#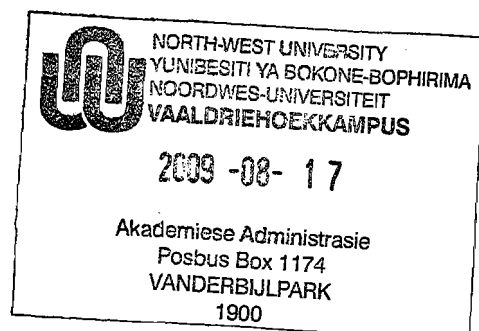 THE CHALLENGES FACING SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES IN HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS WITH REGARD TO THEIR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that:

THE CHALLENGES FACING SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES IN HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS WITH REGARD TO THEIR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

is my own work, that all the resources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references[1], and that this dissertation was not previously submitted by me for a degree at any other university.

N.S. KUMALO
2009

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[1] Some sources do not have page numbers, e.g. sources from internet web sites.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late parents, Elias Velile and Maria Mamosebetsi Kumalo, who sacrificed endlessly to afford my education in trying and difficult times of oppression. It is also dedicated to my family: my dearest wife Dipuo Caroline (Seele) Kumalo for her constant support, my three sons, Nkosana, Sizwe (for always being there for me) and Jabulani, my two daughters, Lindiwe and Busisiwe (you are blessed), and my grandchildren, Granny, Junior, Daddy (late) and Sandile.

JEREMIAH 29:11

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

To God be the glory!!!

ABSTRACT

The intention with this research was to investigate the challenges facing School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in historically disadvantaged schools with regard to their roles and responsibilities. The investigation departed from the premise of prescriptions of the South African Schools Act and other relevant legislation. From the literature review, it became clear that school governance would not be an easy task for schools, based on the precedence set by the apartheid school governance system. Indeed, it was found that SGBs in previously disadvantaged schools experienced numerous challenges. Decentralisation, stakeholder participation in school governance, SGB membership, determination of school policies requiring specialised knowledge and expertise, and policy-making and implementation were found to encapsulate most of the challenges facing SGBs in their roles and responsibilities.

This research, being qualitative and phenomenological, used interviews to focus on some definitive school governance roles and responsibilities. Findings largely confirmed earlier research findings and included challenges such as a poor understanding of the school governance role of promoting the best interests of the school by school governors, the execution of roles and responsibilities being inhibited by poor training and poor capacity building, parent governors lacking knowledge and school governance skills, school governance functions requiring specialised knowledge and skills, a lack of trust, and the influence of suspicion and poor teamwork among school governors.

The main recommendation relates to the review of the Schools Act in terms of specialised functions and who should perform them, and increasing the terms of office of school governors to derive maximum benefit from continuity before new members are elected and another cycle of capacity-building is needed. It is further recommended that the roles and responsibilities of school governors be well explained to stakeholders, even before nominations and elections are conducted,

so that potential governors know exactly what is expected, and that continuous capacity-building becomes a regular feature at school level, including a school cluster-based programme addressing local school governance challenges.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus

AIDS   Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

LETU   Local Education and Training Unit

LSTM   Learning and Teaching Support Materials

NECC   National Education Crisis Committee

SASA   South African Schools Act

SGB   School Governing Body

SMT   School Management Team

CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

1.1   INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

School governing bodies are tasked with the challenging function of governing schools. The South African Schools Act, No 84 of 1996, (hereafter referred to as the Schools Act) (Republic of South Africa, 1996a) stipulates these functions. Among other functions, the Act requires of the SGB to contribute on all or some of the following (Department of Education, 1997a:7):

- *School policy* in terms of school hours, language policy, religious policy, dress code, learners' code of conduct and the goals of the school;

- *School development* in terms of a development plan, getting voluntary helpers when needed, partnerships with the community and relationships with other schools;

- *School administration* in terms of maintaining the school buildings, grounds and other property and deciding when others may use this property, the appointment of staff, an annual general meeting of parents and reporting to the school community; and

- *School finance* in terms of raising funds, opening a bank account and overseeing the school's income and expenses.

The Schools Act also stipulates that the school governing body (SGB) can request, as it were, extra powers or functions from the Head of Department. These can include deciding on the school's admission policy, improving the school's property, deciding on curriculum options and the extra-mural curriculum, buying books and educational material and enquiring into, and taking action on complaints about staff and learners at the school (Department of Education, 1997b:7). In executing some

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of these functions, the SGB is bound by, and is obliged to abide by other legislation
such as the:

- The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No 108 of 1996
  (Republic of South Africa, 1996b), which is the supreme law of the country;

- The National Education Policy Act, No 27 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa,
  1996c), which deals with provisions governing the provision of education in
  South Africa;

- The Labour Relations Act, No 66 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996d)
  which deals largely with employer-employee relations; and

- The Employment of Educators Act, No 88 of 1998 (Department of
  Education, 1998), which deals with service conditions of educators.

A scrutiny of the functions listed above, clearly indicates the roles and
responsibilities of the SGB. In essence, these functions place an onus on the SGB
to make sure that the school is run in the best interest of all stakeholders and thus
the SGB stands in a position of trust towards the school (Department of Education,
1997b:23).

The functions of the SGB, as listed above, seem simple and straightforward.
However, they could be much more challenging than they seem. Numerous writers
have pointed out many challenges that SGBs face in terms of their functions, roles
and responsibilities.

Xaba (2004:3, 6) points out the difficulty related to roles of SGBs as members
elected by constituencies. He argues that since members campaign to be elected
and thus become members on that basis, it is impossible for them to advance the
"best interests" of the school. In his research, Xaba (2004) found that educator-
members of SGBs regard themselves as "watchdogs" of their colleagues, in other
words, they are fighting for educators' issues. This is in conflict with the "best

interests" of the stakeholders. To this end, by way of an example, this can be related to the conflict emanating from strike action. Educators are usually torn between fighting their cause by going on strike, and serving the best interests of the learners. It is in that sense that Xaba argues that SGB members' roles are made difficult by the manner of their gaining membership to the SGB, that is, through a constituency support base, which seems to propound serving the interests of their constituency.

With regard to constituency-based representation and membership, Adams and Waghid (2005:25) highlight the problem of adhering to democratic principles in SGBs. They point out that this is due to each representative group wanting to enhance its own interests at the expense of other representative groups, which leads to the decision-making process becoming an area of strife, struggle and conflict.

The fore-stated position, according to Early and Creese (2000:485), emanates from SGBs usually having so-called minimalist members who are unwilling governor-recruits because no other persons are willing to stand for election, as well as the "watchdogs" who are members with considerable suspicion and who are concerned with protecting their constituencies' interests at all cost and, in the case of educator-governors, are usually involved with union affairs within the staff room and are usually union representatives.

The lack of or poor training and capacity building is often cited as one of the main challenges faced by SGBs. Mabasa and Themane (2002:112) point out that SGBs are not trained before they start with their work and this gives expression to the following problems:

- being unfamiliar with meeting procedures;

- experiencing problems with the specialist language used in meetings;

- finding it difficult to manage large volumes of paper;

- not knowing how to make a contribution;

- lack of knowledge of appropriate legislation;

- feeling intimidated by the presence of other members who seem knowledgeable; and

- perceiving their roles as simply "rubber stamping" what others have already decided upon.

Mabasa and Themane (2002:114) also point out that there are other constraints posing challenges for SGB members, like the behaviour of learners in meetings (in secondary schools), the lack of participation by parents, and members who find it difficult to relate to and accept learners, that is, their children as members of such an important body as the SGB.

Mestry (1999:126) highlights perhaps one of the most serious and important challenges for SGBs. He points out that many principals and SGB members lack the necessary knowledge and skills regarding financial management and, as such, are placed under tremendous pressure as they cannot work out practical solutions to practical problems.

Mestry (2006:133) also points out that there is lack of collaboration between the principal and other SGB members. Consequently, principals are not prepared to share responsibility of school governance for fear of losing power. In this regard, Maile (2002:239) contends that illiteracy among SGB members, especially parent governors, may contribute to their inefficiency and this author argues that this is possible because illiteracy precludes parents from assessing relevant management information from the principal.

Van Wyk (2004:54) reports that educators in SGBs feel that other SGB members, an obvious reference to parent-governors, lack confidence and are not sure of their duties, and that some educators feel that parent members are against them and feel inferior as they think educators are undermining them. In this regard, Motala and Mungadi (1999:15) argue that school governance, in the form introduced by the Schools Act, was introduced with insufficient preparation. To this end, and in relation to the problem of illiteracy and lack of collaboration in the SGB, Van Wyk (2004:50) points out that the government recognises that many SGBs, particularly in rural and less advantaged areas, do not have the required skills and experience to exercise their powers and may have difficulty in fulfilling their functions.

One of the challenges faced by SGBs is articulated by Heystek (2001:212), namely that the involvement of black learners in school management and governance was, in essence, politically and economically motivated, while in white schools (ex-model C) learners are really not interested and do not have the time to participate in school governance. This raises the issue of the best interests of the stakeholders, in that it can be averred that with such motives and lack of interest, these learner governors cannot advance the best interests of the schools.

It is clear from the foregoing exposition that there are indeed challenges facing SGBs in executing their roles and responsibilities. Historically disadvantaged schools are a focus of interest in this regard because, from personal experience as principal of a school, these are common experiences in these schools. This is the basis of motivation for this study. On that basis, the following question emerges:

What are the challenges faced by SGBs regarding their roles and responsibilities in historically disadvantaged schools?

This question finds expression in the following sub-questions:

- What is the essence of SGBs' school governance roles and responsibilities?

- What is the nature of challenges facing SGBs regarding their roles and responsibilities?

- What are the current challenges facing SGBs in historically disadvantaged schools regarding their roles and responsibilities?

- How can SGBs in historically disadvantaged schools be assisted to improve the execution of their roles and responsibilities?

To address this question, this study examines the school governance roles and responsibilities and appraises the challenges they face.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this research is to investigate challenges faced by SGBs in historically disadvantaged schools regarding their roles and responsibilities. This aim is answered by means of a focus on the following sub-aims:

- an examination of the essence of SGBs' school governance roles and responsibilities;

- an appraisal of the nature of challenges facing SGBs regarding their roles and responsibilities;

- an investigation of the current challenges facing SGBs in historically disadvantaged schools regarding their roles and responsibilities; and

- a determination of how the SGBs in historically disadvantaged schools can be assisted to improve the execution of their roles and responsibilities.

To address these sub-aims, the research design of this study provides an exposition of the research plan, structure and execution.

1.3   RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

This study is qualitative in approach. Qualitative research attempts to present the social world, and perspectives on that world, in terms of the concepts, behaviours, perceptions and accounts of the people who inhabit it (Ritchie, 1998). According to Gay and Airasian (2003:13), qualitative research seeks to probe deeply into the research setting with an intention of obtaining a deep understanding about the way things are, as well as how participants perceive them. This provides insights into what people believe and feel about the way things are and, as such, allows researchers to maintain a physical presence in the research setting and involves texts of written words and the analysis of collected data. In this study, the qualitative approach is used to investigate challenges faced by SGBs in historically disadvantaged schools regarding their roles and responsibilities.

The strategy used for this purpose is phenomenological. Fouché (2002:273) explains phenomenology as seeking to understand and interpret the meaning that people give to their everyday lives, which implies that the study describes what meaning a phenomenon, topic or concept has for various individuals. This is done mainly by means of observing participants and using interviews in order to analyse the conversations and interactions that the researcher has with the participants (Fouché, 2002:272). In this regard, this study carefully follows a specific research method.

1.4   RESEARCH METHOD

The method for this study involves both a literature review and an empirical study.

1.4.1 Literature review

A literature review was conducted to enable the study to embark on the empirical study with a strong orienting framework of what would be studied and how it would be studied (Fouché & Delport, 2002:268). According to these authors, the literature

study provides a general description of the study phenomenon as seen through the eyes of people who have experienced it at first hand, and provides a theoretical grounding or paradigm before data collection.

In this study, a literature review was conducted to allow an understanding of current views on the challenges facing SGBs in historically disadvantaged schools with a particular inclination towards governance challenges. For this purpose an extensive literature search for primary and secondary sources was undertaken using the DIALOG search and EBSCOHost, as well as various other web-based sources. The following key words were used in the literature search:

school governance; school governors; governance roles and responsibilities; democratic governance; governance challenges; school governance versus school management.

1.4.2 Empirical study

The empirical study entails the research aims, research instruments, population and sampling procedures and data collection procedures.

1.4.2.1 Aim

The aim of the empirical study is to investigate challenges faced by SGBs in historically disadvantaged schools regarding their roles and responsibilities. School governors' perceptions about the challenges they face in executing their roles and responsibilities were thus sought.

1.4.2.2 *Empirical research approach*

As mentioned earlier in the text, a qualitative approach was used for this investigation as it would enable the researcher to gain an understanding of the phenomenon under investigation from the participants' perspective and would also enable the presentation of findings in a narrative form (Leedy & Ormrod,

2005:134). To this end, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data on the challenges facing SGBs in historically disadvantaged schools.

A semi-structured interview is conducted with an open orientation which allows for directed two-way conversational communication and consists of a set of questions as a starting point to guide the interaction (cf. Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:184; Greef, 2002:303). The interview was chosen as the most appropriate data collection instrument in this study, because as described by various experts in qualitative research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:146, 184; Greef, 2002:291; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2002:260), interviews provide opportunity for the following:

- gathering data through direct verbal interaction between individuals;

- gaining in-depth understanding of participants and following up, where necessary, for purposes of clarity;

- fostering mutual respect and sharing of information with the participants;

- establishing rapport with participants and therefore gaining cooperation; and

- conducting the interviews in natural and relaxed settings.

In this study, an interview schedule with a number of questions was designed from data collected through the literature survey, because a literature survey provides a theoretical grounding or paradigm before the actual data collection takes place (Fouché & Delport, 2002:268). The interviews were thus the person-to-person type where interviewer and interviewee are engaged on the phenomenon of the study in a setting that is relaxed and allows for free interaction.

1.4.2.3 *Participants in the research*

The population for this study comprised SGB members in the Gauteng Province. Due to the vast expanse of the province, the population was demarcated to the

Orange Farm area in the Johannesburg South District 11, which comprises 20 primary schools.

The selection of participants was purposively dimensional in order to focus on those variables in the population that are of interest to the investigation (Strydom & Venter, 2002:207; Merriam, 1998:61). According to the former authors, dimensional sampling entails only a few cases to be studied in depth and ensures that each population dimension or stratum is represented. In this research the population comprises principals, educator-governors and parent governors. The parent-governors consist of chairpersons, secretaries, treasurers and/or ordinary members as informed by guidelines provided by Strydom and Venter (2002:207) that purposely, the researcher uses his or her judgement that those elements contain the most characteristics or typical attributes of the population. The participants in this study were deemed sufficiently characteristic of the study's population.

1.4.2.4 *Sample*

According to Strydom and Delport (2002:334), in qualitative research, sampling occurs subsequent to clearly establishing the circumstances of the study and the directive, so that sampling is undertaken after the actual investigation has commenced. In this regard, sampling is relatively limited, is based on saturation, is not representative, the size is not statistically determined and thus the sampling is non-probable (cf. Strydom & Delport, 2002:334).

In line with the assertion above, and as a result of purposive-dimensional considerations, the sample in this study comprised five principals, sixteen educator-governors and twenty four parent-governors. However, for purposes of saturation and informational considerations, the sample was sequential and was determined by data gathering up to a point of saturation (cf. Strydom & Delport, 2002:336; Merriam, 1998: 65). The interview process spanned a period of three months.

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To establish validity and reliability of the interviews, the interview questions were piloted with two school principals, two parent-governors and two educator-governors who were asked to determine whether the questions were appropriate. The comments forthcoming from this exercise were taken into consideration in preparing the report.

1.4.2.5 *Data analysis*

According to Merriam (1998:178) and De Vos (2002:344), data analysis involves the process of making sense out of data collected by consolidating, reducing and interpreting what participants have said and what the researcher has observed. Transcription and analysis were done every evening after each interview. In this way, data saturation and informational considerations became clear as the interviews progressed (Greef, 2002:305). Basically, the following process was followed in the data analysis (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:150; De Vos, 2002:340):

- The data were organised into smaller units in the form of main concepts, sentences and individual words.

- The data were perused several times to get a sense of what it contains as a whole. Notes suggesting categories or interpretation will be jotted down.

- General categories were identified and the saturation point(s) was(were) noted as interviews continued.

- Data were then summarised and integrated into the text for reporting.

After compiling the report, a discussion was held with participants in the pilot study so as to eliminate, *inter* alia, any researcher bias.

1.4.2.6 *Ethical considerations*

The researcher obtained permission from the district manager to conduct the research by following the prescribed departmental protocol. Permission was also

obtained from the school principals and participants. Adequate and appropriate space for the interviews was provided and the interviews were conducted after school hours for principals and educators and at convenient times for parents. Due to this, interview settings were, in all cases, made appropriate and conducive to effective data collection.

Permission was also obtained from participants to record the interviews. In all instances, field notes were taken and impressions gained were jotted down after every interview (Greef, 2002:304). It was ensured that maximum cooperation was obtained by doing the following (Creswell, 1998:37):

- articulating the topic and objectives to the participants beforehand;

- availing transcripts and interpretations to the participants before the actual textual reporting;

- considering participants' wishes for anonymity and confidentiality, and consequently abstaining from mentioning actual school names and names of participants in the report.

The Ethics Committee of the North-West University was requested to approve the procedures relating to ethical aspects. The prescribed protocol was followed for this purpose and approval was granted.

1.5 CHAPTER DIVISION

Chapter 1 presents an orientation to the study and details the problem statement , aim, objectives, research design and method as well as the ethical considerations.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review on challenges facing School Governing Bodies with regard to their roles and responsibilities.

Chapter 3 presents a detailed description of the empirical study. The aim, objectives and research method are outlined in detail.

