust and respect between the partners as crucial for the success of a school governing partnership. This implies that a partnership should be based on mutual trust and respect between the two parties, where each partner is equal, with no dominance of one partner over the other. Such a partnership also implies the existence of openness, cooperation, participation and accountability between the partners to work together in all spheres of management and governance so as to promote the best interests of their school.

Heystek (2004:38) believes the limited training of the main role players in the management of schools, coupled with their uncertainty regarding their functions and duties, sometimes makes it difficult for principals and parent governors to work together harmoniously. Even though many principals have many years of experience, the participative and democratic experience may prepare them for this changed situation. This poses a serious challenge to the functioning of the SGB, because principals are supposed to guide and even train the governing body members in their roles and responsibilities.

In addition, Maluleka (2008:35) warns that, while in principle, there is a commitment in South Africa to involve “the community” in decision-making about local schools, the constraints in making the principle a reality may include:

- the perception of lack of power among school staff and among parents and others in the community;
- confusion over the varying roles of governing bodies in different categories of schools;
- rurality and illiteracy of a large proportion of the population and unrealistic educational requirements for membership of school bodies;
- the perception of the heavy burden of responsibility for educational matters among a populace already overworked and underpaid.

These constraints may lead to jostling for power and fighting over territory between the school governors and school managers, which might cause serious impediments to the academic performance and development of the school. Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:140) maintain that, although the establishment of democratically-elected governing bodies has changed the political structure of schools and the nature of decision-making, principals are in practice often reluctant to encourage SGB members to take their rightful place in school governance matters.

## **1.7 TRAINING OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES**

Given the magnitude of powers, functions and responsibilities of the SGB, it is imperative for members to possess some form of basic knowledge, skills and capacity to execute their mandate successfully. Section 19 of the SASA compels provincial governments in South Africa to provide training for governing bodies. In this section of the SASA (RSA, 1996b:30), it is stated that, out of funds appropriated for this purpose by the provincial legislation, the Head of Department must establish a programme to: (a) provide training for newly elected governing bodies to enable them to perform their functions; and (b) provide continuing training to governing bodies to promote the effective performance of their functions, or to enable them to assume additional functions. The SASA further urges the HoD to ensure that principals and other officers of the education department render all necessary assistance to governing bodies in the performance of their functions (RSA, 1996b:31). However, the training is problematic and inconsistent and therefore, it may negatively affect governing bodies’ potential support to schools.

## **1.8 STATEMENT OF THE GENERAL RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Van Wyk (2007:135) maintains that, in spite of having the majority representation on the SGB, many parents serving on SGBs are reticent and rely on the principal and educators for leadership and guidance in decision-making. Karlsson (2002:332) ascribes this to parents’ weak

understanding of their role, a capacity deficit in the range of skills needed to perform governance functions, and irregular attendance of meetings. It therefore seems that, in spite of being in the majority, parents do not play a significant role in school governance. On the other hand, educators, who form a minority on SGBs, continue to dominate parents. Karlsson (2002:332) contends that educators have the greatest participation in decision-making after the principal and play a far greater role than members representing non-educator staff, parents and learners. Mabasa and Themane (2002:115) agree by adding that principals and educators dominate SGB meetings and expect their recommendations to be accepted by all members without any further discussion.

According to Singh, Mbokodi and Msila (2004), parents, especially those from impoverished backgrounds, need to be empowered if they are to make a significant contribution to their children's education. A partnership between parents and schools is an instrument to improve and develop the schools as parents involve themselves in the schools' activities to benefit their children's education (Vatterott, 2009:55). This relationship creates the opportunity for parents and educators to become involved in a more formal and structured partnership relating to the education of the child. The importance of this partnership is emphasised by Vatterott (2009:55), who argues that the "power relationship between schools and parents must be realigned to embrace parents as equal partners in their children's education".

Research has consistently shown that, with the increase in parent partnerships in the governance of schools, there is a concomitant increase in student achievement (Ramirez, 2001:130). Gonzalez (2002:132) cites numerous studies that found links between parental partnerships and student variables, such as academic achievement, sense of wellbeing, school attendance, attitude, homework readiness, grades and educational aspirations. While these studies may not be directly linked to schools in South Africa, the findings are universally significant in terms of parent-school relationships. Blankstein (2004:167) believes that nothing motivates a child more than when learning is valued by schools and communities working together in partnership. Blankstein notes that parent partnerships lead to greater achievement, irrespective of factors such as socio-economic status, background, educational level and whether or not parents are employed.

Edwards and Alldred (2000:3) state that, across the political spectrum, parental partnerships are regarded as enhancing the educational performance of children from deprived socio-economic backgrounds. In addition, such partnerships serve as a market mechanism or even a communication approach to improve schools' effectiveness for all learners. On the other hand, Gonzalez (2002:132) observes that the lack of parental partnerships in schools leads to excessive

peer influence on learners. This inevitably creates negative educational outcomes, which range from truancy to drug abuse and from depression to low grades.

## **1.9 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **1.9.1 Main research question**

What are the perceptions of school governing bodies' (SGBs) and principals on the importance of support towards academic improvement of their schools?

### **1.9.2 Sub-questions**

The following specific questions were investigated in this study:

- What are the characteristics of a mutual supportive relationship between the principal and the rest of the governing body?
- What is the nature of the relationship between SGBs and principals?
- How does SGBs' support of principals and educators influence the academic performance of schools?

## **1.10 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main aim of the study was to investigate the perceptions of school governing bodies' (SGBs) and principals and the importance of its support of schools towards academic improvement.

The specific objectives were:

- to determine how the support of SGBs to principals could be enhanced to improve academic performance;
- to investigate how SGBs and principals of schools relate to each other in the Kgetleng River Area Project Office and how it influences academic improvement to determine if and how SGBs support principals and educators to produce improved academic performance.

## **1.11 RESEARCH DESIGN**

According to Flick *et al.* (2004:146), a research design is a plan for collecting and analysing evidence that will make it possible for the investigator to answer the questions he or she has posed. McMillan and Schumacher (:2010:63) further stipulate that a research design refers to the plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer questions the researcher might have.

The research design for this study was both descriptive and interpretive. It was descriptive as it aimed at revealing the nature of certain situations, settings, relationships and people. A phenomenological strategy was used in this study. According to Fouché and Delport (2002:273), phenomenology seeks to understand and interpret the meaning people give to their everyday lives. In addition, Bogdan and Biklen (2003:23) argue that researchers in phenomenology attempt

to understand the meaning of events and interactions of ordinary people in particular situations. In essence, this implies a study that describes the experiences that a phenomenon, topic or concept holds for various individuals. The researcher does this by entering the subject's "lifeworld" or life setting, mainly by observing participants and conducting interviews in order to analyse the conversations and interactions that the researcher has had with the participants (Fouché & Delport, 2002:272). In other words, in a phenomenological study, the researcher tries to understand people's perceptions, perspectives and understanding of a particular situation. Phenomenological researchers depend exclusively on lengthy interviews with a carefully-selected sample of participants. The researcher listens closely as the participants describe their everyday experiences related to the phenomenon and must be alert to subtle yet meaningful cues in every participant's expressions and questions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:139).

## **1.12 METHODOLOGY**

Mouton (2001:56) argues that the research methodology focuses on the research process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used. Mouton (2001:55) defines the research method as the total set of means that researchers employ in their goal of acquiring valid knowledge. Cohen *et al.* (2000:34), on the other hand, assert that the term research method refers to a range of approaches used in educational research to gather data which is to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation for explanation and prediction. According to Henning *et al.* (2004:36), methodology refers to the coherent group of methods that complement one another to deliver data and findings that reflect the research question and match the research purpose.

For the purposes of this study, a qualitative research method was used. A qualitative research method was chosen as the most suitable method of data collection for this investigation. Hammersley (2000:2) concur that a qualitative research method is a systematic, empirical strategy for answering questions about people in a bounded social context where the focus of attention is on the perceptions and experiences of participants.

## **1.13 SAMPLING STRATEGY**

### **1.13.1 Sampling**

Sampling is the method of selecting a group of people from a population to represent that population. I selected a group from the population that was studied. For the purposes of this study, convenient and purposive sampling strategies were used to collect data that would address the research question. Purposive sampling strategies are designed to enhance understanding of selected individuals' or groups' experience(s), or for developing theories and concepts. Researchers seek to accomplish this goal by selecting "information-rich" cases, that is, individuals, groups, organisations, or behaviours that provide the greatest insight into the research question (Devers & Frankel, 2000:264). Furthermore, purposive sampling strategies are

non-random ways of ensuring that particular categories of cases within a sampling universe are represented in the final sample of a project. The rationale for employing a purposive sampling strategy is that the researcher assumes – based on his or her *a priori* theoretical understanding of the topic being studied – that certain categories of individuals may have a unique, different or important perspective on the phenomenon in question, and their presence in the sample should be ensured (Robinson, 2014:32).

I focused on the two schools which were selected based on the number of circuits (2) in the Kgetleng River Area, namely Madikwe and Pella-Silverkrans. One school was selected from each circuit. The two schools were allocated symbols, like School A and School B, to ensure anonymity. The researcher randomly selected one school from each circuit as he believed that all the schools operated under the same conditions and were subjected to the same regulations governing schools, and also to compare how the SGBs in the respective circuits functioned in terms of academic performance of their schools. The two schools consisted of many learners who came from the same socio-economic background. Both schools were rural schools. Most parents of the learners belonged to the working class and some were unemployed, single parents who relied on social grants from the government. The literacy level of the parents was average as they could read and write in their home language, but they struggled when it came to other official languages like English and Afrikaans.

The two schools fell under the same Area Project Office and district office. School governing body members were supported by the same official who was connected to the Education Management Governance Development Unit. Both schools were primary schools. The schools were ranked by the North West Department of Basic Education as quintile 1 and 2, meaning that they served learners who were from the same disadvantaged and socio-economic backgrounds. Quintile is a term used to classify schools according to the socio-economic status of the people living in a particular municipality area. The sample consisted of 12 members, chosen based on their experience in teaching and school governance: one represented the teaching staff on the SGB, chairpersons, secretaries, and one additional parent member was interviewed. The aim of including an experienced educator who was not a member of the SGB and an additional parent member in the sample was to obtain the perspectives of role players outside the SGB and who were not members of the executive committee of the SGB. These participants were purposively selected for interviews in order for the researcher to obtain rich information from all relevant parties. In addition, the selection of members from three different components and groups of people assisted the researcher to get three perspectives on one phenomenon under study. Traditionally, office bearers are likely to be conservative with information and therefore the inclusion of other members of the SGB and staff will add value to the research.

Three groups were interviewed in this study: principals, who were interviewed individually; parent members of the SGB, who participated in a focus group; and educators, who participated in a focus group. Parents were likely to be more open and free to participate in the absence of the principal and in the company of their peers. It was expected that the discussion would be rich and varied in this way.

## **1.14 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

### **1.14.1 Literature Study**

A literature review was carried out, focusing on scholarly work done in South Africa. The current study is conducted within a South African context and the researcher undertook to find out what other researchers say about SGBs in other parts of the country. A literature study is critical as the research cannot be done in a vacuum. It helps to give insight into the present and past research already undertaken. This is of particular importance as knowledge evolves every day. Therefore, it is important to refer to previous knowledge and experience on the topic. The study relied on information from journals, DoE publications and documents, circulars, Acts, books, theses and research articles that were relevant to the topic under investigation. A literature study contributes to the shaping of the researcher's frame of reference and forms a central part of the research process. It leads to a clearer understanding of the nature and meaning of the research question (White, 2002:26). As educators often say, we must begin with the known and move to the unknown. Greenfield (2002:8) summed it up when he said that a good start is an overview of current thinking in the field. The aim was to learn more about school governance in South Africa and more importantly, how the mutual support and the relationship between SGB members and school principals promote the academic development of schools.

Both primary and secondary sources of information were used to conduct the literature review in this study. The aim of the study was to research the effectiveness of the mutual support and relationship between SGB members and principals in the academic development of their schools. The literature review assisted in finding relevant information with regard to the mutual support and relationship between SGBs and principals in the Kgetleng River Area Project Office.

## **1.15 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

In addition to the literature review, I employed a qualitative research method to collect data, namely semi-structured interviews with SGB chairpersons, secretaries, additional members, educators and principals. This was of particular importance as I needed to establish and gather first-hand information on the topic, which was only possible through personal contact with the relevant role players.

Cooper and Schindler (2008:170) state that an interview is the data collection technique for qualitative research. Blumberg *et al.* (2008:281) define an interview as a two-way conversation

managed by the interviewer to obtain information from the participant. Cooper and Schindler (2008:171) identify three types of interviews:

- Unstructured or open-ended interviews: no structure, order, or predetermined questions are used. The conversation is open and allows freedom and time for new lines to emerge.
- Semi-structured interviews: a set of predetermined questions is used to structure the conversation, but enough space is allowed for discussion of the possible answers and the thoughts of the participants.
- Structured interviews: an interview guide similar to a questionnaire is used to structure the interview, but questions are open-ended. Probing or discussions are not allowed or need to be minimised.

Furthermore, qualitative research aims to generate in-depth accounts from individuals and groups by talking with them, observing their behaviour, and analysing their artefacts (e.g. diaries, meeting minutes, photographs), considering the different contexts in which they are based. Qualitative researchers primarily gather data from interviews (semi-structured or unstructured), focus groups, observations, or documents and other written artefacts (Kuper *et al.*, 2008:404).

Qualitative research is an approach to social science that emphasises understanding the subject's point of view (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003:261). A qualitative research method was chosen as it was the most appropriate method for this study. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Through this method, the personal perceptions and life experiences of all stakeholders in the study, namely the parent members, principals and educators in the Kgetleng River Area Project Office, could be determined.

## **1.16 METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS**

Mouton (2001:108) explains data analysis as the breaking up of data into manageable themes, patterns, trends and relationships. Bogdan and Biklen (2003:120) furthermore state that data analysis is a process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes and other materials accumulated so as to increase their understanding and to enable the researcher to present what has been discovered to others. The researcher begins with a large body of information, and through inductive reasoning, sorting and categorising, gradually boils the data down to a small set of abstract, underlying themes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:160).

## **1.17 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Babbie (2008:67-72) explains that the most important ethical agreements that prevail in social research are voluntary participation, no harm to participants, anonymity, confidentiality, and no deception. Human beings have human rights, as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of

South Africa (108 of 1996)(RSA, 1996c) (hereafter the Constitution), and researchers always need to bear this in mind when they interact with the subjects of their studies.

The researcher first obtained permission from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University to continue with the fieldwork (Appendix A). Permission to conduct interviews with parents, educators and principals at the sampled schools in the Kgetleng River Area Project Office was also requested and obtained from the North West Department of Education (Appendix B). All participants in this study were requested to sign the informed consent forms prior to their participation in individual (Appendix C) and focus group (Appendix D) interviews.

As the researcher, I had to understand that participation in all research is voluntary and that there should be no coercion or deception. Therefore, I should not be in a position to force or pressure respondents to participate. Participants assist the researcher and they should be invited to participate, with a clear understanding that they are under no obligation to do so, and that there will be no negative consequences for them if they do not assist the researcher in his research.

I made personal visits to the selected schools to hold briefings with all stakeholders about the purpose of the study and to officially request their participation. Participants were informed that the study was meant to benefit them individually as they interacted with others and their schools. The participants were then given a printed briefing information sheet and were asked to sign a consent form as part of an agreement to participate in the research. The researcher also issued acknowledgement letters to the participants. All information of the participants was treated confidentially, and participants were assured that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time if they felt that they no longer wanted to participate. After permission to conduct research was obtained from the Department, appointments were arranged with the schools, followed by personal visits for briefing sessions with the SGBs and principals. Important information was shared with participants and contact numbers were exchanged for free and open communication.

### **1.18 SUMMARY**

This chapter provided an orientation to the study. Chapter 2 will discuss the legislative framework of SGBs in South Africa.

## CHAPTER 2

# THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to explore SGBs' support of schools to promote quality academic performance. In general, there are many variables and factors related to school performance. For example, educator and learner discipline; cleanliness of the school; punctuality of educators and learners to school and classrooms; participation in extramural activities; lesson preparation and presentation; and good working relationships between educators and SMTs. However, the presence or absence of these factors have a specific influence on academic performance; hence the rationale for the study to specifically look at the relationship between SGBs' support of schools and how it may influence academic performance of schools.

The SASA promulgated the establishment of SGBs in South Africa. The Act outlines the legislative roles and responsibilities of SGBs. The SASA stipulates that the SGB should support and promote the best interests of the school. This chapter deals with the legislative framework of SGBs, with an emphasis on how the SGB supports schools, and how SGB members relate and work with the school principal to promote quality academic performance.

It is important to trace the origins of parental involvement in school governance in South Africa before 1994 – the year in which South Africa became a democratic country – and after, and to look at how the support of governors to schools has evolved. Since the general elections of 1994, the adoption of a new constitutional dispensation and the phasing in of new education legislation, a new system of education and training has been created in South Africa. The new system of education and training is based on the fundamental principles of democracy, unity, non-discrimination, equity and equality (Squelch, 2000:137). The education environment, in particular, has experienced tremendous transformation since the democratic dispensation. In line with democratic principles, the government enacted a law to make it mandatory for all stakeholders, particularly parents, to be involved in the governance of schools. The passing of the SASA made provision for the establishment of democratic SGBs for all public schools in the country (Quan-Baffour & Arko-Achemfuor, 2014:171).

Prior to 1994, principals and chiefs of rural communities undemocratically handpicked school council members, and people who were close to the learners that had vested interest in children's education were not necessarily given the opportunity to serve on the school council. Clarke (2009) views the SASA as the piece of legislation that is most relevant to members of SGBs, consisting of parents,

educators, non-educators and learners. The latter is an indication that the Act democratised school governance, making it mandatory for parents to serve on SGBs. Governing bodies are responsible for school governance issues and supporting school principals and their management teams for the realisation of quality education. Clarke (2009) further maintains that SGB members are expected to provide the principal with sound advice and guidance on issues that can improve the smooth running of the school.

According to Karlsson *et al.* (2001:163), the rationale behind SASA is to ensure that all stakeholders in SGBs will actively participate in the governance and management of schools, with a view to providing a better teaching and learning environment. This implies that the government is committed to the development of a democratic system that provides for participation of all stakeholders with a vested interest in education.

The National Education Policy Act (27 of 1996) (RSA, 1996c) outlines the organisation, management and governance of schools. It stipulates that education policies must ensure broad public participation in the development of the education system and the representation of stakeholders in the governance of all aspects of the education system (Oosthuizen, 2002). This Act, for the first time, provided for the need of parental involvement in school governance matters.

Education White Paper 2 (General Notice 130 of 1996) (RSA, 1996a) sets out the policy of the government on the governance of schools and the development of capacity for school leadership throughout the country. It is also aimed at providing an acceptable framework for the achievement of a truly democratic school governance system in a diverse society. The White Paper included a major role for parents in school governance to be exercised in the spirit of a partnership between the state and a local community (Duma, 2014:146). Each public school would represent a partnership between the state and the local community. This concept was of fundamental value in reconciling the respective responsibilities of the government and the community. It was the basis for reconstructing the system of public education. The essence of the SASA was to transform education in South Africa away from the iniquitous policies of the past. Its main thrust was the normalisation of the South African education system; the advancement of the democratic transformation of the country; the combating of racism, sexism and all forms of unfair discrimination; the promotion of the rights of learners, educators and parents; and most significantly, the involvement of parents in school governance (RSA, 1996b).

Therefore, the principles underpinning the establishment of SGBs are based on the principles and values of the Constitution (RSA, 1996c). School governing bodies are a means of deepening our social democracy, broadening participation, instilling a sense of ownership, and transforming

education. However, as Heystek and Paquette (1999:191) have noted, the challenge faced by SGBs is that, in South Africa, neither parents nor educators have had much experience of participatory decision-making because, in the past, principals were generally considered to be the only people with the knowledge and authority to make decisions. Marishane (1999:60), Themane and Mabasa (2002), and Duma (2014) added by saying that school governors have diverse backgrounds and often have little or no experience in managing an organisation such as a school. Heystek (2011:457) confirms that, during this time, non-white schools did not have any form of self-management, with limited involvement of parents, except for educator and parent committees, with no power related to the teaching and learning activities of schools. Therefore, they tend to be spectators in the education system, since they are unable to perform their duties effectively as enshrined in the SASA.

On this basis, training or capacity-building for newly elected members and continued training for existing members becomes critical. Training will assist SGB members to understand their role and functions and to be able to serve their schools better. Training will also bridge the gap between the parents and educators and will strengthen partnership, which is the basis for improved service delivery in our schools.

## **2.2 THE NATURE AND FUNCTIONS OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE**

### **2.2.1 School governance before 1994**

The governing of individual schools – school governance as it is known in South Africa – only began in the early 1990s. Since this coincided with the political transition to a post-apartheid South Africa, the policies and structures for school governance were influenced by the local political context and international trends. These trends related to the self-management of schools in which community involvement, decentralised decisions and decentralisation of funds were the driving forces. This decentralisation of decision-making to the local school was also officially implemented in all schools in South Africa as a result of the promulgation of the SASA (Heystek, 2011). Although there were expectations that self-managing schools would be able to provide better, improved education to the local community, three decades of research about the possible link between improved education results and self-managing schools has produced only limited evidence of this. Self-managing schools may have a positive influence on academic achievement if other factors, such as centralised curriculum and examination, coexist with the school autonomy (Caldwell, 2008). This study focused on school governance in South Africa with an emphasis on the support of SGBs to schools and their relationship with school principals to promote quality academic performance.

The South African education system before 1994 was extremely complex, with a variety of different governance structures at all levels of the education system. The one consistent trend after 1948, with the accession to power of the National Party and the institutionalisation of apartheid, was that the control and administration of education reflected the apartheid policies of separate provision, which divided the country into Bantustans or homelands for the different nations in South Africa.

There were fifteen different ministries of education: four in the independent homelands; six in the self-governing territories; one responsible for the Department of Education and Training (catering for Africans outside the homelands); one in each of the three tri-cameral houses of parliament (catering for Whites, Coloureds and Indians); and one for the Department of National Education (DNE) (Naidoo, 2005:22).

Mabasa and Themane (2002:112) argue that the various systems made some provision for community participation through school councils, management committees, or school boards. School committees and boards in black schools played a consultative role, while school boards in white schools enjoyed more autonomy. Heystek (2011:457) agrees with Mabasa and Themane (2002) when he maintains that these schools had the right to appoint educators and non-educating staff, the right to ownership of the school buildings and facilities, and could determine learner enrolment and other related policies. They also introduced a school fee that parents were expected to pay, although the provincial departments continued to pay educators' salaries. During that time, the non-white schools did not have any form of self-management, with limited involvement of parents, except for educator and parent committees, with no power related to the teaching and learning activities of schools (Heystek, 2011:457). In black schools, these structures did not encourage stakeholder participation and were dominated by principals. Principals were responsible for both the management and governance of schools, with minimal participation and involvement of stakeholders. As a result, from the 1970s, parents began to show their anger and frustration through mass protests and action because they regarded the school committees as illegitimate and autocratic structures. According to Mabasa and Themane (2002:112), the exclusion of some of the stakeholders created fertile ground for the broader political struggle towards a more inclusive system of governance.

From the 1980s, the education struggle against apartheid education intensified, with a united front from all stakeholders, such as parents, educators, students, and religious and community leaders. These developments were characterised by a call for people's education. Because of mass protests, the government responded by establishing the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC). In its response, the NECC called for the formation of parent-teacher-student associations (PTSAs) in high schools and parent-teacher associations (PTAs) in primary schools. There were similar organisations in white schools with a different purpose. These organisations were functioning as support structures for schools. For example, they were actively involved in fundraising and similar activities. The aim was to foster partnership and participation in decision-making and to democratise school governance. These structures enjoyed popular support and were considered legitimate. According to Masheula (2003:22), the PTSAs served as alternative governance structures that operated in township schools in the mid-1980s as part of the initial campaign to develop a new democratic system of school governance.

During the 1990s, following the unbanning of anti-apartheid structures and organisations, leaders of these organisations saw the need for generating viable alternatives to apartheid education. Taking the lead was the African National Congress (ANC) which released its Education and Training Framework Document. At the same time, the NECC sponsored the National Education Policy Initiative (NEPI). Sayed and Carrim (1997:92) maintain that the NEPI elaborated the role of PTSAs as governance structures, which would determine school policy within the national framework. The next discussion will focus on school governance after 1994, the advent of democracy, to compare school governance before and after 1994.

### **2.3 SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AFTER 1994**

The preamble of the SASA transports the constitutional values and aims to the Schools Act as well as school governance and management. For the purpose of the study, I will emphasise the theme of the preamble (RSA, 1996b:1):

Quality education aims and values:

Provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners and in so doing lay a strong foundation for the development of all our people's talents and capabilities and contribute to the eradication of poverty and the economic well-being of society (RSA, 1996b).

The period after the democratic elections in 1994 was characterised by the formulation of a uniform education policy for all schools, which is characterised by a focus on redress, equity, quality and democratic participation (Naidoo, 2005:23). A committee to review the organisation, governance and funding of schools was commissioned and the findings of the committee were released in the Hunter Report. The Hunter Committee report of 1995 proposed that two categories of schools should operate in South Africa— public schools, and independent or private schools— and proposed that parents as the majority, students, educators, non-teaching staff and the principal should serve on the governing bodies. It further proposed two sets of powers and functions of SGBs, namely basic and negotiable powers (Naidoo, 2005).

The government responded to the Hunter Report in the form of two White Papers (White Paper 2a: November 1995; and White Paper 2b: February 1996). These two White Papers, after considering the proposals of the Hunter Report and the response of the minister to the report, became the Bill as to how schools were to operate in future. The Bill had passed through many phases in parliament before the SASA was eventually passed in November 1996. According to Naidoo (2005:29), the SASA reaffirmed the principles of equity, quality and democratic governance of schools. Its intention is to create a new school governance landscape based on citizen participation, partnerships between the state, parents, learners, school staff and communities, and to devolve power towards the individual school and community. Additionally, the preamble of the SASA (RSA, 1996b:5) states that

South Africa needs a new national system of education to redress past injustices; provide education of high quality; lay a solid foundation for developing all people's talents and capabilities; democratically transform society; combat racism, sexism, and all other forms of discrimination and intolerance; protect and advance our diverse cultures and languages; uphold the rights of learners, parents and educators; and promote the acceptance of responsibility for schools in partnership with the state.

## **2.4 COMPOSITION OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES**

It can be deduced from the SASA that SGBs are given the mandate to support schools to provide quality academic performance. This mandate to support is evident in the composition of SGBs, which gives parent members an advantage over other stakeholders in the SGB in terms of numbers. The SASA gives parents the muscle to make and implement decisions that promote quality education with its voting powers. School governing bodies of ordinary public schools comprise the school principal, as an ex officio member, elected members and co-opted members. Elected members of the governing body comprise parents, educators at the school, members of staff who are not educators, and learners in the eighth grade or higher (Squelch, 2000:138). According to the SASA (RSA, 1996b, section 23), there must be one more parent on the governing body than the combined total of the other members with voting rights. This puts parents in the majority and paves a way for parents to support schools. A parent who is elected to the governing body must have a child or children at the school and may not be employed at the school.

Furthermore, Squelch (2000:139) states that only a parent who is not employed at the school may be the chairperson of the governing body. The provision for representation of all stakeholders is important because it ensures that all major role players in the school are represented on the governing body, including learners. In order to draw on people with certain skills and expertise, the governing body is allowed to co-opt members from the community to serve on the SGB. Co-option gives parents extra pairs of hands and puts parents in the majority to vote in favour of their decisions to fully support schools to promote quality academic performance.

## **2.5 THE LEGAL STATUS OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES**

In terms of the SASA (RSA, 1996b, section 15), a public school is a juristic person with the legal capacity to perform its functions. A juristic person is an abstract legal entity – such as a church, bank and university – that stands separately from the people who are members of it and has rights and duties independently from its members. Therefore, a juristic person can engage in legal activities such as agreements and the closing of contracts. Section 16 of the SASA states that a school operates as a juristic person through its governing body in which school governance is vested. An example given in section 9 of the SASA is that a SGB acts on behalf of the school when it suspends

a learner. Thus, the action taken against the learner is taken in the name of the school and the school is legally responsible for its conduct. The school may be sued and may also sue in its own name. Furthermore, the SASA (RSA, 1996b, section 16) states that the governing body of a school stands in a position of trust towards the school. According to Squelch (2000:137), this means that the governing body must act in good faith; carry out its duties and functions in the interests of the school; not disclose confidential information that might harm the school; not engage in any unlawful conduct; and not compete with the school's interests and activities. The SGB must therefore use its legal status to support schools to promote quality academic performance.

Squelch (2000) further maintains that the SASA lays the foundation for cooperative governance and encourages strong partnership between the governing body and other role players. Squelch (2000) further argues that this partnership should be characterised by mutual trust and respect; shared decision-making; common vision; open communication; and good teamwork. In addition, since schools are state organs, and as a result, public entities that operate primarily in the public law domain, they must have the public interest in mind. They are therefore bound by the underlying democratic principles and values (RSA, 1996b).

## **2.6 THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

Quite often, the members of the SGB and school management intrude into each other's scope of responsibility. The confusion is largely due to the thin line of demarcation between school governance and school management. It is very important that the SGB and SMT should see themselves as partners in education and should strive to strike a balance between their roles. The SASA clearly spells out the difference between the roles of the SGB and SMT. The role of the SGB is to oversee and support the school. They are not performing professional functions in the school, but must support educators by providing them with resources for quality teaching and learning. The SGB is concerned with governance. The SMT, on the other hand, is concerned with the day-to-day administration of the school. The roles of the SGB and SMT are differentiated in Table 2.1:

**Table 2.1: The difference between governance and management (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2009:236)**

<b>Governors</b>	<b>Managers</b>
They are elected	They are employed
Adopt a constitution	Perform and carry out professional functions
Develop the mission statement of the school	Organise all activities that support teaching and learning
Buy textbooks, educational materials and equipment for the school	Decide on textbooks, educational materials and equipment to be bought
Control and maintain school property, buildings and grounds	Manage personnel and finances
They are rendering a voluntary service for the benefit of their children	They are remunerated for services rendered every month
They support the principal, educators and other staff in carrying out their functions	They represent the employer and implement the policies of the department
Develop school policies	Implement school policies
Promote the best interests of the school	Apply and promote best practices at school
Adopt a code of conduct for learners	Draw up a code of conduct for learners
Open and maintain a bank account for the school	Raise funds, collect school fees and deposit money into the school's bank account
Start and administer a school fund	Control and monitor the school fund
Prepare an annual budget	Submit the needs of the educators for budgeting purposes to the SGB

## **2.7 FUNCTIONS OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES**

Prior to 1994, as alluded to earlier, the governance of schools was highly centralised with minimal participation from stakeholders, which resulted in the SASA after 1994. The rationale behind the SASA was the decentralisation of school governance, which would firmly place the real authority of school governance in the hands of broad representatives of local communities. It offers local school communities the opportunity to become more responsive to local educational needs. The functions of SGBs will be discussed next.

### **2.7.1 Developing an admission policy**

The SGB is required by section 5 of the SASA to decide on the admission policy of the school. The admission policy should clearly explain the minimum academic, financial and general requirements that need to be satisfied by all learners who wish to be admitted to a school. The admission policy should not be discriminatory, among others, in terms of language, race or religion. School governing bodies should consider the context in which their schools exist and the socio-economic factors of parents when developing an admission policy. School governing bodies should make it easier for parents to register their learners at schools and support parents who are without required documentation, like birth certificates, to register their children. In so doing, the SGB will be supporting schools by making access to education easier. The SGB will also be supporting schools to get more funding from the Department by increasing learner enrolment and will have more funds to develop the school and provide resources for quality education. Furthermore, the SGB should develop an admission policy that is not in conflict with the general laws of the country. For example, a school is not allowed to test learners for HIV when a learner is admitted to a school.

The SGB should comply with relevant legislation pertaining to admission of learners to a school. A case in point is provided by Pillay and Van Leeve (2016:2) when they refer to a constitutional judgement that clarifies the policy-making authority of governing bodies. Pillay and Van Leeve (2016:2) maintain that, in his last and unanimous judgment, Deputy Chief Justice Moseneke provided much-needed clarity in “the murky waters of the shared space between [SGBs] and provincial executives charged with the regulation of public schools.” Parents, SGBs and governing body federations ought to take heed of the regulations in formulating and revising school admissions policies to ensure compliance with provincial laws and the imperative to further equitable access to education.

Section 5 of the SASA clearly stipulates the requirements for admitting learners to a school. The SASA states that no learner can be refused admission because his/her parents cannot pay or has not paid school fees; no learner can be refused admission because his/her parents do not agree with the vision and mission of the school; no learner can be refused admission because his/her parents refuse to sign the indemnity form which relinquishes the school from paying any damages for any harm that may be caused to the learner and that no tests may be set or administered for purposes of admission. School governing bodies are advised to strictly adhere to these admission requirements when admitting learners to schools.

### **2.7.2 Developing a language policy**

The SGB, in consultation with the relevant stakeholders, must decide on the language policy of the school. According to section 6A of the SASA, the governing body of a public school may determine

the language policy of the school subject to the Constitution, the Schools Act, and any applicable provincial law. It further states that no form of racial discrimination may be practised in implementing policy determined under this section and that a recognised sign language has the status of an official language for purposes of learning at a public school. It is necessary for the SGB to consider local and broader contexts of the community and to follow the blueprint of the DoE on language policy so as to avoid contradictions between the school's admission policy and the guidelines of the DoE on language policy.

School governing bodies should strictly follow the guidelines prescribed by the DoE in developing a language policy. The school policy on language should reflect the spirit of the language policy as determined by the Department, and the two policies should correspond. There are instances where schools will refuse learners admission based on the language of teaching and learning. This action may result in court cases, since the Constitution (RSA, 1996c) stipulates that education is a basic human right and no learner may be denied admission because of his/her home language. Therefore, the language policy must promote inclusivity and multilingualism. The governing body should also make sure that people belonging to a cultural or linguistic community are not discriminated against or denied the right to use their language. The SGB should apply the language policy in such a way that it supports the school in attracting many learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. An increased number of learners comes with increased funding from the Department, and more money can be channelled to curriculum delivery and learner achievement.

### **2.7.3 Developing a religious policy**

The SGB is expected to develop the religious policy for the school in line with all the supreme laws of the country. Section 7 of the SASA stipulates that, subject to the Constitution and any applicable provincial law, religious observances may be conducted at a public school under rules issued by the governing body if such observances are conducted on an equitable basis and attendance by learners and members of staff is free and voluntary. It implies that the religious policy should not discriminate against any religion in terms of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion, as stated in section 15 of the Constitution (RSA, 1996c). In practice, it implies that all religions and religious observances in the school should be treated equally on a fair, free and voluntarily basis (RSA, 1996b). School governing bodies are advised to always remember that their primary role is to support schools and act in the best interests of schools. School governing bodies should therefore avoid making decisions that will result in conflict and disruptions of teaching and learning by ensuring that their decisions are in line with the Constitution and all other Departmental policies and guidelines. In this regard, the SGB must guard against imposing their preferred religion on others or forcing any member or learner of the school to participate in any religious observances against their wishes. The SGB is in a position to promote diverse religions and promote tolerance of other religions in the community.

#### **2.7.4 Adopting a code of conduct**

The SGB should, in collaboration with all stakeholders, develop and adopt a code of conduct for learners in order to guide the behaviour of learners and maintain discipline in the school (RSA, 1996b). Section 8 of the SASSA states that, subject to any applicable provincial law, a *governing body of a public school* must adopt a code of conduct for the *learners* after consultation with the *learners, parents and educators* of the *school* and it must be aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful *school* environment, dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the learning process. In addition, a code of conduct must contain provisions of due process safeguarding the interests of the learner and any other party involved in disciplinary proceedings. The code of conduct must also provide for support measures or structures for counselling a learner involved in disciplinary proceedings. This is a mandate from the SASSA (section 8), which states that the SGB should adopt a code of conduct for learners. In so doing, the SGB must consider the inputs of learners, educators and parents to promote ownership of the code of conduct and adherence to it by all learners. Consultation will, in turn, promote peace in the school, and learners will not disrupt teaching and learning because of their discontent with the code of conduct. When there is peace in the school, the SGB will be in a better position to support the school and will not be engaged in disciplinary proceedings which will consume a lot of their time.

A code of conduct can be said to be a document that is used to guide the behaviour of learners. Oosthuizen and Roos (2003:38) describe a code of conduct as a clear written statement of rules and principles regarding the discipline of learners, and according to them, it should not in any way contradict the Constitution or any other laws that protect the rights of learners, parents and educators. Motimele (2005:11) maintains that the aim of the code of conduct is not only to regulate the behaviour of learners, but also to regulate relations between learners and educators, educators and parents, and learners and learners in a school. The code of conduct must state clearly what behaviour is acceptable and what behaviour is unacceptable in the school. Motimele (2005:11) goes on to argue that the code of conduct must state how persons who break the rules will be dealt with. The aim of a code of conduct is to create a safe, supportive and productive school environment and the SGB must be guided by this aim when establishing a code of conduct.

#### **2.7.5 Adopting a constitution for the school**

According to the SASSA (RSA, 1996b:29), every governing body must adopt a constitution. The SASSA describes a constitution as a document with important basic and fundamental principles and rules that form the basis on which a governing body must act and govern. Through the constitution, the SGB decides on how best it will support the school by determining its *modus operandi*.

Furthermore, section 18 of the SASA states that the constitution of a SGB should provide for the following:

- (a) Meeting of the school governing body that should take place at least once every school term;
- (b) Meeting of the school governing body with parents, learners, educators and other staff at the school, respectively, at least once a year;
- (c) Recording and keeping of minutes of school governing body meetings;
- (d) Making the minutes available to the Head of Department as and when it is necessary;
- (e) Reporting to parents, learners, educators and other staff of the school on its activities at least once a year; and
- (f) Finally, the governing body should submit a copy of its constitution to the Head of Department within 90 days of its election.
- (g)

### **2.7.6 Promoting the interests of the school and supporting the principal**

Heystek (2011) believes that the pressure on governing bodies to improve the quality of education for all is considerable because many schools have very low academic achievement levels. The standard of South African education is well below par, when compared with that of other countries. It may be argued that governing bodies, and specifically the majority of parents, may be able to do something to improve the quality of the education, if that is considered one of the important aims of the self-managing principles (Caldwell, 2010). Two specific functions mentioned in section 20(1) of the SASA that may be powerful for governing bodies to improve the quality of education are:

- (a) to promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school;
- (e) to support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions.

These specific functions for governing bodies seem like empowerment, but as with the concepts management and governance, there is no agreement on what governing bodies can do to support and promote the best interests of the school (Heystek, 2010). Until 2006, legislation and common practice excluded governing bodies, especially parents, from any active involvement in the professional management of the school. The incapacity or non-performance of principals or educators is a professional issue and governing bodies are therefore not supposed to or expected to be involved in any claims or acquisitions against non-performing educators or principals (Grant-Lewis & Naidoo, 2006).

The Education Laws Amendment Act, 2007 (ELAA) (Department of Education [DoE], 2007) may change the potential involvement of governing bodies in the professional management of schools. The ELAA highlights the importance of governing bodies, especially in underperforming schools. It concurs with the Ministerial Review Committee (2004) that governing bodies should become more accountable for the quality of education in a school, irrespective of the diverse abilities and availabilities of governing bodies. Clause 9 of the ELAA added the following SASA section 20(e):

The governing body of a public school must adhere to any actions taken by the Head of Department in terms of Section 16 of the Employment of Educators Act (76 of 1998) (RSA, 1998) to address the incapacity of a principal or educator to carry out his or her duties effectively. Section 56B(1-5) of the ELAA further states that a provincial HoD may take action against principals, educators and governing bodies if the quality of education at a school is unacceptable. These actions specifically refer to underperforming schools, as mentioned in sections 58B and C, which is predominantly in quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools. However, sections 58B and C are directly linked with section 16, because section 16A refers to section 58, which stipulates that principals from underperforming schools must provide the provincial HoD as well as the governing body with a report on the situation as well as plans for school improvement [section 16A(1)(ii) and (iii)].

Heystek (2011) asserts that the implication of section 58B in the ELAA 2007 is that governing bodies must be required to be involved in supporting principals and schools even before the judgment of incapacity is made by the HoD, because they could lose their power to govern the school. The HoDs may take action against a governing body, even though the governing body does not have any direct involvement in the professional management of the school, because they are traditionally not involved in the academic management of schools. Even if it was not the intention of the government to involve parents more directly, an unintended consequence of the ELAA may be to give the governing bodies greater responsibility for ensuring high-quality education in schools.

Therefore, Heystek (2011) asserts that the specification in the ELAA 2007 that parents should be held accountable for the quality of education could imply that parents have the right to deeper involvement in the professional activities of schools. Furthermore, Mestry and Grobler (2007) believe that the success of the SGB in performing the compulsory functions (section 20) depends on the support, cooperation and trust amongst all relevant stakeholders. Although this list does not include a full range of responsibilities of governing bodies, it sufficiently illustrates the pivotal role of the SGB and the indispensable link it forms between the school and the community it serves.

According to Epstein *et al.* (2002:3) evidence shows that parental involvement improves learners' emotional wellbeing and levels of school attendance, while also encouraging a better understanding of the roles and relationships involved in the parent-learner-school triad. In addition, research

suggests that those parents who participate in decision-making, experience greater feelings of ownership and are more committed to supporting the school's mission. The more intensively parents are involved in their children's learning, the greater the achievement attained (Jackson *et al.*, 2000).

### **2.7.7 Developing the mission statement for the school**

According to section 20(c) of the SASA, another important function of the SGB is to develop a mission statement. The mission can be said to describe the character, purpose and identity of the school. The mission can also be said to be a document stating the direction the school wishes to follow for the first five years as well as the values of the school. The process of developing a school mission is a consultative one, involving parents, learners and educators to develop a sense of ownership and commitment. The mission statement of the school describes how the SGB intends to support the school in the long term and in which direction the SGB wishes to direct the school. To achieve the mission, the SGB must commit itself to work tirelessly to support the school in all aspects of schooling.

According to the DoE (1997), the school mission statement should give reasons for why the school exists and state what the business of the school is. It should make it clear what stakeholders can expect of the school, it should be seen in the daily practice of the school and should be shared by all stakeholders. The mission statement should also guide policy decision at the school and should be displayed in public places, change over time and be easy to read (RSA, 1996b).

### **2.7.8 Decisions on school times**

It is the responsibility of the SGB to decide on the times of the school day. The members of the SGB are advised to familiarise themselves with the acts and laws of the country as they are the lawmakers of their schools. This is very important because all policies, rules and regulations of the SGB should be legal wise. That is, the policies of the SGB should be within the confines of the laws of the country. In deciding on the school times, the governing body should be aware of the conditions of service of educators so that whatever school times they decide upon are in line with the conditions of service. In cases where the SGB wishes to engage the services of educators outside of their normal working hours, such educators should be consulted and requested (RSA, 1996b). In showing its support to schools, the governing body can make arrangements with the educators and learners to attend extra classes during weekends and school holidays and offer some form of incentive for educators for working overtime. In so doing, the SGB will be playing its supportive role to improve quality academic performance.

### **2.7.9 The administering and controlling of the school's property**

The state, through section 20 of the SASA, expects the SGB to administer and control the school's property, buildings and grounds. It is a great responsibility placed on the SGB to maintain the infrastructure of the school. This means that the SGB should take care of all classrooms, offices, toilets and grounds. This function requires the SGB to budget for this purpose and to raise additional funds. Broken windows need to be fixed, old and dilapidated fences need to be replaced, and the school surrounding needs to be cleaned. Learners and educators spend a minimum of seven hours at school and this means that a school is almost a second home to them. It is therefore important that the buildings and grounds are in good condition and fit for occupation. This is also important to give the school a good and inviting image. A SGB can also request donations from large companies for school repairs and maintenance. It can also write a request to the Department to prioritise the school for renovations. A well-maintained school will attract the best educators and more learners. It is the responsibility of the SGB to maintain school buildings and grounds to improve the image of the school and to make it a home away from home for educators and learners. Educators will be happy to work in a well-maintained and beautiful school. Educator satisfaction may result in good performance.

### **2.7.10 Voluntary service to the school**

The SGB is required by the SASA to encourage other parents, learners, educators and other staff members of the school to render voluntary service to the school. This is also in line with the DoE's call for community participation and ownership of schools. The Department encourages parents to serve their schools by cleaning before the schools reopen through the "Letsema Campaign" or voluntary service. The SGB is expected to foster the spirit of volunteerism amongst all stakeholders, including the business community. In so doing, people will be willing to participate in all school activities and will support and serve the school throughout the year. The idea of cooperative governance will be realised and schools will become real centres of community life.

### **2.7.11 The recommendation of educators for appointment**

The SGB is charged with the responsibility of determining staffing needs (section 20 of the SASA) as one of its functions. The SGB should identify suitable candidates for existing vacancies at the school and recommend them to the HoD for appointment as principals, HoDs, educators, and non-teaching staff. The SGB interviews candidates for a vacant post in a school and then recommends to the HoD the candidate it considers most suitable for the post. Through this function, the SGB is placed in a better position to support the school by recruiting the best available staff to their school to assist in producing quality academic performance. The SGB should not be unfairly influenced to recommend underqualified people for the job and should be guided by their role to support the school to produce good results.

The SGB should be familiarised with or inducted into the procedures to be followed in filling posts in order to avoid disputes and minimise tension between the SGB and other stakeholders like union representatives. The SGB should also be made aware that they can only recommend and that the final appointment is made by the HoD. This means that the HoD can either employ a candidate recommended by the SGB or reject the recommendation. If he/she decides otherwise, he/she should refer the selection process back to the SGB. The SGB should then restart the process of interviewing and selecting a suitable candidate (RSA, 1996b). The SGB is in a position to recruit qualified and the best educators who will contribute to the academic performance of the school. In addition to the abovementioned functions, the SGB is required to carry out other duties determined by the Minister in the Government Gazette. The Minister of Education can add more responsibilities to the existing responsibilities of the SGB. The SGB is further expected to determine the conditions under which school facilities are made available to the community.

### **2.7.12 Financial school management**

According to Mestry (2004), the management of a school's finances is an integral part of effective school management. The SGB should utilise funds to support the school to produce quality results. Mestry (2004) advises SGBs to manage the school finance properly by establishing and implementing sound internal financial control systems to ensure the reliability and accuracy of its financial transactions. The SGB is also advised to adequately insure the school against exposure to risks – such as theft, vandalism and fraud – and to ensure that purchasing arrangements comply with good accounting practices. In addition, Mestry (2004) states that stocks, stores and other assets should be recorded and adequately safeguarded against loss or theft and that asset registers should be maintained. Furthermore, all income due to the school should be identified and all collections should be receipted, recorded and banked promptly. The SGB should properly control the operation of only one bank account and reconcile the bank balance with the accounting records and control the use of petty cash.

In addition, the SGB is expected to find additional resources to improve the quality of education. This can be done through fundraising activities, such as asking for donations and school concerts. The SGB is required to establish a school fund. All monies received by the school should be paid into this fund. The SGB must also open and maintain a bank account on behalf of the school. The SGB should decide who the signatories to the school account are. In addition, the SGB has a responsibility of making sure that the financial statements of the school are audited. The SGB must submit audited reports to the HoD within six months after the end of each financial year.

### **2.7.12.1 Preparing a school budget**

Furthermore, the SGB is obliged to prepare an annual budget which shows the estimated income and expenditure for the following year. The budget serves as a guide to spending the school funds. The budget must reflect the educational objectives of the school in order of importance and should assist in the efficient use of funds. The budget should be presented to the parents at the end of every year for discussion and approval. This means that the majority of parents must agree with the SGB on the budget presented to them by voting for the budget. At this meeting, parents will be in a position to agree as to whether school fees should be charged or not to supplement the subsidy or allocation from the DoE. When a decision to charge school fees is taken, parents should be informed by the SGB of their right to apply for school-fee exemption. This is a policy of the DoE to lift the burden off the shoulders of parents who cannot afford to pay the school fees. Parents who wish to be exempted must apply to the SGB and include all documentation and proof of income. The governing body will then preside over the applications and decide whether the parents who have applied qualify for exemption or not (Mestry, 2004).

## **2.8 WITHDRAWAL OF FUNCTIONS FROM GOVERNING BODIES**

According to section 22 of the SASA and later, the ELAA, the HoD may, on reasonable grounds, withdraw a function from a governing body. The HoD may only take this decision if he/she has informed the governing body of his/her intention to do so, and the reasons thereof, and has given the governing body a reasonable opportunity to make presentations to him/her relating to such an intention and has given due consideration to any such representation received.

## **2.9 FAILURE OF THE GOVERNING BODY TO PERFORM ITS FUNCTIONS**

Section 25 of the SASA states that if a governing body, for whatever reason, does not perform its functions, the HoD may appoint a sufficient number of people to perform those functions for a period not exceeding three months. The HoD may further extend the functions of the appointees for a period not exceeding one year. Therefore, within a year of the first appointment, the HoD must ensure that a new governing body is elected.

## **2.10 THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE**

According to section 16(a) of the (SASA) Education Law Amendment Act (31 of 2007)(RSA, 2007), the responsibility of the school principal is as follows:

- i The Principal of a public school represents the Head of Department (HOD) in the governing body when acting in an official capacity;
- ii The principal must assist the SGB in their role functions and responsibilities.

Section 16 of the SASA gives principals active participation in school governance. They must establish a SMT to assist them in their responsibilities and to follow through with policies (Department of Education, 2000). In essence, principals are required to manage the day-to-day running of the school, such as instructional and operational matters. Mncube (2009b:35) conducted a study on the role of school principals in school governance and concurred with the SASA that principals can influence the SGB and many suggestions emanate from them, since they are always at school and know the situation intimately, while parent SGB members are only occasionally at school. Participants regarded the principal as the leader of the SGB, without whom nothing can be accomplished and who is responsible for the physical planning of the school. Most governors also felt that the principal interprets education policies to other stakeholders, since he/she is better enlightened about issues in education, ensures that education policies and the curriculum are implemented, coordinates SGB meetings, and ensures that requirements of the Act are adhered to. Moreover, principals are regarded as the representatives of the DoE, and at the same time, they must be members of the SGB. This makes his/her task complicated as he/she should serve two masters simultaneously.

Principals are a link and a mediator between the Department, SGB and the school, and ensure that rules and regulations are kept accordingly in the school. As one participant said: "He, the principal, is the finger on the pulse of what is happening. He is a resource person for other members of the SGB and the engine of the institution". Unlike the status of the other governors, the principal holds an *ex officio* status on the SGB. Furthermore, the principal advises the SGB regarding critical educational matters. The principal adheres to working cooperatively with the SGB in the development, formulation and implementation of school policies. The principal thereby applies these policies in the day-to-day running of the school. In short, the principal and the SGB work closely and cooperatively to ensure that the school is run effectively and efficiently.

There seems to be a contradiction between the dual roles of the principal of a public school as a representative of the HoD in the governing body when acting in an official capacity. Xaba (2011:209) believes that the difficulty with the role of the principal, as set out above, seems to be: when does he/she represent the HoD and when does he/she promote the interests of the school as a fully-fledged member of the SGB? This difficulty is compounded by the requirement that the principal must assist the SGB in the execution of its functions and responsibilities. The question is whether the principal, by being required to assist the SGB, is him/herself not perceived as a member of the SGB. This role might have a tendency to position the principal above all other members of the SGB and thus creates conditions for his/her dominance, which contradicts the notion that, once in the SGB, all members assume equal status as governors. Indeed, this may be so, simply because the principal is a permanent member of the SGB, and as such, acquires better insight into and knowledge

of governance issues over the period of his/her membership of the SGB. This, in my opinion, perhaps explains the reason why principals consider themselves as mentors to other governors.

The principals within the SMT are responsible for the professional management functions of the school such as: timetabling; admission of learners; making the best use of the school funds for the benefit of the learners; monitoring the work performance of staff members; mentoring staff members; making critical decisions regarding the educators' workloads and ensuring that the workloads are equally distributed; organising staff development workshops to help staff develop professionally; promoting co-curricular and extracurricular activities; providing the necessary assistance to the SGB to ensure that they fulfil their role functions and responsibilities; and serving as a communication officer between the DoE, the educators, non-teaching staff, learners and parents. These functions of the principal do not mean that the principal should make all decisions without consulting and involving the SGB for their inputs.

The dominance of school principals in governance is revealed by a study conducted by Khuzwayo and Chikoko (2009). Khuzwayo's and Chikoko's (2009:161) findings revealed that SGB chairpersons are largely dependent on the principal for guidance on school governance and policy matters. Three of the participants attributed the abdication of power to the SGB's reliance on the principal, even on matters that involve them directly.

According to Bagarette (2014:403), these statements seem to suggest that some SGBs are not yet ready to govern because they rely on the principal to give them guidance, even on matters that involve them directly. This implies that some SGBs are not taking decisions in the best interests of the learners; instead, they simply agree with everything the principal says and carry out his/her orders. This type of relationship leads to a situation where the principal claims all the decision-making power, despite the significant amount of decision-making power devolved to the SGB. The aforesaid is confirmed by Naicker and Mestry (2013:6), who state that power and decision-making remains the domain of the principal and SMT in schools with a rigid hierarchical structure.

Findings from research conducted by Xaba (2011:206) revealed that SGB members rely on the inputs of educators in the drawing up and implementation of policies. In this regard, the SGB acted as a "rubber stamp" (Xaba 2011:206). This inability of SGBs to understand and interpret the SASA and other school-related acts and policies, places SGBs in a poor position to govern schools. This creates a situation where they rely on the principal for interpreting all documents. When this type of a situation occurs in a school, it becomes inevitable that the principal makes all decisions on their behalf, where after they merely become "rubber stamps" (Grant-Lewis & Naidoo, 2004:423). This is confirmed by the responses of Principal P and G, who contended that:

They always accept what I say. They do not question (Principal P). As principal, I still teach and guide them (Principal G).

These statements by the principals are a clear indication that decisions are made on their behalf, because they (the SGB members) accept what they are told and never ask questions. Furthermore, these statements also suggest that the principals are aware of the poor literacy levels and knowledge of the SGB members regarding the acts and policies – therefore, the principals always guide and give them direction. Bush (2011:75) shed light on the aforementioned by asserting that the essence of collegiality is participation in decision-making. He stated that, through shared decision-making, power is shared with all stakeholders represented on the SGBs, irrespective of the members' literacy levels. This implies that shared decision-making may empower parent members on SGBs with certain skills and knowledge, while at the same time educators can learn from the experiences of parents (Bagarette, 2014:403).

According to Mncube (2009:42), principals have the responsibility of ensuring maximum participation of both parent and learner governors in decision-making in SGBs so as to create conditions which are in line with democratic principles of participation. However, principals should be willing to share their power and authority for the effective functioning of the SGB. Principals can also contribute greatly to school governance issues, since they are usually at an advantage in terms of their familiarity with official regulations, provincial directives and knowledge of educational reform measures. In addition, principals should guard against the danger of role conflict that may manifest in power struggles, which occur when principals take crucial decisions without involving parent and learner governors.

Governance refers to the managing of collective decisions of individuals and institutions (private and/or public) to manage their collective affairs and resolve their differences, taking into consideration their diverse interests and opinions (OECD, 2001). It is an act of determining policy and rules by which a school can be monitored, organised and controlled as stipulated in the SASA. It is a process whereby policies are formulated, implemented, monitored and adopted. School governance relates to the overall control and authority of the school. Governance promotes relationships between the state and the school which emphasises influence, leadership and accountability (Kooiman, 2000). This also refers to rules and regulations set out by SGBs and implemented by their policies.

## **2.11 SECTION 21 OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT**

### **2.11.1 Allocated functions of governing bodies**

In terms of section 21 of the SASA, a governing body can make an application to the HoD to carry out allocated functions in addition to those discussed above. The allocated functions include the following:

- (a) To maintain and improve the school's property, and buildings and grounds occupied by the school, including school hostels, and where applicable;
- (b) To purchase textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school;
- (c) To pay for services to the school;
- (d) To determine the extramural curriculum of the school, the choice of subject options and the language of teaching and learning.