Chapter 4 presents data analysis and interpretation of the empirical research data.

Chapter 5 presents the summary, findings and recommendations of the study.

1.6 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The study relates to a phenomenon in schools that is pivotal to effectiveness, especially with regards to school governance. It is envisaged that this study will contribute to the practice of school governance and the improvement of school organisational effectiveness, particularly in primary schools. The study therefore intends to improve the practice of school governance by investigating the practicality of standing school governance conventions against what works in practice.

1.7 SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the orientation of the research (in the form of the problem statement, the research aims and research methodology). In chapter 2, the literature review on challenges facing SGBs with regard to their roles and responsibilities will be discussed.

CHAPTER 2

CHALLENGES FACING SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES WITH REGARD TO THEIR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the challenges facing school governing bodies in the execution of their roles and responsibilities. A brief historical background to school governance is presented to contextualise the current roles and responsibilities of school governing bodies. Then the challenges pertaining to school governing bodies are outlined in terms of their various roles and responsibilities.

2.2   SCHOOL GOVERNANCE: AN OVERVIEW

School governance currently entails devolution of power to stakeholders. In fact, this seems to have been the trend in many countries. This new direction is underpinned by factors such as decentralisation, stakeholder participation in school governance, school governing body membership, determination of school budgets and fees and determination of various school policies (Bush & Heystek, 2003:128). Decentralisation seems to be the key principle in school governance.

2.2.1 Decentralisation

The state cannot do everything for the school and, similarly, the school governing body cannot expect the state to do everything for them. Hence the concept decentralisation in school governance was introduced. Decentralisation relates to power sharing and partnerships. In this regard, Marishane (1999:78) makes the point that the concept of decentralisation originates from the belief that the state alone cannot control schools, but should share its power with other stakeholders, particularly those closer to the school, on a partnership basis.

Levin (1998:132) points out that the premise of decentralised school governance is to devolve more authority over education matters to local school communities. In this regard, Gann (1998:7) opines that school governance gets to be viewed as the story of how ordinary people eventually obtain a say in the running of their schools. In this sense, school governance, according to Naidoo (2005:40), involves the centralisation and decentralisation of education administration and control and includes moving some responsibilities nearer to the school and classroom, strengthening some decision-making arenas and weakening others, empowering parents and communities, curbing professionals' control and the style and substance of modern business and financial management with the aim of integrating school-based governance with participatory decision-making.

However, there are challenges with regard to effective partnerships. Because centralisation is characterised by mutual trust and respect, shared decision-making, shared goals and values, common vision, open communication, good teamwork, promotion of the interests of the partnership rather than those of the individual and respect for the roles of different partners, capacity building is a crucial challenge and indeed a prerequisite for school governing bodies if the benefits of decentralised school governance are to yield the expected benefits (Bush & Heystek, 2003:128). Therefore the state's responsibility, in partnership with other stakeholders, must be to develop capacity for governing bodies, which will ensure that SGBs perform their duties and responsibilities effectively and efficiently (Marishane, 1999:59).

Furthermore, SGB members serving schools situated in poor socio-economic communities often struggle to survive and have little energy for school obligations, and therefore need additional help (Van Wyk, 2001:196). To this end, McPherson and Naicker (2002:53) add that the socio-economic environment of a school and the attendant financial implications have a profound impact on effective school governance. To this end, Van Langen and Dekkers (2001:380) argue that decentralisation of school governance can bring with it the possibility of extreme

inequalities, and state that: "... the possibility (exists) that the local community, including parents and educators may not have the knowledge and resources to adequately protect the quality of education provided to their children". In this regard, Beckmann (2002:162) points out that the SGB might determine some policies, but that their power is significantly curtailed by the directives from the national authority. Clase, Kok, and Van der Merwe (2007:244) cite fields of tension between SGBs and the national and provincial departments of education as including, among others, issues concerning funding of schools, appointment of staff, admission requirements at schools, the language policy of schools, measures to discipline learners and the policies on religion, religious instruction and practice.

It can be concluded from the foregoing exposition that, while the decentralisation of school governance seems desirable and seems to empower stakeholders at local education delivery sites, the restrictions imposed on their autonomy in various aspects bring about a challenge of dealing with centralisation in those aspects. In addition, the ability to execute functions attendant to decentralisation, is wholly dependent on capacity-building. Considering the number of schools and SGBs in the country, and the urgency with which implementation is needed, it is clear that there will be challenges regarding the mode of such capacity-building and the effectiveness thereof. Closely related to decentralisation in terms of governance effectiveness, is the notion of stakeholder participation.

2.2.2 Stakeholders participation in school governance

The Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996a) describes ideals for stakeholder participation in school governance. In addition, the Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) enshrines the rights of all people in the country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom, which imply people's rights to participate in decision-making on matters that affect their interests. Based on these constitutional principles, stakeholder participation in schools governance can be seen as a democratic right.

Bush and Heystek (2003:128) cite Waring who defines stakeholders as those who have a legitimate interest in the continuing effectiveness and success of an institution. In this regard, school staff, parents and learners may be regarded as legitimate stakeholders. However, in a broad sense, the state, education departments, business and community groups may also be regarded as stakeholders with legitimate interests in the schooling and education system, and thus their participation in education and in schools is also a democratic right. To this end, Bush and Heystek (2003:128) quote the South African Government's language in emphasising this point:

> "The democratisation of education includes the idea that stakeholders
> such as parents, teachers, learners and other people (such as members
> of the community near your school) must participate in the activities of
> the school."

Based on this statement, stakeholder participation seems an ideal for school governance. In fact, Bush and Gamage (2001:39) assert that stakeholder participation is likely to be beneficial for the school and its learners, as well as the community it servers. This is also emphasised by Mgijima (2000:18), who states that the democratisation of education includes the "idea that all stakeholders, that is, parents, educators, learners and members of the community must participate in school activities".

The implications of stakeholder participation at school level present enormous challenges. For one, this cannot be a harmonious process. In fact, stakeholder participation at school level is not without tensions, mainly because of it being a new dimension in an education system that previously had been characterised by unilateral decision-making from the state and at school, from school managers (Sayed, 1999:143).

Mabasa and Themane (2002:112) indicate that problems with stakeholder participation in school governance are by no means unique to developing countries

like South Africa. Jones (1998:329) argues that in the United Kingdom, SGBs have been given more powers and influence than ever before and such bodies are even required to be involved in making important decisions that have an impact on the quality of education. However, as pointed out in the problem statement (cf. 1.1), they are faced with the following challenges:

- lack of preparation for new governors before they start their work;

- governors' unfamiliarity with meeting procedures;

- problems with specialist language used;

- finding it difficult to manage the large volumes of papers;

- not knowing how to make a contribution;

- lack of knowledge of appropriate legislation;

- feeling intimidated by the presence of other members who seem to have more knowledge; and

- perceiving their roles as simply "rubber stamping" what others have already decided upon.

Therefore as argued by Heystek and Paquette (1999:191), school stakeholders, especially governors, require capacity-building in participatory decision-making, since, in the past, principals were considered to be the only people with the knowledge and authority to make decisions. Furthermore, a research by Christie (1998:90) reveals the conflictive nature of relationships between management, educators, learners and parents and the negative effects this has on a school. According to Christie, this points to a lack of respect or cooperation among different stakeholders with each group complaining about the others, as well as lack of motivation, commitment and discipline. This also boiled down to the

abridgement of the powers of the SGBs and this abridgement was contrary to the principle of a healthy democracy and ran counter to the fundamental rights of parents to have a say in the education of their children (De Vries, 2004:1) .

It can therefore be concluded that, while the notion of stakeholder participation in school governance is noble and ideal, it is not without challenges. In the case of school governance, these challenges are more pronounced with regard to the capacity to operate harmoniously towards the achievement of school governance goals. Among other influences on goal achievement, the issue of the governing body membership becomes pivotal.

2.2.3 School governing body membership

According to the Schools Act, the governing body of an ordinary school is made up of three groups of people namely, members who are elected, the school principal and members who are co-opted but not elected (Department of Education, 1997b:24). Unlike in other countries where membership to SGBs comprises parents, educators, community representatives and the principal, in South Africa, there is also provision for learner membership in secondary schools. Heystek (2001:93) posits that the inclusion of learners agrees with the democratic principle of giving all stakeholders a say in school governance. Features of the membership and functioning of SGBs include the fact that the SGB chairperson must be a parent governor, that co-opted members do not have voting rights and that learners do not have voting rights on issues that have a legally binding obligation (Bush & Heystek, 2003:131).

The membership of SGBs has led to numerous problems in the functioning of SGBs. In some instances, SGBs have been rendered completely dysfunctional as a result of contested power terrains between members who, on the basis of representing their constituencies, fail to promote the best interests of the school and learners (Ngidi, 2004:263; Xaba, 2004:313; Van Wyk, 2007:135). Some of the challenges experienced by SGBs can be attributed to lack of capacity to carry out

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their functions. This is further manifested in the requirement for SGBs to determine school budgets and fees.

2.2.4 Determination of budgets and fees

Money received from the state is generally insufficient to provide for all educational matters, for example, maintaining schools, paying for services, paying for educators and non-educators, and buying learning support materials and equipment. Thus the SGB is expected to raise money to supplement the state contribution (Bush & Heystek, 2003:132).

The SGB is also, according to the Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996a) expected to draw up the school's budget, on the basis of which school fees to be paid by parents are determined. An important feature of this exercise is, as articulated by Bush and Heystek (2003:132), the requirement that the finalisation of both the budget and the determination of school fees be approved by the majority of parents present and voting at a general meeting called for that purpose, where parents have a right to take the final decision on the budget and fees. The afore-cited authors argue that this combination of parental sovereignty with regard to the budget and setting of school fees and the positive discrimination of parents being responsible for making the final decision on the budget and fees could leave SGBs in an uncomfortable position of having insufficient income to meet their commitments. Even more of a problem, is the fact that the requirement to set fees and the ability to pay, are closely linked to the socio-economic status of parents, which results in wide variations in fee levels at different types of schools. This most certainly is bound to lead to even more inequalities, with township and rural schools remaining highly under-funded and under-resourced.

An added challenge relates to the provisions of the Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996a) that exempt certain categories of parents from paying school fees. The Act provides for poor parents having statutory rights to full exemption, partial exemption and/or conditional exemption. On the same note, failure by an "able"

parent to pay school fees may force the SGB to take necessary steps or use legal procedures to force the non-paying parent to pay (Department of Education, 1997b:41).

The foregoing exposition clearly indicates the challenges that SGBs face regarding the execution of their commitments in terms of budgetary processes, which are, as is evident from all functions, also inhibited by lack of capacity to execute such specialised functions as drawing up of budgets, especially where large amounts of monies are paid into schools by the state. The execution of such functions is also indicative of the ability of SGBs to draw up school policies to direct the execution of activities attendant to their functions.

2.2.5 School policies

The general purpose of school policies on governance is to promote the overall development of schools through the development of the vision and mission of the schools (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). School policies are the schools' legal documents and must be in line with the Constitution, the South African Schools Act, the National Education Policy Act and the provincial education departments' policies and regulations. SGBs are thus required to develop and draw up various policies and see to their implementation. Following are some important policies needed for the smooth running of a school:

- *Admission policy*, which must ensure that there is no unfair discrimination in the admittance of learners to schools (Bush & Heystek, 2003:134). Of note, is the fact that the admission policy should in no way allow for the use of tests as a means of limiting admission of learners to schools.

- *Policy on religious matters*, which, according to Malherbe and Beckmann (2002:35), state that all religious practices should be done equitably, free and voluntarily.

- *The language policy*, which the school governing body should draft, taking into account the language of the community in the school surroundings, and that the language policy should not be used to discriminate on the basis of race (Nelushi, 2006:15).

- *A code of conduct for learners*, which seeks to promote proper and good learner behaviour and set standards for positive learner discipline (Van der Bank, 2003:310-315).

- *An HIV/AIDS policy*, which, according to Hartell (2004:183), is imperative for managing the impact of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, taking into account the disclosure procedures and process.

The actual challenge in the development and drafting of school policies pertains to the capacity of SGBs to carry out these responsibilities. According to Maluleka (2008:95), although there are guidelines for policy formulation, the actual process would require SGBs to engage in serious reading and research on the various aspects relating to each policy and relevant legislation, and would need education in policy formulation and implementation, which is an indication of the enormity of functions that require specialised knowledge and expertise.

This section has outlined the scenario for SGBs in terms of the new governance approach in South African schools and has also highlighted some of the challenges SGBs may be facing in executing their functions. The actual challenges become even more vivid when the entire spectrum of SGBs' roles and responsibilities are considered.

2.3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

According to Brown and Duku (2008:431), school governance is a feature of school leadership in schools and while there is considerable variation in the way school

governance is defined, it could be argued that within the South African context, school governance relates to, *inter alia*, part of the processes and systems by which schools operate and use structures of authority and collaboration to allocate resources and co-ordinate or control activities linked to the management of the school. However, school governance in South Africa in its historical evolution can be viewed in terms of two main eras namely, the pre-democratic era before 1994 and the democratic era after 1994.

2.3.1 School governance in the pre-democratic era

In the pre-democratic era, school governance in South Africa was mainly the task of the state. This was prominently so with the coming to power of the National Party, with the concomitant impact of its separatist policies which were characterised by bureaucracy, autocracy and centralisation (Singh, 2006:69). As a result of the separatist policies, education control and governance were fragmented in various education departments, including Homeland departments that catered for separate ethnic and racial groups. Therefore there was little or no participation by parents and communities in school governance and no meaningful governance at regional and school level (Buckland & Hofmeyr cited in Singh, 2006:70).

Looyen (2000:66) articulates that, in the past, South African schools were largely controlled by principals with little or no educator-parent participation, and the principal's leadership style and frame of reference largely drove the school's ethos, culture and impetus. Thus, educators, parents and learners contributed little to policy and decision-making since, for the most part, their role was one of support.

It was only late during the apartheid era that some semblance of parental participation in school governance was given effect. According to Maboe (2005:14), the National Policy for General Education Affairs Act, No 76 of 1984, provided guidelines for co-operation between the school and parents. In terms of section 2(1), cognisance was to be taken of the freedom parents' choice in as far

as the admission of learners to schools was concerned, and that parents had a say and a co-responsibility as far as formal education was concerned. This, in a way, gave parents more power on issues related to the education of children. However, the roles of parents were mainly advisory and consultative (Naidoo, 2005:22; Mabasa & Themane, 2002:112). In fact, Mabasa and Themane (2002:112) expound that during the apartheid era, the structures that were in place for purposes of black education were known as the "school committees". These structures did not advocate stakeholder participation and were dominated by school principals reporting directly to the government bureaucracy (and sometimes the politicians responsible for education). Consequently, the exclusion of some of the stakeholders (such as learners) created fertile ground for the broader political struggle that later ensued towards a more inclusive system of governance.

Mongake (2001:6) adds that structures such as the Parent-Teacher-Student-Associations (in secondary schools) and the Parent-Teacher-Associations (in primary schools) were established in many schools, especially at the African schools, but also at a number of schools for Coloureds and Indians. These organisations faced great difficulties in functioning for a number of reasons, including hostilities from the then authorities, lack of clarity on their role, and inadequate skills and knowledge to fulfil their functions completely. Consequently, it can be surmised that parent structures during the apartheid era failed to execute any school governance functions.

The political struggles of the 1970s and '80s saw changes in the participation of parents and communities in school governance. The National Policy Amendment Act, No 103 of 1986, supplemented the other education acts on parental involvement in school governance and promoted the image and, at the same time, increased the authority and responsibility of the school committee (later changed to "management councils") to allow parents a greater say in the education of their children and, as stated by Maboe (2005:15), this was extended to include matters such as consultation on the appointment, promotion and dismissal of staff.

Despite all the changes introduced and purporting to involve parents in school governance, it is apparent that school governance still resided in the state and that parents were only involved in consultative capacities. This gave rise to many structures and concerns aimed at dismantling the apartheid education structure. Prominent among these was the formation of the Soweto Parent Crisis Committee. Segwapa (2008:33) points out that these bodies were formed to organise a national conference to address the exclusion of blacks in the decision-making process regarding education. The outcome of the conference was a strong negotiating team, called National Education Crisis Committee (NECC). The NECC strove for the creation of an educational system along the lines of people's education and the active involvement of black people in education matters.

It is clear that parent involvement in school governance was heavily regulated by the state and did not really involve governance at school level. Consequently, as propounded by Looyen (2000:66), in the past principals largely controlled schools with little or no educator-parent participation. This scenario changed drastically with the new democratic dispensation.

2.3.2 School governance in the democratic era

The advent of democracy in South Africa saw many radical changes to the country's political dispensation and all state structures. Accordingly, the Department of Education (1997a:2) outlines the essence of the shift from the pre-democratic era to the democratic era and states:

> "Just like the country has a government, the school ... needs a "government" to serve the school and the community."

This, according to Bush and Heystek (2003:127), represents a major shift to school self-governance as has been the trend in many countries during the past two decades. In essence, this implies devolution of power to the school grassroots levels. In this sense, school governance finds expression in the White Paper on Education and Training (Republic of South Africa, 1995:21), which states:

"The principle of democratic governance should be increasingly reflected in every level of the system, by the involvement in consultation and appropriate form of decision-making of elected representatives of the main stakeholders, interest groups and role players. This is the only guaranteed way to infuse the new social energy into the institutions and structures of the education and training system, dispel any chronic alienation of large sectors of society from the education process, and reduce the power of government administration to intervene where it should not."

These major shifts in South Africa were informed by, and were expressed in legislation. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996b), the National Education Policy Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996c) and the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996a) are perhaps the most important pieces of legislation in this regard.