Mestry (2004:130) stated that the HoD will allocate these functions to the SGB only if the school has the proven capacity. This is determined by ensuring that the school has managed its own funds efficiently and also that it is complying with all regulations as stipulated in the SASA. If the school is allocated the section-21 functions, the provincial department will deposit the school's resource allocation directly into the school's bank account. In addition, the governing body should put in place a sound financial policy and establish a finance committee to oversee the implementation of the finance policy. The policy should clearly spell out mechanisms for regular checks and counter-checks that will assist the governing body to avoid the mismanagement of funds by any person or groups of persons. On this basis, Mestry (2004:131) concluded that the case of *Schoonbee and other v MEC of Education, Mpumalanga and Another (unreported case No. 33750/01 (T))* has created a new dimension for the effective and efficient management of school finances. Mestry further said that the SGB is responsible for the financial matters of the school.

## **2.12 THE TRAINING OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES**

Given the magnitude of powers, functions and responsibilities of SGBs, it is imperative for members to possess some form of basic knowledge, skills and capacity to execute their mandate successfully. Wolhuter *et al.* (2007:191) argued that professional knowledge is indispensable to the functioning of schools and forms the basis of the professional autonomy of educators. Thus, if laypersons on governing bodies are to fulfil the tasks with which they are charged with, they need to acquire some professional knowledge themselves, otherwise the bureaucratic professionals will not only retain their power, but extend it.

Section 19 of the SASA compels provincial governments in South Africa to provide training for governing bodies. In this section of the Act (RSA, 1996b:30), it is stated that, out of funds

appropriated for this purpose by the provincial legislation, the HoD must establish a programme to: (a) provide training for newly elected governing bodies to enable them to perform their functions; and (b) provide continuing training to governing bodies to promote the effective performance of their functions or to enable them to assume additional functions. The SASA further urges the HoD to ensure that principals and other officers of the education department render all necessary assistance to governing bodies in the performance of their functions (RSA, 1996b:31).

In this way, the SASA holds the education department accountable for the implementation and success of the government's policy on democratic SGBs and developing their capacity to govern. Marishane (1999:60) maintains that training is necessary as school governors have diverse backgrounds and for this reason, have little or no experience in managing an organisation such as a school. The importance of training was also emphasised by Looyen (2000:131), who said that the process of decentralisation and cooperative school governance requires intensive training and retraining in the way schools need to operate. Moreover, Kani (2000:40) suggested that the training of SGBs should take place at the following levels:

- school level: principals should organise workshops for all SGB members for a particular school;
- clusters of SGBs representing an area: the circuit managers should organise SGB workshops at cluster level where representatives from each school participate and report back to the entire SGB in their schools;
- specific groups of governors according to various portfolios: workshops may be organised for school principals, treasurers and finance officers who work on the day-to-day management of the school.

Heystek (2004:38) is of the opinion that the limited training of the main role players in the management of schools, coupled with their uncertainty regarding their functions and duties, sometimes makes it difficult for principals and parent governors to work together harmoniously. Although many principals have long years of experience, the participative and democratic experience may prepare them for this changed situation. This poses a serious challenge to the functioning of the SGB, because principals are supposed to guide and even train the governing body members in their roles and responsibilities. Maluleka (2008:35) further maintains that, while in principle there is a commitment in South Africa to involve "the community" in decision-making about local schools, the constraints in making the principle a reality may include the perception of lack of power among school staff and among parents and others in the community and confusion over the varying roles of governing bodies in different categories of schools. The other constraints are the rurality and illiteracy of a substantial proportion of the population and unrealistic educational requirements for membership

of school bodies and the perception of the heavy burden of responsibility for educational matters among a populace already overworked and underpaid.

These constraints may lead to jostling for power and fighting over territory between the school governors and the school managers, which might cause serious impediments to the performance and development of the school. Lemmer and Van Wyk (2004:140) maintain that, although the establishment of democratically elected governing bodies has changed the political structure of schools and the nature of decision-making, principals are in practice often reluctant to relinquish or even share power and authority. Mashele's (2009:120) findings reveal that SGBs of previously disadvantaged communities experience many problems that prevent them from governing their schools effectively. These include a lack of knowledge on the orientation of newly elected SGB members; the formulation of policies; joint (team) decision-making; communication skills; and conflict resolution. The other problems from Mashele's study are changing the negative attitudes of both learners and educators, financial management and the fact that schools should be safe places for both educators and learners.

According to Pattie (2005:167), training is intended to improve individual work performance by equipping people with the knowledge, skills and attitudes they must possess to be successful in their work. Pattie (2005:167) further maintains that service providers for training should be familiar with the systems approach to training, and that the various methods available for training are important for success on the job for both an administrative manager and employee.

### **2.13 CHALLENGES FACED BY SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES**

The SGB is a relatively new practice that is still being rattled by the racial divisions and inequalities of the past as well as the contextual variations at different schools and psychological stresses (Ministerial Review Committee, 2004). Following many reported cases of poor governance across South African schools, a national urgency has been expressed for the effective training of SGB members (Ministerial Review Committee, 2004; Dieltiens in Xaba, 2011; Waghid, 2005; Mkhize, 2007). According to Mchunu (2010), the majority of SGBs remain dysfunctional and therefore strategies need to be urgently employed to create effective, efficient schools. Research has shown that schools are performing poorly in the grade 12 national matriculation examinations (Legotlo *et al*, 2002:1). This situation is reflective of the poor state of management and governance at schools.

In his study on the possible causes of school governance challenges in South Africa, Xaba (2011:205) discovered a number of challenges facing SGBs. The first challenge relates to difficulties in realising the main role of the SGB, namely promoting the best interests of the school. Chief among the reasons for this difficulty, involves SGB members' perceptions of what this role entails. Members

of SGBs seemed to operate from different positions concerning this role. For instance, in pursuance of this role, principals largely perceived themselves as tasked with teaching other members, particularly the parent component, their roles, and acting as mediators in conflicts between educators and parents in the SGB. To this end, one principal remarked that he could not say they were successful in executing this role. Educators blamed the difficulty in promoting the best interests of the school on parent governors' low education levels, which, according to them, resulted in parent governors being unable to execute their roles and responsibilities, being easily manipulated, unable or unwilling to participate in decision-making, and being continually absent from meetings and workshops.

According to Legotlo *et al.* (2002), schools are faced with inadequate resources, unclear government policies, ineffective school policies, lack of staff and learner discipline, lack of staff commitments, lack of parental involvement and ineffective policies at the school level. Simultaneously, SGBs are striving to improve the quality of education in South African schools and keep abreast with the technological advances and formidable changes that the new century has brought (Khuzwayo, 2007). In addition, Legotlo *et al.* (2002) have shown how many SGBs complained about the pressures and challenges they faced and were overwhelmed by the demands made by parents, educators, learners, school principals and the community at large. Moreover, SGBs are continually affected by the fluctuating economy, increasing legal constraints and growing learners' needs (Van Wyk, 2004; Waghid, 2005).

Khuzwayo (2007) has pointed out that a lack of effective SGBs has affected the quality and standard of education and this has become a national trend in many South African schools. The poor governance present in many schools has resulted in poor relationships between teaching staff and parents (Sithole, 1995). In some cases, the SGBs blatantly manipulated staff appointments and in other cases, educators felt that they were more superior to the parents and did not respect the parents' inputs (Mestry, 2004; Mkhize, 2007). More essentially, a lack of parental support has contributed to more problems being experienced by SGBs (Mkhize, 2007). According to Saunders (2000), a former vice-chancellor of the University of Cape Town, South African schools are in a worse state than ever before, with alarming failure rates and many schools being in a poor state of despair. He added that SGBs were faced with insurmountable pressures at many failing South African schools.

Theoretically, school governance is supposed to operate democratically with accountability, trustworthiness and representation; yet this is contrary to what is actually happening at many South African schools (Mabitsela, 2004). Mkhize (2007) has observed that SGBs' lack of knowledge of school legislative law has seriously affected their role performances. School governing body

members who do not fully understand their role functions feel disempowered and frustrated (Zondi, 2005). Other studies have shown that SGBs in well-developed communities and in ex-Model C schools were working more efficiently than those schools in rural and townships areas (Mestry, 2004; Sithole, 1995). Waghid (2005) added that many SGBs were not operating democratically and were therefore failing to comply with the legal requirements as set out in the SASA.

## **2.14 MAKING SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES WORK**

Wolhuter *et al.* (2007:142) state that SGBs have evolved over time. There has been a concerted effort by countries across the globe to strengthen the influence of SGBs in school governance. To this effect, many legislative reforms were effected which served to redefine the role of SGBs and establish SGBs as permanent structures aimed at mobilising the support of parents to schools. The success of SGBs in carrying out their mandates will largely depend on the lessons learnt from their global counterparts, which include the following:

### **2.14.1 The power factor**

According to Wolhuter *et al.* (2007:142), the successful functioning of a governing body depends to a large extent on the political structure of a school. Decentralised control inevitably results in a redistribution of power and authority. Principals are no longer in a dominant position whereby they can manage schools in an autocratic, top-down manner. The establishment of democratically elected and representative governing bodies has changed the political structure of schools and the nature of decision-making.

### **2.14.2 The expertise factor**

A common problem experienced by many SGBs is the lack of or inadequate expertise. Not all governing bodies have the good fortune to be served by skilled professionals. Therefore, although governing bodies may be given extensive decision-making authority over educational matters, many governors are reluctant to contribute in this area because they feel they lack the relevant knowledge and experience (Squelch, 2000:142). The situation is worsened by the fact that many SGB members do not have the time for self-development by reading to keep themselves up to date with new developments and research.

### **2.14.3 The time and workload factor**

School governance is a time-consuming enterprise that places enormous demands on the time of both principals and governing body members. This is unavoidable as fruitful and meaningful discussions and carefully-reasoned decisions about complex issues require a lot of time. However, in practice, as Guskey and Peterson (1996:11) maintain, principals, educators and parent governors

do not have the necessary time to devote to regular meetings, especially lengthy ones. Therefore, meetings are held infrequently and they seldom leave time for in-depth discussions on crucial issues.

#### **2.14.4 The training and development factor**

Squelch (2000:143) maintains that the shift to decentralised school governance requires all governors or components of the SGB to develop a wide range of skills and capacities to deal with the complex issues and tasks of decision-making, for example, problem-solving skills, conflict resolution, time management, financial planning and development of school policies. However, as Shields and Knapp (1997:297) have observed, insufficient investment in training opportunities has not fully prepared parents, educators and principals for their new roles and responsibilities.

### **2.15 IMPLICATIONS FOR SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNING BODIES**

In comparison with other countries, South African education is still fairly centralised and in addition, the implementation of decentralised school governance is still in its infancy. Moreover, the effective and efficient functioning of SGBs varies greatly between schools, clusters or circuits, and regions. The success of the SGB's governance will depend on several factors, which will be discussed next.

#### **2.15.1 Enabling leadership**

Lindle (1995:22) maintains that leadership plays a pivotal role in nurturing any kind of change. Whether or not decentralised governance works will to a great extent depend on leaders who are able to develop decision-making structures and processes that promote rather than hinder meaningful participation and collaboration. Therefore, schools need to have strong leaders who are prepared to share their power and authority and who can initiate and manage change. Furthermore, a principal, as the key leader in a school, should be able to plan, organise, motivate and direct people towards achieving the common goals that are aimed at genuine transformation and school improvement.

#### **2.15.2 Collaborative or team approach**

School improvement is more likely to happen when a collaborative professional culture is developed among the staff so that they act as a team rather than a loose collection of individuals. However, educators need the skills and commitment to work collaboratively as a team. Strategies need to be devised to provide educators with the time and opportunity to work together (Shields & Knapp, 1997:292-293).

### **2.15.3 Opportunity for development**

One of the most important concerns about the implementation of decentralised school governance in South African schools is the issue of expertise and the availability of parents. Governing bodies comprise individuals who have different levels of expertise and experience and who have different reasons for being a school governor. Schools that can draw on the particular expert knowledge of parents and community members, as elected or co-opted members are at a distinct advantage over schools that do not have this resource. Therefore, schools need to invest in training and need to develop skills and knowledge that will enable them to participate more meaningfully in transforming and improving schools (Williams *et al.*, 1997:626).

### **2.15.4 Access to resources**

Access to resources and information is a prerequisite for effective and efficient decentralised governance and management. Governance involves decision-making and as a result, governing body members need to have access to knowledge and reliable sources of information to make good decisions. Principals, in particular, need to ensure that relevant information is collected and disseminated so as to people are kept up to date with developments and issues so that they can make informed decisions (Squelch, 2000). School governing bodies are also charged to provide strategic leadership for their schools. Providing strategic direction entails SGB activities that are aimed at promoting the best interests of the school and strives to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school. Xaba (2006:13) regards this as a strategic role and suggests setting a strategic framework, aims and objectives within the school's vision and mission, setting policies and targets for achieving objectives, and monitoring and evaluating progress.

Open University (2017) argues that if strategic direction is about setting aims and targets, devising plans and policies, and taking decisions that will raise standards, then strategic management is concerned with ensuring that all the necessary elements are in place in order that success can be achieved. This exposition about the strategic direction highlights four key components of strategic management, namely: the destination the school is aiming for; the path or map to the destination; the vehicle to be used; and the drive mode required (Winkley, 2002). These components define the product of a strategic management process as it should occur in schools, which is the production of a strategic plan and its implementation involves a range of activities that begin with the drawing up of a school development plan (SDP), sometimes also called a school improvement plan (SIP).

The SDP, as the product of strategic planning (Harwood-Smith, 2008:3), is regarded as the improvement strategy and the thrust of the Education Quality Improvements Partnership Programme (EQUIP), which is expected to provide school direction. Simply put, the SDP is an essential tool used

for reviewing the school's progress and for challenging any strategies that do not appear to be delivering expected results. This provides a systematic check that everything is in place when a school is to be provided with direction. Mchunu (2010:47) suggests that, for the SDP to be regarded and used as a means to achieve strategic objectives, the SGB must prepare it in collaboration with the SMT. Mchunu (2010) believes that the involvement of the SMT is critical, because they have a mix of professional competencies and a wealth of experience needed for the provision of quality education, and their contribution will add to the proposed roadmap that must be followed. In other words, the SDP is a product of the team that articulates the overall business direction in which the school should go.

In this endeavour, the SGB facilitates the design of the school's strategic plans, which need to be adhered to and followed with discipline. Strategic plans are fundamental to school activities because they shape and guide the school in what it does and why it does it. Thus, the ability of the school to successfully achieve its concrete actions, organisational mission and vision, and promote accountability, is dependent on its strategic direction (Hellriegel & Slocum, 2007:71; Kohtamäki *et al.*, 2012:161). Mncube *et al.* (2011) conducted a study on parental involvement in schools and reported that the participants in their research proposed ways in which parents could be encouraged to participate more fully in SGBs, including the payment of those parents who are SGB members and the establishment of regulatory mechanisms to discipline lazy or uncooperative members. In addition, the participants believed that the valorisation, recognition and appreciation of those parents who are school governors, the co-option of parents with relevant skills, the election of parents with relevant skills, even if such parents do not have children attending the school, and the effective training of members of SGBs would contribute to the effective functioning of SGBs. They also affirmed their belief that, once parents are members of SGBs, they should receive ongoing training on issues pertaining to the functioning of SGBs. The findings suggested that the involvement of the media (specifically newspapers and national television) could play a pivotal role in the training of members of the SGB. The participants held that the general public needs to be informed about, and trained in, the functions of SGBs, even before general elections are held for such bodies in schools.

## **2.16 SUMMARY**

This chapter dealt with the legislative framework of SGBs in South Africa, which included the historical background of school governance in South Africa, school governance after 1994, and an overview of the functions and nature of training for SGBs. The rationale for the establishment of SGBs is, in essence, a desire to make schools more efficient and effective, to improve the quality of education and raise levels of learner achievement, and to be able to respond to the needs of learners. The establishment of SGBs was aimed at democratisation and decentralisation of education as opposed to sole control by principals. Ordinary people are now empowered to make decisions at the

lowest level of the school. They are more familiar with the environment in which their schools are situated and are in a better position to perform their functions. School governing bodies in South Africa have a statutory responsibility for many critical functions within schools which could make a valuable contribution to ensuring the effectiveness and continuing improvement of schools.

However, central to the success of SGBs, is the ability to work together as stakeholders in education. The contribution and the active participation of each stakeholder is of great value, especially because each represents their constituency, which needs to be updated. The parents are in the majority and firmly placed in a position of influence and power. This is an opportunity not to be wasted and should be grabbed with both hands so that parents can become agents of change in their schools. The SASA has placed SGBs in a position of trust and SGBs have been given powers and functions to perform. These functions are complex, varied and technical in nature. Therefore, the success of SGBs in executing their functions will depend on several factors such as the individual governing body members and their commitment to shared decision-making, the structures and processes created to help governors operate, the resources available, and most importantly, the training opportunities provided.

# CHAPTER 3

## THE NATURE OF THE SUPPORT AND RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY MEMBERS TO PROMOTE QUALITY ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This research focused on SGBs' support of schools to promote quality academic performance in schools. The study was aimed at exploring the concept of support from SGB members to schools and their relationship with other stakeholders in education and to determine how the support and the way SGB members relate to each other and to school management influence school academic performance. There is substantial evidence to suggest that parents' involvement in the education of their children can make a significant difference in the educational attainment of those children (Epstein, 1995; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009; Studsrød & Bru, 2009; Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013).

Although there is a growing body of literature on the importance of parental involvement in their children's education, studies have nevertheless shown that parents' involvement in the education of their children still appears to be limited (Wherry, 2009; Mncube, 2010; Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013). The purpose of this study was to investigate the level of SGB members' involvement in the schooling of their children and the influence of their involvement on the academic performance of learners.

There are many variables and factors related to school performance in general, for example: educator and learner discipline; cleanliness of the school; punctuality of educators and learners to school and classrooms; participation in extramural activities; lesson preparation and presentation; and good working relationships between educators and SMTs. However, the presence or absence of these factors have a specific influence on academic performance; hence the rationale for the study to specifically look at the relationship between SGBs' support to schools and how it may influence academic performance of schools.

### 3.2 RELATIONSHIPS

#### 3.2.1 Definition of a relationship

Memidex.com (2013) defines a relationship as a state of connectedness between people, especially an emotional connection. A large body of research indicates the importance of positive interpersonal relationships for healthy human functioning (Berkowitz, 1996; De Leon, 2000; Fyson, 1999; Glover *et al.*, 1998; Moos, 2002). Relationships are a major source of happiness and a buffer against stress (Argyle, 1999). Through relationships, individuals receive instrumental help for tasks and challenges, emotional support in their daily lives and companionship in shared activities (Gutman *et al.*, 2002). Conversely, the loss of a relationship is a source of unhappiness and distress. Interpersonal relationships are also important for social and emotional development.

Ongoing social interactions teach individuals about themselves and about what is needed to fit in with a particular group. Accordingly, individuals develop beliefs, orientations and values that are consistent with their relational environment. Hence relatedness in the academic domain teaches students the beliefs, orientations and values needed to function effectively in academic environments. In turn, these beliefs (if positive and adaptive) direct behaviour in the form of enhanced persistence, goal-striving and self-regulation (Martin & Dowson, 2009). In high-quality relationships, individuals not only learn that particular beliefs are useful for functioning in particular environments, but they also actually internalise the beliefs valued by significant others. In this way, beliefs held by others become a part of the individual's own belief system. Relatedness is an important self-system process in itself. As such, it has an energising function on the self, working through the activation of positive affect and mood (Furrer & Skinner, 2003).

This intrapersonal energy, gained from interpersonal relationships, provides a primary pathway towards motivated engagement in life activities. A complementary perspective on these processes is provided by the *need to belong* hypothesis. This hypothesis suggests that "human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships" (Meyer & Turner, 2002). When the need for belongingness is fulfilled, this fulfilment produces positive emotional responses. In the academic domain, these emotional responses are said to drive students' achievement behaviours, including their responses to challenge, self-regulation, participation and strategy use (Meyer & Turner, 2002).

Relatedness affects individuals' motivation and behaviour by way of positive influences on other self-processes relevant to achievement motivation. For example, in the context of a student's life, positive emotional attachments to peers, educators and parents promote not only healthy social, emotional and intellectual functioning, but also positive feelings of self-worth and self-esteem. This is important because self-worth and self-esteem are both related to sustained achievement motivation (Covington, 2002). School governing bodies are placed in a position of trust by the SASA and all members should strive to maintain positive relatedness and work together to maintain healthy relationships.

Educators, parents and students together understand that problematic relationships can be detrimental to the attainment of student outcomes and development. Productive learning environments are characterised by supportive and warm interactions throughout the class. As education is fundamentally a social enterprise, learning how to enhance the social interactions between educators, administrators, students and peers is essential to higher education. Thus, improved interpersonal relationships should generate better educational outcomes (Fraser, 2007).

Education is essentially a relational activity in which the interaction between educator and learner creates a learning space in which knowledge is constructed and co-constructed. It is clear, however, that the learning space is not just cognitive. It is coloured and nuanced by emotion and interpersonal relationships. Indeed, educators and schools have long acknowledged the influence of a school on social and emotional development – a fact that has been acknowledged in more recent times through the formalisation of social and emotional learning in school curricula (Durlak *et al.*, 2011). Classroom and behaviour management are areas where the cognitive, social and emotional aspects of learning intersect. Through the ways in which they respond to each other's behaviour, educators and children do not just learn about appropriate behaviour, but also determine whether the learning space is a facilitative one.

Among the most important values and motives of people around the world, is to feel connected and meaningfully related to others. Yet not all social interactions yield a true sense of relatedness. Although, in some social situations, people can feel cared for and acknowledged and experience a sense of belongingness; in other situations, they can feel isolated or misunderstood, instrumentally used, or in other ways frustrated in their desire for connection or relatedness. It is thus important to distinguish those elements within social interactions, affiliations and relationships that truly foster a sense of relatedness and connection from those elements and dynamics that thwart that experience (Reis, 2011).

According to the self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2000), all human beings have a fundamental psychological need to experience relatedness – that is, to feel personally accepted by and significant to others and to feel cared for by others and caring for them (Lavigne *et al.*, 2011). Although some theories view relationship motivation as derived from other instrumental outcomes, such as drive gratifications, physical security or resource exchanges, SDT posits that relatedness is an evolved psychological need in its own right, which, although associated with adaptive advantages, takes on an intrinsic character in human nature. Specifically, people find relatedness to be inherently satisfying, independent of instrumental advantages. Indeed, individuals often value and maintain connections that afford a sense of relatedness to their distinct material disadvantage (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

A basic or inherent need for relatedness thus underlies people's motivated tendencies to make interpersonal contacts and to adopt identities and join groups that socially connect them with others. The concept of a *need*, however, is distinct from that of motivation. People can fail to be motivated for that which they actually need. Thus, the idea of a relatedness need goes beyond the suggestion that relatedness is something merely preferred, desired or considered important, for SDT argues that relatedness is essential to human wellness. Thus, people require relatedness to be vital and to

thrive. Even people who say, and indeed believe, that they do not want to connect with others will nonetheless suffer ill effects if they do not experience relatedness or belonging. Similarly, even within organisations or cultures that do not give primacy to relatedness and collectivity, people suffer if they lack a sense of relatedness (Ryan *et al.*, 2010). Human nature thus declares interpersonal relatedness to have primacy, and families, institutions and cultures must provide the pathways for this need to be satisfied if their constituents are to be well.

Committed relationships is one of the great paradoxes of life. On the one hand, people have a strong need to belong and close personal relationships can be a great source of satisfaction and fulfilment (Rusbult *et al.*: 2010). Indeed, research has shown that individuals with stronger commitment tend to experience higher relationship quality, have greater relational adjustment and tend to be in more stable relationships (Rusbult *et al.*, 2012). Furthermore, the stronger people's commitment, the stronger their feelings of psychological attachment, the more long-term orientation they have, and the greater their intent to persist in their relationships (Rusbult *et al.*, 2012). Commitment is also a hallmark of long-term, enduring relationships (Marcher, 2013).

In this regard, it is maintained that, since the work of school governance is voluntary, it can be assumed that their willingness to be a member is driven by a love for children and a desire to see them prospering in their lives. Hence it seems that the drive to be a member of the SGB is intrinsically motivated because they accept the responsibility to be entrusted with the lives of children by parents who expect that their children will be taken care of. Since one of the main functions of SGBs is to promote the best interests of the school, it becomes paramount for them to promote and foster good relationships amongst all stakeholders. It will create a conducive environment for quality learning and teaching to take place and as a result, adhere to their mandate to put the best interests of the school first. In this regard, it becomes crucial for all the components represented in the SGB to work together and maintain good relationships with one another so as to support schools.

### **3.3 RELATIONSHIP COMMITMENT**

There are various conceptual frameworks of relationship commitment. However, the paradox of commitment plays out in many of the most popular models. Levinger (1999), for instance, viewed commitment as an interplay of attractions (i.e. driving forces to maintain the relationship) and barriers (i.e. restraining forces that inhibit dissolution of the relationship). Stanley and Markman (1992) outlined a similar view of commitment, arguing that commitment includes personal dedication (i.e. the desire of an individual to maintain a relationship) and constraint commitment (i.e. the factors that cause an individual to maintain a relationship regardless of personal dedication). Johnson's tripartite model (Johnson, 1999) purports that individuals stay in relationships not only because they want to (personal commitment), but because they feel that they ought to (moral commitment), or perceive

that they must (structural commitment). Although personal commitment entails positive perceptions, such as affection and longing, moral and structural commitment comprises elements of obligation, constraint, frustration and resentment. According to Farrell (2001), the most important relationship is that between the principal and the chairperson of the governors. The chairperson has a tricky task of balancing the views of other governors and the ambitions of the head educator of the school (Farrell, 2001). This statement implies that the principal-chairperson relationship or partnership is improved if both the principal and chairperson understand their roles and responsibilities in the process of implementing school policies. These power plays and domination can also be seen at the level of understanding of each component of its roles (Heystek, 2004).

An important factor in the principal's role relates to working relationships with the SGB as a whole. This can include elements pertaining to how the SGB conducts its business and the support the principal provides. Pertinent examples of this can include procedures used in formulating policies, their implementation and interaction with and among other SGB members. According to the Province of the Eastern Cape (2012:10), each party must have a clear understanding of its respective role and the governing body should respect the position of the principal as the professional leader of the school and as the person responsible for the day-to-day management and administration of the school.

Therefore, as partners in schools, SGBs and principals are bound by their roles and mandates to work together for the common good of the schools. Both share the responsibility for the total welfare and success of the school and therefore they are interdependent on each other because of the nature of their membership composition. Their relationship is therefore one of the most significant variables that determines success in their roles and the school performance (Bush & Heystek, 2003). Power play between role players may have a detrimental effect on the relationship of trust and mutual support (Heystek, 2004) and impacts negatively on participation of all in school governance (Mabasa & Themane, 2002). The relationship between principals and SGB members is significant because of the interdependence. Both parties need each other for the success of the school. However, power play may derail the work of governors and principals and needs to be kept in check at all times.

### **3.4 ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

The Oxford English Dictionary (2012) defines academic achievement as relating to studies that rely on reading and involving abstract thought rather than being primarily practical or technical, or relating to scholarly performance, that is, a learner's academic average. Moreover, academic achievement refers to results and their outcomes obtained from processes, products and services that permit evaluation and comparison relative to goals, standards and past results (Mwamwenda, 1996). It relates to the extent to which a learner has achieved short-term or long-term educational goals which

is commonly measured through examinations or continuous assessment (Wikipedia, 2017). According to Steinmayr *et al.* (2014), academic performance represents performance results that indicate the level to which a person has achieved specific goals that were the focus of undertakings in instructional situations, specifically in schools, college and university. Academic achievement occurs within a broad environmental context. In the school environment, learners have positive and negative experiences that affect their cognitions, behaviours and socio-emotional development (Mwamwenda, 1996).

Learners who experience social difficulties within the school environment could experience frustration that negatively affects their academic success (Mwamwenda, 1996). According to DiPerna and Elliott (2002), academic performance includes academic competence, which refers to all attitudes, behaviours and skills that a learner needs to be successful in the classroom and involves two components: academic skills and academic enablers. Academic skills are basic and complex skills needed to be successful in the classroom, such as language-based skills, math skills and critical thinking. On the other hand, academic enablers are skills and behaviours that support learning, such as academic engagement, interpersonal skills, motivation, and study skills, and are important predictors of academic success (DiPerna & Elliott, 2002; DiPerna *et al.*, 2005). To be successful in academics, learners should have a combination of general intelligence, academic skills and academic enablers.