2.3.2.1 *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*

The Constitution, being the supreme law of the country, implies that all other laws, such as education legislation, and all other conduct by organs of state and persons, are subject to its authority and must be in line with its provisions (Van Rooyen & Rossouw, 2007:12). The main thrust of the Constitution is expressed in Section 1, which states that the Republic of South Africa is one sovereign, democratic state founded on the values of "universal adult suffrage, a national common voters' roll, regular elections and a multi-party system of democratic government, to ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness". This, according to Van Rooyen and Rossouw (2007:12), means that the primary aim is to establish a representative democracy (government by the elected representatives of the people) that is supplemented by direct and participatory democracy where people themselves participate in government decisions that

affect them, for example, in law- and policy-making, and also participate directly where they are asked to make a decision.

The Constitution, as the supreme law, thus sets a framework for governance in the country and it follows, therefore, that school governance legislation would be shaped within this framework. In fact Carrim (2001:102) makes the point that the Constitution depicts democratic representativeness nationally and, in a way, dictates the same democratic principles across all other state organs.

The Department of Education (1997b:5-6) highlights the following aspects as relevant to school governance:

- The right to education and the transformation of the education system, which recognises that everyone has a right to basic education. This implies that the state must see to it that enough schools are built and maintained, educators are trained and paid, books and other materials for schools are purchased and that the standards of education are maintained. This implies effective school governance as stipulated by the Schools Act in terms of devolution of powers for such responsibilities to school governing bodies.

- Transformation and democratisation of education, which requires that schools must be transformed and democratised in accordance with the democratic values and principles that include:

  - the idea that stakeholders, such as parents, educators, learners and community members near the school, must participate in the activities of the school;

  - the school governing body taking decisions on behalf of the school and seeing to it that the school is administered properly.

These principles imply that, through representation on the school governing body, all stakeholders can share in decision-making of that body and that the members of

the governing body are also accountable to these stakeholders, and must report back to them on what they have done to serve the best interest of the learners of the school.

The provisions of the Constitution find expression at departmental level through the National Education Policy Act.

2.3.2.2 *The National Education Policy Act*

The National Education Policy Act, No 27 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996c), provides for the determination of the national policy for education. With regard to school governance, this Act makes provision for policy guidelines that regulate policies at school level. In particular, section 4 of this Act, clearly stipulates that the Minister of Education shall determine national policy directed toward:

(a) the advancement and protection of the fundamental rights of every person guaranteed in terms of Chapter 2 of the Constitution, and in particular the right-

    (i) of every person to be protected against unfair discrimination within or by an education department or education institution on any ground whatsoever;

    (ii) of every person to basic education and equal access to education institutions;

    (iii) of a parent or guardian in respect of the education of his or her child or ward;

    (iv) of every child in respect of his or her education;

    (v) of every learner to be instructed in the language of his or her choice where this is reasonably practicable;

(vi) of every person to the freedoms of conscience, religion, thought, belief, opinion, expression and association within education institutions;

(vii) of every person to establish, where practicable, education institutions based on a common language, culture or religion, as long as there is no discrimination on the ground of race;

(viii) of every person to use the language and participate in the cultural life of his or her choice within an education institution;

(b) enabling the education system to contribute to the full personal development of each student, and to the moral, social, cultural, political and economic development of the nation at large, including the advancement of democracy, human rights and the peaceful resolution of disputes;

(c) achieving equitable education opportunities and the redress of past inequality in education provision, including the promotion of gender equality and the advancement of the status of women;

(d) endeavouring to ensure that no person is denied the opportunity to receive an education to the maximum of his or her ability as a result of physical disability;

(e) providing opportunities for and encouraging lifelong learning;

(f) achieving an integrated approach to education and training within a national qualifications framework;

(g) cultivating skills, disciplines and capacities necessary for reconstruction and development;

(h) recognising the aptitudes, abilities, interests, prior knowledge and experience of students;

(i) encouraging independent and critical thought;

(j)   promoting a culture of respect for teaching and learning in education institutions;

(k)   promoting enquiry, research and the advancement of knowledge;

(l)   enhancing the quality of education and educational innovation through systematic research on and development in education, monitoring and evaluating education provision and performance, and training educators and education managers;

(m)   ensuring broad public participation in the development of education policy and the representation of stakeholders in the governance of all aspects of the education system;

(n)   achieving the cost-effective use of education resources and sustainable implementation of education services;

(o)   achieving close co-operation between the national and provincial governments on matters relating to education, including the development of capacity in the departments of education, and the effective management of the national education system.

A scrutiny of the provisions of the section of the Act above clearly indicates that school governance at school level is guided by this Act in terms of policies that have to be developed. The National Education Policy Act also makes provision for such policies as the national policy for HIV/AIDS for learners and educators in public schools, the national policy for the management of drug abuse by learners in public schools and the national policy on religion and education (cf. Van Rooyen & Rossouw, 2007:12).

It is on the basis of this Act that the Schools Act provides for governance roles and responsibilities of SGBs.

2.3.2.3 *The South African Schools Act*

The Schools Act presents a clearly defined direction with regard to school governance in South Africa. According to Naidoo (2005:29), taking from the Constitution's precepts of democratic values and principles, the Schools Act prescribes school governance based on equity, equality and democratic governance and seeks to create a new school governance landscape based on citizen participation, partnership between the state, parents, learners, school staff and communities and devolve power towards the individual school and community. In this regard, Grant-Lewis and Naidoo (2004:102) make the point that the Schools Act provides for election of the SGB by learners, parents and staff, which in theory, grants schools and their constituent communities a significant say in decision-making by devolving power to stakeholders who participate in democratic governance at schools.

Naidoo (2005:31) articulates the notion that the Schools Act essentially prescribes a top-down model of governance in which the SGB is legitimated by the fact that its members are elected and that it acts within the nationally created laws and thus focuses the formal articulation of the structure, roles and functions of different levels of government, including their composition, roles, channels of accountability and rules governing their operations as depicted in figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1   The implications of the Schools Act

Devolution of authority	Elected School Governing Body	Promote interests of school and community	Efficiency/equity
	Elected School Governing Body	Participation of school community in decision making	Greater democratisation
	Elected School Governing Body	Play a role in funding	Quality
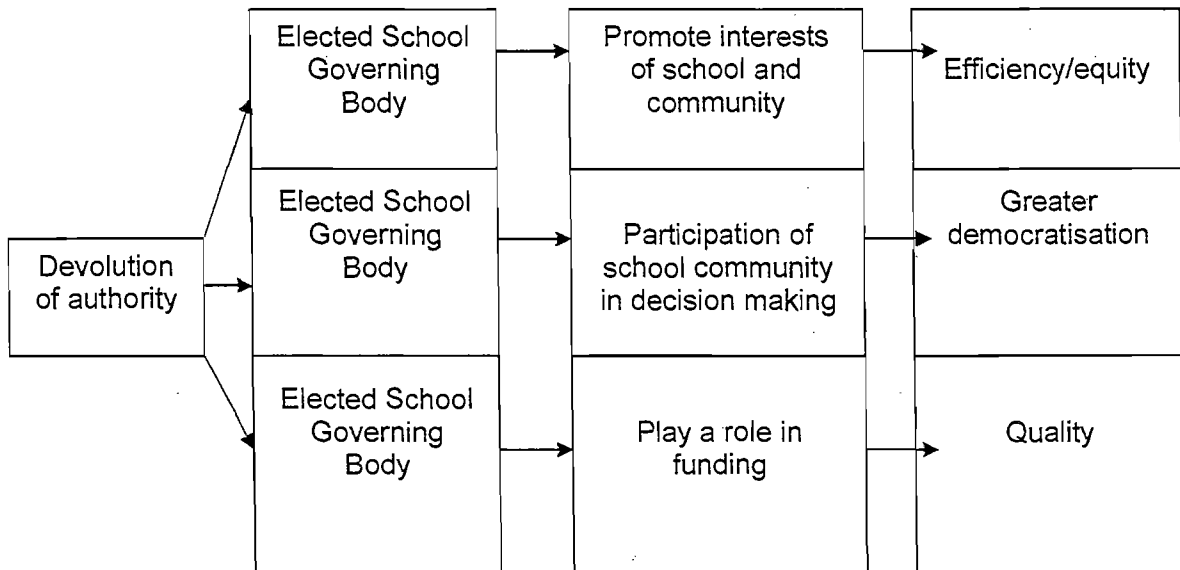
Source: Naidoo (2005:31)

As illustrated in figure 2.1, the implications of the Schools Act are the following:

- Governance reforms and establishment of elected SGBs promote the best interests of the school and ensure efficiency and equity;.

- Governance reforms and establishment of elected SGBs increase community participation in school-level decision-making and advances the cause of democracy; and

- Governance reforms and establishment of elected SGBs ensure greater funding for the schools and thus advance quality education. To this end, Beckmann (2002:153) highlights the fact that the system for the organisation, governance and funding of schools is deeply embedded within the philosophy of democratic school management.

Grant-Lewis and Naidoo (2004:107) point out the most prominent feature of the Schools Act, which is the representation of stakeholders who affect or are affected

by the goals, policies, practices, actions and decisions of the school. Prinsloo (2002:356) asserts that the Schools Act plays an important role in encouraging the principle of partnership in and mutual responsibility for education. With the institution of school governing bodies, the Act aims to give effect to the principle of the democratisation of schooling by affording meaningful power over their schools to the school-level stakeholders. The governing body also aims to bring together all the stakeholders in a forum where differences may be discussed and resolved for the purpose of developing an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning.

The Schools Act can be seen as a legal means of ensuring that school governance involves stakeholders on the ground and seeks to ensure that parents and the community have a say in school matters and thus take ownership of school processes as a way of serving the best interests of the school and, by implication, the child (cf. Department of Education, 1997b:8). This is expressed in the roles and responsibilities that the Schools Act dictates for the SGBs.

2.4 THE PROVISIONS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT FOR SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

The Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996a) stipulates roles and responsibilities of SGBs in school governance. The first responsibility of the SGB relates to developing and adopting a constitution. According to the Schools Act, the governing body of a public school must function in terms of a constitution that complies with minimum requirements determined by the Member of the Executive Council by notice in the Provincial Gazette. Such a constitution must provide for:

- a meeting of the governing body at least once every school term;

- meetings of the governing body with parents, learners, educators and other staff at the school, respectively, at least once a year;

- recording and keeping of minutes of governing body meetings;

- making available such minutes for inspection by the Head of Department; and

- rendering a report on its activities to parents, learners and other staff of the school at least once a year.

The SGB constitution is therefore a document with important, basic and fundamental principles and rules, and forms the basis on which a body such as the SGB must act and govern (Department of Education, 1997b:29). The roles and responsibilities of SGBs are then categorised into functions for all SGBs and allocated functions as contained in sections 20 and 21 of the Schools Act respectively.

2.4.1 Functions of all governing bodies

Functions relating to all SGBs are compulsory (Department of Education, 1997b:31). Regarding these functions, the Schools Act states that the governing body of a public school must:

- promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school;

- develop the mission statement of the school;

- adopt a code of conduct for learners at the school;

- support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions;

- determine times of the school day consistent with any applicable conditions of employment of staff at the school;

- administer and control the school's property, as well as buildings and grounds occupied by the school, including school hostels, if applicable;

- encourage parents, learners, educators and other staff at the school to render voluntary services to the school;

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

- at the request of the Head of Department, allow the reasonable use under fair conditions of the facilities of the school for educational programmes not conducted by the school;

- discharge all other functions imposed upon the governing body by or under this Act; and

- discharge other functions consistent with the Act as determined by the Minister by notice in the Government Gazette, or by the Member of the Executive Council by notice in the Provincial Gazette.

The Schools Act also provides for the following roles:

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

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

SGBs are also charged with allocated functions as stipulated in section 21 of the Schools Act.

2.4.2 Allocated functions of SGBs

Allocated functions are given to SGBs when such SGBs want to be responsible for them and only if the Head of Department is satisfied that the SGB can perform them (Department of Education, 1997b:32). The Schools Act stipulates the following allocated functions of SGBs:

- to maintain and improve the school's property, as well as buildings and grounds occupied by the school, including school hostels, if applicable;

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

- to purchase textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school;

- to pay for services to the school; or

- other functions consistent with this Act and any applicable provincial law.

The nature of the functions pertaining to the roles and responsibilities of SGBs indicates that these can present enormous challenges for SGBs. The next section explores the challenges associated with the roles and responsibilities of SGBs.

2.5 CHALLENGES REGARDING SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES' ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

According to Van Rooyen and Rossouw (2007:22), school governance, in terms of the Schools Act, can be regarded as tantamount to school-based decision-making and management in that it is about the devolution of authority to the operational school level and under the new school governance system in South Africa, it

essentially implies self-governance and enhances the influence of parents and governing bodies in the school community.

However as highlighted earlier, the major challenge for school governance in a sense of a truly self-managing school resides in the top-down and prescriptive nature of the Schools Act. In other words, while propounding self-governance, which implies independence in decision-making, it prescribes and defines functions attached to these roles and responsibilities of SGBs. A scrutiny of the prescriptive nature of these functions illustrates the challenges in them.

2.5.1 Challenges with regard to school governance versus school management

Section 16 of the Schools Act stipulates that the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body, and section 20 states that the SGB must promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school. The implication of this role differentiation is that the SGB's functional mandate excludes only matters pertaining to teaching and learning during the school day, which includes purchase of educational supplies and operational management of personnel and finance (Bush & Heystek, 2003:136). However, considering that the SGB is supposed to be in charge of managing finances, this can create challenges in so far as requisitioning of funds is concerned, purely because all expenditure is supposed to be sanctioned by the SGB, which, in a way and theoretically, implies some form of involvement in the day-to-day running of the school (cf. Van Rooyen, 2007:139).

The main problem, however, pertains to intrusion in management. Xaba (2006:20) argues that since the enactment of the Schools Act, there have been conflicts regarding parental powers as well as the demarcation between governance and professional management issues. For instance, parents have demanded rights to hire and fire educators, much against the stipulations of the Education Labour Relations Act and the prescripts of due processes in dealing with disciplinary

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issues pertaining to educators. Bush and Heystek (2003:136) also cite a case in a London school where the SGB suspended the principal, who was eventually reinstated after a protracted legal battle, which matter was finally resolved after the resignation of the governing body chairperson.

Heystek (2004:308) cites an instance where parents in a school felt they had a right to pay class visits as a form of professional assessment because they were paying the salary of an educator employed by the SGB. They felt they were specifically supporting the principal and were not aware that they were intruding in the "forbidden" professional management field.

From these anecdotes it becomes clear that there seems to be confusion regarding what really belongs to professional management and school governance. This poses a major challenge in role and responsibility definition and execution for SGBs and might as well have a negative impact on advancing the best interests of the school.

2.5.2 Functioning in terms of the SGB constitution

The Schools Act stipulates the first role of the SGB as drawing up the Constitution. As mentioned earlier (cf. 2.3), the constitution details all aspects relating to how SGBs should function. It can be concluded that the constitution is a critical procedures' document and functioning according to it, will ensure the efficiency of SGBs. However, it appears that many SGBs are challenged regarding sticking to the procedures as detailed in their constitutions.

The study of Nelushi (2006:54) found that there was a tendency among parent members to complain that, although the SGB had been duly elected, not much had happened since then. Parents, in particular, seemed to want to know more about matters of school governance from which they had traditionally been excluded, such as making decisions about policy, setting up disciplinary codes, running finances and being knowledgeable with regard to school matters. In the same

study, it was found that some parents indicated that meetings were not held regularly enough.

Maluleka (2008:90) reports from his observation of SGB meetings that such meetings seem to be dominated by the principals and that the principals remain in control of the SGB activities. This is expressed by a principal in that study who states:

"As the principal you chair meetings ... you end up calling meetings ... come up with agenda ... come up with the proposals ... you come up with all what has to be done ... and they always rubber stamp what you say."

Tsotetsi (2005:212) reports from his study that SGB constitutions were reportedly not implemented despite the fact that they were in place, and attributes this to lack of understanding about the importance of the constitution. In the same study, SGB members remarked:

"To be honest and self-critical, I want to believe that we are not following our constitution to the letter. For example, one member did stay away for more than three meetings without giving written reasons. We did not say he has terminated his membership because he is such an important and helpful person in the SGB."

The exposition above indicates that there are challenges in adhering to the constitution of the SGB. While there may be reasons for this, it is equally important to realise that the SGB cannot function well without adhering to its constitution. This may relate to the capacity of the SGB to execute all functions.

2.5.3 Challenges with regard to the capacity of SGBs

According to Nong (2007:2) the transformation of the education system includes, inter alia, the principle that stakeholders, such as parents, educators, learners and the community must participate in the governance and management activities of schools. However, doing so requires skill, knowledge and expertise, which seem to be a major problem that SGBs experience.

Squelch (2000:143) points out that all role players should master a number of skills if they are to fulfil their tasks successfully. These include problem-solving skills, conflict resolution skills, time management, change management and financial planning. In recognition of this requirement, section 19(1) of the Schools Act stipulates that, out of funds appropriated for this purpose by the provincial legislature, the Head of Department must establish a programme to:

(a)   provide introductory 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.

There is indeed a need for capacity building of school governors. The training of SGBs therefore remains a priority for the successful functioning of SGBs and it is the state's responsibility, in partnership with other stakeholders, to develop capacity for governing bodies, which will ensure that they perform their duties and responsibilities effectively (Tsotetsi, Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2008:387).

Naidu (2003:4) points out that the majority of elected members of SGBs are not clear on what their respective roles and responsibilities involve, because they are not familiar with the ethos of education, they lack participatory skills and do not know how to contribute gainfully to the school activities. On this note, Van Wyk

(2004:51) postulates that it is the lack of or inadequate expertise within the field of education that has a negative impact on the SGBs ability to support educators as intended by the Schools Act. To this end, Karlsson, McPherson & Pampallis (2001:169) point out that incapacity to perform certain functions tends to cause governing bodies to function only as crisis committees, because of lack of knowledge.

Clase *et al.* (2007:255) states that lack of knowledge and uncertainty amongst partners in education as a result of a lack of training leads to mistrust, inadequate communication and misinterpretation. Moreover, inadequate collaboration and support by the role players in the education process undermines mutual faith and loyalty and is mutually experienced as a lack of transparency. For this reason, Motala and Mungadi (1999:15) argue that school governance was introduced with insufficient school level preparation. Xaba (2006:19) makes the point that the mode of training involving all SGB members at school level is fraught with difficulties. Firstly, not all members are always available. Secondly, time for training is usually set for afternoons, which are not always suitable or long enough.

The main challenge, as articulated by Dean (2007), is that government expects school governors to take on more responsibility without ensuring that they have the capacity to do so. They are expected to act as critical friends to principals, as strategic leaders of their schools and to represent their local communities. As a result, the current system leaves governors ill-equipped to cope with the problems they face when running schools, especially in disadvantaged areas. Most importantly, it is difficult to find and retain governors with the necessary time and expertise to face these challenges.

The capacity of school governors also includes principals and educators. Section 19(2) of the Schools Act states that the Head of Department must ensure that principals and other officers of the Department of Education render all necessary assistance to governing bodies in the performance of their functions in terms of

this Act. This seems to assume that principals and such officials have the capacity to do so. However, since the introduction of the Schools Act, the performance of most SGBs seems to indicate the contrary. This is aptly articulated by Heystek (2004:311):

> "The department does not make provision for training other than the limited initial training soon after the election of the SGB. A critical question to be asked is whether the departmental officials who are responsible for training the SGB are in fact adhering to the requirements of section 19 of the Schools Act, that they should provide continuous training, (which) obviously includes principals who are also departmental officials."

Jones (1998:32) surmises the challenges facing SGBs in terms of their capacity. He reasons that the SGBs have been given more powers and influence than ever before and are involved in making important decisions despite the lack of preparation before they start with their work. This finds expressions in problems such as being unfamiliar with meeting procedures, experiencing problems with the specialist language used, struggling to manage the huge volumes of paper work, not knowing how to make a contribution, lacking knowledge of the appropriate legislation, feeling inhibited by the presence of other colleagues who seem to have more knowledge and perceiving their role as simply endorsing what others have already decided upon (cf. 1.1).

The challenges raised above indicate just how much the good intentions of the Schools Act can be hampered by not paying attention to any of its provisions.

2.5.4 Challenges with regard to prescribed functions

The Schools Act prescribes certain functions to all school governing bodies. Promoting the best interests of the school is the first function that poses major challenges for SGBs.

2.5.4.1 *Promoting the best interests of the school*

According to section 20(1)(a) of the Schools Act, the SGB must promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school. Squelch (2001:140) states that the school governing body stands in a position of trust towards the school, which means, *inter alia*, that the SGB must carry out duties in the best interests of the school, act in good faith and not engage in any unlawful conduct.

Xaba (2004:313) points out that an analysis of this provision of the Schools Act suggests that the SGB must endow all its efforts to promoting the best interest of the school, and therefore of learners. Of note is that all SGB members must synergise their operative efforts towards the provision of quality education for learners. In this regard, the status and role of school governors raise some critical aspects. Xaba further argues that consideration of the composition of the SGB membership and the manner of their gaining membership, that is, being elected, and the functions of the SGB, presents a challenge for school governors in that being elected implies they have a constituency and therefore must represent it. The question then becomes one of balancing this with promoting the best interests of the school and learners.

Bush and Gamage (2001:42) posit that members of governing bodies are elected as representatives of certain interests connected to the school, which, by implication, means that governors represent the interests of their constituencies, i.e. parents represent parents' interests, educators represent educators' interests and learners represent learners' interests. This, in many instances, results in ineffective and dysfunctional governance and tensions among governors, between governors and principals as well as between governors and staff.

Grant-Lewis and Naidoo (2004:107) make a compelling argument regarding the notion of promoting the best interests of the school. They postulate that although the "common interest" metaphor is dominant, stakeholders define representation in

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terms of their responsibility to a particular constituency, for example, parents, learners or educators. The authors point out that even while some parents see themselves as representing all parents, they may represent particular parents' interests. In this regard, Naidoo (2005:47) reports from his research that an educator member of the SGB stated emphatically, "I am not afraid to oppose the principal if I think it's in the best interest of teachers". This indicates clearly that the interests of the constituency supersede those of the school.

In fact, Xaba's (2004:315) research found that educator-governors regarded themselves as watchdogs for their colleagues and perceived their role as mainly to protect their colleagues' interests. Grant-Lewis and Naidoo (2004:108) found as much in their research and report that the majority of stakeholders, especially principals, felt that the SGB represented "their constituencies" because they had an "elected SGB ...".

It seems, from the foregoing exposition, that promoting the best interests of the school as prescribed by the Schools Act may be an idealistic and real challenge for SGBs. For instance, Xaba (2004:315) cites Fox who postulates that a governing body is not a supporters' club, which implies that school governors are not there to support or be supported by their constituencies, but to promote the best educational interests and needs of the learners. To this end, Earley and Creese (2000:480) assert that, although the interest and views of staff, including other governors, may be important, they are certainly not paramount because schools exist primarily to serve the needs of learners, not their constituencies.

2.5.4.2 *Supporting the principal and educators*

Section 20(e) of the Schools Act prescribes that the SGB must support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions. This, in essence, implies cooperative governance in line with democratic principles of stakeholder participation and involvement in school governance (Department of Education, 1997b:19). Achieving cooperative

governance requires the promotion of peace, securing the well-being of stakeholders, ensuring effective, transparent and accountable governance, consulting on matters of common interest, ensuring that agreed procedures are kept and avoiding legal action against one another (Singh, 2006:74).

According to the Department of Education (1997a:22), support in the SGB involves working as a team with the main goal of improving the quality of education in the school. This implies the need for trust and respect. However, when various research findings are considered, it is clear that this poses a real challenge for SGBs.

Heystek (2004:309) reports the following remarks from principals of schools he has surveyed:

> "I would rather do the work myself, than to wait and expect that the School Governing Body must do it and I know that nothing will happen."

> "The parents (in the SGB) thinks [sic] they own you and the school and can tell you how to manage the school just because they pay a large amount for the school fee."

Heystek (2004:309) argues with regard to such remarks as those listed above, that there are power plays in SGBs and these may be conscious or unconscious, 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, which may have a detrimental effect on the relationship of trust and mutual support.

From interviews with six school principals in the Gauteng Province on stakeholder relationships, Bush and Heystek (2003:129) state the following:

> "... the interviews with the various stakeholders groups revealed the conflictual nature of relationships between management, teachers,

students and parents and the negative effects this had on the school. They pointed to lack of respect or co-operation among different stakeholders, within each group complaining about the others' lack of motivation, commitment and discipline."

Brown and Duku (2008:436) point out that, despite explicit provisions in the Schools Act regarding who should participate in SGBs and how they should participate, in practice participation is structured and institutionalised through the actions of principals who define who participates, how they participate and what decisions are open to participation. In this regard, Heystek (2004:310) reports that, according to principals in his research, most principals were used to a situation in the school where they were in charge and had virtually all the power, especially with regards to the school's finances and, to an extent, policies, general management of the school and governance.

The SGBs' support for the principal and school staff, while seemingly an easy undertaking, is an enormously challenging responsibility, especially because it appears that all the other roles and responsibilities of the SGB are dependent on its effectiveness. It is in that context that the SGB can be in a position to control school property.

2.5.4.3   *Challenges regarding the control of school property*

Section 20(1)(g) and section 20(2) of the Schools Act stipulate that the SGB must administer and control the school's property, as well as buildings and grounds occupied by the school, including school hostels, if applicable, and may allow the reasonable use of the facilities of the school for community, social and school fund-raising purposes, subject to such reasonable and equitable conditions as the governing body may determine, which may include the charging of a fee or tariff that accrues to the school. Department of Education (1997b:37) names school property as the school assets and states that these belong to the school and may

only be used or controlled as permitted by the Schools Act or any other applicable law.

The challenge in terms of controlling school property hinges on the capacity of SGBs to execute this function. This is essentially because certain skills are required for this complex function. Among other implications, controlling school property includes:

- financial management and control;

- maintenance and management of school facilities;

- overseeing and ensuring the safety of school amenities and staff;

According to Lackney (2008), this also consists of not only the physical structure and the variety of building systems, such as mechanical, plumbing, electrical and power, telecommunications, security, and fire suppression systems, but also includes furnishings, materials and supplies, equipment and information technology, as well as various aspects of the building grounds namely, athletic fields, playgrounds, areas for outdoor learning and vehicular access and parking.

The challenge for SGBs seems to be on the financial allocation for maintenance of school property. Lackney (2008) points outs that the costs of managing school facilities have historically received much less attention with the percentage of the operating budget allocated for the maintenance and management of school facilities being steadily decreased. This is further compounded by the fact that, in South Africa, the majority of schools are in a poor condition and are characterised by dilapidated buildings, lack of basic facilities, such as toilets, and unsafe terrain (Mabasa & Themane (2002:139).

Another challenge for SGBs can be related to the fact that controlling school property in terms of maintenance, safety and efficiency would require expertise like facilities management, including planning, organising and controlling skills. As is

very often articulated, most SGB members are not very educated (Robinson, Ward & Timperly, 2003:270). Moreover, these skills seem to be of a specialised, professional nature.

2.5.4.4 *Encouraging parental involvement*

Section 20(1)(h) states that the SGB must encourage parents, learners, educators and other staff at the school to render voluntary services to the school. This, in essence, implies encouraging, among other stakeholders, parental involvement in school activities. In this regard, Epstein and Salinas (2004:13) describe parental involvement in terms of six typologies namely:

- *Parenting*

    This implies assisting families with parenting skills, family support, understanding child and adolescent development and setting home conditions to support learning at each age and grade level, and also assists schools in understanding families' backgrounds, cultures and goals for children. According to Mitchell (2007), parenting might require roles such as presenting parent education workshops and support groups, offering family centres, home visits and neighbourhood meetings.

    These roles on their own can be daunting, even for the most skilled of professionals. For the SGB to execute this function would be a real challenge, considering often-mentioned barriers to parental involvement such as language and illiteracy, cultural barriers, socio-economic barriers and parents' negative perceptions towards the school (Bermúdez & Márquez, 1996; Trumbull, Rothstin-fisch, Greenfield & Quiroz , 2001:19; Van der Westhuizen & Mosoge, 2001:193; Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004:303).

- *Communication*

    Communication relates to communications from the school to the home about the school's programmes and the children's progress and is usually in the form of memos, notices, report cards and conferences, which, according to Fege and Smith (2002:75), should be in an understandable format and language and, to the extent feasible, in the parents' mother tongue.

    Clearly, this is an even more daunting role for the SGB because this role is essentially located in the professional domain of the school staff. However, the SGB would be expected, in the quest to encourage parental involvement, to communicate effectively with parents. The challenge in this case would be the skill level of SGB members to do so. In addition, SGB parent members may themselves be constrained like other parents whose involvement should be encouraged.

- Volunteering

    Volunteering relates to parents becoming involved by volunteering at school and serving as an audience for school performances, which improves recruitment, training, activities and schedules to involve families and enable educators to work with such volunteers who support learners and the school. According to Lunenberg and Irby (2002:9), volunteering includes activities such as parents helping other parents, mentoring learners and increasing family attendance at school events.

    The challenge for SGBs as related above, would be about the skill level of members. Clearly, this is an obligation requiring expertise that even the most experienced school principals have struggled with.

- *Learning at home*

  Learning at home relates to a school's perspective as to providing information to parents/families about how to help learners at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, and decisions and planning, which translate to parents helping learners at home. This includes assisting children with goal-setting, and encourages educators to design homework that enables learners to share and discuss interesting tasks. It can be emphasised that this role requires professionals to execute. It can also present a challenge for SGB members to carry out.

- *Decision-making*

  Decision-making relates to including parents in school decisions and developing parent-leaders and representatives on boards and committees, including school improvement teams and parent organisations. In South Africa, parental participation in decision-making is a crucial aspect of parental involvement and school governance and is provided for by the Schools Act, which makes it mandatory for a majority parental representation in School Governing Bodies. The challenge, however, is the ability of the SGB to solicit parents' views regarding matters on which decisions need to be taken, taking into consideration constraints such as the non-availability of parents to attend meetings due to poverty and other responsibilities (Davis, 2004:25; Wherry, 2008).

- *Collaboration with the community*

  This means that community resources and agencies become integrated with school programmes fostering a shared responsibility for children, including businesses, agencies, cultural and civic organisations and colleges or universities. In South African schools, cases in which schools have engaged local feeding scheme organisations to feed learners from poor families have

seen an increase in attendance and an improvement in performance. Prior to this arrangement learners from poor families would often be absent and, when present, would perform poorly due to, among other reasons, malnutrition and hunger (cf. Human, 2003:44; The Public Service Commission, 2008:24).

It is clear that this can present an enormous challenge for SGBs, especially because parent members may not be disposed to community structures and may not have time to engage in community involvement activities and educators may not have the time required to engage in this activity.

Considering the nature of parental involvement, it may be too challenging a task for SGBs to encourage parental involvement. This is especially true when considering Grant-Lewis' and Naidoo's (2004:105) assertion regarding parent members of SGBs, that participation by parents in governance is individualistic and sporadic.

2.5.4.5 *Recommending the appointment of staff*

According to section 20(1)(i), the SGB must recommend to the Head of Department the appointment of educators at the school, subject to the Employment of Educators Act of 1996. Davis (2004:6) contends that the right of a governing body to make recommendations about the appointment of educating staff to the subsidised establishment of the school is the most contested area.

The first challenge in this regard relates to the expertise or level of education needed to undertake the recruitment and appointment of appropriate candidates for staff positions. In is research, Malangwane (2007:42) found that SGB members often lacked the expertise needed for recruiting staff (school managers).

The second challenge relates to expertise regarding the interview process. Malangwane (2007:42) reports that SGB members face problems when evaluating

responses of candidates and, in addition, inconsistencies existed regarding experience in the evaluation and scoring of candidates during their presentation.

The co-option of external expertise is supposed to present an alternative in an attempt to reinforce the SGB with the necessary expertise needed in the recruitment of principals. In this regard, Malangwane (2007:42) reports that this alternative is not utilised effectively because of the fact that there are no clear guidelines as to who must decide on whom to co-opt. An interviewee actually commented:

> "How can a person who lacks the capacity be in a position to decide on
> the personnel with the necessary capacity to be co-opted?"

This research also found that decisions taken by SGBs are influenced by among other things, the nature of the qualifications and previous work experience of the candidate. The candidate who has acted in a particular position is usually recommended because it is assumed that the experience he/she had gained during the period in that post puts him/her in better position to know and understand the needs and background of the school and its community. The candidate's ability to convince the panel that he/she would be a good principal also has an influence on their decision. Furthermore, the knowledge and understanding of the system of education and the management of the curriculum and its changes influence the decisions of the interviewers.

Maluleka (2008:45) cites Marishane who points out that the SGB, in carrying out this role, has to be familiar with various legislation applicable to education (for example the Employment of Educators Act and the Labour Relations Act). However, the challenge is that SGB members often display limited knowledge regarding the various aspects of these Acts. Consequently, it is not uncommon to hear of decisions pertaining to staff appointments being contested through lengthy and often acrimonious grievance procedures.

Gina (2006:23) cites Adams and Waghid, who, in their research, found cases of nepotism in the appointment of educators, and state that an agreement is made before the post is advertised and the post is filled before the advertisement has been placed. Gina (2006:23) further points out that whilst educators accept the role of the SGB in appointing staff, they are concerned about principals who dominate the school governing bodies. In addition, she alludes to cases of bribery in the appointment of educators being rife to the extent that some educators are given posts without relevant qualifications because they are friends or girlfriends of principals.

The foregoing exposition details challenges facing SGBs with regard to general functions. SGBs of Section 21 schools are also challenged by allocated functions.

2.5.5 Challenges with regard to allocated functions

In terms of Section 21 of the Schools Act, a governing body may apply, in writing, to the Head of Department to be allocated any of the following functions:

- to maintain and improve the school's property, as well as buildings and grounds occupied by the school, including school hostels, if applicable;

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

- to purchase textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school; and

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

To be able to execute the allocated functions, SGBs are funded by the Department of Education, which funds are allocated in a prescribed manner. This means that

the utilisation of such funds is prescribed. For instance, the Gauteng Department of Education (2003:4) prescribes that such funds must be subdivided as follows:

- 60% for Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM);

- 28% for services (e.g. electricity and water);

- 12% for maintenance and improvement of the school's property, as well as buildings and grounds occupied by the school.

The implication of this prescription is that SGBs must use these funds as indicated above. Furthermore, Gauteng Department of Education (2003:2) directs that the funds must be used efficiently, which means that the money is to be used for that for which it was intended, at the right time, price and quality. By implication, for anything to be regarded as efficient, it must be preceded by a plan that will act as a standard, which plan must address the issue of effectiveness in that it must be drawn up with an intention to achieve what the funds were transferred for.

This also includes the prescription of the Public Finance Management Act (1999), which directs that there should be transparency in the use of public funds. This implies that the body or entity that receives the funds must disclose to all stakeholders its plans, showing where the funds came from, what they were intended for, what they will be used for and when and how they will be used. It must also disclose how the funds were used, when and how the funds were used and who benefited from such utilisation.

The requirements attendant to the execution of Section 21 functions present an enormous challenge to SGBs in that they require expertise, especially financial management. In this regard, the Gauteng Department of Education (2003:3) points out that, due to the lack of transparency in the use of state funds transferred to schools and accountability for expenditure, the department has engaged Edu-Solutions to collect data on financial processes evident at some section 21

schools. Some of the weaknesses that were identified at schools in terms of financial processes, were *inter alia*:

- lack of control over cash receipts, receipt issuing and the banking of cash;
- inadequate updating or non-existence of cashbooks;
- lack of control over authorisation of payments and wrong requisitions;
- lack of control over petty cash transactions;
- poor document control, inadequate filing systems and safe keeping of documents;
- financial statements not being compiled;
- budgets and financial statements that do not comply with policy requirements;
- inadequate monitoring of actual expenditure against budgeted expenditure;
- lack of control over the issue and retrieval of LTSM;
- lack of control over the use of telephones, cell phones, photocopiers and printers; and
- the absence or lack of minutes of meetings where strategic decisions were taken.