In the South African context, academic achievement is related to the percentage that the DoBE would like learners to score in the ANA for grades 3 to 9 in Literacy and Numeracy (DoBE, 2013). The DoBE would have liked to see at least 60% of learners achieving acceptable levels of literacy and numeracy by 2014, increasing to 90% by 2024 (DoBE, 2013). Good achievement is linked to schools that score 70% or more in the grade 12 examinations. However, schools with a lower than 70% pass rate in the grade 12 examinations are underperforming schools.

Gaza (2012), Modisaotsile (2012) and Motsamai (2015) are of the view that the South African government has the highest budget spending on education in the world. However, it seems that the investment in schools does not have the desired effect on most schools as expected by policymakers and other stakeholders in education. Challenges are mostly found in impoverished schools, which are situated in the townships, informal settlements and rural areas of South Africa and are commonly characterised by poverty and illiteracy. Research shows that most impoverished schools do not have basic services – such as electricity, water supply, ablution facilities, stocked libraries, and laboratory facilities – to help them function well as a school (Legal Resource Centre, 2001; Moyo, 2013; Equal Education, 2015). Drug abuse, school violence, gangsterism and teenage pregnancies are further challenges in these schools (Gaza, 2012; Modisaotsile, 2012; Prew, 2010). Data from the World

Bank indicated that, as a result of these conditions in and around impoverished schools, half of all learners who have started school drop out before they complete the grade 12 examinations (Chetty, 2014). In this regard, the relationship between the SGB and the school is important. Good relationships between SGBs and schools will be the starting point to improve the academic achievement of learners in schools. Since healthy relationships between stakeholders will increase dialogue and an interest in what the school does, all stakeholders will be able to better understand the situation of the school. The latter will put stakeholders, especially the SGB, in a better position to support the school for sustainable academic improvement of learners.

The SASA spells out the SGB's mandate of setting the school's strategic direction, which involves setting standards for educational achievement and setting targets for learner academic achievement (RSA, 1996b). Therefore, while the task of teaching learners is a professional responsibility, setting academic achievement targets involves the SGB in its role of providing a strategy for a school's learning and teaching direction (RSA, 1996b). In this regard, the SGB sets performance standards for the school's aspirations. Performance targets are characterised by three essential characteristics, namely: outcomes to be aimed for; quantitative and qualitative measurability; and attainability within a specified time (Denis Muller & Associates, 2001:14).

Setting targets for learner academic performance involves the SGB in curriculum matters. Hamilton (*et al.*, 2009) argues that this involvement determines what support the SGB can offer to the school, and ultimately, the learners as governing body members bring a wealth of expertise from their life experiences and working environments – many of which are transferrable skills that can be used by the school. However, (Hamilton *et al.*, 2009) emphasises that to make those targets realistic and achievable but appropriately challenging, school governors rely on the advice of the principal and the curriculum leaders at the school. For this reason, Denis Muller & Associates (2001:14) posit that the process of performance and academic target-setting involves school-level planning to improve student learning outcomes; targets built into that planning but set at a system level; regular internal review; and external audits to assess progress. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2001:5) supports this and states that target-setting works best as part of regular planning to improve learner performance and as a process involves a continuing cycle of steps comprising:

- *gathering* appropriate information about learner achievement and about the context of the SGB and its community;
- *analysing* the information in context – looking at individual learners, groups of learners, grade levels, schools, and the SGB – to take stock of the current situation, establish an expectation for future achievement, and identify where improvement is needed;
- *setting* clear and measurable achievement targets as part of the regular school-year cycle;

- *using* achievement targets to guide improvement planning, which involves: identifying strategies and resources to help reach the targets; monitoring progress towards the targets; and refining the targets and improvement strategies on the basis of experience and results; and
- *reporting* the targets and results to ensure accountability.

In light of the meaning of setting targets for learner academic performance, it can be concluded that the role of the SGB involves much more than just an oversight role of school activities, but actually giving direction to the school's aspirations. It is further argued that the SGB, through the principal as the accounting officer, is essentially involved in setting educational targets and that the outcome of the processes of setting educational achievement standards and learner academic achievement are essentially descriptive of the principal's role in his/her official capacity as manager of the school (Leithwood *et al.*, 2004:8). The main role of the principal is to translate the action plans emanating from the strategic development planning process on these aspects into actionable, day-to-day targets by ensuring that the plans are implemented (Leithwood *et al.*, 2004:8). Doing so requires the principal to play the roles that Leithwood *et al.* (2004:8) describe as setting directions which are aimed at helping people to develop shared understandings about the school organisation and its activities and goals. Leithwood *et al.*, (2004:8) maintain that people are motivated by goals that they find personally compelling as well as challenging but achievable. Having such goals help people make sense of their work and enable them to find a sense of identity for themselves within their work context.

The principal achieves this by (Leithwood *et al.*, 2004:8):

- identifying and articulating a vision: fostering the acceptance of group goals and creating high-performance expectations, monitoring organisational performance and promoting effective communication throughout the school;
- developing people: which belief involves specific sets of leadership practices that significantly and positively influence people's direct experiences, which include, for example, offering intellectual stimulation, providing individualised support, and providing appropriate models for best practice and beliefs considered fundamental to the organisation;
- redesigning the organisation: involves developing the school as an effective organisation that supports and sustains the performance of staff, educators and learners.

Executing these practices should help the principal, who is acting on behalf of the SGB, to promote learner academic performance. Other scholars, such as Seashore Louis *et al.* (2010:316), assert that the principal has to start with, *inter alia*, a focus on instruction, where the style of teaching and learner engagement is important; instructional leadership as a way for the principal to ensure that

he/she understands curricular content; instructional materials and lending support for improved instruction; shared leadership that reflects deliberate patterns of commitment and mutual influence among organisational members; and trust (Seashore Louis *et al.*, 2010:316). The latter implies that principals build trust indirectly through supportive behaviour, cultivate respect and personal regard for educators, and cultivate competence in core role responsibilities and personal integrity, because high-trust schools exhibit more collective decision-making and improvements in learner academic achievement.

It thus becomes clear that academic achievement of learners is not the responsibility of the educators and principal only, but also that of the SGB. However, their role is more indirect, amongst others, through their engagement with the principal, the discussion of results of learners, the provision of learning and teaching material, the money that is budgeted for teaching and learning, as well as their caring for the school buildings and playgrounds.

### **3.5 TRUST**

According to Prinsloo (2016), trust is fundamental and a positive expectation that keeps things running smoothly and it is crucial for any organisation. Furthermore, it is asserted that the building of trusting relationships supports integrity that, in turn, sets the foundation for mutual trust for one another (Prinsloo, 2016). If parents are properly guided, they can make an enormous contribution to support of a school. Schools function best when parents and other members of the community have a sense of belonging and ownership of the school and its activities (Clarke, 2012:174). Getting parents involved in schools means building trust. Parents need to be convinced that schools care about their child and that they will provide individual attention to meet their child's needs (Bafumo, 2003:12).

However, Badenhorst and Koalepe (2014) claim that parents, especially from disadvantaged settings, often have an intense distrust towards schools due to negative school experiences, feelings of inferiority, low competency levels, and poverty, amongst other reasons. According to them, the way the school interacts with parents could be either invitational or disinvitational. Welcoming parents to the school and communicating with them, especially good news about their child's efforts, can help optimise parent cooperation and trust in the school and could be seen as an invitation to them to build relationships and partnerships that is based on mutual trust (Badenhorst & Koalepe, 2014). According to section 16(1-2) of the SASA, the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body. A governing body stands in a position of trust towards the school. It is the responsibility of the school principal and the SGB to establish the culture and ethics that ensure the relationships are conducive to effective communication and decision-making.

According to Mabovula (2010), the culture and ethics of the SGB and the principal is called communicative action. Communicative action is a circular process whereby one masters situations through actions for which one is responsible and also becomes a product of the changes surrounding oneself. It enables stakeholders to understand and agree with one another and to make plans for common action where no partner is left behind powerless and mistrusted (Mabovula, 2010). According to Mahlangu (2014:180-181), trust means to acts in good faith towards one another or towards the school. In a trusting environment, decision-making can be carried out by one person after consultation with other stakeholders (Mahlangu, 2014:180-181). In order to build trust among stakeholders in a school, there is a need to: cultivate a cooperative rather than a competitive or dominating mind; make involvement with parents understanding and concerned; be open about the school's objectives; and subtly demonstrate expertise without being oppressive or signalling superiority (Botha, 2013). Building trust is an interactive process that involves the sharing of information, ideas and feelings. The operative word in trust is reciprocity. It is important to share rather than conceal feelings. Thoughts, however, should be expressed in ways that parents can understand and appreciate (Mahlangu, 2014:180-181).

According to Heystek (2006:474), although the legislation puts the emphasis on the SGB to be in a relationship of trust with the school, in practice, trust is also expected from the other partner in this partnership, namely the principal and the educators. The position of trust must come from both sides, as the people should be working towards the same goal – the best interests of the school. This position of trust may be the key to the effective functioning of schools and especially for the relationship between the SGB and the principal.

Mahlangu (2014:181) identified some strategies that can be used in a relationship that can initiate and enhance trust-building with parents. The first strategy is accepting parents as they are and not trying to introduce fundamental changes. In conflict situations, the less you try to change broad-based philosophical beliefs of people, the greater the chances of influencing them. When trust is high, parents may demonstrate their readiness to change by asking for assistance. Another strategy is listening carefully to and with empathy for the cognitive and emotional content of parents' messages. The principal should give complete, undivided, uninterrupted attention, and communicate with parents, help them to feel comfortable, and share information and resources with them when legally permissible.

Providing help and requesting legitimate assistance from parents establish natural trust-building opportunities. Sharing information, resources and ideas is a powerful process in building trust. On the other hand, evading requests for information or obscuring pertinent facts at once creates the impression that you are hiding something. This may heighten distrust and defensiveness. In

managing township schools, principals need to focus on parents' hopes, aspirations, concerns and needs. Unilaterally setting agendas for parents rather than focusing on their concerns only intensifies distrust and resistance. It is natural to like someone who is interested in you and your concerns (Mahlangu, 2014:181).

According to Harris *et al.* (2014), definitions of trust distinguish different elements and contexts. Harris *et al.* (2014) describe four types of trust. Self-trust is what people need to be confident of their capabilities and judgments in given situations. Structural trust is placed in institutions, companies, brands, or countries. Transactional trust is specific to particular contexts and times. Relational trust is the type of trust a person puts in another person or group of people and is the type of trust that has received most attention in the school education literature.

Rotter (1980) defined trust as “a generalized expectancy held by an individual that the word, promise, or statement of another individual can be relied upon”. Deutsch (1973) took a broader, more general perspective, defining trust as “confidence that one will find what is desired from another, rather than what is feared”. Adding to this definition, Scanzoni (1979) introduced the idea that an individual must be placed in a position of risk to trust: the likelihood that trust would be present in new relationships is low because of the limited interaction upon which to justify taking a risk. Finally, Holmes and Rempel (1989) viewed trust in interpersonal relationships as “reflecting confident expectations of positive outcomes”. Adams and Christenson (1998) defined trust in the family-school relationship as confidence that another person will act in a way to benefit or sustain the relationship, or the implicit or explicit goals of the relationship, to achieve positive outcomes for students. Trust makes cooperative endeavours happen and is a key to positive interpersonal relationships in various settings, including working relationships (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Harris *et al.* (2014) present a modified version of the elements described by Bryk *et al.* (2010) which is used below to describe the relationship between trust and school improvement.

- **School-community trust**

The relationships between schools and the wider school community – including parents, individuals, external agencies and other organisations – form an integral component in schools' social capital. This form of social capital may be referred to as 'bridging' social capital as it draws together parties from different social groups and/or organisations to develop a network (Putnam, 2000). A high level of engagement with the community is vital for schools, particularly schools in disadvantaged contexts, so that they can offer students a broad range of support and opportunities.

- **Educator-principal trust**

School principals and other school leaders play integral roles in developing a culture of trust in schools (Rhodes *et al.*, 2011; Walker *et al.*, 2011). School leaders who are successful in developing a culture of trust make relationship-building a priority in their leadership. School leaders help establish trust when they make themselves available to school staff and encourage open communication.

- **Educator-educator trust**

In schools with a strong culture of trust between educators, levels of vulnerability are lowered. Educators feel more assured about engaging in processes of reform and are more likely to engage in collaborative problem-solving.

- **Student-educator trust**

High-quality relationships between educators and students offer educators insights into the attitudes and life worlds of their students. These relationships also provide students with insights into adult behaviour and can support their enculturation into the normative expectations of the school. Research has shown that reciprocal trust relationships between students and educators can increase students' identification as part of the school community, support student engagement, enhance student wellbeing, and raise the bar for all students (Mitchell *et al.*, 2008; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011). Important consequences play out in the day-to-day social exchanges within a school community. Recent research shows that social trust among educators, parents and school leaders improves much of the routine work of schools and is a key resource for reform. Trust makes cooperative endeavours happen. Trust is key to positive interpersonal relationships in various settings because it is central to how we interact with others. Trust is a central component in effective working relationships (Bryk & Schneider, 2003).

In summary, school principals and other school leaders play integral roles in developing a culture of trust in schools when they inspire and motivate others with their passion for improving educational outcomes and when they align trust with strategies to move towards a shared vision. It can thus be postulated that, in order to be trusted, one needs to build a good relationship with another and set an example that can be followed by others. As the principal and the SGB has no choice but to work together for the common good of the school, it becomes important for them to act in a trustworthy manner.

### **3.6 RELATIONAL TRUST**

According to Bryk and Schneider (2003), for a school community to work well, it must reach an agreement in each role relationship in terms of the understandings held about personal obligations and expectations of others. Bryk and Schneider (2003) maintain that an interrelated set of mutual dependencies are embedded in the social exchanges in any school community. Regardless of how much formal power any given role has in a school community, all participants stay dependent on others to achieve desired outcomes and feel empowered by their efforts (Prinsloo, 2016). The principal, for example, needs educators' support to maintain a cohesive professional community that productively engages parents and students (Botha, 2013). Educators' work, in turn, depends on decisions that the principal makes about the allocation of resources to their classrooms. Parents depend on both educators and the principal to create an environment that keeps their children safe and helps them learn (Prinsloo, 2016).

Such dependencies create a sense of mutual vulnerability for all individuals involved. Consequently, deliberate action taken by any party to reduce this sense of vulnerability in others (to make them feel safe and secure) builds trust across the community (Botha, 2013). However, it is alleged by Smit and Oosthuizen (2011) that trust among stakeholders can be compromised through communication that is comforting, consulting, informing and manipulating. According to them, it conveys a false message of involvement that might discourage parents. They are of the view that real parental involvement and thus relation trust, relates to, among others, the holding of meetings, public hearings, voting, campaigning, group activities and fundraising. Furthermore, Bryk and Schneider (2003) maintain that, as individuals interact with one another around the work of schooling, they are constantly discerning the intentions embedded in the actions of others. They consider how others' efforts advance their own interests or impinge on their own self-esteem. They ask whether others' behaviour reflects appropriately on their moral obligations to educate children well. These discernments take into account the history of previous interactions. In the absence of prior contact, participants may rely on the general reputation of others and on commonalities of race, gender, age, religion, or upbringing. These discernments tend to organise around three specific considerations: respect, personal regard, and personal integrity (Bryk & Schneider, 2003).

From the above it becomes clear that, in order to build relational trust amongst members of the school, it is important that the relationships are built on genuine principles. These principles relate to the establishing of meaning rather than controlling, dialogue, and cooperative, democratic leadership principles that are ethical and based on beliefs and values that serve others (Botha, 2013). The elements of relational trust that form the building blocks to instil genuine trust among stakeholders will be discussed next.

### **3.6.1 Respect**

According to Bryk and Schneider (2003), relational trust is grounded in the social respect that comes from the kinds of social discourses that take place across the school community. Respectful exchanges are marked by genuinely listening to what each person has to say and by taking these views into account in subsequent actions. Even when people disagree, individuals can still feel valued if others respect their opinions.

According to Heathfield (2016), respect is when you admire and show feelings of regard for someone because of the qualities and capabilities that individual displays in his/her work. In this regard, it becomes crucial that the individual becomes aware of the feelings of admiration that another has for him/her in order to do it in return and to improve further in the workplace.

Schools became diverse after 1994, and as a result, schools and the stakeholders involved in schools are no longer narrowed to discernible descriptions and qualities, but a variety of personalities and backgrounds (Sklarz, 2015). In the context of the SGB and the school, it is thus important to nurture and embrace differences that exist amongst stakeholders. Recognising the talents and contributions of others, irrespective of differences, creates mutual respect, minimises workplace conflict and ultimately encourages collaboration, synergy and cooperation, which is crucial to the improvement of academic achievement of learners in schools (Sklarz, 2015).

### **3.6.2 Personal regard**

Personal regard represents another important criterion in determining how individuals discern trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Such regard springs from the willingness of participants to extend themselves beyond the formal requirements of a job definition or union contract (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). It means valuing an individual for doing things at best constructively and respecting the person's right to self-determination, regardless of what he/she chooses to do (Joseph, 2012). Furthermore, showing personal regard means one respects an individual, no matter how dangerous or dysfunctional the act seems to be. It does not mean that one likes an individual or approves what he/she does (Joseph, 2012).

In the context of schooling, and specifically the school (principal) and the SGB, it seems that the notion of personal regard –considering the different backgrounds and personalities of stakeholders –is crucial to establish sound relationships between the SGB and the principal. Furthermore, it is maintained that, if healthy relationships exist within the school, stakeholders will be in a better position to support the principal in his/her endeavours to create conditions that are conducive for quality teaching and learning to take place.

### **3.6.3 Personal integrity**

According to Vocabulary.com (2017), integrity is a personal, innate conviction and trait that means doing the right thing in a reliable way. It implies individuals doing things that they think is right, regardless of the consequences accompanying those decisions. Individuals with high integrity are usually described as being trustworthy, loyal, big-hearted and mature (Vocabulary.com, 2017). Personal integrity also shapes individuals' judgement that trust exists and that a moral-ethical perspective guides one's work (Bryk & Schneider, 2003).

In the light of the mentioned facts about personal integrity, it seems that the characteristics attached to individuals' perceived integrity are essential for building healthy relationships among stakeholders in the school. In fact, it also seems that individuals with integrity serve to give other people a sense of security and comfort. In this regard, it becomes important that stakeholders who select and appoint the SGB and principal during elections, appoint those who have the necessary integrity. This will benefit the learners and the school.

### **3.7 BENEFITS OF TRUST**

According to Tschannen-Moran (2014), the payoffs of trust amongst members of the school community are many and relates to collaboration and self-efficacy. Greater collaboration might foster a spirit of professionalism amongst members. In schools where there is a sense of trust, people work better together, and members feel supported and are more willing to make themselves available through teamwork and sharing with others (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Collective decision-making with broad educator buy-in, a crucial ingredient for reform, occurs more readily in schools with strong relational trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Strong relational trust also makes it more likely that reform initiatives will diffuse broadly across the school, because trust reduces the sense of risk associated with change. When school professionals trust one another and sense support from parents, they feel safe to experiment with new practices. Similarly, relational trust fosters the necessary social exchanges among school professionals as they learn from one another (Bryk & Schneider, 2003).

### **3.8 PROGRESSION OF TRUST**

Rempel *et al.* (1985) hypothesised that trust consists of three progressing levels arranged in a hierarchical order, namely predictability, dependability and faith, and that interactions within relationships tend to be characterised by a single level. Later, Holmes and Rempel (1989) referred to this developmental progression as uncertainty reduction. The first most basic foundational trust is that of predictability, which refers to reliability of behaviour and stability of the emotional environment. At this level, trust is established from specific behavioural evidence, where individuals repeatedly behave in the manner expected. Sharing knowledge of relevant behavioural constraints for expected parent or educator behaviours encourages predictability (Holmes & Rempel, 1989).

As the relationship progresses towards dependability, trust is seen as a personal attribute. The shift from a focus on concrete behaviours to a focus on personal qualities (i.e. “They are trustworthy people”) occurs after individuals demonstrate that their behaviour is predictable and responsive to another’s needs (Holmes & Rempel, 1989). The final level of trust is faith, which reflects an emotional security that is not solely rooted in past experiences; it goes beyond the available evidence or dispositional attributes. Despite uncertainty, individuals in the relationship are certain that their partner will follow through and be responsive to their needs (Rempel *et al.*, 1985). Rempel and colleagues contend that, “although we do not consider these components to be mutually exclusive, we do believe that the dominance of one perspective over another has very different implications for the quality of the relationship”. Therefore, the concept of trust is essential in building relationships within a learning community in which knowledge is socially created and shared and building the kinds of group relationships that boost learner achievement (Bottery, 2004).

### **3.9 SUPPORT**

According to Van Zyl (2013), the South African government wants parents to be involved in the education of their children, as it endorses the notion that effective parental involvement results in improved learner achievement. He further claims that supportive parents encourage, show sympathy, support and show understanding when it comes to the education of their children. The latter involvement is also stated in the SASA (RSA, 1996b), section 20(a). According to this section, the best interests of the school should always be a priority and it must be in the interest of quality teaching and learning.

Moreover, it is maintained that relations between the school and parents take different forms: firstly, in the form of cooperation and showing loyalty towards the school; and secondly, in the form of belonging to different committees with the aim of supporting the school with procurement of scarce learning material and educational tours for learners (Van Zyl, 2013).

#### **3.9.1 Social support**

Different authors called it social support (Shumaker & Brownell, 1984; Cohen & Syme, 1985; Tardy, 1985; Lin, 1986; Solberg & Villarreal, 1997; Gurung, 2006). The views of these authors are presented in the following paragraphs. Social support is defined by Gurung (2006) as being valued, respected, cared about and loved by others, and can encompass tangible interventions from others (e.g. appraisal of situations, coping strategies and emotional support) and serves to help individuals in coping better with challenging situations. Cohen and Syme (1985) define social support as a positive or negative resource exchange between two or more individuals. Lin (1986) defined it as the perception or actual reception of resources of an instrumental or expressive form from the

community, social networks, or trusted partners. Tardy (1985) stated that social support is differentiated in terms of the direction of support (social support can be given or received), the nature of such support (the availability of social support versus the use of such support), the description of support in contrast to the personal evaluation of the satisfaction of support, the form of the support, and the network from which the support is derived.

For the purposes of this study, however, social support will be defined as per Shumaker and Brownell (1984), who defined social support as a process whereby a positive resource exchange occurs between two or more persons, with exchanged resources being beneficial towards the wellbeing of the benefited party. Social support was conceptualised as a mutual process that involves the exchange of resources between two or more individuals, with such an exchange being of a beneficial nature to the wellbeing of the recipient of such exchanged resources (Shumaker & Brownell, 1984). Social support was found to be an important factor in increased general life satisfaction and decreased symptoms of depression and anxiety and as a consequence, was an important buffering agent related to adjustment to tertiary academic life (Solberg & Villarreal, 1997).

From the above, it seems that social support from parents can take many forms. Importantly, the support from parents is to give assistance to the school where there is a scarcity of resources in terms of finance and expertise. This type of support is also vital to help the school to fulfil its duties towards their learners.

### **3.9.2 Support of the school governing body (SGB)**

Parents also form partnerships –by serving on the SGB –with the school, where they actively partake in decision-making to the benefit of the school (Van Zyl, 2013). This type of support, as previously stated, is mandatory and important for schools to survive and deliver the best service to the school so that effective teaching and learning take place. The following sections will discuss the support that SGBs are supposed to provide to schools to deliver quality teaching and learning to learners. Furthermore, the barriers that prevent SGBs to perform their mandate will also be part of the discussion. Lastly, recommendations will be made to improve the support of SGBs to schools.

According to the SASA (RSA, 1996b), the supportive functions of the SGB relate to the establishment of policies with regard to admission, language and religious practices of the school. The SGB must also adopt a constitution, a code of conduct for learners, a mission statement, promote the best interests of the school, decide on the times of the school, recommend the appointment of staff to the DoBE, render voluntary services to the school, and make school buildings available to the communities it serves.

For the purposes of this research, only two of the supportive functions of the SGB will be discussed in detail, namely: promoting the best interests of the school; and rendering voluntary services to the school. It seems that these all-encompassing supportive functions of the SGB are in the best position to answer the proposed research sub-question: *What is the nature of the relationship between SGBs and principals?*

### **3.9.3 Promote the best interests of the school**

Sections 16 and 20 of the SASA lay the foundation for cooperative governance and encourage strong partnership between the governing body and other role players. This partnership is said to be characterised by mutual trust and respect, shared decision-making, common vision, open communication, and good teamwork (SASA, 1996, section 16). Section 16(2) states that the SGB stands in a position of trust. Furthermore, section 20(1)(a) of the SASA directs the SGB to “promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school”. This is essentially the school governance mandate of all SGBs of schools in South Africa. This mandate implies that the SGB must, in all its roles and responsibilities, put the interests of the school, and by extension, the learners, first. This translates into three main roles that define this mandate. According to various experts on school governance (e.g. Balarin *et al.*, 2008; Barton *et al.*, 2006; Heystek, 2004; Ranson & Crouch, 2009), the three roles that define the SGB’s mandate of promoting the best interests of the school, and therefore, learners, include providing the school with a strategic direction, acting as critical friend, and holding the school to account.

Although these three roles are inseparable in practice, they can be separated for purposes of definition. Providing the school with a strategic direction involves, according to Xaba (2006:13), a strategic role and implies setting a long-term strategic framework with a strategy that sets aims and objectives within the school’s vision and mission, setting policies and targets for achieving objectives, and monitoring and evaluating progress. OpenLearn of the Open University (2017) describes setting a strategic direction as a role that “involves a period of reflection and evaluation of the school’s current status, combined with forward thinking about future education initiatives and projections relating to the potential budget and pupil numbers” and ends up with plans that clearly link the demands of the school and its community, the aims, values and culture of the school and the available resources, whether financial, human or material.

Acting as a critical friend implies that the SGB provides advice, support and challenge to the school and principal (Business in the Community, 2008:14). Balarin *et al.* (2008:15) define acting as a critical friend as implying that the SGB asks questions and tries to understand what the school is doing well and where it needs to do better and includes monitoring and evaluating the school’s progress by

also supporting the principal in the performance of his functions and giving him/her constructive criticism. In this regard, Heystek (2006:403) points out that critical friendship is only achieved where there is trust and mutual respect, and as such, the SGB should feel able to question and challenge the principal.

Holding the school to account can be understood from the point of view of demanding accountability, which Balarin *et al.* (2008:30) define as: a relationship of formalised control between parties, one of whom has the authority to hold the other to account for what they do and typically includes an evaluation of what has been done in relation to the required standards. Balarin *et al.* (2008:30) further argue that to be accountable usually carries with it a sense of being responsible for something and answerable to another for the discharging of that responsibility. Applied to the SGB, holding the school to account implies that the SGB sets the target for school performance and achievement and delegates the implementation thereof to the principal and school and in return expects the principal and school to account in respect of the achievement of such targets. Collaboration means that parents, educators and learners (in the case of secondary schools) work together in school governance in order to promote the best interests of the school (Heystek, 2004). The nature in which SGBs are constituted allows greater space for community members to collaborate with educators in school governance. It is of primary importance that each stakeholder component in the process of collaboration understands its line of operation within the SGB (Heystek, 2004).

The movement nowadays is towards decentralised governance and self-management (RSA, 1996). The rationale for this type of governance, as Lemmer (2000:145) describes it, is to make schools more efficient and effective, to improve the quality of education, raise the levels of learner performance at schools and to respond to the needs of learners. The success of democratic decentralised governance will depend on factors such as stakeholder participation, commitment to shared decision-making, structures and processes to assist stakeholders to operate, the availability of resources (physical and human), and the provision of training programmes (Lemmer, 2000:145). In a study of 24 schools in Gauteng Province, 70% of the stakeholders interviewed felt that the formation of the SGB had led to “greater participation by parents in school activities, such as meetings, fund-raising and extra-mural activities” (Gauteng Department of Education [GDE], 2001:28). This has led to all stakeholders working together and making decisions by consensus in pursuit of a common interest – to improve the quality of education in schools.

The government’s call for greater participation in education has growing support. The call is based on the assumption that, if more people were included in school governance, then democracy in education would be boosted and equality among schools would be ensured (Dieltiens & Enslin, 2002:5). Through the development of partnerships by SGBs within the community, schools benefit

greatly by promoting quality education for all learners. These benefits are: improved learner attendance; positive attitude towards the school and learning by learners; communication among the school's staff, children and SGBs; as well as improved attitudes. There is also improved job satisfaction among people in education (NASP, 1999). Improved financial support for schools result in resources being supplied and building and school premises being maintained. Community involvement is a resource for school improvement projects (Sanders & Lewis, 2005:6).