This is an indication of how much of a challenge the execution of allocated functions is for SGBs. Soga (2004:49) reports from her research that the majority of principals indicated fear of overspending, misusing of funds and the potential for fraud as the first major challenges for SGBs in managing Section 21 funds. She found that even most of the principals were not very adept in financial management. The second challenge relates to the issue of accountability and responsibility. In this regard, consultation and participation in decision-making were required and most managers felt that, when things went wrong, they were the ones held accountable, despite the collective decision-making required. Finally, another challenge for SGBs was found to relate to the fact that while the SGB is supposed to be responsible for financial management, some principals found it difficult to let go of the control function in the management of funds.

While not exhaustive, the issues raised above indicate the challenge with regard to executing Section 21 funds. It can also be added that, in terms of the poor capacity of SGBs as alluded to earlier, adhering to the prescriptions regarding the management of Section 21 funds, including funds for the purpose of ongoing monitoring with respect to financial management and the requirement that schools maintain monthly cash flow projections and actual expenditure statements (Gauteng Department of Education, 2003:2), would be a challenging task for SGBs.

2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented a literature review on challenges facing school governing bodies with regard to their roles and responsibility. The question that needs to be addressed at this point in time is what challenges SGBs currently face in executing their roles and responsibilities. The next chapter presents the empirical research design in an attempt to uncover the current challenges.

CHAPTER 3

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Through a survey of literature chapter 2 of this study presented the challenges facing school governing bodies in the execution of their roles and responsibilities. This chapter outlines the empirical research process undertaken to investigate the current challenges facing SGBs in historically disadvantaged schools regarding their roles and responsibilities. This investigation enabled the researcher to appraise or examine the SGBs' current practices to determine how skilled or successful they are in executing their roles and responsibilities. The empirical research thus focused on school principals and SGB parent and educator governors to provide rich data on the current challenges facing them regarding their roles and responsibilities. The empirical research design details how this research study unfolded.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Mouton (2001:55), a research design is a plan or blueprint of how one intends conducting research. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:85) describe a research design as providing a plan for collecting and utilising data so that the desired information can be obtained as precisely as possible. This implies engaging phenomenology in the research. According to Fouché (2002:273), phenomenology as an approach aims to understand and interpret the meaning that subjects give to their everyday lives. Bogdan and Biklen (2003:23) posit that in this approach, the researcher attempts to understand the meaning of events and interaction to ordinary people in particular situations. This implies a study that describes the experiences that a phenomenon, topic or concept has for various individuals. According to Fouché (2002:273), researchers do this by entering the subject's "setting", by using naturalistic methods of study, *inter alia*, analysing conversations

and interactions that they have with subjects and using interpretive enquiry strategies, like observation and interviews, as data collection methods. In that sense, data are systematically collected and meanings, themes and general descriptions of the experience analysed with specific contexts.

Since this research sought to appraise challenges faced by SGBs in historically disadvantaged schools regarding their roles and responsibilities, the phenomenological approach was chosen as suitable for achieving this aim. This was done by entering principals' and SGB parent and educator governors' life settings, as it were, using the interview as a data-collecting method from which themes and general descriptions of participants' experiences were appraised to examine how successful they were in their roles and responsibilities. Data collection for the purpose of this research was therefore qualitative.

3.3   THE QUALITATIVE APPROACH

Bogdan and Biklen (2003:38) describe the goal of qualitative research as better understanding human behaviour and experience. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:391), qualitative research focuses on phenomena that occur in natural settings and which are complex, and thus qualitative researchers recognise that the phenomena they study have many dimensions and layers. Qualitative research, according to Gay and Airasian (2003:13), probes deeply into the research setting with an intention of obtaining a deep understanding about the way things occur and how participants perceive them, which provides insights into what people believe and feel about the way things are. This allows researchers to maintain a physical presence in the research setting and involves texts of written words and the analysis of collected data.

In this research, the researcher intended to obtain an in-depth understanding of the study phenomenon from the participants' own experiences. This was facilitated through interaction with them in their own, convenient environments. To "enter" into

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these environments, the interview was selected as a qualitative data-collection technique.

3.4   DATA COLLECTION

Data for this research study were collected by means of interviews with school principals and SGB parent and educator governors.

3.4.1 The interview as a data-collection technique

Greef (2002:292) cites Kvale who describes qualitative interviews as attempts to understand the world from the participant's point of view, to unfold the meaning of people's experiences and to uncover the lived world prior to scientific explanations. Bogdan and Biklen (2003:94) contend that an interview is a purposeful conversation, usually between two people but sometimes involving more, and is directed by one in order to get information from the other.

In this research, the interview was used as a dominant technique for data collection and was used to gather descriptive data in participants' own words so that the researcher could develop insight into how they interpret the challenges in their roles and responsibilities as school governors (cf. Bogdan & Biklen, 2003:95). The interview was also chosen for the opportunities it provides, as articulated by various experts in qualitative research (Greef, 2002:291: 305; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:184), namely:

- gathering data through verbal interaction with participants;

- gaining in-depth understanding of participants and following up where necessary for purposes of clarity;

- fostering mutual respect and sharing information with participants;

- establishing rapport with participants and thus gaining cooperation; and

- conducting the interview in natural and relaxed settings.

The interviews were of the semi-structured one-to-one type, with open-ended questions. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:76) describe open-endedness as meaning that the interviews were conducted with an open orientation, which allowed for direct two-way conversational communication, and consisting of a set of question as a starting point to guide the interaction. Semi-structured interviews are those organised around areas of particular interest, while allowing for considerable flexibility in scope and depth (Greef, 2002:298). In this research, the interview focused on areas definitive of SGBs' roles and responsibilities namely:

- school governance roles and responsibilities; and

- aspects of school governance, including:

  - relations among SGB members,

  - relations with educators at the school,

  - team-work in the SGB,

  - maintaining school property, buildings and grounds,

  - communication with and accountability to parents,

  - financial management, including budgeting, accounting and reporting to stakeholders,

  - drawing up and implementation of school policies.

The open-ended nature of the interview questions allowed for flexibility in that, guided by the interview schedule (cf. Annexure C), the researcher could probe and seek clarity on a variety of issues related to the areas of interest, and the participants could share in the direction of the interview and introduce issues that

the researcher had not thought of (Greef, 2002:302). This was also facilitated by the interview setting.

3.4.2 The interview setting

As advised by various experts in qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003:95; Greef, 2002:300; Cohen *et al.*, 2002:279), the interview process was well prepared for. After finalisation of the interview questions and schedule, the questions were first piloted with six participants who were not part of the final interview process. The intention for the pilot interviews was for the interviewer to "come to grips with some of the practical aspects of establishing access, making contact and conducting interviews", as well as testing interviewing skills.

Then arrangements were made with regard to dates and time. Interview rooms were prepared to be quiet and to be without interruptions. In that sense, privacy, comfort and accessibility were ensured. In all interviews, schools were used where participants were SGB members, with permission from the SGBs and principals.

In the actual interviewing process, participants were, in every instance, welcomed and made to feel comfortable and at ease through initially engaging in "small talk". Each participant was reminded of his/her right to participate and/or withdraw participation at any time and the right to decide not to respond to questions he/she feels uncomfortable with. They were also assured of the confidentiality of their responses as well the fact that only pseudonyms would used in the research report. Permission to record the interviews was obtained from the participants.

Through attentive listening and showing interest, understanding and respect for participants' views, and seeking clarity in a way that did not lead to argumentation or present a disbelieving attitude the researcher also ensured that his deportment was not threatening and overbearing.

Finally, non-verbal cues in terms of body language, facial expressions and gestures were observed and these were incorporated into the field notes as interviews progressed.

3.4.3 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity in qualitative research are treated differently due to the very nature of qualitative research. According to Cohen *et al.* (2002:118), unlike quantitative research which assumes replicability if similar methods are used with a similar sample, qualitative research cannot be replicated. Instead, as explained in Bogdan and Biklen (2003), in qualitative research the concern is with the accuracy and comprehensiveness of data, and reliability is viewed as a fit between what is recorded as data and what actually happens in the setting under study, rather than the literal consistency across different observations or situations.

In this research, the following aspects were viewed as important to ensure reliability:

- *Credibility*

  De Vos (2002:351) describes credibility as an alternative to internal validity and points out that it aims to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subjects were accurately identified and described. In this research the subject of the study was identified as challenges facing SGBs in historically disadvantaged schools regarding their roles and responsibilities (cf. 1.1; 1.4.2.3). This is also described in the selection of participants who, in this research, were identified as principals and parent and educator governors.

- *Transferability*

  De Vos (2002:352) describes transferability as the alternative to external validity or generalisability and points out that it relates to being able to

generalise to other settings. While difficult in qualitative research, data collection and analysis in this research are located within the parameters of SGBs' roles and responsibilities as prescribed by relevant legislation and as revealed through the literature study of this research. This assisted with seeing how this research ties into a body of existing theory as stated by De Vos (2002:352).

It must be stated that the participants of this research are unique to their own circumstances and it is not therefore necessary to attempt to generalise their circumstances to other settings or the entire population of the SGB.

- *Confirmability*

De Vos (2002:352) describes confirmability as capturing the concept of objectivity and removes evaluation from some inherent characteristic of the researcher and places it squarely on the data by answering the question: Do the data help to confirm the general findings and lead to implications? In this research, it was meticulously attempted to ensure objectivity through researcher neutrality and to focus on data collected. Consequently the findings and implications are based purely on data collected.

Furthermore, to ensure credibility, participants' verbal accounts are extensively quoted. This assisted the researcher to work with data as collected from participants' accounts. In this way it was ensured that participants' words were used instead of the researcher's own understanding or attachment of meaning (cf. Bogdan & Biklen, 2003:190). In addition to the measures described above, the interview questions were, as alluded to above, piloted with two school principals, two parent-governors and two educator-governors, who were asked to determine whether the questions were clear and whether they appropriately addressed the study phenomenon. The comments forthcoming from this exercise were taken into consideration while preparing the final interview questions.

3.4.4 Participants in the research

The population for this study comprised SGB members in the Gauteng Province. Due to the vastness of the province, the population was demarcated to the Orange Farm area of the Johannesburg South District 11, which comprises 20 primary schools.

The selection of participants was purposively dimensional, in order to focus on those variables in the population that are of interest to the investigation (Strydom & Venter, 2002:207; Merriam, 1998:61). According to the mentioned authors, dimensional sampling entails that only a few cases are studied in depth and ensures that each population dimension or stratum is represented. In this research, the population consisted of principals, educator-governors and parent-governors.

The parent-governors consisted of chairpersons, secretaries, treasurers and/or ordinary members. This is informed by guidelines provided by Strydom and Venter (2002:207) that purposely, the researcher uses his or her judgement that those elements contain the most characteristics or typical attributes of the population. This also applied to decisions regarding the number of participants to be actually included in the interviews. To this end, the selected participants were considered as having the most typical attributes of school governors in historically disadvantaged schools.

According to Strydom and Delport (2002:334), in qualitative research, participant selection occurs subsequent to clearly establishing the circumstances of the study, so that selection is undertaken after the actual investigation has commenced. In this regard, participant selection is thus relatively limited, is based on saturation, is not representative, the size is not statistically determined and thus sampling is non-probable (cf. Strydom & Delport, 2002:334). In line with this assertion, and as a result of purposive considerations, this study targeted five principals, sixteen educator-governors and twenty-four parent-governors as participants. However, for purposes of saturation and informational considerations, participant selection was

sequential and was determined by data gathering up to a point of saturation (cf. Strydom & Delport, 2002:336; Merriam, 1998:65). The interview process spanned a period of three months.

3.4.5 Data analysis

Data analysis involves the process of making sense out of data collected by consolidating, reducing and interpreting what participants have said and what have been observed (Merriam, 1998:178; De Vos (2002:344). In this regard, Neuman (1997:441) points out that a qualitative researcher may analyse data by organising information into categories derived from similar features, concepts or themes and may develop new concepts within categories to examine the relationship among concepts. Therefore, for purposes of analysis and in line with guidelines on qualitative data analysis (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:150; De Vos, 2002:340), the following process was followed:

- Data were organised into smaller units in the form of main concepts, sentences and words.

- The data were studied to get a sense of what it contained.

- Notes suggesting categories or interpretation were jotted down. These were mainly categories of challenges relating to school governance as recounted by the participants in the research.

- Data were then summarised and integrated into the text for reporting.

This process was done after every interview session and involved a *verbatim* transcription of tape-recorded data. This included transcribing exactly what was said, noting the tone of voice, emphasis used, pauses and silences and unclear or indecipherable responses (cf. Cohen *et al.*, 2002:282). Finally, data were arranged in categories denoting challenges facing SGBs in historically disadvantaged schools, which then culminated into the writing of the research report. Direct

quotes were used extensively to capture what the participants themselves articulated. This, combined with the narrative form of the report allows the participants, as it were, to "speak" for themselves.

The whole process of interviewing was done with due consideration for ethical aspects in qualitative research.

3.5   ETHICAL ASPECTS

The North-West University Research Ethics Committee granted approval for the research to be conducted (cf. Annexure A). Thereafter permission to conduct the research in schools was granted by the Gauteng Department of Education (cf. Annexure B). The letter of permission was presented to the SGBs of schools from which participants were selected. The researcher was thus permitted to conduct the research.

Maximum cooperation and goodwill of the participants were obtained as advised in Cohen *et al.* (2002:37) through:

- articulating the topic and objectives of the research interviews to the participants beforehand;

- discussing the report before it was actually finalised;

- considering and respecting participants' wishes for anonymity and confidentiality. The research report, therefore, makes use of fictitious names.

Finally, the researcher ensured that participants understood their rights to withdraw from the interviews at any stage if they so desired. They were also guaranteed that their responses were for research purposes only and would not be used for any other purpose. They were also informed that they were not obliged to answer questions they felt uncomfortable with. Before interviews commenced, they were

requested to sign the informed consent form (cf. Annexure D), which ensured that participation was free and voluntary. Not all participants agreed to sign the consent form. Various reasons were cited like, what guarantee was there that these would not fall into the "wrong hands". Despite assurances that these would be handled only by the researcher and the project leader, and would be kept safely in his office, they refused to sign them, but agreed to continue with the interviews. Their wishes in this regard were respected and I reemphasised their rights to participate voluntarily.

3.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the empirical research by outlining the research design and methodology. This included a discussion of the qualitative approach, data collection and ethical aspects. The following chapter presents the data analysis and interpretation.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1   INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research was to investigate challenges faced by SGBs in historically disadvantaged schools. This aim is achieved by means of a focus on the following sub-aim:

- an investigation of current challenges faced by SGBs in historically disadvantaged schools regarding their roles and responsibilities.

This chapter contains an analysis and interpretation of the results of the empirical research in narrative form. For ethical reasons, data in this study is presented in a confidential manner and, as such, all data collected was coded in terms of (1) names; (2) data collected; (3) use of identification keys, which are known only to the researcher.

4.2   REALISATION OF ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND SAMPLING

It was found during the research process that participants were eager to take part in the research. This is basically because of the importance of the study phenomenon and the apparent frustrations generally experienced by the SGBs regarding challenges facing their roles and responsibilities in the primary schools. Two interviewed principals actually said:

"Saying effectively, I will be lying. Not successfully because I still have to strive first to teach these people (SGB members). What are their responsibilities? And how should they perform them"

"Yes, I cannot say we are performing our roles and responsibilities 100 percent, because I am trying to close a gap that is there. Other

governors believe they belong to another structure, the parents'
component and teachers' component. So they are working against
each other".

The responses emanate from a question: Do you feel, as a principal, that you are
executing your roles and responsibilities successfully? This clearly showed that
there are challenges regarding the execution of the SGB roles and responsibilities,
since the principals have to take it upon themselves to teach and train the SGB
members about the active roles they have to fulfil and responsibilities they need to
perform.

The eagerness to discuss challenges faced by SGBs roles and responsibilities
ensured that the interviews took place successfully and yielded genuine responses
from the participants. Furthermore, an approval letter from the Gauteng
Department of Education to conduct the research added some weight and helped
to gain the trust and goodwill of participants.

4.3   PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The Orange Farm area consists of 20 public primary schools. Consequently,
sampling was relatively limited and was based on saturation, was not
representative, thus sampling was non-probable (cf. Strydom & Delport, 2002:334).
In line with the assertions above, and as a result of purposive-dimensional
considerations, the participants comprised five principals, 16 educator-governors
and 24 parent-governors. The table below illustrates the profile of the participants:

Table 1   Profile of participants

Participants	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Principals	3	2	5
Educators	8	8	16
Parents	11	13	24

The schools are situated in a large informal settlement *cum* township that started as an informal settlement. While developing, it is still largely characterised by common features found in most informal settlements, in terms of poverty, unemployment, orphaned children and poor basic services in the community.

Since there is no intention to quantify data collected or to generalise the findings, the demographic profile of the participants is not detailed in the study. Suffice to mention that the participants consisted of educator-governors and parent-governors whose experience as school governors ranges from one to two terms and they were serving the last few weeks of their terms as school governors. Out of the 16 educators, eight were serving as SGB secretaries, three as deputy secretaries and five were additional members. Of the 24 parent-governors, one parent had a degree qualification, two had diplomas, six had a Grade 12 level of education while the majority (15) had below Grade 12 education levels. There were SGB eleven chairpersons, four deputy chairpersons and three treasurers.

4.4   PERCEPTIONS ABOUT CHALLENGES FACING SGBs REGARDING THEIR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

From the participants' responses, it seems as if SGBs are facing real challenges with regard to their roles and responsibilities, particularly in primary schools. Most participants cited challenges with regard to parents' low level of education, infighting between the educator and parent components, cliques among educators, lack of team-work, communication and accountability, failure to implement and

follow policies, overcrowding of learners, learners' lack of discipline, lack of maintenance policy, failure to control and monitor school buildings and grounds, misunderstanding of their roles and responsibilities, lack of consultation among SGB members, lack of financial management skills, lack of commitment and failure to attend meetings, failure to follow the correct procedures, and a negative and disrespectful attitude among the SGB members.

Frustrations were raised about the late deposit of section 21 allocated funds, the time-consuming procedure that must be followed by section 20 schools in terms of ordering learning and teaching support materials, equipments and cleaning materials, and the time it takes to get repairs done to sanitation, burst pipes, leaking pipes, electricity and broken windows.

In addition, there were concerns about community members' intentions to obtain use of the schools' facilities and resources by force, as well as the rife and continuous burglary and vandalism of school properties. It was also mentioned that workshops and training are usually conducted in English, while the majority of SGB parent-governors are African and their level of education is low. It was also stated that training manuals, including the Constitution, South African Schools Act, and the National Education Policy Act are all written and presented in English.

The next section presents specific responses to interview questions.

4.4.1 Principals' responses on their governance roles and responsibilities

When they were asked whether they were performing their governance roles and responsibilities successfully, participants' responses indicated that there are indeed challenges with regard to their roles and responsibilities and that there is a "long road to be travelled" in ensuring that SGBs are truly acquainted with their roles and responsibilities.

However, from their responses it was found that principals did not seem to have a clear understanding of what their roles and responsibilities in the SGB are. Instead, they seemed to refer mostly to other SGB members, and the parent governors in particular. For example, it was clear that principals, in many instances, act as mentors. They actually seem to be doing work for the SGBs in ensuring that there is harmony among SGB members and that the schools are running smoothly. In this regard, Ms Mamsy, a principal from Sizwe Primary school, with 1025 learners stated:

> "Yes. I am helping them to perform their duties. Our SGB is responsible for everything, but I have to consistently help and guide them, to the extent that I end up doing most of their functions."

In this regard, she acted as a separate entity from the SGB, whilst she is a part and parcel of the SGB. Seemingly, her governance roles and responsibilities revolve around helping the SGB to perform their duties.

Mr Zola, a principal from Lethu Primary school, with 900 learners, said:

> "I believe I do perform my governance roles and responsibilities, but saying successfully is another story. I still have to face and strive to teach these people (referring to the members of the SGB)."

This means that the principal positions himself as a referee and a player as well. He is only there to teach the SGB and not to work collectively as a team member, to achieve the mission and vision of the school. This is based on the fact that he specifically stated that he has to teach "them".

Mr Jabu, a principal from Xolani Primary school, with 970 learners responded. He said:

> "We are performing our governance roles and responsibilities. But I would not say 100% successfully. We still have a lot of challenges on."

He then remarked on parent members:

> "One of the challenges we face, is the need to take parents onto our
> level, in terms of understanding their roles and responsibilities."

Mr Maduna, a principal from Mayibuye Primary school, with 870 learners, seemed to attribute challenges to the constituency basis of the SGB membership. He commented:

> "Yes I believe so. I am trying to close a gap between parents and
> educators component."

He regarded himself as a lubricant that prevents friction between two metals namely, the educator component and the parent component. This, somehow, gave an impression that he did not see himself as a partner in governance operations. Indeed, it is understandable that there are tensions and conflict in SGBs and that the principal, as the leader, is expected to lead in terms of conflict management and inspiring teamwork among SGB members.

Only one principal seemed to refer to the actual SGB roles and responsibilities. Mrs Lisa, a principal from Mphumelello Primary school, with 1100 learners said:

> "I think I do. As the governing body (emphasising) we have our policy.
> It has be agreed upon, accepted and confirmed by all members. We
> live as agreed on the grounds of understanding the governance roles
> and responsibilities."

From the statements above, it can be concluded that, indeed, there are challenges SGBs face in the execution of their roles and responsibilities. It is also apparent that principals might not be knowledgeable about their own specific roles and responsibilities. This is understandable when considering that even the SASA does not specify categorical roles, but refers to roles of SGBs. The difficulty is in the meaning of the role of the principal as an *ex-officio* member, while being an

accounting officer. Empowering SGB members with regard to skills, knowledge and attitudes might be the necessary solution for all SGB members, including school principals.

4.4.2 Educators' response to questions on their governance roles and responsibilities

From the educators' responses, it can be seen that there are challenges with SGBs' execution of their roles and responsibilities. There are *attitude problems* among SGB members and this hampers their team-work. There is also a *problem of transparency* among SGB members, *confusion and misunderstanding* of roles and responsibilities and a *lack of financial skills and maintenance procedures*. From their responses it appeared that some educators were confused about their roles and responsibilities, while five educators seemed confident about their roles and responsibilities.

Mrs Nomsa, an educator from Zola Primary School, situated in an informal settlement, seemed uncertain of her roles and responsibilities as governor. She said:

> "...at other points it is easier and successful, but at some levels there are complications and difficulties with regard to the execution of our roles and responsibilities. I think we lack the necessary skills to perform these responsibilities. It seems that in some other instances, there are teachers who are better skilled and knowledgeable than us. "

Similarly, it seemed that Mrs Kedi, an educator from Xolani Primary School, did not really understand her roles and responsibilities as governor. She referred to parents' visibility in the school premises as an indication that they are participating in their SGB roles and responsibilities. She basically seemed to refer to parents as the SGB. She commented:

"It is true that we are doing our job, because we see them (parent component) around the school. And when we need them, they usually come to us."

A similar confusion of governance roles and responsibilities was expressed by Mr Tlou, from Mpilezweni Primary School:

"Yes, I do not have any problems with regard to the execution of my roles and responsibilities. Parents attend meeting and learners have a positive attitude towards teaching and learning."

The participation of parents in their children's education is important, since it assists the educators, principal and staff. However, the response above seems to confuse ordinary parental involvement with governance roles and responsibilities.

Mrs Lebo, an educator from Mayibuye Primary School seemed to be confused about governance roles and responsibilities. Instead, she referred to other SGB members, in particular the parent component, as the cause of the problems. She opined that sometimes parents cannot clarify their roles and responsibilities. While this could be a challenge in roles, it really does not indicate what she perceives her role as governor to be.

Ms Deliwe, from Vukani Primary School indicated that she did not think they were performing their governance roles effectively. She stated:

"I do not think that I am performing my governance roles and responsibilities effectively since nothing was done by the SGB this year. For instance, the principal did not inform the SGB about the redeployment of our Grade R educator. Our Grade R educator was redeployed to another school and out of the blue, we received a new Grade R practitioner, who must be paid by the SGB and we do not have sufficient funds to pay her."

Mr Ncokoane, Mr Kobue, Mr Padi, Mr Neo and Mr Ngema shared similar sentiments on successful governance roles and responsibilities. Mr Ncokoane from Masimong Primary School commented:

> "Yes, I am performing my governance roles and responsibilities effectively because I am a team player. You see, teamwork helps us to promote the best interests of the school and learners, but that basically is our main role and responsibility. Yes, promoting the best interests of the school. "

Mr Kobue, an educator from Mphumelello Primary school, also shared a similar sentiment. He said:

> "Yes, we are performing our roles and responsibilities successfully, because we plan together and adhere to our management plan and policies. We are guided by the wish to promote what is good for the child. Yes there are challenges, but just knowing that I am doing whatever for the child is enough to motivate me. "

Mr Padi, an educator from Sizwe Primary School, also expressed a similar opinion. He said:

> "I think I do carry out my duty successfully since transparency, openness and commitment of SGB members exist. There may be difficulties, but the child comes first in what we do."

Mr Neo, an educator from Thabong Primary School, also expressed the importance of the interests of the learner. He commented:

> "Yes, I am executing my governance roles and responsibilities effectively because we involve all stakeholders in the decision-making, ... for the sake of the school and child. "

Mr Ngema, an educator from Thabong Primary School, expressed an opinion that also touched on the interests of the school. He said:

> "Yes, I am performing my duty successfully because there is a lot of confidence from all stakeholders. They seem to understand that we are sacrificing for the child. "

The Schools Act indicates that the SGB must promote the best interests of learners and of the school. This is clear in the latter educators' comments and encouragingly suggests that while there may be various challenges, educators do understand what informs their main roles and responsibilities. It is, however, concerning that most principals did not seem to articulate this important starting point in all school governance roles and responsibilities. It is indeed on that basis that the SGB members can project transparency, commitment, and a quest for governance skills and knowledge and ultimately have a positive attitude in the fulfilment of their various SGB roles and responsibilities.

4.4.3 Parents' responses to questions on their governance roles and responsibility

From some parents' responses, it is evident that the SGBs are really experiencing challenges with regard to the *implementation of decisions taken, failure to volunteer, lack of commitment and misunderstanding of their roles and responsibilities*, as well as a *lack of knowledge regarding school governance*. As a result, successful execution of their roles and responsibilities remains a challenge. However, from other parent participants' responses, there seems to be examples of good practice with regard to stakeholders' involvement in decision-making, successful holding of meetings, shared values, application of strategic planning and the promotion of learners' best interests.

Mr Bongani, a parent from Lethu Primary School, cited frustrations with regard to the implementation of decisions. He indicated that the SGB only does a lip service and does not act accordingly. He said:

"We do make decisions, but there are no follow-up mechanisms to ensure that decisions are implemented. This way, I don't think we are successful in our roles and responsibilities. Personally, I don't think I am doing much in this regard."

Mr Kehla, a parent from Mphumelello Primary School, attributed his frustrations and their failure to execute their roles and responsibilities to the lack of knowledge. This is understandable since the low level of parents' education and, at times, illiteracy are commonly reported. He said:

"Most of the things that transpire in our school are new to us and we do not understand them."

Mrs Tsatsi from Rearuta Primary School also echoed a similar sentiment. She commented:

"We are performing our governance roles and responsibilities but I cannot say effectively, since most parents lack knowledge and skills. We cannot match the dynamics that occur in education and this leaves us hopeless. We did attend a workshop based on roles and responsibilities, but the information was beyond our comprehension."

Ms Nomvula, a parent from Thabong Primary School, cited frustrations due to the chairperson's constant absence. She hinted at the non-performance of crucial duties. She said:

"The chairperson is always absent, although she is unemployed. For me this makes it difficult to execute some crucial roles. I just feel that promoting the best interest of the children is still just a dream."

Ms Lindi, a parent from Imfundo primary school, cited her frustrations caused by the non-attendance of the parent component of the SGB. She attributed this to the lack of parent commitment, a low level of education, lack of understanding of the roles and responsibilities and lack of a spirit of volunteerism. She stated:

> "Not all members attend the SGB training, and yet we know that we have to learn what our roles are. How do we succeed if we don't do simple things like attend meetings?"

Mrs Vivian, a parent from Buhle Primary School, seemed not to understand her roles and responsibilities. Instead she referred to the wonderful work done by the SGB and not to the actual roles and responsibilities performed by them. She seemed uncertain about what the SGB roles and responsibilities entail. She said:

> "We are doing a wonderful work to maintain and ensure that the school run smooth and effective."

Mr Nzimeni, a parent from Xolani Primary School, cited their commitment in the effective rendering of their functions. While not specifically articulate, he related an important aspect of promoting the best interests of the schools. He said:

> "We (emphasising) are executing our roles and responsibilities successfully, because we are the watch-dogs of the school. We are making sure that the school should not be vandalised. We are also taking care of our school furniture and buildings."

Mr Sipho, a parent from Sizwe Primary School, indicated their commitment in working as a team and having a strategic plan for solving challenges. He emphasised that

> "... everyone is on board. We know what we have to do."

Mrs Lebo, a parent from Mayibuye Primary School, highlighted the need to hold regular meetings as governors. This good practice surely improves the SGBs execution of its roles and responsibilities. She commented:

"We do hold meetings to discuss our plans, share ideas and reach agreements about the way forward."

Mrs Puleng, a parent from Bohlale Primary School, shared the same sentiment. She said:

"We are executing our roles and responsibilities successfully, because we are always present in the SGB meeting and take joint-decisions."

Mrs Puleng further asserted that this was a sign indicating that all things work together for the good. She said:

"Active participation or involvement of SGB members, their commitment and tolerance, promote shared values and a common vision, which can only benefit the school and learners. After all, as the SGB, we are about the school and our children!"

Ms Sonti, a parent from Manyano Primary School, indicated the SGB's engagement in gardening projects to provide food to needy learners. This is surely a good gesture because the SGB must promote the best interest of learners. Learners who suffer from malnutrition tend to lose concentration in their studies, which results in poor performances. Furthermore, the SGB, in doing this, supplements the Departments' Primary School Nutrition Programme. She said:

"We are embarking on gardening projects with the aim of providing food to the needy learners, if only to see them succeed in school and in life. They need that."

Ms Busi, a parent from Lesedi Primary School, was confident about the roles they play as members of the SGB in promoting the best interest of learners and the school. She commented:

"We are performing our roles and responsibilities successfully as members of the SGB. Everything we do is guided by the knowledge that it is for the school and the children."

Mrs Matlakala, a parent from Inala Primary School, highlighted the stakeholders' involvement as part of their roles and responsibilities, since the SGB did not work in isolation but in partnerships with other structures.

"We are working harmoniously with other stakeholders in trying to do the best for the school."

Mrs Letima, a parent from Lebone Primary School attributed their frustration to challenges pertaining to aspects of school management, which she correctly articulated did not belong to their governance domain. She remarked:

"I do not think we are performing our governance roles and responsibilities successfully because of challenges we are experiencing, such as the use of corporal punishment by educators. We as governance cannot charge an educator for the use of corporal punishment since it is a professional matter and not a governance matter."

Mrs Letima continued off the record, after the interview that this was their main challenge, as parents were expecting them to do something about matters such as the use of corporal punishment by educators. "Unfortunately", she remarked, "we can only report to the principal and more often than not, these matters remain unresolved or take time to be resolved."

Ms Refeiloe from Sonqoba Primary School indicated that they were not performing their governance roles and responsibilities "100%, because other committees are not functional". She further pointed out that elected committees usually had only two active members, while the rest of the members were passive and only attended meetings without participating.

Another parent, Mr Nkuta, identified an important aspect that contributes to non-performance of roles and responsibilities. He indicated that, because most SGB members were not educated, they could not distinguish between governance and professional management roles. He emphasised that since there were overlaps in the two roles, there were often challenges. He cited areas such as disciplinary action against staff members and the day-to-day running of the school as some of the roles that were often confused in terms of governance and management.

From the responses given by principals, educators and parents, it can be concluded that, while there are some who did not relate directly to the school and learners, most understood that their roles have to do with promoting the best interests of the school and learners. The responses in this regard, while not specific to this role definition, hinted at an understanding of what they needed to do as governors. It is also clear from responses that mentioned activities defining roles and responsibilities, that challenges indeed exist in the execution of their roles and responsibilities.

4.4.4 Challenges with regard to aspects of school governance: principals' views

4.4.4.1 *Relations among SGB members*

From the principals' responses it is evident that challenges with regard to *attitudes* exist, where educators look down upon parents, because of the perception that they know more than the parents do. On the other hand, the parents thought it was their democratic right to be members of SGB. Apart from the above-mentioned,

there are challenges regarding the relationships among SGB members. Only one principal indicated that there was collaboration among SGB members.

Ms Mamsy explained that there were good relations among members of the SGB and attributed this to their level of education. She referred to the spirit of team-work and enlightened people in the SGB, as a sign of healthy relationship among SGB members. She said:

> "There is no challenge since we have the spirit of team-work and enlightened people in our SGB. We work together as a team."

Mr Zola cited the educator and parent components as stumbling blocks for good co-operation and collaboration, since each group represents the needs of their constituencies. He expressed frustration with this situation as he commented:

> "Yes, there is a challenge. Sometimes educators look down upon parents and expect that parents must listen to them, because they, educators, know more than them. And on the other side parents think it is their democratic right to be in the SGB and, therefore, teachers need to listen to them."

Mrs Lisa did not directly mention relations among SGB members. This can be understood as implying that there were healthy relationships among members of the SGB. She remarked:

> "There is no challenge because everything is done by the SGB. And there are no challenges in the elected school governing body."

Mr Maduna cited his frustrations with regard to educators' conduct, misunderstandings and educators' negative attitudes towards the parent component:

"There is a challenge. Educators at times believe that they understand their roles and responsibilities better than anybody else. You find educators overstepping their roles, especially when it comes to financial matters. You will find educators not understanding who deals with finances and that creates problems in the SGB. Furthermore, in terms of promotional posts, educators believe that parents are taking the principal's side, and claim that that is unconstitutional. They regard themselves as one structure and parents as another structure, which, in turn, creates two centres of power within the SGB."

Mr Jabu indicated co-operation and collaboration among SGB members, which, in turn, promote the best interest of learners and that of the school. He said:

"Unity prevails in our SGB and there is an understanding of issues related to the SGB's work, even though, as I hinted to you earlier, there are other challenges."

From the above statement it can be concluded that there are challenges with regard to the relations among the SGB. There seems to be a problem of educators and parents being watchdogs for their constituencies as reported elsewhere in this text (cf. 2.4.4.1). This is a serious concern since it creates a situation where there are power struggles, which, in turn, do not benefit the school, the learners or even the SGB members themselves.

While educators and parents articulated the promotion of the best interests of the school and learners as their main responsibility, it seems doubtful if they really understand the implications of doing so. Instead, it seems as if they do so in terms of their own definition of what promoting the school's interests imply. This confirms Xaba's assertions cited earlier in this text (cf. 1.1).