Strong collaboration between parents, who are represented by the SGB and schools, can have a beneficial effect on children in both school and home settings (Sheridan *et al.*, 2010). A collaborative family-school relationship provides the foundation for parents and educators to engage in collective efforts to enhance children's competencies and solve their problems at school and at home (Sheridan *et al.*, 2008). Parental involvement takes many forms, including parents sharing responsibilities in decisions about their children's education, health and wellbeing as well as parents participating in organisations that reflect the community's collaborative aspirations for all children (Perriell, 2015:77).

Furthermore, parental involvement also refers to the participation or inclusion of parents or guardians in their children's education by partnership in and contribution to various activities at home and at school (Perriell, 2015:78). Parental involvement in this context includes parenting, communicating, volunteering, supporting learning at home, participating in decision-making, collaborating with the school, and the extent to which parents take an active role in their children's education (Perriell, 2015:78). A partnership is a joint venture that involves the association of parents and educators in several ways to promote the success of their children's education. Positive parental involvement refers to the establishment of productive relationships between the school and home so as to enhance communication, promote understanding and provide opportunities for children to interact with people, places and things in their immediate environment and beyond (Perriell, 2015:78). The SGB is the grouping of parents and educators who work together to provide benefits for learners in a particular school system (Perriell, 2015:78).

#### **3.9.4 Voluntary services to the school**

One of the main priorities of the South African education system is to improve the quality and standard of the school system (Joubert & Bray, 2007:44). A positive attitude can be developed through a culture of teaching and learning if all stakeholders work as partners in learning. The SGBs, representing the parents, could recruit parents from the external community – businesses and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – to become “partners in learning”. This would result in supportive development of a global perspective in the school curriculum, delivering the school curriculum as well as enhancing the teaching of core subjects and setting up and developing a

learning partnership with schools (Joubert & Bray, 2007:44). According to Joubert and Bray (2007:44), partnerships should: be beneficial to both parties and should aim to provide professional development for educators; add value to the ethos of the participating school, thus improving performance; enhance the content of classroom teaching in all learning areas; and enable learners to acquire new skills, attitudes and experience through contacting their peers from different cultures directly.

Educators and school staff work hard and are always under pressure, which varies from school to school. Therefore, educators should see the learning partnership as assisting them in their duties. The learning partnership with external stakeholders – such as HEIs, private sectors, NGOs, community members – would support educators through SGBs in the following activities (Joubert & Bray, 2001:45):

- exchanging letters or emails amongst a group of learners, educators, classes or the entire school. This would lead to developing communication and presentation skills, personal contact, and building empathy and sympathy in relationships;
- information technology links, such as internet, email and fax used for communication purposes. Computer skills could be practised in a meaningful way;
- information exchange where partners agree on a topic and exchange information;
- communication and language learning, since South Africa has 11 official languages and sign language;
- joint communication projects where schools could agree to work together on different learning areas over a period of time.

Section 36(1) of the SASA mandates the SGB to engage in fundraising activities. These activities will be beneficial to the school and supplement the budget received from the Education Department. The SGB should allow the use of the facilities of the school for community, social and fundraising purposes, which would include charging a fee (Nyambi, 2004:26). In disadvantaged communities, parents are unable to pay school fees. By using the school's property for fundraising activities, these schools will be assisted to alleviate some of their needs (Nyambi, 2004:26). The organisation of fundraising events by SGBs over weekends– which learners, parents and the community attend to financially participate in these fundraising activities–should take place.

The underlying principle is to ensure that educators, parents, learners and non-teaching staff actively participate in the governance and management of the schools with a view to providing a better teaching and learning environment (Nyambi, 2004:26). As school managers, principals should enhance an effective school climate that supports high expectations for learning and commitment to continuous improvement. They should help the SGB with effective governing strategies and

recognise and reward the SGB's efforts to improve governance and effective learning. The demise of a rigid centralised and bureaucratic approach to education brought about by the SASA has paved the way for a more interactive approach to school governance and management.

### **3.10 RECOMMENDATIONS**

According to Singh *et al.* (2004), parents— especially those from impoverished backgrounds— need to be empowered if they are to make a significant contribution to their children's education. A partnership between parents and schools is an instrument to improve and develop schools, since parents involve themselves in the schools' activities in order to benefit their children's education (Hoover-Dempsey *et al.*, 2001; Calitz *et al.*, 2002; Petesch, 2007; Vatterott, 2009). This relationship creates the opportunity for parents and educators to become involved in a more formal and structured partnership relating to the education of the child. The importance of this partnership is emphasised by Vatterott (2009:55), who argues that the “power relationship between schools and parents must be realigned to embrace parents as equal partners in their children's education”.

Research has consistently shown that, with the increase in parent partnerships in the governance of schools, there is a concomitant increase in learner achievement (Ramirez, 2001:130). Gonzalez (2002:132) cites numerous studies that identified the existence of relationships between parental partnerships and student variables such as academic achievement, sense of wellbeing, school attendance, attitude, homework readiness, grades and educational aspirations. While these studies may not be linked directly to schools in South Africa, the findings are universally significant in terms of parent-school relationships. Cotton (2001:4) and Blankstein (2004:167) believe that nothing motivates a child more than when learning is valued by schools and communities working together in partnership. They note that parent partnerships lead to greater achievement, irrespective of factors such as socio-economic status, background, educational level and whether or not parents are employed.

According to Edwards and Alldred (2000:3), across the political spectrum, parental partnerships are regarded as enhancing the educational performance of children from deprived socio-economic backgrounds. In addition, such partnerships serve as a market mechanism or even a communication approach to improve the school's effectiveness for all learners. On the other hand, Gonzalez (2002:132) observes that the lack of parental partnerships in schools leads to excessive peer influence on learners. This inevitably creates negative educational outcomes, which range from truancy to drug abuse and from depression to low grades.

Van Der Berg *et al.* (2011:6) confirm that parental involvement is instrumental to academic performance. Students and parents must be given more accurate feedback and “familiarity with the standards may enhance the ability of parents to act as monitors for school quality and champions

for their children's education". Ferlazzo (2011) agrees that the right kind of school-family connections can produce multiple benefits for students, such as higher grade-point averages and test scores, better attendance, enrolment in more challenging courses, better social skills, and improved behaviour at home and at school. Henke (2011) confirmed that building a relationship with students and their families through home visits by the educator, results in an increase in academic achievement and test scores, improved attendance and homework completion, increased parental involvement, and improved attitudes towards the school.

Epstein's (2001:23) research offers a comprehensive parental involvement programme and is perhaps most frequently cited in this area of scholarship. Epstein's typology suggests that effective parental involvement focuses on:

- parenting skills to assist parents with understanding their children's learning needs and helping educators understand family needs;
- communication that allows for two-way, open communication between the school and home;
- volunteering that recognises parents' talents and contributions both in and for the school;
- learning strategies that engage the family with their children's schoolwork;
- decision-making that includes parents as key stakeholders in making decisions that will impact on learner learning; and
- collaborating with the community to create mutual benefit by sharing resources and contributing to both school and community goals.

Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009) state that improved academic achievement is one of the benefits for learners when parental involvement is in place. Some of the other benefits are improved attitudes to learning, decreased drop-out rates, increased security and emotional stability, as well as improved behaviour and better school attendance. Excellence or any level of success on the part of students depend heavily on parental involvement. Fullan (2001:16) mentioned that "parental involvement is a high predictor of school success". If schools are to survive in the 21st century, then educators must begin to give significant attention to building and strengthening the relationship among educators, parents and principals. Parents should no longer be used solely as sales agents for fundraising tickets or called in only when their children are in trouble. Parents need to embrace the education process and become active participants in the daily life of the school (Perriell, 2015:76).

Parental involvement is a multidimensional construct that involves the participation of parents in both school- and home-centred activities that are designed to promote optimal development. Parental

involvement not only includes parent behaviour, but also attitudes about involvement as well as barriers and facilitators of involvement (Wandersman, 2002:14).

Involvement should not be limited to volunteering or attending school-sponsored events. The broad view of involvement affirms the parent's role as the child's primary educator and the home as the child's first classroom (Barbour, 2001). Supporting this line of thought, Epstein (1996) has suggested several ways in which parents can be involved in education and schools. Each of these areas presents challenges. The Epstein model proposes six types of activities that schools have identified as important to establishing and increasing meaningful parental involvement. The first type addresses the basic obligation of parents, which refers to the responsibility of families to ensure that the establishment of the home environment is conducive to the health and safety of the child; ensuring that the child-rearing skills needed to prepare children for school are present; recognising the continual need to supervise, discipline and guide children at each age level; and the need to build positive home conditions that support school learning and behaviour appropriate for each grade level (Jones & Jones, 2004).

The second type of activity is communication. There is a basic obligation for schools to communicate with the home about school programmes and children's progress. Schools vary in the form and frequency of communication such as memos, notices, report cards and conferences. The forms of communication might determine whether the information about school programmes and children's progress can be understood by all parents. Epstein's (2001) third type of parental involvement at school is providing support as volunteers who assist educators, administrators and children in classrooms or other areas of the school. It also includes parents who come to school to support student performances, sports or other events, or to attend workshops and other programmes for their own education or training (Jones & Jones, 2004).

The fourth type of parental involvement, learning at home, refers to parent-initiated activities or child-initiated requests for help, and ideas or instructions from educators for parents to monitor or assist their own children at home with learning activities that are coordinated with the children's classwork. Jones and Jones (2004) described Epstein's fifth type of parental involvement as participation in decision-making in the school and helping to develop parent leaders in governance and advocacy. It refers to parents assuming decision-making roles in PTAs, advisory councils, or other committees or groups at the school, district or state level. Finally, the sixth type of parental involvement, as demonstrated by Epstein (2001), is collaborating with the community. This type of activity identifies and integrates resources and services from the community to strengthen school programmes, family practices and student learning and development.

Information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational or social support and other programmes or services is provided through collaboration of students, families and school staff. This information on community activities may be linked to learning skills and talents, including summer programmes for students. According to Jones and Jones (2004), research has shown that parents and family are critical factors in children's education, particularly for those who are at risk of dropping out of school. Benefits of parental involvement that are directly experienced by students include: having positive attitudes towards school; much higher levels of achievement (particularly in reading and mathematics); completion of more homework in shorter time; and observing a closer relationship between family and school in general. Epstein (1991) suggested that when parents are involved, fewer students are placed in special education programmes and more students maintain a positive attitude and display more appropriate behaviour (Perriell, 2015:79-80).

Within the South African context, parental involvement is uniquely packaged following the historical antecedents that produced the SASA (Smit & Liebenberg, 2003; Lemmer, 2007; Mmotlane *et al.*, 2009; Mncube, 2009; Mbokodi & Singh, 2011). Although such legislation appears to play both an empowering and motivational role in parents' involvement in their children's schooling (Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2004; Brown & Duku, 2008), there still seems to be a lack of actual involvement of parents in many of the school activities of their children. Researchers (Mestry & Grobler, 2007:177; Felixet *et al.*, 2008; Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013) have noted that this lack of involvement "is not a lack of interest that prevents parents from becoming involved in their child's education, but rather problems of poverty, single-parenthood, non-English literacy, the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and cultural and socio-economic isolation". It is also important to note that, although many South African parents may be involved in their children's schooling, in many instances, much existing literature on the subject shows a predominance of issues of school governance, where parents are legally constituted as part of the SGB (Mestry & Grobler, 2007; Brown & Duku, 2008; Nojaja, 2009; Mncube, 2010; Mbokodi & Singh, 2011; Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013).

Parental involvement in education is known to have a substantial effect on the development of children. Studies have shown that parental involvement in education contributes to children's academic achievement as well as their socio-emotional maturity (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). More specifically, parental involvement in education has been shown to be positively correlated with children's academic motivation and achievement, attitudes towards schoolwork, self-efficacy, behavioural functioning, and social competence (El Nokali *et al.*, 2010). Parental involvement includes "a wide range of parent activities that support children's learning" (Fishel & Ramirez, 2005). Parents' involvement, in terms of frequency of attending events related to their children's education, positively affects children's commitment to school, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, perceived

competence, perceived control, self-regulation, mastery, goal orientation, and motivation to read (Gonzalez-DeHass *et al.*, 2005). Schools that successfully involve parents in the SGB:

- create a welcoming environment;
- use frequent and various communication methods;
- involve parents in decisions that affect their child;
- make an attempt to learn about parents' strengths, skills, talents and experiences;
- provide strategies and resources for parents to support their children's learning;
- initiate the process of building relationships with parents; and
- have leaders that believe in parents as partners in their children's learning.

Professional development of educators on promoting effective parental involvement in children's education is not only helpful, but also necessary. It cannot be assumed that educators are comfortable working with parents, know how to promote effective parental involvement, and have the skills to interact with parents in ways that are mutually beneficial. Educators should play a vital role to encourage a sound or good relationship between schools and parents.

In conclusion, when schools, families and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more. Furthermore, parental involvement over the past decade goes on to find that, regardless of family income or background, learners with involved parents are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, and enrol in higher-level programmes; are more likely to be promoted, pass their classes and earn credits; attend school regularly; have better social skills, show improved behaviour, and adapt well to school; graduate and go on to post-secondary education (Shumow, 1998:34).

If parents have a central role in influencing their children's progress in school, research has shown that schools, in turn, have an important part to play in determining levels of parental involvement (Epstein, 2001:54). Nowadays, there is a movement towards decentralised governance and self-management. The rationale for this type of governance, according to Lemmer (2000:145), is to make schools more efficient and effective, to improve the quality of education, raise the levels of learner performance at schools, and respond to the needs of learners. The success of democratic, decentralised governance will depend on factors such as stakeholder participation, commitment to shared decision-making, structures and processes to assist stakeholders to operate, the availability of resources (physical and human), and the provision of training programmes (Lemmer, 2000:145). In a study of 24 schools in Gauteng province, 70% of the stakeholders interviewed felt that the formation of the SGB had led to "greater participation by parents in school activities, such as meetings, fund-raising and extra-mural activities" (GDE, 2001:28). This has led to all stakeholders

working together and making decisions by consensus in pursuit of a common interest – to improve the quality of education at schools. The government’s call for greater participation in education has growing support. The call assumes that, if more people were included in school governance, then democracy in education would be boosted and equality among schools would be ensured (Dieltiens & Enslin, 2002:5).

Through the development of partnerships by SGBs within the community, schools benefit greatly by promoting quality education for all learners. These benefits are improved learner attendance; positive attitude towards the school and learning by learners; communication among the school’s staff, children and SGBs; as well as improved attitudes. There is also improved job satisfaction among people in education (NASP, 1999). Improved financial support for schools result in resources being supplied and building and school premises being maintained. Community involvement is a resource for school improvement projects (Sanders & Lewis, 2005:6).

### **3.11 BARRIERS TO THE FUNCTIONS OF THE SGB**

According to Conley and Van Deventer (2016), accountability structures remain weak and the various stakeholders do not always act in a coordinated fashion or with the same goals in mind. There may be various reasons for the state of affairs, amongst others, the SGB receives little support from government as they are overburdened with work that is beyond their capabilities and the fact that they are not sufficiently trained and do not understand how schools are and should be run (Jordaan, 2017).

In South Africa, Van Wyk (2007:135) maintains that, in spite of having the majority representation on the SGB, many parents serving on SGBs are reticent and rely on the principal and educators for leadership and guidance in decision-making. Karlsson (2002:332) ascribes this to parents’ weak understanding of their role, a capacity deficit in the range of skills needed to perform governance functions and irregular attendance of meetings. It therefore seems that parents do not play a significant role in school governance, despite being in the majority. On the other hand, educators, who form a minority on SGBs, continue to dominate parents. Karlsson (2002:332) contends that educators have the greatest participation in decision-making after the principal and play a far greater role than members representing non-educator staff, parents and learners. Mabasa and Themane (2002:115) agree by adding that principals and educators dominate SGB meetings and expect their recommendations to be accepted by all members without any further discussion.

Where there is a lack of understanding of one’s roles and responsibilities, the relationships within the SGB are negatively affected. Heystek (2004) refers to this lack of understanding as “power plays”. Heystek (2004:309) further maintains that power plays may be conscious or unconscious,

but they do happen, for example, a principal trying to dominate the rest of the SGB, or the chairperson of the SGB trying to dominate the principal on behalf of the parents. This power play may have a detrimental effect on the relationship of trust and mutual support. This means that power plays may lead to poor collaboration amongst SGB stakeholder components. This excerpt suggests that there must be a form of partnership between the SGB components, especially the principal and the chairperson of the SGB.

Lawson (2003:79) believes that perceived barriers to parental involvement need to be addressed for the partnership between parents and educators to succeed. Smit and Liebenberg (2003:4) and Singh *et al.* (2004:304) suggest that educators and schools bar parents from being actively involved in their children's education by not designing parental involvement programmes and policies. There is a gap between the parents and educators and a way of closing that gap is to enhance propinquity between educators and parents (Singh *et al.*, 2004:306).

Levine (2002:9), Lemmer (2007:223) and O'Connor and Geiger (2009:260) identify certain social circumstances that serve as barriers to parental involvement, such as long working hours, lack of transport or finances, lack of time, cultural style, and language. Language is regarded as a barrier to parental involvement as most parents are not educated and therefore experience difficulties in attempting to assist their children with their schoolwork. As a result, it seems difficult to bring these hard-to-reach parents into a significant and meaningful relationship. Latino students believe language and low educational/illiteracy levels contribute to the non-involvement of their parents (Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, 2007:14).

Educators' lack of training or qualifications in terms of their awareness of the need to work closely with parents serve as one of the barriers to parental involvement and as a result, discourages parents from coming forward and it increases sceptical attitudes on the part of the parents and the school (Bhering, 2002:237). To work with parents is a skill, and as such, educators need to be trained thoroughly so that parents can be motivated to be part of the development of the child – both at school and at home. Lemmer (2007:223) maintains that schools should become places where parents feel wanted and recognised for their strengths and potential. He further suggests that parental involvement activities should take into account the needs of families and the realities of contemporary life. Gelsthorpe and West-Burnham (2003:152) identify the following reasons why parents do not participate actively in school activities, namely parents' negative attitudes towards the school; parents' feelings of inferiority in the presence of the educators; lack of knowledge, skills and competencies of both parents and educators; demographic reasons; and educators' negative actions and attitudes.

Another challenge is the complexity of functions SGBs must undertake. These functions include developing policies, recommending the appointment of educators, and drawing up school budgets. School governing body members must have a certain level of expertise in these areas. They must understand education policies such as Employment of Educators Act (1998) (RSA, 1998), the Public Service Act (103 of 1994) (RSA, 1994), and the Labour Relations Act (66 of 1995) (RSA, 1995). According to Chaka (2008:27), various studies conducted on the functions of SGBs reflected that members do not have the necessary knowledge and skills required to undertake their responsibilities. The SGBs relied heavily on the principals and educators in the processes of decision-making and agreed fully on the decisions made by them. Illiterate parents followed the guidance of the school principal with technical issues such as drawing up the budget. Therefore, SGBs function at different levels, depending on the type and location of the school. It is the responsibility of the school to empower parents with knowledge and opportunities to become involved in school activities.

### **3.12 SUMMARY**

School governance in South Africa is the single most important factor in education that seems to experience apparent insurmountable challenges. Although more than a decade has passed since the enactment of the SASA, it seems that efforts to have effective school governance fall far short of their intended outcomes. Despite various attempts aimed at training and capacity building of school governors, including financial resources having been expended for these purposes, studies abound with reports of numerous challenges in the governance of schools in South Africa. According to section 20(1)(a) of the SASA, the key role of the SGB is to promote the best interests of the school and to strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education.

The SGB, standing in a position of trust towards the school, must furthermore act in good faith and not engage in any unlawful conduct or conduct that may jeopardise the interests of the school. This implies that all SGB members must synergise their operative efforts towards the provision of quality education for learners. Serving and promoting the best interests of the schools also find expression in roles detailed in section 20(e-j) of the SASA, which include supporting the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the execution of their professional functions. To this end, there is substantial evidence to suggest that parents' involvement in the education of their children can make a significant difference in the educational attainment of those children. This chapter dealt with support of SGBs to schools to promote quality academic performance. Various concepts linked to support of SGB were defined and explained in detail. The various benefits and challenges experienced by parents during their participation in school governance was highlighted. The next chapter will deal with research design and methodology used in this study.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

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#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The research methodology includes issues relating to how the research was conducted with regard to the research paradigm, design, strategy of inquiry, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, the role of a researcher, participants and their selection, quality standards and ethical standards.

#### 4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm defines a researcher's way of viewing his/her research material and thus determines his/her approach to research and is important in data collection, analysis and interpretation (De Vos & Schulze, 2002:45). Maree (2010:48) describes a paradigm as a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects or reality which gives rise to a particular worldview. It addresses fundamental assumptions taken on faith, such as beliefs about the nature of reality (ontology), the relationship between the knower and the known (epistemology), and assumptions about methodologies.

The study employed a social constructivist paradigm in the quest to explore the support of SGB members to schools in order to improve academic performance. Social constructivists hold the assumption that people seek understanding of the world in which they live and work and thus develop subjective meanings of their experiences – meanings directed towards certain objects or things (Creswell, 2009:8). This view is supported by McMillan and Schumacher (2006:396), who maintain that people form constructions in order to make sense of entities such as events, persons, processes or objects and reorganise them as viewpoints, perceptions and belief systems. Within this context, the researcher relied on people's views of the situation being studied by focusing on specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand subjective meanings they negotiate through social, cultural and historical interaction with others.

The aim of this study directed the paradigm by exploring and gaining insight into how the participants view and construct meaning in terms of how they support their schools to promote academic performance. During the process of data gathering, the researcher listened carefully to what they said regarding the phenomenon under study in order to interpret or make sense of the meanings they had about the manner in which they supported schools with the intention of promoting quality academic performance.

### **4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

A research design is the overall, detailed plan or framework for collecting or obtaining, analysing and interpreting data (Charles & Mertler, 2002:384; Bryman, 2004:27; Creswell, 2007:27). In addition, Cassell and Symon (2004:326) see a research design as an argument for the logical steps that will be taken to link the research question(s) and the issues that are related to data collection, analysis and interpretation in a coherent way.

### **4.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative research is a strategy that emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2004:19). It is based on the use of words whereby the researcher describes, attaches meanings, interprets or tells a story about a particular phenomenon. Bogdan and Biklen (2003:261) and Hittleman and Simon (2006:65) describe qualitative research as an approach to social science research that emphasises collecting descriptive data in natural settings; uses inductive thinking; and emphasises understanding subjects' points of view. Qualitative research is concerned with the interaction of people with others and objects in their natural settings or contexts as well as answering the research questions inductively.

Salkind (2006:201) states that qualitative research, in the simplest terms, is social or behavioural science research that explores the processes that underlie human behaviour, using exploratory techniques such as interviews, surveys, case studies and other relatively personal techniques. Qualitative research is characterised by the following: the naturalistic setting as the direct source of data and the researcher as the main research instrument; multiple sources of data; descriptive data; is concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes; inductive data analysis; interpretation of participants' meanings; emergent design; interpretive inquiry; and holistic account (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003:4-7; Creswell, 2007:20; Creswell, 2009:175-176). This means that the analysis, interpretation and description of individual and group behaviour, attitudes, perceptions and convictions are incorporated in qualitative research (Prinsloo, 2007:159).

Three key characteristics of qualitative research were evident in this study. The first characteristic, as explained by Mertler and Charles (2011:192), is that qualitative research is naturalistic in that the researchers go directly to the particular setting of interest in order to collect their data. The focus of this study was understanding the perceptions of SGB members, principals and educators with regard to how SGBs support schools to promote quality academic performance. The researcher went to the school setting to collect data because it was the participants' naturalistic setting. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:322) explain the second characteristic of this research design as being rich and descriptive. Qualitative research accomplishes the task of providing rich data by making use of words or pictures rather than numbers and every detail is considered to contribute to a better understanding

of the phenomenon. Furthermore, it is a design in which the descriptions capture observations as they occurred naturally in the particular context and no detail escapes scrutiny or is taken for granted so as to ensure that a complete understanding is obtained (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:322). The third characteristic is that qualitative research is an emergent design (Creswell, 2009:175).

#### **4.5 STRATEGY OF INQUIRY**

The strategy used for data collection was phenomenological. Phenomenology was deemed suitable for this study because it suited the purpose of this study. According to Fouché and Delport (2002:273), phenomenology as a strategy “seeks to understand and interpret the meaning that the people give to their everyday lives”. In other words, the researcher should be able to enter the participant’s life world or life setting and place himself/herself in the shoes of the subjects by means of naturalistic methods of study, analysing conversations and interacting with research participants.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:352), a phenomenological interview is a specific type of interview used to study the meanings and essence of a lived experience among selected participants, and in particular, to “investigate what was experienced, how it was experienced and finally the meanings that the interviewees assign to the experience”. The phenomenon under study was SGBs’ support of schools to promote quality academic performance. Examples of the interview questions that may be used to gather the data may include the following: What is the general academic performance of the school for 2016 at 50% as pass mark per subject and grade? Do you know as SGB members that you must promote the best interests of the school? And, how is your relationship with other members of the SGB?

Leedy and Ormrod (2014:147) claim that, in a phenomenological study, the researcher aims to listen closely to the participants as they describe their everyday experiences that are linked to the phenomenon. The advantage of this strategy is that the researcher can administer meaningful cues displayed by the participants, such as expressions, pauses, questions and side tracks. In this study, the researcher listened closely to the participants as they described their experiences with regard to how they supported their schools to improve academic performance. According to Lichtman (2011:77), a phenomenological study looks for the essence of the experience.

Researchers using this strategy focus entirely on lengthy interviews that resemble an informal conversation, with a sample of approximately 5 to 25 participants, in which the participants do most of the talking and the researcher does most of the listening (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:147-148). In this study, 12 participants who had experience in supporting learners were identified. Direct information was obtained from these participants by conducting lengthy interviews of about 60 to 90 minutes per interview.

Furthermore, the researcher decided on phenomenological strategy for the study as it fits well into the social constructivist paradigm and the aims of qualitative research, which were appropriate to achieve the purpose, which was to investigate how SGBs support principals and educators to improve academic performance. A phenomenological approach was most appropriate to assist the researcher to investigate the experiences of and meanings the participants assigned to their experiences as members of SGBs in supporting their schools to promote quality academic performance. Therefore, the researcher was optimistic that, with this strategy, he would have been able to interact with participants in their own setting and as such interpret the meanings they attached to the effectiveness of their support to schools in improving the academic performance at their schools.

#### **4.6 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS**

In this study, a purposive sampling method was used to select participants. Purposive sampling is a strategy in which the researcher selects participants and sites for study that can inform an understanding of the research problem and the central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2007:166). In purposive sampling, the researcher uses his/her judgement in the selection of participants in relation to certain characteristics or traits and as such this study's selection of the participants is based on certain characteristics (Burton *et al.*, 2008:47).

Silverman (2000:104) furthermore argues that purposeful sampling allows us to choose a case that illustrates some feature or process in which we are interested. For the purposes of this study, the researcher used purposeful sampling to illicit as much information as possible from the carefully-selected group of people who had experience of the topic under investigation. Two schools formed part of the sample which were selected from three circuits in the Kgetleng River area. One school was selected from two circuits, namely Madikwe and Pella-Silverkrans. These schools operated under the same conditions, were subjected to the same regulations governing schools and also compared with regard to how the SGBs in these different circuits functioned in terms of academic performance of the schools. These two schools consisted of many learners who came from the same rural socio-economic background.

The majority of parents of the learners belonged to the working class and some were unemployed, single parents who relied on social grants from the government. The literacy level of the parents was average as they could read and write in their home language, but they struggled when it came to other official languages like English and Afrikaans. The two schools fell under the same Area Project Office and district office. School governing body members were supported by the same official who was associated with the Education Management Governance Development Unit. Both schools were primary schools. The schools were ranked by the North West Department of Basic Education as

quintile 1 and 2 schools, which means that they served learners from the same disadvantaged and socio-economic backgrounds. Quintile is a term used to classify schools according to their socio-economic status of the people living in a particular municipality area.