4.4.4.2 *Relations with educators at the school*

From the principal's responses, it is evident that challenges exist with regard to the *relationship with educators, parents' level of education, the negative attitude towards parent members, isolation and educators not having faith in parents' ability to carry out their roles and responsibilities.* Only one principal cited a healthy relationship with educators SGB members.

Ms Mamsy, continuing from her last comment, explained that there were no serious problems with relationships with educators. As she had pointed out above, there were harmonious relations and team-work among members of the SGB.

Mr Zola directed his frustrations at the negative relationships that are displayed by educators looking down upon parents, because of their low level of education. He commented:

> "As I pointed out earlier, the level of parents' education slows us down
> and educators seem to make an issue out of it. They actually make
> parents feel inferior."

Mr Jabu shared a similar sentiment regarding the unhealthy relationships among the SGB members. He cited educators' attitudes as the challenge towards positive collaboration. He said:

> "Educators regard themselves as the only people in the SGB who are
> knowledgeable and who know their roles and responsibilities."

Mr Maduna cited her frustrations because of educators' isolation in the SGB, since educators regard themselves as another structure within the SGB. He said:

> "Educators do not regard themselves as part of the SGB. They create
> a 'them and us' situation, which leads to strained relations with other
> members of the SGB."

Mrs Lisa also cited sound relationships with educators. She said:

> "Everyone is concerned about everybody and that is not a secret.
> Relations are sound".

As stated above, there indeed seems to be relationship challenges in SGBs. These mainly seem to stem from attitudes towards, especially, parent members. At this stage, one wonders if these are defence mechanisms from the side of principals themselves, in terms of not being able to facilitate healthy relationships, as well as educators, who, though "educated", may not be knowledgeable about school governance.

4.4.4.3 *Team-work in the SGB*

From the four principals' responses, it is evident that there are *challenges with regard to delegated duties, time constraints in carrying out the mandate of the SGB, and the alleged lack of commitment from the parent component*. Only one principal seemed happy with the SGB's team-work.

Mr Zola cited failure or lack of commitment where SGB members do not work as a team, "you expect them to perform their duties, but in turn, they give excuses and reasons". He further stated:

> "SGB members do not adhere to delegated duties. This breaks the
> spirit of team-work because other members, especially me, end up
> doing all the tasks, otherwise, nothing would be done."

Mrs Lisa articulated that they operated as a team. She, however, cited the time constraint as a challenge to attaining their objectives. She said:

> "Time is the problem we face. We are unable to carry forth our SGB
> mandates because of time. There is always so much to be done. No
> matter how we co-operate, this is a big challenge."

Mr Maduna cited lack of commitment from the parent component. They do not attend SGB meetings, and this results in meetings being postponed indefinitely. He said:

> "The parent component has a problem of not coming to the SGB meetings. This tends to discourage other members and leads to conflicts that impact negatively on the team spirit and team-work."

Mr Jabu cited his frustration about the lack of parent development, which he saw as a stumbling block towards functional team-work in the SGB. He opined:

> "I think we work well and just need to take the parent component along with us, in terms of development. It may be that they are uncomfortable due to being uninformed or poorly knowledgeable about many aspects of school governance. You see, they seem withdrawn most times. But in issues they know, they really go for them enthusiastically."

Ms Mamsy mentioned that sound relationships within her SGB is a good and necessary tonic that promotes good governance and team-work. She said:

> "... consequently, the team-work spirit is fine. We help each other in everything that concerns the SGB and school governance."

It is clear from the responses above that, while in some instances there is team-work, there also are challenges in this regard. This is especially true in the light of comments made earlier regarding attitudes and poor relations among members of the SGBs.

4.4.4.4 Challenges regarding maintaining school property, buildings and grounds

From all the principals responses, it is evident that there is a problem with regard to *the late deposit of Section 21 funds allocated to schools by the Department of Education*, as well as the *long procedures to be followed by Section 20 schools in placing orders, doing major maintenance work, vandalism of school properties, buildings and grounds, parents' failure to enforce the code of conduct of learners and lack of commitment from the parent component.*

Ms Mamsy seemed not to relate to the maintenance policy, which surely highlights the importance of strategic planning, involves short-, medium- and long-term planning for school development, and includes the fact that the SGB should, through donations and sponsors, improvise and supplement funds allocated by the Department. This is, however, understandable considering the difficulties of securing donations and sponsorships in a poverty-stricken area in which the schools are located. Ms Mamsy expressed her frustration:

> "The problem is caused by the Head Office, for the late deposit of allocated funds to schools (Section 21 funds). You cannot maintain a school without money, especially where there is poverty like in this area and companies and donors do not see anything in return if they were to 'invest' here."

Mr Zola put the blame on the Departments' failure to act instantly to a demand of major repairs, like leaking pipes and fencing of the school. He justified this blame and stated:

> "... Major work needs to be done by the Department and not the school."

Mr Jabu cited burglary as a stumbling block to a proper maintenance of school property, buildings and grounds. He said:

> "Currently, we are missing property to some other organisation. We repair this, it is broken. We install security equipment, they still manage to break in. The damage is big. The money we get for maintenance is so little. It simply does not cover all the maintenance needs of the school. For example, some things remain unrepaired because there are other priorities. You have to decide between repairing a photocopier and a broken burglar bar to the toilets. This weighs heavily on the SGB."

Mr Maduna cited his frustrations on the parent component's failure to ensure that the learners' code of conduct is implemented. He lamented:

> "Parents are not preaching the code of conduct to their children. They do not take the learners' code conduct seriously. It becomes a baby of the educators to see to it that a code of conduct for learners is implemented."

From the above responses, it can be concluded that the maintenance of school property is a real challenge for SGBs. It is also notable that the Department of Education also seems to contribute to this challenge by allocating funds to schools late in the year. This might just lead to schools hastily using funds on non-essential equipment in order to expend the allocated funds before the end of the financial year. This must also impact on the SGB's preparation of budgets and prioritisation of needs related to their physical environments.

4.4.4.5 *Communication and accountability to parents*

It is evident from principals' responses, that there are challenges with regard to *communication and accountability to parents*. This was attributed largely to the

non-attendance of meetings by the parent component, as well as lack of commitment. However, two principal's responses indicated that they experienced sound communication and are accountable to parents.

Ms Mamsy explained her frustrations as being related to the non-attendance of SGB meetings, due to work and personal commitment. She said:

"During SGB meetings, you will find that most of our parents are not around. Some of them are domestic workers and spent most of their time at work. They only come home during month-ends. And if you call meetings at month-end, they do not come, since it is their time to be with their families, and they have their stokvels and attend to other matters."

Mr Zola did not relate to communication and accountability. He cited his frustration at parents' lack of commitment. He said:

"We communicated with parents, and agreed to start a garden project. But, when the day comes to start the project, parents are no longer there."

This response seems to suggest that parents are a stumbling block towards communication and accountability, perhaps by not keeping to agreements and decision taken. It does sound unfair to blame parents for this. This does, however, indicate the status of co-operation in the SGB and seems to indicate a relations and attitude challenge in SGBs.

Mrs Lisa cited good collaboration among SGB members, which, in turn, promotes positive communication and accountability to parents. She said:

"We have a positive and open communication channel. This makes it easy for us to be accountable to the broad parent community."

Mr Jabu stated that communication and accountability to parents are not as ideal as it should be. This he attributed to: "parents' lack of proper mandate-seeking from their constituency". He went on to explain:

> "The parent component does not present the needs of their constituencies. They have nothing to present in the SGB all the time. How can the SGB be accountable?"

This response, in a way, indicates lack of understanding of how communication with parents should be facilitated. It also seems to show poor understanding of what accountability is and how should be executed.

Mr Maduna mentioned parents' lack of commitment and not regarding SGB meetings as important. In this regard "it becomes very difficult to communicate issues of the school with these people". He further said:

> "Our parents do not consider our meetings as important. They always give excuses and reasons for not honouring meetings."

From the above statements it can be concluded that there are challenges with regard to stakeholders' participation or involvement. The decentralisation of schools has given SGB members, especially the parent component, an opportunity to have a say in the education of their children.

4.4.4.6 *School financial management, including budgeting, accounting and reporting to stakeholders*

From three principals' responses, it is evident that there is a challenge with regard to *lack of financial management skills, budgeting and accounting.* Some educators thought it was their responsibility to dictate to the SGB on how school money should be used. Two principals praised openness and transparency and the SGBs active involvement in school finances.

Mr Jabu indicated that there indeed was a huge challenge in this regard. He commented:

> "We have a huge challenge in this regard. The SGB as a whole lacks the necessary financial management skills. We do not have anybody who is qualified, who has enough expertise in the financial management area, budgeting and accounting."

Mr Maduna cited educator interference in school financial management as a stumbling block to effective financial operations. Educators do not adhere to a drawn-up budget and often force the SGB to deviate from the budget.

> "I think the bone of contention is the finances, particularly from educators' side. They demand to do things their own way. They force deviations from the budget. They actually make everyone feel uncomfortable in the SGB. As a result, it is difficult to exercise financial management."

This comment identifies a serious concern and indicates poor financial management at schools. However, one principal, Ms Mamsy indicated a functional SGB with office bearers, executive members and financial committee. She said:

> "We have no challenges in this regard, since we have active an Financial Committee which comprises the principal, chairperson, the treasurer and administrative clerk."

Mrs Lisa cited openness and transparency as a tool for their successful school financial management. "We have no challenge in this regard," she said and further commented:

> "The SGB is fully involved in the school finances."

Mr Zola seemed to be doing work for the SGB in ensuring that an annual general meeting is held. He commented:

> "I am making them aware that towards the end of the year, we should
> have the general meeting, wherein we should report to parents about
> the finances of the school."

Though not explicit, Mr Zola seemed to hint at his taking charge of all financial management responsibilities. He declined to comment on the exact challenges that the SGB has experienced that might have prompted him to act on his own regarding financial management. This can be understood in the context of comments he made on aspects such as relations with and among SGB members, team-work and communication with and accountability to parents.

4.4.4.7 *Drawing up and implementation of school policies*

The responses from five principals to this aspect indicated that there are challenges facing the SGBs with regard to *the drawing up and implementation of school policies*. Ms Mamsy's response seemed direct and forthright:

> "Honestly speaking, we fail to practise what we teach. You see, we
> draw up policies, talk about and agree that implementation is crucial
> for the good of the school and learners, but, at the end we end up not
> doing something which is in line with our policies."

In this instance it seems to be a case of poor mastery of policy development, because a well-developed policy would urge its users to implement it, especially if it is a joint effort by all stakeholders. There is also a possibility of neglecting to implement policies. It can be, for example, that because principals, in many instances, act as "teachers" to SGB members, they actually do the work for the SGBs and ensure that policies are drawn up and implemented. In this regard, Mr Zola commented:

"The challenge once more is the level of parents' education. As always, it ends up being a one-man race, where I, as principal, explain everything to every member. I end up doing things myself."

Mrs Lisa indicated that the SGB relies on the inputs of educators in the drawing up and implementation of policies. In this regard the SGB acted as a 'rubber stamp'. The SGB is not a part and parcel of the draft. She said:

"The educators draft policies and send them to the SGB for approval and amendments. At the end, these are educators' policies."

This response gave a clear indication of who is considered the SGB namely, the parent members. This a problem caused by lack of understanding of what school governance entails, as well as, as asserted by Xaba (cf. 1.1), the constituency-based membership eligibility into the SGBs. Mr Jabu shared similar sentiments, "We struggle a lot as the SGB in drawing up policies", he said, and continued:

"We struggle and rely heavily on the inputs that are made by the staff, as opposed to us, SGB members ... Well, for obvious reasons."

Mr Maduna seemed to refer mostly to other SGB members', in particular, parent governors', low level of education. He said:

"The level of education of our parent members is a challenge. They are not conversant with the language that is used in these documents, in particularly SASA."

For the above statement it can be concluded that the challenges with regard to the drawing up and implementation of policies seems to be located in parents' low educational levels and consequent poor understanding and knowledge of doing things. The educators' perceptions about the aspects of school governance will possibly present another context for understanding the challenges discussed above.

4.4.5 Challenges facing educators with regard to aspects of school governance

4.4.5.1 *Relations among SGB members*

Some educators' responses made it evident that there are challenges manifested in issues such as *lack of communication, lack of participation by the parent component, and their failure to attend SGB meetings*. Only one educator cited regular meetings as a remedy to sound relationships among SGB members.

Mr Padi, an educator from Sizwe Primary School, seemed not to understand the positive impact of positive relationships among SGB members. He cited parents' low level of education as a stumbling block to healthy relations among SGB members. He commented:

> "Most of our governing body members (*meaning parent members*) are not learned. In most cases where there are workshops, you found our SGB members not attending the workshops, due to a fact that their illiteracy part will be exposed."

Mrs Lebo shared a similar sentiment:

> "There are challenges based on parents' inferiority complexes, because they are not learned like educators. They just accept policies because they are not sure whether to agree or to disagree to certain aspects."

Mr Ngema, an educator from Bohlale Primary School, similarly expressed the above sentiment: He said:

> "The main challenge that we are facing as the SGB, is the level of education of parent members. Because of their low education levels,

they feel inferior and this tends to strain relations. Sometimes, they act robust and bully-like to hide their lack of education."

Mr Neo, an educator from Thabong Primary School, cited the non-attendance of parents as a stumbling block to healthy relationships among SGB members. "The challenge is that of convening meetings", he commented and further stated:

"Other members are not participating in the SGB, in particular the parent component, because they are working. Most of the time it is only the educators that are present and sometimes one or two parents."

Mrs Marumo also expressed similar sentiments. She remarked that, because parent-governors were not learned, they do not know their roles and responsibilities and, as a result, do not participate in SGB activities such as drawing up of budgets and policies.

Mrs Mathe remarked that the principal and deputy chairperson of the SGB finalised issues without involving other SGB members and that "the chairperson and other members of the SGB are not satisfied by that as they feel marginalised, threatened and not wanted in the SGB."

Mr Ncokoane, from Buhle Primary School shared the same sentiment as above. He cited non-attendance of the parent component as a stumbling block to healthy relationships among SGB members. He remarked:

"Most of our parents are working and do not have time to attend our meetings. During the week, you will find only one parent and the rest are unavailable."

This view was also expressed by Ms Deliwe. She remarked:

"The SGB is dysfunctional since other members are not attending the meetings representatives. Parents who have being elected to the SGB do not turn up for meetings."

Mr Charles, from Buhlebezwe Primary School, indicated poor relations among SGB members as a consequence of the chairperson being uncooperative. He reported:

"We do not share a common goal with the chairperson. The chairperson is a bully and undermines other SGB members because they are not learned. He is influential and, in turn, incites parents not to participate in school activities, such as cleaning classrooms and the surroundings."

Mrs Nomsa, from Lethu Primary School cited failure to understand their roles and responsibilities and the protocol for communication as challenges. She also added that parent members tended to be passive most of the time. She said:

"The biggest challenge facing SGB members with regard to relationships is that of communication. Parents' component is silent most of the time. It seems to me they do not understand their roles and responsibilities as members of the SGB."

Mrs Kedi, an educator from Xolani Primary School, identified an operational matter in the functioning of the SGB. She shifted the blame to the Department's 'late deposit of allocated funds' to schools, especially Section 21 schools. She said:

"The relationship amongst SGB members is good, but the late deposit of allocated funds created mistrust and demoralised the spirit of the SGB members. Now relations are not as good as they used to be."

Some educators indicated good relations among SGB members. This, they attributed to various factors like good communication and transparency, regular

meetings and participation in SGB deliberation. Mrs Theki, from Mthatha Primary, commented:

> "We have good relationships among SGB members because members are fee to make contributions and corrections. Furthermore, communication channels are open and there is transparency and support."

Mrs Komane from Mphumelello Primary School, cited regular SGB meetings as a remedy to healthy relationships among SGB members. She said:

> "We have regular meetings that are intended to promote the best interest of our learners and the entire school as a whole. In turn, this seems to have created sound relationships among SGB members, as we seem to understand each the more we work together."

While meetings are an important aspect of promoting good working relations among SGB members, educators' reasons for poor relations among SGBs seem generally misplaced. They seem to attribute the cause of poor relations to parent members' low education and literacy levels. Clearly there are other ways of promoting god relations in organisational structures.

4.4.5.2 *Relations with educators at the school*

From the seven educators' responses, it is evident that there are challenges with regard to educators at the school over *conflicts, 'loopholes' in SGB functions, wrong practices, failure to consult and lack of knowledge.* Mr Padi cited conflict among educators as a stumbling block to a healthy relationship among educators at the school. He said:

> "Conflict is a major challenge that we, as SGB educator members, face at the school, especially with other educators. This conflict, they

claim seem to be caused by lack of transparency, non-consultation and so on, even though in many cases, it is not our fault."

Almost in the same vein, Mr Zola from Boitumelo Primary School, commented on the challenge regarding school governance and professional management. He indicated that there was a time at their school when an SGB member confronted an educator about her child. This, he pointed out, was not in line with the school procedures of reporting first to the receptionist and thereafter, letting yourself be directed to the relevant person, depending on the issue in question. He stressed that this created tensions between SGB members and educators at the school.

Mrs Nomsa shared a sentiment similar to the one above. She said:

"There are loopholes here and there with regard to relationships with educators."

Mrs Nomsa stated that because educators had elected them, they expected them to be with them regardless of issues under consideration. She stated that this happened mostly with cases where appointments to promotion post were concerned, as well as when an educator had to be declared in excess for redeployment as a result of low enrolments or changing curriculum needs of the school. She felt that being elected caused tension, especially because "some of us actually campaign actively to be elected".

Mrs Lebo cited negative attitudes among educator SGB members who tended to always bully their way out. She said:

"Educators do not want to follow some policies. They just want to put forward their needs and force the SGB to deviate from the policy, like the budget, for instance."