The sample comprised 12 members: an educator selected based on his/her experience in teaching and school governance, one representing teaching staff in the SGB; principals, one male and one female, with many years of experience in school management; chairpersons; secretaries; and one additional parent member. All participants were interviewed. The purpose of inclusion of an experienced educator who was not a member of the SGB and an additional parent member in the sample was to obtain perspectives from role players who were outside the SGB and who were not members of the executive committee of the SGB. Participants were selected on the basis of their minimum teaching and SGB experience of five years or more. These participants were purposively selected for interviews so that the researcher could obtain rich information from all relevant parties. In addition, the selection of members from three different components and groups of people assisted the researcher to obtain three perspectives on one phenomenon under study. Traditionally, office bearers were likely to be conservative with information and therefore the inclusion of other members of the SGB and staff added value to the research.

The study consisted of two groups of interviews. One group comprised principals who were interviewed individually, while the second group comprised parent members of the SGB, educators who represented staff in the SGB, and educators from staff who were not members of the SGB, who were interviewed in focus group interview. Parents and educators were likely to be more open and free to participate in the absence of the principal and in the company of their peers. The discussion was rich and varied in this way. Data was recorded and transcribed verbatim to keep it uncontaminated.

#### **4.7 DATA COLLECTION**

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews in this study because they allowed for greater depth of information than any other method of data collection (O'Donoghue, 2007:133). The researcher used individual as well as focus group interviews to collect data. Individual interviews were conducted with school principals in their offices, while the focus group interview was conducted in a staff room and involved educators and parent members of the SGB. Both methods were used to gather data. The focus group interviews were used to bring different stakeholders in the SGB as well as educators from staff together to give them an opportunity to present their views on governors' role of support to schools to promote quality academic performance. Each focus group interview consisted of five members each, made up of the chairperson, secretary, one additional parent member, one teacher component or representative of staff members on SGB and one staff member

who is not part of the SGB. The duration of the interview lasted for 90 minutes. The researcher managed the interviews to give all stakeholders a chance to participate and also managed any form of difference or argument arising from the discussion. The researcher used the same interview schedule for both individual and focus group interviews to solicit responses from the participants and to be able to use the data to analyse the responses of both the individual and focus group interviews.

For the empirical data, primary data were collected. According to Cooper and Schindler (2008:92), primary data are the opinions of participants on what they know, believe and experience. For the collection of the primary data, the researcher decided on semi-structured interviews. Cooper and Schindler (2008:170) mention that the data collection technique for qualitative research is interviews. Blumberg *et al.* (2008:281) define an interview as a two-way conversation managed by the interviewer to obtain information from the participant.

From the literature (Cooper & Schindler, 2008:171; Maree, 2010:87), three types of interviews were identified:

- unstructured or open-ended interviews: no structure, order or predetermined questions are used. The conversation is open and allows freedom and time for new lines to emerge;
- semi-structured interviews: a set of predetermined questions is used to structure the conversation, but enough space is allowed for discussion of the possible answers and thoughts of the participants;
- structured interviews: an interview guide similar to a questionnaire is used to structure the interview, but questions are open-ended. Probing or discussions are not allowed or need to be minimised.

De Vos (2005:19) uses the term focus group, which is defined as a carefully-planned discussion with a group of participants designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. The focus group interview is a research technique which is used to collect data through group interaction on a particular topic determined by the researcher. The researcher used individual and focus group interviews in this study to gather data.

Focus group interviewing is a process whereby the researcher works with several people simultaneously rather than just one person (Punch, 2003:171). King and Horrocks (2010:70) identify the following characteristics of group interviews: they highlight the respondents' attitudes, priorities, language and framework of understanding; they encourage a variety of communication from participants; they help to identify the group norms; they provide insight into the operation of group/social processes in the articulation of knowledge; they also encourage an open conversation about embarrassing subjects; and they facilitate the expression of ideas and experiences. The group

interviews were used to encourage an open, interactive discussion amongst the participants, and control was necessary to bring everybody on board and to avoid dominance (Punch, 2003:171; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:180).

I used focus group interviews with two categories of participants, namely parents and educators. A focus group is a qualitative research technique in the form of a group interview that relies on the interaction within the group to discuss a topic or topics supplied by the researcher, aimed at yielding a collective rather than an individual view (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:436). Babbie (2010:323) and Johnson and Christensen (2008:210) identify three distinct features of a focus group:

- (a) There is a 'focus' on the session, with discussion based on an experience about which all participants have similar knowledge;
- (b) Particular emphasis is placed on the 'interaction' within the group as means of eliciting information;
- (c) The moderator's role is to 'facilitate' the group rather than lead the discussion.

The researcher used an interview schedule during the interview process to collect data from the parents, educators and principals. Semi-structured interview questions were used during the group interviews. The role of the researcher in this study's group interviews was more of a facilitator than an interviewer: the researcher facilitated, moderated, monitored and recorded the group interaction, as outlined by Punch (2003:171) and Ritchie and Lewis (2003:180).

#### **4.8 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

The data analysis was an ongoing process that involved continual reflection on the data, asking analytic questions and writing memos throughout the study (O'Donoghue, 2007:135; Creswell, 2009:184). Creswell (2009:183) and Merriam (2009:175) explain data analysis as a process of making sense of the text and data, which may include consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people have said and also what the researcher has seen and read. The main aim of data analysis is to look for trends and patterns that reappear within a single focus group or among various focus groups. The critical ingredient of a qualitative analysis is the systematic, sequential, verifiable and continuous analysis of data (De Vos, 2005:20).

It is said that the data analysis of a group interview is different to that obtained from an individual interview and that the researcher therefore should consider the words, context, internal consistency, frequency of comments, the extensiveness of comments, the specificity of comments and what was

not said, and finding the big idea (De Vos, 2005: 21). The data analysis of this study was guided by the guidelines outlined by Hittleman and Simon (2006:136) and O'Donoghue (2007:135-136): the transcription of the information obtained orally; the organisation of data; familiarisation with all the information; the coding and categorisation of the data; and identification of themes and subthemes. The data from the two interview methods (i.e. individual and focus group interviews) were used as one data set from which the researcher made the discussion, analysis and interpretation of the data.

The data obtained from participants through in-depth, semi-structured individual and focus group interviews were transcribed from audio recordings. The researcher ensured that every piece of data from the interviews was transcribed immediately after the interviews. The transcription of data is a process of converting recorded material into text and is usually a necessary precursor to commencing the analysis of the interview data (King & Horrocks, 2010:142). After transcription, the researcher organised the data according to the questions asked during the interviews to compare the different opinions in a particular set of data. Once the data was organised, the researcher read through the data several times to familiarise himself with it and to have a clear understanding of the general views of the participants in relation to the study.

The next step was the coding process. Creswell (2009:186) explains coding as a process of organising data into segments of text before giving meaning to the information. Punch (2009:175) maintains that coding is the initial activity in qualitative analysis and the foundation for what comes later. Coding is further referred to as a process of putting tags, names or labels on the pieces of data.

For the purpose of the study, the researcher organised data into major themes. The researcher studied the data and looked at the strong emerging themes or ideas from all the participants. Similar responses from the participants were grouped together and then given codes. The process is referred to as coding. In the study, the researcher identified themes and were then classified under different codes.

#### **4.9 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER**

The role of the researcher is critical in research because the researcher needs people to work with as subjects of the study. The researcher needs to gain access to the participants and win the confidence of the participants in his/her role as the primary data collection instrument (Creswell, 2009:177).

According to Maree and Van der Westhuizen (2010:41), the role of the researcher should empower him/her to enter into a collaborative partnership with the respondents in order to collect and analyse

data, with the main aim of creating understanding, and he/she will need to be a sensitive observer who records phenomena as faithfully as possible, while simultaneously raising additional questions, following hunches and moving deeper into the analysis of the phenomenon. Furthermore, the role of the researcher includes preparing and structuring interviews, conducting interviews, analysing data and triangulating and/or crystallising data.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005:139) maintain that researchers have to suspend any preconceived notions or personal experiences that could unduly influence them during the collection and analysis of the data– the data collected should reflect the perspectives, opinions and thoughts of the participants as accurately as possible. Cognisance of the difficulty of being objective in qualitative interviews was noted, as pointed out by Nieuwenhuis (2007a:78-79), who argues that qualitative research is based on a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in a context (or real-world setting) and, in general, the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomena of interest. Nieuwenhuis maintains that as qualitative research is being carried out in a real-life situation, it is accepted that researcher subjectivity is something that cannot be completely eliminated as the researcher is also seen as the research instrument in the data-gathering process.

The role of the researcher in this study was to gather data, using a tape recorder; by taking notes; by conducting face-to-face interviews with the participants to facilitate the participation of the participants; and by presiding over all the proceedings. During the group interviews the researcher's role was to facilitate, moderate, monitor and record the group interaction in the study. I was an observer throughout the interview process whose aim was to get more information on the participants. I was concerned with probing the participants with questions and follow up questions to get rich data from them. As a researcher I was objective as far as possible to avoid being biased or trying to influence the responses of participants. Participants were assured of anonymity. Discussions were facilitated in a mutual and respectful way to the participants and the responses showed that participants respected each other's opinions.

#### **4.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

According to Coleman (2001:629) and De Vos (2005:345), in qualitative research, reliability refers to results that are dependable, trustworthy, stable, consistent, accurate, predictable, repeatable and generalisable. In qualitative research, trustworthiness (reliability and validity) depends on truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality of the research (De Vos, 2005:345), as discussed below:

- Truth value refers to the confidence that the researcher established in time the findings of the results in which the research was conducted (De Vos, 2005:350);

- Applicability, according to De Vos, (2005:349), is the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts and situations;
- Neutrality means that there is no bias in the procedures and results. To ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative research process, the researcher ensured there was confidentiality, questions were asked in simple, understandable language, and the analysis and interpretation of data were fair.

Furthermore, qualitative research can be judged using four criteria to ensure validity and reliability. They are credibility, generalisability, confirmability and dependability.

- Credibility refers to how accurately the data reflect reality (Maree, 2007:297). In this study, as suggested by Creswell (2009:191) and De Vos (2002:351), in order to attain credibility, the researcher ensured that the subject was accurately defined and described by ensuring that the study phenomenon was guided by the conceptual framework and dimensions describing SGBs' support to schools for improved academic performance.
- Generalisability, according to Maree (2007:298), is the extent to which generalisations can be made from findings to a population. Since there was no intent to generalise, trustworthiness would be judged by researchers who would work within the same parameters to determine whether the findings can be generalised or transferred to other settings.
- Confirmability is the degree to which others can confirm the results of a study (Kalofet *al.*, 2008:164). In this study, the researcher relied on participants' responses. As suggested by De Vos (2002:352), confirmability was achieved by determining if the findings could be confirmed by others. In this case, a cross comparison with existing studies related to the parameters of this study was conducted.
- Dependability reflects how truthful the researcher is in the collection and presentation of data (Kalofet *al.*, 2008:164). To achieve this, as suggested by Creswell (2009:191), member-checking was used, and rich and thick descriptions were also used to convey the findings.

#### **4.11 VALIDITY**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:104), the term validity refers to "the degree to which scientific explanations of phenomenon match reality", in other words, the truthfulness of findings and conclusions. In addition, Bryman (2008:151) argues that validity refers to the issue of whether an instrument or indicator that is designed to gauge a concept actually measures that concept. Maree (2010) and Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009:248) share similar views. Newby (2010:17) maintains that

“our data has to be representative of the issue we are investigating in the study and our argument and the evidence that supports it have to be complete”.

The researcher ensured the accuracy of the study by means of the application of member checking whereby the researcher went back to the respondents to check or confirm with them whether the data collected and its interpretations represented their experiences, perspectives, beliefs, feelings and understandings of the study. Member checking helps in that participants are given opportunity to verify whether the researcher has represented their perspectives and that there is a correctness of the interpretation of the data. Cassell and Simon (2004: 330) suggest that checking the findings with the case study participants can be a valuable part of the data analysis and, as such, it may enhance the credibility of the study. The researcher used the audiotape recorder to record the data from the participants to avoid bias. The researcher also asked himself some questions during the data analysis process to promote reflexivity and he used his experience in the interpretation of the findings to enhance credibility.

#### **4.12 ETHICAL STANDARDS**

The researcher must seek the collaboration of participants and should be able to alleviate the fears of participants. The researcher is expected to assure participants that their human rights would be protected and that they do not have to answer questions with which they feel uncomfortable. As the researcher, I was conscious of my own values and personal issues that could have compromised the trustworthiness of data collection and analysis. Therefore, I adhered to the interview schedule and avoided probes that could have been misconstrued as some kind of a forensic investigation.

My role involved taking steps to gain entry to the research sites and to secure permission to study the participants' situation, which entailed gaining approval from the relevant gatekeepers (Creswell, 2009:178). To this end, the letter of approval from the Department and the goodwill of participants who finally agreed to participate were pivotal to the completion of the data collection process.

Ethical behaviour refers to the awareness that participants have that their privacy and sensitivity will be protected (Henning *et al.*, 2004:73). The ethical principles, internationally agreed upon, as identified in the Belmont Report (Amdur & Bankert, 2011:19) were used as a framework to govern the ethics of this study. The report identified three principles, namely respect for people, beneficence, and justice.

*Respect for people:* According to Amdur and Bankert (2011:20), the focus here is on the participants' self-determination and autonomy. The researcher was fully aware of his accountability and strove to honour the rights of participants. Participants were personally invited by the researcher to ensure no

undue influence from any other person. The letter of consent stipulated their voluntary participation and it was emphasised at the beginning of each interview. The background and need for the research as well as the research process were also explained at the beginning of the interviews and participants were invited to become partners in the research process. Participants were also informed that they were allowed to withdraw from the interviews at any stage without fear of victimisation. Participants' identities were protected by locking away the audio records after the data had been transcribed and participants' names were replaced with numbers. Audio records will be destroyed after two years. Data were transcribed by the researcher. The transcriptions were sent back to participants for final reviewing, giving them the opportunity to correct information they did not approve of.

*Beneficence:* Amdur (2011:24) describes the core meaning of beneficence as follows: "do unto others as you would have them do unto you". This study therefore strove to minimise any possible risk for participants and the schools and strove to maximise any possible benefits, such as personal professional development and possible improvement of the schools' management and governance. Although the topic of this research might not be classified as sensitive in the traditional sense of the word, the researcher intended to identify any discomfort and uncertainty in order to resolve them if needed.

The researcher first obtained written permission from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University to continue with the fieldwork (Appendix A). Permission to conduct interviews with parents, educators and principals at the sampled schools in the Kgetleng River Area Project Office was also requested and obtained from the North West Department of Education (Appendix B). All participants in this study were requested to sign the informed consent forms prior to their participation in individual (Appendix C) and focus group (Appendix D) interviews.

The informed consent forms explained the purpose of the study; indicated the data gathering methods; and set out who the beneficiaries of the research study would be. Prior to the commencement of the interviews, the researcher told the participants about the procedures that would be followed. The participants were also told that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice.

The collected data was treated confidentially and the anonymity of the participants in the study was also adhered to. King and Horrocks (2010: 117) are adamant that confidentiality is crucial, especially when using group interviews. Anonymity refers to concealing the identity of the participants in all documents related to the research, that is, actively protecting the identity of the research participants (King & Horrocks, 2010:117). Ground rules for the focus group interviews were discussed with

participants and they were asked to be discreet and not to disclose or discuss the process of the interviews with anyone. The researcher promised participants that their identities would remain secret and would not be disclosed verbally or in any publications. In order to protect the identity of the participants, the researcher used numbers during data gathering and the processing of interview notes, tapes and transcripts. Care was also taken concerning privacy by ensuring that no school or participant could be identified in reporting the results. Although it is difficult to maintain anonymity in a focus group, the researcher discussed the rules of the study with the focus group participants at the beginning of the interviews to emphasise the protection of their opinions and preserve their anonymity.

#### **4.13 SUMMARY**

This chapter outlined the research methodology and the design that were employed in gathering data for this study. The chapter commenced with a discussion on the methodological approach, which was qualitative in nature. The research design was explained. The sampling method as well as the unit of analysis were discussed. The data collection instruments and strategies as well as the data analysis and interpretation were discussed. An overview of how the researcher ensured the validity or trustworthiness of the data were also provided. In the last section of this chapter, the researcher emphasised the issue of reliability and trustworthiness of the research findings, including ethical measures to be taken into consideration when conducting a qualitative research study. Chapter 5 will present the data that were collected as well as data analysis and the interpretation of the data.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

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#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The process of qualitative data analysis is much more than approaching the analysis of image and text data. It includes organising the data, doing a preliminary read-through of the data, coding and organising themes, representing the data and finally, developing an interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2013:179).

This study sought to determine the support of SGB members to schools to promote quality academic performance. As explained in Chapter 4, data were firstly collected through a literature review to gain an understanding of the nature of SGBs' support to schools with the aim of promoting quality academic performance. Secondly, to generate empirical data, individual and focus group interviews were employed to collect data on the support of SGB members to schools.

#### **5.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS**

The participants in this study comprised two school principals, two chairpersons, two secretaries, two additional members, two educators representing educators in the SGB, and two educators from staff in the Kgetleng River Area Office of the Ngaka Modiri Molema District in the North West Department of Education and Sport Development. Although participants' demographic profiles are important in research, no attempt in this study was made to link and/or interpret data in relation to this as would be the case with a quantitative study. Rather, the focus was on discovering and gaining insight into how SGB members support schools to promote quality academic performance. Consequently, data collected, analysed and interpreted were not generalisable to SGB populations, but were critically analysed to understand meanings participants attach to SGB activities to support schools.

This study focused on participants who were serving and had served as school governors and had experience in school governance as well as educators with no experience in school governance in an area with similar features insofar as school demographics were concerned. Hence, the selected participants were from rural schools in the area. Therefore, to collect data, participants were confined to school principals, educator components, educators from the staff, and parent members from schools in the area. The breakdown of participants' profiles per stratum is illustrated in tables in the following section.

### 5.2.1 Profile of participant school principals

Two participants were involved in the study. Participants were all from primary schools located in the Kgetleng River Area Project Office.

**Table 5.1: Profiles of participating school principals**

Principal	Gender	Experience as a principal	Category	Enrolment	Quintile
A	Male	18	Primary	590	2
B	Female	16	Primary	653	2

The profiles of participating principals indicate that there was gender balance: one participant was male and the other was female. Both participants had vast experience in leadership and management. Profiles of participating school chairpersons, secretaries, additional members, educator component, and educators from staff

**Table 5.2: Profiles of chairpersons, secretaries, additional members, educator component, and educators from staff**

Participant	Gender	Experience	Category	Circuit	Quintile
C A	Male	9 years	Primary	Madikwe	2
C B	Female	6 years	Primary	Pella-Silverkrans	2
S A	Female	5 years	Primary	Madikwe	2
S B	Female	4 Years	Primary	Pella-Silverkrans	2
AM A	Female	4 years	Primary	Madikwe	2
AM B	Female	4 years	Primary	Pella-Silverkrans	2
T1 A	Female	12 years	Primary	Madikwe	2
T1 B	Female	6 years	Primary	Pell-Silverkrans	2
T2 A	Female	2 years	Primary	Madikwe	2
T2 B	Female	Nil	Primary	Pella-Silverkrans	2

KEY: CA =Chairperson of school A or B

SA=Secretary of school A or B

AM= Additional member

T1= Teacher one (representing teachers on SGB)

T2=Teacher two= Teacher from staff (not a member of SGB)

Although there was no intention to quantify the collected data through statistical analysis, the demographic profile of the participants in the study is generally detailed using statistics in order to give a clear picture of participants and their schools. Although this was not used for the purposes of generalising the findings, it provides insight into the potential challenges the schools might have with regard to governance matters, *inter alia*, the effects of, for example, school enrolments, school locations, and years of participants' experience as school governors.

### **5.3 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS AND STRATEGIES**

According to Creswell (2012:212) and Atkins and Wallace (2012:85), in qualitative research, the researcher engages in extensive data collection, spending time at the site where people work, or engage in the phenomenon you wish to study. At the site, the researcher gathers detailed information to establish the complexity of the central phenomenon. Qualitative data were collected by means of individual and focus group interviews.

#### **5.3.1 Interviews**

According to Creswell (2012:213), a qualitative interview occurs when researchers ask one or more participants general, open-ended questions. In qualitative research, the researcher may ask open-ended questions so that the participants can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings. The researcher often records (audiotapes) the conversation and transcribes the information for analysis. Wellington (2000:72) mentions that an interview normally has a dual purpose in that it provides opportunity for the interviewees to state their feelings and thoughts, but it also enables the researcher to examine and probe the views and perspectives of the respondents. Newby (2010:156) suggests that there are several approaches to interviewing. Moreover, he specifies that which interview approach to use, will ultimately depend on the accessibility of individuals, the cost, and the amount of time available. The researcher can decide to make use of one-on-one interviews, focus group interviews, telephone interviews, and e-mail interviews.

### **5.4 TRANSCRIBING THE DATA**

Johnson and Christensen (2004:502) describe transcription of data as a process of transforming qualitative research data, such as audio recordings of interviews or field notes, written from observations into typed text. Bogdan and Biklen (2003:121) state that transcripts are the main data of many interview studies. Thus, in order for data to be effectively analysed, all recorded interviews

should be transcribed first. Patton (2002:380) maintains that, if the interviewer fails to capture the actual words of the interviewee, no matter what style is adopted or how the questions are phrased, the interview becomes fruitless. Therefore, in this research study, after each interview session, the researcher transcribed the interviews verbatim. The researcher listened to the audio recordings of all participants' responses and wrote them down word for word. The transcripts were filed per participant per selected schools. This process was followed until all the interviews were transcribed.

## **5.5 DATA ANALYSIS**

The SGB mandate is supporting schools by promoting the best interests of the school and striving to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school.

According to Nieuwenhuis (2007b:98), qualitative data analysis tries to establish how participants make meaning of a specific phenomenon by analysing their perceptions, attitudes, understanding, knowledge, values, feelings and experiences. In this research study, the data gathered from the participants were analysed by means of content analysis. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:34) state that it involves organising what you have seen, heard and read so that you can make sense of the data collected. The researcher read the interview transcripts and responses to the open-ended questions. Creswell (2012:236) discusses six steps involved in analysing and interpreting qualitative data, which will be briefly outlined. These steps were followed in the study under investigation.

### **5.5.1 Preparing and organising the data**

In a qualitative study, the initial data management consists of organising the data, transcribing interviews and typing field notes, and making decisions on whether the data will be analysed by hand or computer.

### **5.5.2 Exploring and coding the database**

Qualitative researchers conduct a preliminary analysis of data by reading through it so as to obtain a general sense of the data after which they employ the steps involved in coding. The process of coding involves reducing a text or image database to discrete themes of people, places, or events. It involves examining the text database line by line, asking oneself what the participant is saying and then assigning a code label to the text segment.

### **5.5.3 Describing findings and forming themes**

This process involves examining the data in detail to describe what the researcher has learnt and developing themes or broad categories of ideas from the data. Describing and developing themes from the data consists of answering the major research questions and gaining an in-depth understanding of the central phenomenon through description and thematic development.

#### **5.5.4 Representing and reporting findings**

Qualitative researchers often display their findings in visual displays, which may include figures, tables, maps and a detailed discussion of the themes. They report findings in narrative discussions comprising many forms, such as a chronology, questions, or commentary about changes that participants experience.

#### **5.5.5 Interpreting the meaning of the findings**

From this reporting and representing of findings, qualitative researchers interpret the meaning of the research. This interpretation consists of advancing personal views, making comparisons between findings and the literature, and suggesting limitations and future research.

#### **5.5.6 Validating the accuracy of the findings**

To check the accuracy of their research, qualitative researchers often employ validation procedures such as member checking, triangulation and auditing. The intention of validation is to have participants, external reviews, or the data sources themselves provide evidence of the accuracy of the information in the qualitative report. According to Merriam (2009:175), the goal of data analysis is making sense of the data. Making sense of data involves consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read. It is the process of making meaning.

### **5.6 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

According to Wallace and Poulson (2003:55), during the presentation of findings, the most common findings within the overall range, backed by supportive quotations, should be indicated. To them, the research questions or hypothesis, whatever the case may be, should provide the basis for structuring the presentation of the findings. In this regard, the presentation of findings for this empirical investigation was guided by the research questions. These questions, which comprised of main and follow-up questions/probing as well as participants responses, were presented under the following categories, themes and topics:

- Theme 1: Characteristics of a mutual supportive relationship between the principal and the rest of the governing body;
- Theme 2: The nature of the relationship between the governors and principals;
- Theme 3: The link between governors' support to principals and educators and academic performance of the schools.

## **Theme 1: Characteristics of a mutual supportive relationship between the principal and the rest of the governing body**

According to Bagarette (2011), the SGB of a public school comprises all stakeholders of a school. Through the employment of this structure in a school, the SASA envisages a partnership between all stakeholders in the best interests of the learners and the school. The stipulations of especially sections 16(1) and (3) as well as section 20(1)(e) of the SASA outlines how the partnership should be forged. The separation of duties and responsibilities is not intended to be performed in isolation by the two centres of power (i.e. the SGB and principal). On the contrary, this arrangement is purposefully intended for the two centres of power to work together in a partnership to achieve the goals and objectives which they have set out for themselves. Members of this partnership should work together to promote the best interests of the school through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school (RSA 1996a, section 20).

This section presents the perceptions of participants on the characteristics of a mutually supportive relationship between the principal and the rest of the governing body members as prescribed by the SASA. Most of the participants had an idea of the type of a mutual supportive relationship that should exist between them as partners in education in order to promote quality academic performance.

Mutual support as our basis for the argument is not only directly linked to academic improvement and achievements, but it may have an indirect influence as the evidence indicated. For example, it has emerged from the data that there was a strong relationship between SGB support to principals and educators and academic performance of the schools (§ 7.2). Data suggested that participants from the two schools shared the same view that there was a strong link between the performance of their schools and the support that the schools received from the SGBs. The participants believed that the performance of the school was largely influenced by the type of members serving on the SGB as well as their understanding of their roles and functions, especially in determining the educational outcomes of their children (§ 7.2.1).

The performance of both schools was above 50% in all subjects per phase and grade. The two schools were also doing extremely well in key subjects like mathematics. When asked about the performance of the school, Principal 1 indicated that the school performed extremely well in all subjects. As he put it:

“generally, our learners performed well last year I want to be honest. Generally, the whole average of the school, for all the classes and all the grades is more than 90%. So, they performed well. If we look at grade 3 and 6, because they are external classes, all the grade 3’s passed and the grade 6’s about only one failed.”

Equally, principal 2 was confident about the performance of her school. Principal 2 replied by saying that “no subject has performed below 60% because as I look here the lowest is 79%. Grade 6 home language 96%, life skills 100%, and Social science 89%. For grade 3 home language 100%, maths 97%.” Other SGB members agreed with the views of the principals. Educator 3 said that most of the subjects were passed at 50% and above, especially in the foundation phase. According to the educator who was teaching social science, there was a minor problem in grade 6 in that the question paper was not up to standard because it was above the learners’ intellect, and consequently, they had passed at 50% and above, but it was about 58%.

According to Principal B, the SGB knew that, according to the SASA, they must promote the best interests of the school and always be available at the school. Principal B replied to the question on the knowledge of SGB members about the SASA and that they had to promote the best interests of the school by saying:

“they do support the school making sure the school is functioning fully. They make sure that everything is okay. I don’t have a challenge cause most of them are actively involved in the school”.

Principal A also mentioned that the SGB was aware of the SASA’s mandate to work together with the principal to promote the best interests of the school, but that the department was interfering in the work of the SGB. Parent 1 agreed with the principal when he said:

“they promote the best interest of the school by attending SGB meetings and coming to school whenever they are needed.”

In addition, Parent 2 said that, as parent members, they knew that they had to promote the best interests of the school by making themselves available for school matters. She replied:

“the support we are supposed to do is whenever we are called at any time must come and support or hear what is expected of us so that we can support with whatever is expected us.”

Educator components, Teacher 2 emphasised, also attested to the role played by the SGB in promoting the best interests of the school. She said:

“the SGB goes the extra mile, they even attends (sic) assemblies with them. During the day, they will come in the morning and control the learners at gate. They also help us to discipline learners.”

The SGB supports the school by establishing and maintaining supportive mutual relationships with community structures for the benefit of the school. As Principal B indicated, the school did not have a soccer field and through the support of the SGB, the community soccer field had been made available for the school to use. Furthermore, community structures in the form of NGOs, religious leaders, business forum, tribal authority, ward councillors and other government departments supported the schools with many things like cleaning the school, teaching learners about health and diseases, and buying school uniforms for needy learners.

Principal B said:

“We had a problem with some learners that is part of a programme with the social workers they take them to prison so they can be rehabilitated so we do take part with social workers”

T1 responded by saying:

“the chairperson is very active he is the one that cause the SGB to be so active. He is the one who insisted that the school be renovated, without him I don't think the renovations would've take place”.

T2 replied that they also had support from parents:

“Our parents are supportive most of the time especially during December they support us whole-heartedly, they come here; they clean the classes, work around the school yard.”

### **5.6.1 Theme 2: The nature of the relationship between the governors and principals**

This section presents the perceptions of SGB members on the nature of their relationship with the principal. Views expressed by the participants show that the SGBs and principals had developed a healthy working relationship and worked as equal partners in education. Each stakeholder was given space to exercise his or her role as stipulated in the SASA. According to Mahlangu (2014:175), relationships in schools determine the effectiveness of teaching and learning to a great degree. Managing township schools is about trust, acting in good faith, forming partnerships and communicating. It involves solving problems, decision-making and developing cooperative efforts among all stakeholders. It also deals with the sharing of responsibilities, involvement, supporting, obligations, collaboration, parenting, motivation, empowerment, volunteering, accountability, and being part of the team. If the relationships between learners and educators are not good, the

following symptoms may appear between learners and educators and between the school principal and the SGB in schools, namely: poor school attendance by learners; educators who do not have the desire to teach; tensions between various stakeholders of the school community; weak leadership management and governance; a general feeling of hopelessness; demotivation; low morale; and disrupted authority. Khuzwayo and Chikoko (2009:147) believe that an effective partnership and trust between the principal and the SGB is essential if the staff and governors are to contribute positively to the effectiveness of the school. Heystek (2006:474) points out that, although the emphasis is placed on the SGB by legislation to be in a relationship of trust with the school, in practice, trust is also expected from the other parties, namely the principal, the SMT, and the educators.

Claseet *al.* (2007:243) support this notion with their assertion that the proper functioning of any country's education system to a great extent depends on the mutual trust and collaboration that exist among all partners. There is therefore no doubt that the building of a partnership between the SGB and the principal is of utmost importance so that there is a shared responsibility for developing and maintaining the school at local level. A solid partnership between the SGB and the principal creates an opportunity for all stakeholders to develop a sense of ownership of the school and compels partners to take responsibility for the advancement of the school and its community.

In this study, it was found that SGB members and principals were relating to each other very well. The relationship was healthy. School governing body members enjoyed support from the school and were welcomed with open arms. Principals and educators enjoyed the company of SGB members. On the other hand, SGB members were on good speaking terms with each other. From the researcher's interactions with all participants, it was discovered that they were working together as a unit. Both schools enjoyed good relationship which contributed to the promotion of the best interests of the schools and good performance by learners.

Principal B responded to the question of her relationship with the SGB in this way:

"I think the relationship is okay, I cannot say it's good, it's okay from my part they know their responsibilities. So, my relationship is okay, so they do support me."

Principal A replied to the same question by saying:

"generally, we are okay, we are fine. I encourage my chair person to make rounds maybe weekly to make sure everything is okay. The executive, we are fine, when I call them for something, they will be here."

Educator 3, on the other hand, agreed that they got along, but sometimes there was a little bit of conflict:

“especially when we do work divisions. We have fundraise (sic) as SGB, then sometimes the ones who are not willing to, can’t come to school, just sometimes. We resolve them (conflict) immediately.”

Educator 1 believed that they were working together with the principal, and if the principal had a problem with the SGB, they worked together to resolve that problem.

Parent 3(P3) replied:

“we are a family, you know? We know there is a proper path. Because you know we are friends.”

Parent 2 added by saying, “we are just treating each other friendly”.

Parent 1 responded as follows:

“as the SGB, we are doing so many things for the school as if we are doing it for ourselves or our families. So, the school is part of our families now just because of this healthy relationship”.

### **5.6.2 Theme 3: The link between governors’ support to principals and educators and academic performance of the schools**

Participants from the two schools agreed that there was a strong link between the performance of their schools and the support the schools received from the SGBs. The participants believed that the performance of the school was largely influenced by the type of members serving in the SGB as well as their understanding of their roles and functions, especially in determining the educational outcomes of their children. The participants believed that when the SGB is dysfunctional, schools will also become dysfunctional, since governance and management roles are interdependent on each other. For example, both schools were doing well in terms of academic performance. The performance of both schools was above 50% in all subjects per phase and grade. The two schools were also doing extremely well in key subjects like mathematics.

According to Principal A, the school performed extremely well in all subjects. As he put it:

“Generally, our learners performed well last year, I want to be honest. Generally, the whole average of the school for all the classes and all the grades is more than 90%. So, they performed well. If we look at grade 3 and 6, because they are external classes, all the grade 3’s passed and the grade 6’s about only one failed.”

Equally, principal B was confident about the performance of her school. Principal 2 replied to the question in this way:

“Yes, because no subject has performed below 60%, because, as I look here, the lowest

is 79%. Grade 6 home language 96%, life skills 100%, and Social science 89%. For grade 3 home language 100%, Maths 97%.”

Other SGB members agreed with the views of the principals. Educator 3 said that most of the subjects were passed at 50% and above, especially in the foundation phase. According to the educator who was teaching social science, there was a minor problem in grade 6, in that the question paper was not up to standard because it was above the learners’ intellect, and consequently, they had passed at 50% and above, but it was about 58%.

Educator 2 further maintained that, in connection with grade 6:

“in SS especially, there are only two areas and there is no SBA, learners are assessed only in those two areas and most of the learners performed weakly in Geography rather than in History. There was this question whereby the learner was supposed to measure a distance between point A and point B and in the question paper it was not recognised”.

Parent members endorsed the response of the principal and educators. Parent 1 said:

“learners do well in other subjects and that do not have many learners failing”.

The principals of the two schools believed that their schools were performing well when compared with the performance of other schools in the area. Both principals attributed this achievement to the involvement of SGB members in the school.

For example, Principal A replied:

“I suppose so generally speaking you know the school reputation is good and the teachers said they can see that the performance is outperforming others, so I am very satisfied with the way the school is doing.”

On the other hand, Principal B also emphasised the performance of her school and said:

“yes, the school is performing, because of the results as I said in the beginning when you asked me. As you can look at the past percentage of the grade three its 100% and the also grade six is also 100%. Grade seven 100% and grade one also at 100%. We also get feedback from the schools, other high schools. The feedback is very positive.”

Educator 2 agreed with the principal that the school was doing extremely well academically. She said that the school was performing extremely well:

“we got morning lessons and afternoon lessons, we go the extra mile”.

Educator 3 said:

“even head office knows that our school is one of the most performing primary schools”.

Principals of the two schools in the study involved SGB members in the development of a School Improvement Plan (SIP). A SIP is a document that details the intentions of the school for the academic year. It outlines how the school aims to spend its budget to maintain and improve the school buildings and facilities and to improve academic performance. The school cannot make progress in the SIP if it does not consult with parents. Principals indicated that they presented a SIP to the SGB for discussion.

When asked if she presented the SIP to the SGB during their meetings, Principal 2 replied:

“yes, they do, we do discuss it if it is based on the budget for they are the ones that are doing the budget and we as educator contributes towards the learners and academically. But that 9 areas they know it for they have developed the budget and in the budget, there it is the part that contributes to it. The school is still developing but they know most of it must be allocated to the school. We work and spend the 10% for maintenance.”

Principal A answered by saying:

“is a big one you know SIP, SGB I just inform them on particular points, I would say 8 out of the 10 items should be known by the SGB, but what I do, is I discuss the budget in detail, so you know SIP we just make them practical. Generally, I would tell them things that are related to them, but for the fact that the way we do SIP, it’s new, so probably in future, we will involve them fully with all the items of SIP.”

Responding to a question on whether the principal presented the SIP to the SGB during their meetings, SGB and educator component members agreed that the principals presented the SIP to them and gave them an opportunity to discuss it before signing it off as an official working document and budget before it was submitted to the DoE for the approval by the Circuit Manager. Parents emphatically agreed that they were consulted on the SIP.

Another parent (P2) replied to the question of what the SIP entails by saying:

“SIP covers governance, teacher development, learner achievement, infrastructure, how to do finances, how we do requisitions when we want to buy anything new.”

Educator 3 concurred with what the parent members said. Educator 3 said:

“School Improvement Plan also covers the budget, and also has column of progress and once we’ve done something we indicate it in the progress report.”

Responding to a question on what the role of parents was in the academic performance of the school, it was found that parents generally contributed to the performance of the school. The support of SGB was evident in the way in which they influenced parents to support schools by playing their part at home and in schoolwork.

As Principal B replied:

“I think they are supporting in terms of learners’ work. Whenever they have been called for their learners, they do come. Academically, as I said, a certain percentage might be a problem, but generally, they are supporting. The only problem we have is that we are in a community which is not well literate. The percentage is 50. But those who are able to help, they do help. But in some cases, they cannot interpret.”

On the other hand, Principal 1 maintained that South Africa would have a brighter future if all the parents could check their children’s homework every day to see what they had done.

Principal B believed that, amongst other factors, teamwork among all stakeholders in the school contributed to the good results of the school. As she put it:

“I think it is teamwork. I must acknowledge that I have a good educator in Intermediate and she is a HoD and she supports, more than supports other educators; inter-grade 4-7 and also foundation phase. So, its teamwork and working together, and most of the time they are preparing together, so that is why it’s easier for them to present to the classes.”

## **5.7 DISCUSSION**

The leading issue in this study was SGBs’ support of schools to promote quality academic performance, and more specifically, the role played by parent components in supporting schools.

The results from the study were grouped into three broad themes that emerged from the data analysis:

- Theme 1: Characteristics of a mutual supportive relationship between the principal and the rest of the governing body;
- Theme 2: The nature of the relationship between the governors and principals; and
- Theme 3: The link between governors’ support to principals and educators and academic performance of the schools.

The results indicated that a great deal of trust existed and that a positive relationship existed between the principal and the SGB and between SGB members. Participants from both schools depicted a healthy working and personal relationship amongst all members of the SGB, including all other staff members in the school. The relationship was mutual to the extent that parent members spent a lot of their time at school and assisted educators in managing the school. Educators in another school indicated that the good relationship that existed between the principal and SGB members had filtered into the entire staff to the extent that when one educator was on leave, other educators missed him or her. Educators also spent more time at school and worked extra hours as they enjoyed each other's company.

Kamper's (2008) research into the role of effective leadership in high-poverty settings found that "invitational leadership is indeed the characteristic leadership style in successful high poverty settings." It highlights the principal's passion for uplifting the poor and the unshakable belief in the potential of high-poverty learners to excel personally and academically. These principals show pastoral care for learners, educators and parents, and show the ability to think and act as visionaries. They set and maintain high standards, inspire and motivate others, build team spirit and pride, and explore opportunities to meet the school's needs. The leadership characteristics highlighted by Kamper (2008) were confirmed by Gray and Streshly (2008:2) in their study about what principals do to move schools from good to great.

A principal should firstly build solid relationships to establish a foundation for sustaining improvement over the long run. They should be humble when they consult with stakeholders, while they are exercising professional will, give credit when things go well, and accept the blame when things go badly.

Parental involvement in the SGBs of the participating schools was very high, which indicated a strong commitment from parents to see the schools succeed. They saw their involvement in the schools as part of their duties as members of the community and as a form of community development.

The parent component in the SGBs were cooperative and supportive to the school principals. All programmes of the school that needed funding were implemented as parents were actively involved in fundraising initiatives and they authorised payments without hesitation. The two schools under study were performing well academically. The pass rate for all the subjects was above 60%. Performance of mathematics as a critical subject for the promotion of learners from one grade to the next was also above 60%. The good performance of the schools was in part an indication that principals and educators were happy to deliver the curriculum due to the level of support from the

SGB. The educators were able to spend most of the time teaching as SGB members controlled movement at the gates and visited the homes of the children who were absent from school. The two schools were enjoying wider support from community structures, including the ward councillors, tribal authority, caregivers, social workers, South African Police Service (SAPS), and teacher unions.

It emerged from the findings that the principals of the two schools presented the SIP, which incorporated the budget, to the SGB members during meetings. School governing body members were aware of the SIP and could mention some items therein. The remaining challenge for the two schools was to give SGB members an opportunity to discuss the SIP in detail and to give all parents an opportunity to discuss the SIP during parents' meetings. This exercise would help the two schools by increasing the level of support from all SGB members to the schools as well as motivating parents to be active in helping their children with homework and therefore increasing the support of all parents to the school activities.

Data analysis showed that SGB members were trained immediately after elections and orientation was provided for new members elected through by-elections to fill vacancies. However, it emerged that only few members of the SGBs, namely the chairperson, secretary and treasurer, were often trained, while additional members were excluded from training by the DoE officials responsible for education, management, governance and development. The budget for catering was cited as a reason for excluding other members. Principal B indicated that she provided training to all members of the SGB at her school in policy development and finance management. However, Principal A indicated that he only provided orientation and induction to new SGB members. Therefore, the issue of training still needed a lot of attention from both the DoE and school principals to capacitate SGB members to be able to fully support schools in their mission to provide quality education and promote quality academic performance.

## **5.8 STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

### **5.8.1 Empowerment**

From the data collected, it emerged that insufficient training was provided to SGB members. The Department of Education and Sport Development was not doing enough to capacitate SGBs to function effectively. School governing body members stated that they were provided with limited training for a period of three days per term. Participants indicated that training was given on a selection of topics, including financial management and their functions. Training did not cover topics such as relationships and partnerships between SGB members. Empowering people in a relationship, is when there is encouragement, motivation, supporting and inspiring of people to think for themselves and to make sound decisions (Moloi, 2002:70-71). When all stakeholders are given the opportunity to make decisions in a school, they will become more responsible for their actions.

In all organisations, there are rules of power that operate to the inclusion of some and the exclusion of others. According to section 19(1)(a-b) of the SASA, out of funds appropriated for the enhancement of capacity of governing bodies, the HoD must establish a programme to:

- Provide introductory training for newly elected governing bodies to enable them to be able to plan and organize work, perform their functions; and
- Provide continuing training to governing bodies to promote the effective performance of their functions or to enable them to assume additional functions.
- The Head of Department must ensure that principals and other officers of the Education Department render all necessary assistance to governing bodies in the performance of their functions in terms of this Act. It is those who have little or no power who are most in need of empowerment. It is necessary to provide those stakeholders with less information more empowerment so that they can participate fully in the schools' activities.

Just as a principal's leadership is a key contributor to schools' involvement practices, so too are school actions that empower educators for effective involvement. Many educators hold generally positive attitudes about involving families in students' education (e.g. Lawson, 2003), but few receive training in how to develop collaborative, family-responsive involvement practices (Graue & Brown, 2003). School in-service support for educators' development of parental involvement skills thus is an important strategy for enhancing the incidence and effectiveness of involvement. One key contributor to effective educator invitations is educators' sense of efficacy for involving parents (Garcia, 2004), which can be enhanced by dynamic, school-based in-service programmes. Particularly effective are in-service programmes offering experiences related to involvement practices, including open discussion of positive and negative experiences with involvement, sharing suggestions for improved parental involvement, collaboration with colleagues in developing and implementing school-specific involvement plans, and ongoing group evaluation and improvement of involvement practices (Hoover-Dempsey *et al.*, 2001).

Schools may also empower educators for involvement by making parental involvement a routine part of staff thinking and planning. Regular school attention to involvement is enhanced by a welcoming school climate e.g. Epstein & Sanders (2000), largely because an inviting school climate increases parental presence in the school which, in turn, generates more opportunities for parent-educator conversations. Attention to involvement may also be enhanced by regular discussion of identified issues, resources, plans and ideas that work during faculty and department meetings.

### **5.8.2 Motivation**

During the interviews, a question was asked to SGB members about what they got from the principal for supporting the schools. The response was that they got verbal acknowledgement and praise as a form of motivation to serve in the SGB. Motivation is those conditions responsible for variations in the intensity, quality and direction of ongoing behaviour in a relationship. It is a concept that is intended to explain why we do what we do. Motivation is something that can be neither directly observed nor precisely measured (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000:1). Motivation can be either intrinsic (natural for people to be curious, active, and to initiate thought and behaviour) or extrinsic (external influences, such as reward motivates). Principals should motivate all stakeholders involved in the school.

### **5.8.3 Principal leadership in creating a welcoming school climate**

On the question of the role of the principal in encouraging SGB members to be more supportive to the school, it emerged from the data that the principal remained the central figure in promoting parental involvement in the school. The administrative will of the principal to make SGB contribution to the decision-making process a reality, is very important. The creation of an inviting climate for parental involvement is grounded in strong principal leadership. Griffith's (2001) findings, for example, emphasised that school administrators set the tone for parental involvement and programme implementation. On the other hand, others have underscored the principal's role in empowering educators and parents for effective involvement (Soodak *et al.*, 2002). The literature suggests overall that, the more committed, visible and active principals are in supporting parent-educator relationships, the more likely schools are to develop strong programmes for parent and community involvement (Soodak:2002; Griffiths:2001; Lawson:2003). One major goal and an outcome of a welcoming school climate is the creation of trust among members of the school community. Parents' trust in educator's influences their responses to involvement invitations, and parental perceptions that schools are safe, empowering and trustworthy have been consistently associated with greater parental involvement (e.g. Lawson, 2003).

School practices that support parents' trust in schools include establishing and maintaining a respectful and collaborative attitude towards families e.g. Lawson (2003) and frequent opportunities for two-way communications between parents and educators e.g. Sanders & Harvey (2002). The principal's role in creating school-family trust in relation to a welcoming school climate is especially important, because sustainable improvements in school, family and community relationships require continuous, active and well-informed leadership that emphasises meeting parent, educator and student needs over time (Griffith, 2001).

#### **5.8.4 Decision-making**

Involving parents in meaningful decisions and encouraging parental leadership and representation on important issues is key in decision-making, which is in line with the SASA. For the school principal, this means that he or she must encourage and help parents find ways for their voices to be heard in decision-making. Parental involvement in decision-making may promote their active participation in SGBs. Involving parents can also occur indirectly. For example, the school principal could discuss ideas with parents before he or she makes a decision that affects learners. The school principal can also seek feedback from parents about their child's progress and activities. Involving parents in decision-making is not without challenge to the school principals. Effective schools tend to have meaningful partnerships with parents. In order to build a strong partnership, the school principal needs to include a broad representation of parents in decision-making processes (Smar, 2002:48). In order to be informed, thoughtful participants, parents need appropriate training, information and support. Furthermore, the school principal needs to establish and maintain the focus of parents' participation on what is in the best interests of the school and its learners.

#### **5.8.5 Developing school policies**

The SASA mandates SGBs to develop a wide range of school policies as part of their functions. From the data collected, one principal indicated that she trained new SGB members on how to develop school policies so that they could be in a better position to support the school. It emerged that it was part of her strategy to support SGB members to carry out their functions. However, from the literature, the question of literacy level of SGBs was raised as a major obstacle for SGBs to participate fully on the function of developing school policies. Heystek (2011:458) maintains that a large number of the South African population is not sufficiently functionally literate to meet the requirements of reading and drafting policies. Only 40.3% of people older than 20 years of age have completed primary education and another 30.8% have completed some secondary education. Therefore, there is a strong likelihood that many of the parent members of a governing body, even with the assumed training, do not have the necessary literacy level to read legislation, draft policies and manage budgets. Even those few who passed grade 12 may not have sufficient literacy levels to read, understand and interpret legislation to perform the functions allocated to them.

The limited literacy rate of parents does not preclude them from being SGB members. There are numerous examples where parents who have limited literacy or governing experience play a positive role in school governance and contribute to the improvement of education (Pashiardis & Heystek, 2007; Prew, 2009). Consequently, the competence of parents in these areas should not be used as an excuse to limit parental involvement. While principals or educators may be aware that parents are probably unable to ask questions about their performance as professionals, they should acknowledge that parents, regardless of their level of education, want the best education for their

children and expect educators to perform and deliver results. Parents can play an important role if they are well trained and afforded sufficient opportunity to play a role (Heystek, 2011:461).

### **5.8.6 Offer specific suggestions about what parents can do**

Specific suggestions from educators, support-programme personnel and parent leaders about how to help and what to do when helping also offer considerable support for parents' active role construction and positive sense of efficacy (Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2000; Gonzalez & Chrispeels, 2004). Suggestions may include relatively simple ideas for parent activities that help students focus attention during homework (e.g. Hoover-Dempsey *et al.*, 2001), or approaches to homework that elicit parent-student interaction (e.g. Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001). Suggestions may highlight more complex efforts to support student understanding of homework concepts, or suggestions to help parents balance direct involvement with support for developmentally appropriate student autonomy (Ng *et al.*, 2004). Invitations and suggestions grounded in clear respect for parents' life contexts are also important (Okagaki, 2001). These may include plans for identifying family strengths, preferences and resources e.g. Collignon *et al.* (2001), Machida *et al.* (2002) and Christenson (2004), offering all information to parents in appropriate languages, or adapting assignments e.g. Okagaki (2001), Peña (2000) and García Coll *et al.* (2002).

## **5.9 SUMMARY**

This chapter focused on what transpired during the process of individual interviews with school principals and focus group interviews with the chairpersons, secretaries, treasurers, additional members, educator components, and educators from staff. All the participants were asked the same questions from the same interview schedule.

It emerged clearly from the interviews that the SGBs of the two schools understood their supportive role in the promotion of quality academic performance in their schools. The SGB members were volunteering their services to the schools in many ways. The SGBs were active in maintaining learner discipline during school hours by controlling the gate, standing in for absent educators to supervise learners in the classrooms, and carrying out fundraising activities. It emerged from the data gathering that the principals and educators of both schools were happy with the support of parent members in school activities and programmes. The SMT, staff and SGB members of the two schools related very well to each other. In addition, the support of SGB members enabled the two schools to produce quality academic results each year. The next chapter will present summary, conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This final chapter presents the summary, findings, conclusions and recommendations. An overview of the findings of the literature review will first be summarised. Thereafter, the findings of the empirical study will be presented and contextualised, and then conclusions will be drawn. This will culminate into recommendations and implications for future research. In this final chapter, the focus will be on the general findings and insights drawn from the research.

This chapter will, secondly, provide an outline of the theoretical considerations. Thirdly, limitations will be noted, and fourthly, recommendations and suggestions for further research will be made. Finally, an overall conclusion will be made.

The research question focused on the role of SGBs in supporting schools to promote quality academic performance. The relationship between management (as performed by the principal and the SMT) and governors (as performed by various stakeholders, including the parent component) is crucial to schools' success.

#### **6.2 FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH**

Research findings presented in this section relate to the research objectives as stated in Chapter 1. The objectives of the study were formulated as follows:

The main aim of the study was to investigate school governing bodies' support of schools to promote quality academic performance.

The specific objectives were:

- to determine how the support of SGBs to principals could be enhanced to improve academic performance;
- to investigate how SGBs and principals of schools relate to each other in the Kgetleng River Area Project Office and how it influences academic performance;
- to determine if and how the SGBs support the principal and the educators to improve academic performance.

The findings that follow are made based on the literature review as well as the analysis of the data collected. The sub-questions were broken down to answer the main research question (§1.9.1).

### **6.2.1 The characteristics of a mutual supportive relationship between the principal and the rest of the governing body**

Mutual support refers to the assistance provided by parties to each other, especially in the face of common adversity. As Mabovula (2009:223) puts it, a key principle of school governance is that decisions be based on consultation, collaboration, cooperation, mutual trust and participation of all affected parties.

In South Africa, all public schools must elect a SGB as part of the governance and management structure in schools. The SASA describes governance and management as two separate activities, with two teams responsible for the activities. The professional management is the responsibility of the principal with the professional staff, while the SGB is responsible for the governance of a school. An important stipulation is that the SGB must stand in a position of trust towards the school (RSA, 1996b). This notion of trust is especially important for the relationship between the principal and the parent governors on the SGB. Trust can be defined as a belief in the honesty and reliability of others. This means the SGB must exercise their functions in an honest and reliable manner, and so should the principal and the educators. According to Bertelsmann (2000), the collective action of SGB members must be conducted as though trust had been erected in favour of the school. He adds that members of the SGB must avoid the kind of behaviour that might lead to fraudulent conduct, recklessness, or dishonesty. Being a member of the SGB means an individual accepts the trust vested in them, which means the member must act in good faith and with due diligence towards the school (Heystek, 2006:472-473).

From the data presented in Chapter 5, it emerged that SGBs of both schools displayed the characteristics of a mutually supportive relationship with the principals and amongst themselves. School governing body members and principals are in a relationship that is characterised by a high level of trust, respect and cooperation. From the researcher's interaction with the participants with regard to the research question, responses from the participants affirmed that the SGBs of the two schools were functioning as a unit (§ 2.1).

One participant, Principal 2, replied to the question on the knowledge of SGB members about the SASA and said that:

“they have to promote the best interest of the school by saying that they do support the school making sure the school is functioning fully. They make sure that everything is okay. I don't have a challenge cause most of them are actively involved in the school.”

Principal 1 also mentioned that the SGB is aware of the SASA mandate to work together with the principal to promote the best interests of the school, but that the department is interfering in the work of the SGB. Parent 1 agreed with the principals when he said that they promoted the best interests of the school by attending SGB meetings and coming to school whenever they were needed.

The response from the principals indicated that there was a high level of trust within SGBs towards principals and that principals also displayed trust towards SGB members. There was not a single incident during the data gathering process that showed signs of mistrust amongst the different stakeholders in the SGB (§ 4.1).

### **6.2.2 The nature of the relationship between school governing bodies and principals**

A relationship refers to the state of being connected or related (Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2017). As partners in schools, SGBs and principals are bound by their roles and mandates to work together for the common good of the schools. Both share the responsibility for the total welfare and success of the school, and therefore, they are interdependent because of the nature of their membership composition. Their relationship is therefore one of the most significant variables that determines success in their roles and the school performance (Bush & Heystek, 2003). Power play between role players may have a detrimental effect on the relationship of trust and mutual support (Heystek, 2004:310) and impacts negatively on the participation of all in school governance (Mabasa & Themane, 2002:11).

According to the Ontario Education Service Corporation (OESC) (2010:22), governance is defined as the exercise of authority, direction, and accountability to serve the purpose of public education. School governing body members of the two schools seemed to be aware of the meaning of school governance and had come to the realisation that they had to work together for the benefit of their children's education. This notion of working together or partnership is explained by Bagarette (2011), who stated that the SGB of a public school consists of all stakeholders of the school. Through the employment of this structure in a school, the SASA envisages a partnership between all stakeholders in the best interests of the learners and the school. The stipulations of especially sections 16(1) and (3) as well as section 20(1)(e) of the SASA outlines how the partnership should be forged. The separation of duties and responsibilities is not intended to be performed in isolation by the two centres of power (i.e. the SGB and principal).

Responses from participants in the study revealed that the nature of the relationship amongst SGB members and between SGB members and school principals was healthy. Principals praised the manner in which SGB members conducted themselves in and outside of the schools. According to

the principals, SGB members displayed a high level of professionalism in conducting their governance activities (§ 2.1). School governing body members knew the difference between governance and management and respected the decisions of the principals in professional matters. Principals did not complain about interference of SGB members in their professional duties. Similarly, SGB members did not complain about the interference of the principals in governance matters. Instead, the two parties viewed inputs from the other partner as a form of support. On the question posed to the principals if it would be seen as a form of support if SGB members mentioned to them or informed them if they were aware of an educator who was coming late to school or who was absent from school, Principal 2 replied by saying that she would appreciate it and further investigate the matter and would finally report back to the SGB on the action taken against the educator. The response showed a high level of maturity from the principal. The SGB trusted the judgement of the principal and was satisfied to be given feedback on the matter of educator absenteeism and late-coming (§ 7.3).

### **6.2.3 The influence of school governing bodies' support to principals and educators on the academic performance of the schools**

According to section 20(1)(a) of the SASA, a SGB must promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners in the school. Furthermore, research has consistently shown that, with the increase in parent partnerships in the governance of schools, there is a concomitant increase in learner achievement (Ramirez, 2001:130). Gonzalez (2002:132) cites numerous studies that identified the existence of relationships between parental partnerships and student variables such as academic achievement, sense of wellbeing, school attendance, attitude, homework readiness, grades, and educational aspirations. While these studies may not be directly linked to schools in South Africa, the findings are universally significant in terms of parent-school relationships. Cotton (2001:4) and Blankstein (2004:167) believe that nothing motivates a child more than when learning is valued by schools and communities working together in partnership. They note that parent partnerships lead to greater achievement, irrespective of factors such as socio-economic status, background, educational level, and whether or not parents are employed.

It has emerged from the data that there was a strong relationship between SGB support to principals and educators and academic performance of the schools (§ 7.2). Data suggested that participants from the two schools shared the same view that there was a strong link between the performance of their schools and the support that the schools received from the SGBs. The participants believed that the performance of the school was largely influenced by the type of members serving on the SGB as well as their understanding of their roles and functions, especially in determining the educational outcomes of their children (§ 7.2.1).

The performance of both schools was above 50% in all subjects per phase and grade. The two schools were also doing extremely well in key subjects like mathematics. When asked about the performance of the school, Principal 1 indicated that the school performed extremely well in all subjects. As he put it:

“generally, our learners performed well last year I want to be honest. Generally, the whole average of the school, for all the classes and all the grades is more than 90%. So, they performed well. If we look at grade 3 and 6, because they are external classes, all the grade 3’s passed and the grade 6’s about only one failed.”

Equally, principal 2 was confident about the performance of her school. Principal 2 replied to the question in this way:

“yes, because no subject has performed below 60% because as I look here the lowest is 79%. Grade 6 home language 96%, life skills 100%, and Social science 89%. For grade 3 home language 100%, maths 97%.”

Other SGB members agreed with the views of the principals. Educator 3 said that most of the subjects were passed at 50% and above, especially in the foundation phase. According to the educator who was teaching social science, there was a minor problem in grade 6 in that the question paper was not up to standard because it was above the learners’ intellect, and consequently, they had passed at 50% and above, but it was about 58%.

Responding to a question on the role of parents in the academic performance of the school, it was found that parents generally contributed to the performance of the school. The support of the SGBs was evident in the way in which they had influenced parents to support schools by playing their part at home and in schoolwork.

As Principal 2 replied:

“I think they are supporting in terms of learners’ work. Whenever they have been called for their learners, they do come. Academically as I said a certain percentage might be a problem, but generally, they are supporting. The only problem we have is that we are in a community which is not well literate. The percentage is 50. But those who are able to help, they do help. But in some cases, they cannot interpret.”

Performance does not come on its own or by default. There should be an investment in the form of teaching and learning, on the one hand, and availability of support mechanisms and systems, on the other hand (§ 7.3). Professionals and SGBs need to acknowledge that education is a societal matter and that it takes a village to raise and educate a child. There is a need for collaboration and partnership between all stakeholders at school level for effective teaching and learning to take place.

Governors must govern, educators must teach, and managers must manage. It emerged from the data that the SGBs and principals of the two schools were on the right track of governing and managing for the sole purpose of promoting quality academic performance, as it emerged from the data on their academic performance in 2016.

### **6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.3.1 Presentation and discussion of results at school governing body meetings**

The principal should present quarterly results at SGB meetings. School governing body members should then be given an opportunity to discuss the results and ask questions for clarity. Factors contributing to poor and good performance in every subject should be discussed. Suggestions should be made on how to improve results and sustain good results. School improvement plans (SIPs) should be drawn up and SGBs should offer support in the form of purchasing additional learning and teaching materials for educators and learners and avail their time for supervision during additional classes.

#### **6.3.2 Recognition and acknowledgement of good performance and excellence in sports**

It emerged from the previous chapter that both schools were performing well academically. My view is that good performance should be sustained and that efforts should be made to reach the ultimate summit, which is 100% in all grades and across all phases. Therefore, SGBs and principals should keep on motivating staff and learners to reach for a 100% pass rate by awarding good performance by learners and educators on a quarterly basis. From the data collected, schools were giving learners prizes for good performance at the end of the year. The schools' efforts to recognise and acknowledge good performance were limited to assist them to reach the ultimate summit. In order to assist schools to achieve a 100% pass rate throughout the year, it is advised that academic and sports excellence should be awarded quarterly. Prizes can vary from trophies to scientific calculators and free trips for best-performing learners. The main function should be held towards the end of the year to award learners and educators. Quarterly prize-giving events will act as an extrinsic motivation for learners and educators.

#### **6.3.3 Discussion of the school improvement plan by school governing bodies and parents**

From data collected, it was found that principals only presented the SIP to SGBs during meetings. It emerged that principals informed SGBs about items in the SIP without explaining those items fully and giving SGBs an opportunity to discuss the items. For SGBs to fully support schools for the improvement of academic performance, they should be given an opportunity to discuss the SIP in detail. The presentation of the SIP to SGB members during meetings is not sufficient. The principal

needs to take SGBs into his/her confidence by thoroughly explaining SIP items in turn and giving SGBs an opportunity to interact with it and make their inputs before the final SIP is adopted. The same procedure should be followed during general parents' meetings, where parents are given an opportunity to discuss the SIP. This might look like a tedious and time-consuming exercise on the part of school management and educators. The exercise will lead to greater parental involvement in the activities of the school and will positively influence the educational outcomes of the children.

#### **6.3.4 Workshops**

The workshops should also aim to build a working relationship that ultimately develops into a partnership between the two stakeholders to better understand their main function, which is to promote the best interests of learners and the school at all times. Principals should also acquire the skill to relinquish traditional authoritative roles and allow SGBs not only to have a greater voice, but to also help prepare them by providing support and establishing an environment of trust.

#### **6.3.5 School governing bodies' knowledge of the SASA**

It was discovered that SGBs were aware of the SASA as an Act that regulated their work. However, SGBs' lack of understanding of the content of the SASA due to the language used in the SASA inhibited them to fully understand and interpret the SASA and negatively influenced their governance role. It is therefore recommended that the SASA should be translated into all eleven official languages to make its contents more understandable for all stakeholders. School governing body members find it difficult to understand and interpret the prescripts of the SASA. Therefore, similar to the aforementioned recommendation, it is further urged that the SASA should be amended to specifically include the number of capacity-building workshops per annum.

#### **6.3.6 Training**

Training of SGBs should be provided to all members of SGBs, including additional members and principals. It emerged from the data that only executive members of the SGBs were invited for training more often than the other members. Training should be provided on a quarterly basis to fully capacitate all SGB members for their governance role. Inclusive training will improve the relationship of all SGB members with each other and between SGBs and principals. Training should cover all topics in the training manual and should not be selective about the topics. Furthermore, parent members who have undergone training can also assist and advise other parent members, even when they are not serving as SGB members anymore. In this way, parents will be empowered and not be regarded as illiterate. Furthermore, the provincial DoE should establish a structure that will ensure that participative decision-making is practised in every public school, where no one stakeholder dominates the other.

The emphasis of the training should be on cooperation and the acceptance of mutual responsibility for quality teaching and learning in the school. Principals should also be subjected to intensive training in the relationship between democratic school governance and professional management. Training should not be separate from that of the other SGB members. This will ensure that both the principal and other members of the SGB develop a mutual understanding of how the two functions (i.e. management and governance) correlate.

Finally, the provincial DoE should forge partnerships with tertiary institutions in the province to develop all stakeholders in terms of governance and management issues in preparing them for their tasks. One-year short course capacity-building programmes should also be introduced for SGBs in terms of governance, and particularly, participative decision-making. These courses could be presented to clusters of SGBs in the dominant language of the particular community. In this regard, principals should play a key role to empower their communities. The empowering of the SGBs through relevant education and training is therefore very important to boost the confidence and knowledge of especially the parent members of the SGBs so that they can see themselves as equal partners in decision-making. It should be noted that not all SGB members are replaced after three years.

### **6.3.7 A relationship based on trust and honesty needs to be encouraged**

It emerged from the data that good relationships between all stakeholders are very important for successful functioning of SGBs. It is recommended that good relationships be based on trust and honesty and that all members should strive towards maintaining excellent working relationships. If all members relate well, there will be no room for conflict and good human relations will be enhanced. This can be enabled by putting in place clear and transparent procedures of operation. Currently, there is still a lack of trust between principals and other members of the SGB, especially those who are not part of the executive.

To ensure the functionality of a governing body, principals must make practical decisions when less competent parent governors find it difficult to perform the expected functions as discussed above. What tends to happen in quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools, is that the principal or an educator on the governing body drafts policies and the budget. Since they are members of the governing body, it can be said that the governing body is performing these functions. If there is a well-established level of trust between the principal and parents, these schools can be managed and governed successfully in this way, irrespective of who is drafting or changing policies (Heystek, 2006). However, as Maile (2002) cautions, the principal and the rest of the governing body need to work together closely. Otherwise, there could be accusations that principals are too autocratic or that they do not allow parents to participate (DoE, 2004; Chaka, 2008; Mncube, 2009a).

## **6.4 FUTURE RESEARCH**

It is important to highlight that this study has indeed brought to the fore several issues pertaining to the support of SGBs to schools to improve academic performance. It is therefore recommended that further research be conducted to look into the implementation of legislation that provides for SGB support to schools to promote quality academic performance. Future research should also focus on factors inhibiting SGBs from promoting the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school, and supporting the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions.

Furthermore, there should be an investigation into participative involvement of retired educators in the formal education system at school level, the role of religion in the school, and the link between large businesses and the education system at school level, as well as other related matters that are not covered in this study. The research will further explore the concept of support by different stakeholders with diverse skills and qualifications who will be co-opted into the school governing bodies, and not only from parents and unemployed SGB members, to schools to determine the link between support and academic performance. To ensure the functionality of the governing body, principals must make practical decisions when less competent parent governors find it difficult to perform the expected functions as discussed above. What tends to happen in quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools, is that the principal or an educator on the governing body drafts policies and the budget. Since they are members of the, it can be said that the governing body is performing these functions. If there is a well-established level of trust between the principal and the parents, these schools can be managed and governed successfully in this way, irrespective of who is drafting or changing policies (Heystek, 2006). However, as Maile (2002) cautions, the principal and the rest of the governing body need to work together closely. Otherwise, there could be accusations that principals are too autocratic or that they do not allow parents to participate (DoE, 2004; Chaka, 2008, Mncube, 2009).

## **6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The research was limited to the two circuits, namely Madikwe and Pella-Silverkrans in the Kgetleng River Area Project Office of the Ngaka Modiri Molema District Office in the North West Province. The research focused primarily on the experiences and perceptions of principals, educators and parents on school governing body support to schools to improve quality academic performance.

## **6.6 CONCLUSION**

The SASA plays an important role in encouraging the principle of partnership in and mutual responsibility for education. With the institution of SGBs, the Act aims to give meaning to the principle

of the democratisation of schooling by affording meaningful power over their schools to school-level stakeholders. The governing body also aims to bring together all stakeholders in a forum where differences may be discussed and resolved for the purposes of developing an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning.

However, it seems that, in many schools, the principle of democratisation to bring all stakeholders together in a forum where the best interests of the learners and the school should be respected, protected, promoted and fulfilled, is hampered by a power struggle between the principal, educator governors and parent governors to promote their own selfish interests. It is further clear that the DoE should spend more energy on training principals and school governors to work together to create an environment conducive to quality teaching and learning in every school.

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# APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY  
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**Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee**

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## ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE OF STUDY

Based on approval by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education Sciences (ESREC) on 15/11/2016 after being reviewed at the meeting held on 29/07/2016, the North-West University Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-IRERC) hereby approves your study as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-IRERC grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

<b>Study title:</b> School governing bodies' support of schools to promote quality academic performance.																												
<b>Study Leader/Supervisor:</b> Prof J Heystek																												
<b>Project team:</b> MT Galetuke & Dr Arrie van Wyk																												
<b>Ethics number:</b> <table border="1"><tr><td>N</td><td>W</td><td>U</td><td>-</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>3</td><td>2</td><td>4</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>6</td><td>-</td><td>A</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td colspan="3">Institution</td><td colspan="5">Study Number</td><td colspan="3">Year</td><td colspan="2">Status</td></tr></table>	N	W	U	-	0	0	3	2	4	-	1	6	-	A	2	Institution			Study Number					Year			Status	
N	W	U	-	0	0	3	2	4	-	1	6	-	A	2														
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<b>Application Type:</b> N/A																												
<b>Commencement date:</b> 2016-11-15	<b>Expiry date:</b> 2017-11-15	<b>Risk:</b> <table border="1"><tr><td>N/A</td></tr></table>	N/A																									
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### Special conditions of the approval (if applicable):

- Translation of the informed consent document to the languages applicable to the study participants should be submitted to the ESREC (if applicable).
- Any research at governmental or private institutions, permission must still be obtained from relevant authorities and provided to the ESREC. Ethics approval is required BEFORE approval can be obtained from these authorities.

### General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:

- The study leader (principle investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-IRERC via ESREC:
  - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the study, and upon completion of the project
  - without any delay in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
  - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader must apply for approval of these changes at the ESREC. Would there be deviation from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the NWU-IRERC via ESREC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-IRERC and ESREC retains the right to:
  - request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;
  - to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
  - withdraw or postpone approval if:
    - any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected,
    - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the ESREC or that information has been false or misrepresented,
    - the required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
    - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.
- ESREC can be contacted for further information or any report templates via [Erna.Conradie@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Erna.Conradie@nwu.ac.za) or 018 299 4656

The IRERC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the IRERC or ESREC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely

Prof LA  
Du Plessis

Digitally signed by  
Prof LA Du Plessis  
Date: 2016.11.18  
08:23:32 +02'00'

**Prof Linda du Plessis**

Chair NWU Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (IRERC)

# APPENDIX B: LETTER TO THE SUPERINTENDENT GENERAL REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

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8 September 2011

**01 JULY 2016**

**Permission: Superintendent general**

**Project**

**School governing bodies support of schools to promote quality academic performance**

## **1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The overarching purpose of the project is to assist schools to have SGBs who understands their critical role of supporting schools to promote quality academic performance. Improvement must be academic improvement with better results but also broader educational goals such as fostering collaboration with the community through QLTC structures to promote a sense of ownership.

The aims of the project will be:

- To determine how the support of SGBs to principals could be enhanced to improve academic performance.
- to investigate how SGBs and principals of schools relate to each other in the KgetlengRiver Area Project Office and how it influences academic performance.
- To determine if and how the governors support the principal and the educators to improve academic performance.

## **2. PARTICIPANTS**

2.1. Three schools will be selected from the APO list.

2.2. from which districts

2.3. How will you select them (criteria)

2.4. At each school the principal for an individual interview and then a focus group with a group who will consist of one experienced educator from the staff, one educator representing educators in the SGB, Chairperson of SGB, Secretary and one additional parent member who is not part of the executive will be interviewed during individual and focus group sessions.

## **3. PROCEDURES**

If you give permission to participate in this study, I would like the participants to participate in the individual and focus group interview to discuss related issues posed by the researcher.

### **DATES AND TIME**

Dates will be confirmed with the participants

The interviews are expected to last about 40 minutes.

### **LOCATION**

- The participant's venue

#### **4. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

I do not foresee any possible risks or discomforts through participation in this study.

#### **5. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

There will not be any direct personal benefits to the participants.

The schools will receive the final report to enable them to use the information for their own in governance development.

The potential benefits however, expected from the research are:

- It can aid in the motivation of educators, principals and governing body members once they understand their own roles and activity to improve their schools;
- Possibly enhance SGB development activities of the school because the information from the interviews will give information about potential fields which needs improvement.
- May promote teaching and learning once the SGB's, educators and principals have an agreed vision and aims of what need to be addressed with teaching and learning to achieve higher quality performance.

#### **6. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

Participation in this study is on a voluntary basis. There will be no remuneration for the participation in this study.

#### **7. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of anonymity of all participants. The information obtained will be stored in a safe in the researcher's office, to which only the researcher has access. After successful completion of the project, all information will be destroyed by the researcher.

The interviews will be audio taped, with the consent of the participant. The participant has the right to edit it at any time before the completion of the project. All information will be erased after successful completion of the project. Names of participants and places will be replaced with neutral identifiers (Educator A, Principal A, School A, School B, etc). At no stage will the true identity of the participants be revealed.

## **8. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

## **9. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the research personnel:

Principal investigator: Galetuke M.T.

Cell Number: 071 844 0108

Supervisor: Professor Heystek Jan

Prof. J. Heystek

Cell no.                   084 722 9136

Work tel. no.:           018 2991906

Work Address:           North-West University

Faculty of Education Sciences

School of Education Study

## **10. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Prof J Heystek

[Jan.Heystek@nwu.ac.za; 018 299 1906] at the Faculty of Education Science, Northwest University.

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT**

The information above was described to *me* by Mr M.T. Galetuke in *English* and *I am in* command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to *me*. *I* was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to *my* satisfaction.

*I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. Have been given a copy of this form.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Investigator**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

# APPENDIX C: LETTER OF CONSENT FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

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Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520  
Tel: 018 299-1111/2222  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Tel: 018 2991906  
Fax: 018 2994558  
Email: [Jan.Heystek@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Jan.Heystek@nwu.ac.za)  
8 September 2011

20 July 2016

Consent for individual interview

## 1. RESEARCH TITLE

School governing bodies support of schools to promote quality academic performance

## 2. THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The research project is a Master's Degree thesis conducted in the North West University, Potchefstroom Campus by Mr Galetuke M.T.

The researcher will visit the school to conduct the interviews.

The research content and procedure has been accepted by the ethical committee of the Faculty of Education Sciences.

The researcher also received permission from the Superintendent General of the Department of Education as well as the district director to do the research in the selected schools in North West Province.

The schools have been selected based on their accessibility and geographic locations in the Kgetleng River Area.

### **3. PERMISSION TO DO THE RESEARCH**

The research content and procedure has been accepted by the ethical committee of the Faculty of Education Sciences.

The researcher also received permission from the Superintendent General of the Department of Education as well as the district director to do the research in the selected schools.

### **4. CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW**

I am requesting your consent to conduct an individual interview with you based on your position in the education system.

It may be necessary to have follow-up interviews after the information from the interviews has been typed. This interview may also be a telephonic interview with you. The purpose of such an interview will be to clarify information that is not clear from the initial interview.

### **5. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The overarching purpose of the study is to assist schools to have SGB members who understands their critical role of supporting schools specifically to promote quality academic performance. Improvement must be academic improvement with better results but also broader educational goals such as fostering collaboration with the community through QLTC structures to promote a sense of ownership.

The aims of the project will be:

- to determine how the support of SGBs to principals could be enhanced to improve academic performance.
- to investigate how SGBs and principals of schools relate to each other in the Kgetleng River Area Project Office and how it influences academic performance.

- to determine if and how the governors support the principal and the educators to improve academic performance.

The following issues will receive attention during the interviews:

1. What are the characteristics of a mutual supportive relationship between the principal and the rest of the governing body?
2. What is the nature of the relationship between Governors and Principals?
3. How does Governors 'support to Principals and educators affect the academic performance of the schools?

## **6. RESEARCH PROCEDURES**

There will be an individual interview with you.

### **DATES AND TIME**

The interview will be conducted at a convenient time as negotiated with you.

The interviews are expected to last about 60 minutes.

### **VENUE**

The venue will be selected in collaboration with you. A convenient venue will be selected where the interviews can be conducted without interruptions, for example of people entering a room.

## **7. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

I do not foresee any possible risks or discomforts through participation in this study. You may feel uncomfortable to discuss issues about your school with an unknown person, but we will do our best to make "friends" before we begin with the discussion.

## **8. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

There will not be any direct benefits to the participants.

The interviews will require some reflection of the participants and therefore the interviews may assist the school with the following:

- It can aid in the motivation of educators, principals and governing body members once they understand their own roles and activity to improve their schools;
- Possibly enhance SGB development activities of the school because the information from the interviews will give information about potential fields which needs improvement.
- May promote teaching and learning once the SGB's, educators and principals have an agreed vision and aims of what need to be addressed with teaching and learning to achieve higher quality performance.

The research may also be beneficial for the school's community because if the learners perform better with the improvement of the support from SGB members and the improved working relations between all stakeholders, learners may be able to be better equipped for the work or study after school.

## **9. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

Participation in this study is on a voluntary basis. There will be no remuneration for the participation in this study.

## **10. CONFIDENTIALITY**

- At no stage will your true identity or that of your school be used. Participants in the study will be referred to as Principal 1, Educator 1, etc. Schools will be referred to as School A, B and School C.
- Any comments made by the participants will be incorporated into the research in the form of a narrative.
- I would like to have your consent to use an audio recording device which will help me to analyze the data gathered at a later stage. These recordings will only be used for the research purpose the researcher has the correct information as it's been explained by you.
- You can decline to answer any question (s) at any time or request that the interview be stopped.
- The typed version of the interview will be sent to you so that you can read it and confirm that it is a true reflection of what was said during the interview. This will also help the researcher to make sure that the information is correct.

## **11. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

## **12. STORAGE OF THE INTERVIEW INFORMATION**

No other person except the research team of this university will have access to the recordings. The information obtained will be stored in a safe place in the researcher's office, to which only the researcher has access. The information from the research will be kept for seven years which will allow the researchers to disseminate the information and then the data will be destroyed.

## **13. WHAT WILL WE DO WITH THE INFORMATION FROM THE INTERVIEWS?**

The information from the interviews will be used to find out the nature of support by SGB members to schools and if there is a relationship between the perceived support and academic performance in the school.

The researcher will analyse the information to get data for interpretation and be able to make recommendations on how SGB members can be able to support schools better to improve quality academic performance.

## **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the study supervisor:

Researcher: Mr M.T. Galetuke

Cell No. 071 8440108

mtgaletuke42@gmail.com

Research Supervisor: Prof. J. Heystek

Cell no. 084 722 9136

Jan.heystek@nwu.ac.za

Work tel. no.: 018 2991906

Work Address: North-West University  
Faculty of Education Science

You may also contact the Prof Lukas Meyer who is the chair of the ethics committee if have any issues which you want to discuss with him.

Work telephone no: 018 2994778

E mail: Lukas.Meyer@nwu.ac.za

#### 14. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you give permission to participate in this study, I would like the participants to participate in the focus group interview to discuss related issues posed by the researcher.

You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT**

The information above was described to *me* by the researcher in *Afrikaans / English* and *I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.*

*I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# APPENDIX D: LETTER OF CONSENT FOR FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

---



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom

South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Tel: 018 2991906

Fax: 018 2994558

Email: [Jan.Heystek@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Jan.Heystek@nwu.ac.za)

8 September 2011

05 September 2016

## **Consent for focus group interview**

### **1. RESEARCH TITLE**

School governing bodies support of schools to promote quality academic performance

### **2. THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

The research project is a Master's Degree thesis conducted in the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus by Mr Galetuke M.T. The researcher will visit the school to conduct the interviews. The schools have been selected based on their accessibility and geographic locations in the Kgetleng River Area.

### **3. PERMISSION TO DO THE RESEARCH**

The research content and procedure has been accepted by the ethical committee of the Faculty of Education Sciences. The research team also received permission from the Superintendent General of the Department of Education as well as the district director to do the research in the selected schools in North West Province.

### **4. CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW**

I am requesting your consent to conduct focus group interview with you based on your position in the education system.

It may be necessary to have follow-up interviews after the information from the interviews has been typed. This interview may also be a telephonic interview with you. The purpose of such an interview will be to clarify information that is not clear from the initial interview.

### **5. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The overarching purpose of the study is to assist schools to have SGB members who understand their critical role of supporting schools specifically to promote quality academic performance. Improvement must be academic improvement with better results but also broader educational goals such as fostering collaboration with the community through QLTC structures to promote a sense of ownership.

The aims of the project will be:

- to determine how the support of SGBs to principals could be enhanced to improve academic performance.
- to investigate how SGBs and principals of schools relate to each other in the Kgetleng River Area Project Office and how it influences academic performance.
- To determine if and how the governors support the principal and the educators to improve academic performance.

The following issues will receive attention during the interviews:

1. What are the characteristics of a mutual supportive relationship between the principal and the rest of the governing body?
2. What is the nature of the relationship between Governors and Principals?

3. How does Governors 'support to Principals and educators affect the academic performance of the schools?

## **6. RESEARCH PROCEDURES**

### **DATES AND TIME**

The interviews will most probably be conducted just after school so that the school program is not interrupted by taking the educators out of the classroom. The interviews are expected to last about 90 minutes.

### **LOCATION**

The location will be selected in collaboration with the participants. A convenient venue will be selected where the interviews can be conducted without interruptions for example of people entering a room. An example of such a venue at a school may be the staff room or classroom that is not on a busy passage.

## **7. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

I do not foresee any possible risks or discomforts through participation in this study. You may feel uncomfortable to discuss issues about your school with an unknown person, but we will do our best to make "friends" before we begin with the discussions.

## **8. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

There will not be any direct benefits to the participants. The interviews will require some reflection of the participants and therefore the interviews may assist the school with the following:

- It can aid in the motivation of educators, principals and governing body members once they understand their own roles and activity to improve their schools;
- Possibly enhance SGB development activities of the school because the information from the interviews will give information about potential fields which needs improvement.
- May promote teaching and learning once the SGB's, educators and principals have an agreed vision and aims of what need to be addressed with teaching and learning to achieve higher quality performance.

The research may also be beneficial for the school's community because if the learners perform better with the improvement of the support from SGB members and the improved working relations between all stakeholders, learners may be able to be better equipped for the work or study after school.

## **9. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

Participation in this study is on a voluntary basis. There will be no remuneration for the participation in this study.

## **10. CONFIDENTIALITY**

- At no stage will your true identity or that of your school be used. Participants in the study will be referred to as Principal 1, Educator 1, etc. Schools will be referred to as School A, B and School C.
- Any comments made by the participants will be incorporated into the research in the form of a narrative.
- I would like to have your consent to use an audio recording device which will help me to analyze the data gathered at a later stage. These recordings will only be used for the research purpose the researcher has the correct information as it's been explained by you.
- You can decline to answer any question (s) at any time or request that the interview be stopped.
- The typed version of the interview will be sent to you so that you can read it and confirm that it is a true reflection of what was said during the interview. This will also help the researcher to make sure that the information is correct.

It may not be possible to ensure hundred percent confidentiality from the group discussions. The principle will be that what is said during this group discussion stays in the group and will not be mentioned or discussed with people who did not participate in this group discussion. At the beginning of the group discussion we will determine the basic rules for the discussion to ensure confidentiality and keep the names and opinions of the participants anonymous.

## **11. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

## **12. STORAGE OF THE INTERVIEW INFORMATION**

No other person except the research team of this university will have access to the recordings. The information obtained will be stored in a safe place in the researcher's office, to which only the researcher has access. The information from the research will be kept for seven years which will allow the researchers to disseminate the information and then the data will be destroyed.

## **13. WHAT WILL WE DO WITH THE INFORMATION FROM THE INTERVIEWS?**

The information from the interviews will be used to find out the nature of support by SGB members to schools and if there is a relationship between the perceived support and academic performance in the school.

The researcher will analyse the information to get data for interpretation and be able to make recommendations on how SGB members can be able to support schools better to improve quality academic performance.

## **14. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the research personnel:

Researcher: Mr M.T. Galetuke

Cell No. 071 844 0108

[mtgaletuke42@gmail.com](mailto:mtgaletuke42@gmail.com)

Study Supervisor: Prof. J. Heystek

Cell no. 084 722 9136

Jan.heystek@nwu.ac.za

Work tel. no.: 018 2991906

Work Address: North-West University  
Faculty of Education Science  
School of Education

You may also contact the Prof Lukas Meyer who is the chair of the ethics committee if have any issues which you want to discuss with him.

Work telephone no: 018 2994778

E mail: Lukas.Meyer@nwu.ac.za

**15. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

If you give permission to participate in this study, I would like the participants to participate in the focus group interview to discuss related issues posed by the researcher.

You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT**

The information above was described to *me* by the researcher in *Afrikaans / English/ Setswana* and *I am in* command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to *me*. *I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.*

*I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study.*

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant

Date

**SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR**

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator

Date

# Dr. JACKIE DE VOS

BA (Psychology & Communication studies), BAHons (Psychology) (NWU)  
MEd, PhD (Educational Psychology) (NWU)  
BAHons (Translation) (UNISA)



072 435 8024

Jackie de Vos

acadwritingconsult@icloud.com

## LANGUAGE EDITING

24 October 2017

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to confirm that the dissertation titled "School governing bodies' support of schools to promote quality academic performance" was edited.

The onus rests upon the client to make sure that all sources/references have been adequately cited/acknowledged.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Jackie de Vos