Mr Ncokoane also echoed similar views and commented:

"We experience a problem when it comes to finances. Educators are always complaining about school monies, even if we have given them full details about the transactions. This strains relations among us."

Mrs Kedi indicated some hiccups in relationships with educators at the school, "such as educator cliques". She further stated:

"Educators have different cliques which are disturbing to the smooth running of the school. As educators in the SGB and as their peers, it is difficult for us to call them to order. After all, we are equals with them. They are adults. They know exactly what they are doing."

Mr Neo chose not to respond to this question. This left a question as to the reason he felt thus. The researcher could see that the issue under discussion revoked some anger or bitterness.

The education level of parent-governors also emerged as a factor in relationships with educators at the schools. In this regard, Mrs Marumo remarked:

"Educators complain about the education level of parents because parents do not understand the logistics of their roles and responsibilities. Again, in terms of promotional posts, parents are not conversant in English and cannot score the candidates fairly and just. As a results, the parents are the ones who need clarity of answers given by the candidate during interviews and this creates dissatisfaction and grievances on the side of the candidate".

Educators also indicated lack of transparency, undermining of SGB parent-governors and educators wanting to get their own way all the time. For instance, Mr Mathe from Tladi Primary School remarked:

"The educators at the school undermine the SGB parent-component. They organised fund-raising activities without the knowledge of the SGB members."

Mr Charles indicated lack of transparency as a challenge regarding relationships with educators. He stated:

"We experience a challenge with regard to relationships since there is no transparency and openness in the SGB. The teacher components do take the mandate from their constituencies to the SGB to be addressed. In turn, the SGB drag their feet in addressing the issues."

Despite the challenges cited by educators above, some educators indicated that there were good relations with educators at their schools. Mrs Komane cited a sound relationship with educators. She commented that educators are not representing their own jackets, and therefore must take the mandate from their constituencies and present it to the SGB 'caucus'. She said:

"Our relationship with educators is a sound one. We play our part as far as other educators are concerned. Otherwise, we represent them and therefore we must report back to them. This is what we do and relations in terms of school governance are OK!"

Mrs Koena, a teacher from Aha-Setjhaba primary school said:

"We forward educators' mandate to the SGB and give our constituencies feedback. As educators' representatives, we inform the SGB about our needs and ways to fund-raise. As a result, members of the SGB, particularly parents, come and assist us in fund-raising."

Mr Tlou stated:

"We (*educators*) have a good relationship with members of the SGB. Whenever, we experience a challenge at the school. We meet with all stakeholders to discuss the issue and amicably find a solution."

Clearly, it can be concluded that there are challenges with regard to educator governors and other educators. It is, however, encouraging that, in some cases, there seem to be harmonious relations, although it must be stated that there should be other ways of ensuring good relations overall – ways based on all school governors promoting the best interests of the school, as opposed to the interest of their constituencies.

4.4.5.3 *Team-work in the SGB*

Most educators' responses indicated that there is a *challenge with regard to confidentiality, non-attendance of parents, lack of team-work, language usage in the SGB meetings and meetings that do not reach final decisions.*

Mr Padi cited mistrust, lack of confidentiality and disrespect among SGB members, as factors that hampered effective team-work. He said:

> "Some SGB members unlawfully disseminate crucial information to third parties. There is also disrespect by certain members towards other members."

Mrs Nomsa referred to herself as the administrator of the SGB, and opined: "I end up doing almost everything". She went on:

> "Anyway, team-work is there, even if it could be 100% better."

Mrs Komane cited parents' non-attendance of meetings as a stumbling block towards team-work, although they are encouraged to participate. She said:

> "There are some parents who are working, who cannot find the opportunity to attend our SGB meetings, although they receive

invitations to particular meetings. As a result, some, if not all, decisions end up being taken in their absence."

Mrs Koena, also cite non-attendance of meetings as "... problematic since some parents are working. Some are working shifts, day-shifts or night-shifts. Another factor is that of punctuality. We may say the meeting starts at four o'clock and members arrive late, at five 'clock."

Mr Tlou also indicated that non-attendance of meetings by parent-governors were: " ... in turn, some issues are left unattended due to non-participation of SGB members. This retard progress and functionality of team-work."

Mrs Theki complained that there were some SGB members who "are uncooperative. At times, they do not show up in the meetings and do not give written apology. Unfortunately, we reach conclusions without their inputs or presence."

Mrs Marumo identified a challenge to team work in the SGB as emanating from a refusal by other SGB member to rotate their being in charge of certain positions. She stated:

> "We experience challenges with regarding to the roles performed by
> the SGB members. There is a conflict with regard to rotation of office-
> bearer portfolios, that of a chairperson, treasurer and a secretary. The
> executive members do not want to change or rotate their portfolios."

Mrs Mathe complained about attitudes and remarked that the chairperson was not comfortable in her position and, as such, fearedstepping on other people's toes, which, in her opinion, was a factor that "retards our team-work spirit."

Mrs Kedi indicated that there was sound collaboration, which she saw as a 'tonic' for successful team-work in the SGB. She said:

"As a team, we work nicely in this regard. We collaborate in tasks and decision-making. I can say there is team-work in our SGB."

Mrs Lebo cited the non-attendance of parents, non-participation of parents in decision-making and a failure to collaborate as challenges to team-work in their SGB. She said:

"It is not easy for the SGB to work as a team, and sometimes decisions are taken in the absence of parents. They do not participate in decision-making. I think they feel intimidated by educators who seem to overwhelm them, with their apparent knowledge and arguments."

Mr Neo cited 'language' as a barrier to fluent communication, which causes misunderstanding and poor team-work and collaboration within the SGB. He said:

"We need to explain everything in detail so that everyone can understand the situation."

Ms Deliwe pointed out that parent-governors' lack of expertise and low level of education impeded team work and resulted in the principal doing everything alone, as it were. She commented:

"... the SGB members cannot make own judgement or be decisive. They only come to school when they are called or asked by the principal to do so. The chairperson does not know her roles and responsibilities, for example calling the SGB meeting. Everything is done by the principal."

Mr Charles was forthright in apportioning blame to the parent component of their SGB. He remarked:

"There is no teamwork because of non-attendance of the parent component to the SGB meetings. Educators are trying very hard to maintain their roles and responsibilities and the parent component is not supportive in promoting the best interests of learners and that of the school at large."

It does seem as if there are challenges regarding team-work in SGBs. Reasons proffered by educators, though making sense, could be the proverbial tip of an iceberg.

4.4.5.4 *Maintaining the school property, buildings and grounds*

From all educator responses, it is evident that there are challenges with regard to *the community intrusion into schools, burglary, not controlling own allocated funds, learners' intrusion into sports grounds and privately owned land where a school is built.*

Mr Padi identified a lack of strategic planning in terms of maintenance of school property, buildings and grounds. There is no short-term, medium-term and long-term plan to combat burglary. It seemed the SGB works on instant emergencies rather than having a plan. He said:

"You will find a general worker complaining about stolen properties. Next day there is a burglary. You see, as the SGB, we seem not to have a plan for addressing these issues. We tend to be reactive and go for quick solutions in an 'on-the-spot' or 'as-the-need-arises' fashion."

Mrs Kedi also expressed similar views. She concluded: "We have a burglary crisis. We seem to have no solutions really". Mrs Mathe shared their sentiments:

"We have experienced a problem of burglary and theft of window handles. Our school buildings are dilapidated. We are still waiting for

the department to paint our school. Learners at the school also break windows, chairs and desks."

Mrs Nomsa attributed her frustrations to the 'landlord' and stated: "The school is on private land and is owned by a [2]"certain entity". She complained:

"Whenever we want to do some renovations or host activities in the school, we need to get permission from the owner. It is really frustrating as the process can be so long that by the time permission is granted, with conditions, it sometimes is too late."

Mrs Komane cited a challenge with regard to the protocol that has to be followed by Section 20 schools for demands and supply. She said:

"We take a long time in getting our deliveries, due to a long procedure applied by the Department. This is frustrating because the school cannot operate and staff and parents sometimes think it is the fault of the SGB. No matter how much we try, this always happens."

Mr Neo saw problems created by the community members in the school's vicinity. They made demands on the school, "regardless of how we, as a school feel about such demands". He remarked:

"The neighbouring community make demands as though the buildings, the school itself, and the resources of the school, belong to them. They feel that the SGB has no power to say no. Today it's a meeting. Tomorrow it's school furniture like chairs for a funeral or a party. When we refuse, there's anger and animosity towards the school."

Mrs Ngema complained about the damage to school property, which made it useless to maintain or continuously repair the same thing. She complained:

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[2] Used to protect identity.

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"Learners cut the school fence, in order to come and play in the school ground after school hours and during weekends and holidays. The problem is lack of sports facilities in the community, so they intrude into the school campus for that reason. As a result (she went on), we have broken windows, broken by our learners. They break glasses in the sport grounds, which become a hazard to them during school hours, something for which we are held responsible if they get injured."

Mr Ncokoane shared the above sentiment. He said:

"Learners prefer to hang around the school and play. As a result, they break windows, toilets and furniture. This puts a strain on the school's maintenance funds, which are very little for the repairs that have to be continuously effected on the same things."

Mr Charles also mentioned the problem of broken chairs and tables, as well as the theft of water taps as challenges regarding their maintenance role. He also remarked that they did not have enough land to establish playground for learners, which might be the reason for their playing in the buildings and thus damaging furniture. Mr Zola, in addition to these problems indicated that their main problem was with regard to fund-raising, which they could not succeed in doing. He cited, for instance, that the installation of an alarm system alone required an exorbitant R20 000, let alone its maintenance.

Ms Deliwe, also added (*with anger*) that they experienced problems of burglaries where, "... we lost computers, toilet-seats, equipments and the school fence. When we report the stolen fence to the department, they promise to replace it. But to date nothing has happened."

Somewhat promising, Mrs Theki commented that in their school, things were not that bad regarding maintenance of school property and resources. She stated:

"We have a retrieval system in place to monitor and control school resources. At our school, our learners are responsible for cleaning their classrooms, chairs and desks. Furthermore, we have a Maintenance Committee which is responsible for repairs, and replacements. A gardener is responsible for the school buildings and grounds."

The Schools Act stipulates that the SGB must allow a reasonable usage of their facilities, in order to supplement their allocated funds. However, from the responses given by educators above, it is clear that there are additional challenges for SGBs to ensure that they act within the stipulation of the Act, while at the same time ensuring that facilities are well maintained and in a proper and safe condition of use. In addition, problems around burglaries at school are an enormous challenge for SGBs. This is compounded by the departmental regulations pertaining to the allocated funds for maintenance, which are, in most cases inadequate.

4.4.5.5   *Communication and accountability to the parents*

Challenges cited by educators relate to issues such as the *lack of communication skills, parents' non-attendance and failure to respond to invitation letters* hindering effective communication channels and accountability. Some educators, however, seemed to be comfortable in their schools' communication efforts.

Mr Padi cited parents' attitudes which hinder progress in developing proper channels of communication and accountability. He said:·

> "Our parents really cannot communicate properly with us, even if we do give them respect. They are sometimes rude and show educators scant respect. You see, there was once, many years ago, a conflict between parents and educators in one school in the area. This led to serious confrontation, which at the end, led to polarisation between

parents and educators. There were moves to get rid of educators from outside this area, and we were in the majority. This left feelings of resentment and some parents still harbour ill-feelings form that time. But in reality, I think it is attitudinal and stems from that episode."

Mrs Nomsa cited the non-attendance of meetings by parents as the stumbling block to effective communication channels and accountability. She said:

"We called parents to the meetings and only 30% of parents attended. As a result the SGB has to sit down and restructure another day, to call a meeting. Now, who do we talk? Who do we account to if they don't attend meetings. It's just hopeless. We do understand their reasons. And these are serious socio-economic reasons. But then, what shall we do?"

Mr Neo shared the above sentiment. He said:

"Our challenge is that parents do not attend meetings, and do not respond to invitation letters written to them. They then complain that they see things happening. They are not consulted and that there is a failure to consult broadly with them. But how do you do that when they don't attend?"

Mrs Lebo expressed a similar sentiment and stated that only a few parents attended meetings, so that the problem was double-fold: non-attendance of meetings by parent governors and non-attendance of meetings by the broad parent community.

Mrs Marumo indicated that the challenge was with regard to the non-adherence to the school plan and policies. She commented:

"We have a plan which indicates dates for meetings, and SGB members do not attend meetings, members have different excuses, such as work commitments, family functions and deaths".

Mrs Mathe stated that their problem related to a poor response from parents and further indicated the reason for the parents' poor response:

"... Parents complained that we fund-raise a lot and we want money now and then. Furthermore, parents complain about our chairperson's conduct in the school and outside the school. The chairperson is a bully and is uncooperative."

Mrs Kadi related a scenario that differs from the views above. She cited good conduct on the side of their SGB members and indicated ways to promote communication channels and accountability to parents. She said:

"We write invitation letters to parents; inform them about the date for a meeting. We have parents' meetings every term and we provide them with full reports. We accommodate their questions and try by all means to respond in a dignified and respectful manner. This seems to work for us."

Mrs Komane also related a similar attitude in their SGB. She commented:

"As the SGB we are accountable to parents, more especially the parent component. So we do everything to open channels of communication and we make sure that we report to parents on a regular basis. Though meetings are not 100% attended, we do give them feedback on various issues. This seems to satisfy them and they try hard to be cooperative."

Mr Ngema related his school's case and highlighted what they do to communicate with parents. He said:

"When there are issues to be addressed, invitation letters are sent to parents. They then get full details of the issues, get their questions answered to their satisfaction, or at least we try to."

Mr Ncokoane indicated that they too held meetings with parents, in which meetings they give feedback to the parents on all issues being discussed".

Ms Deliwe also remarked in a similar manner:

"Communication and accountability are great. Educators receive memos, circulars and copies of meetings and workshops. Information is disseminated to all staff-members on time."

Mr Charles and Mrs Theki also sounded positive and respectively stated:

"We issue out invitation letters to parents, inform them about the meetings. In many cases, our meetings are well attended by parents since we usually hold meetings on Sunday mornings, before people go to churches."

"We write invitation letters to parents and hand out our yearly plan to them, concerning our yearly meetings. When the date for the meeting is near, we send them reminders. Our parents are supportive and do attend our meetings."

Effective communication enhances partnership and stakeholder participation in school affairs. The responses above indicate examples of good practice that work for some SGBs and challenge some experience with regard to communication and being accountable as the SGB, especially to stakeholders.

4.4.5.6 *School financial management, including budgeting, accounting and reporting to stakeholders*

From educators' responses it is evident that there are challenges *in financial management with regard to budgeting, accounting and reporting to stakeholders*. Furthermore, the question of 'no-fee' schools seems to create a challenge to the SGBs, as well as principals' misunderstanding of roles and responsibilities.

Mr Padi cited his frustrations due to in-fights during budgeting of school finances. As results, meetings are usually disrupted. He said:

> "You know, when we talk about money, school finances and budgeting, we normally are at loggerheads as stakeholders and our meetings do not end well."

Mrs Nomsa shared the above sentiment: She said:

> "The school financial management is a very big challenge to us. We still need more training, specifically on finances."

Mr Ncokoane also felt the same. He said:

> "School financial management is a challenge, since our budget exceeds the allocated funds. It does seem as if we fail or do not know how to budget."

Mrs Komane similarly expressed this view. She said:

> "The only challenge is being declared a 'no-fee school'. Working with such large amounts of money is a real challenge. As a result, there is always suspicion, because the money seems so much. What they forget is that this money is 'ring-fenced' for specific expenditures. So you can't use it anyhow."

Mr Zola also painted a gloomy picture. He said:

> "There is a challenge with regard to finances because sometimes cheques are issued without the necessary three quotations. But when educators need something for teaching and learning, the issues of three quotations is pressed or forced down to their throats."

Ms Deliwe, too, indicated a negative picture on this aspect of governance. She stated:

> "I do not think we are fully involved in the school finances. For the entire year, we did not meet as the SGB to discuss the budget because the principal made a short notice and members did not show up. As a result, the principal drew up the budget alone and invited his friend, who is an auditor to help him."

Mr Charles expressed their case differently and openly stated their non-involvement in school financial management. He said:

> "We do not know about school financial management since we are not exposed to the finances. We do not know what the function of allocated funds, especially services, is. But for a budget, we sit with the SGB and the SMT to discuss it. We then present it to parents for approval."

Mr Neo cited the principal's lack of understanding of her roles and responsibilities with regard to school financial management, budgeting and reporting. He said:

> "In our school, the finances are managed effectively. Records are kept, books are sent to the auditors. But the principal is always taking more of a role than the SGB chairperson, on the part of finances. It is like he is solely responsible for monies."

Mr Ngema cited a functional SGB that executed its duties effectively in terms of managing school finances and promoting the best interest of learners and the school. All systems are in place, the office-bearers, executive members and finance committee members, are active. He said:

> "We have a Finance Committee which is a sub-committee of the whole
> SGB and they are working according to the Department's guidelines."

Similar sentiments were expressed by Mrs Theki:

> "The Finance Committee at our school and the school administrator
> are responsible for the control and monitoring of school finances.
> When drawing a budget, we come together and do the need analysis.
> Thereafter, we present the budget to parents for approval."

Mrs Lebo stated that they inform parents about the budget and funds, how they are used and how much is left. Mrs Kedi also indicated that they report to the parents each term and receive suggestions and support from parents. This, she asserted, minimised problems usually associated with school funds.

The responses from educators clearly indicate that there are challenges, especially in so far as financial management is concerned. Though not extensive, these responses provide some insight into what SGBs do with regard to financial management and the challenges they experience.

4.4.5.7 *Drawing up and implementation of school policies*

Responses to the drawing up of policies and their implementation seem to indicate *parents' level of education and non-availability or non-attendance of meetings* as reasons for failure to implement policies. Once again, the parents' low levels of education were cited as a factor in the difficulties experienced with drawing up of school policies.

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Mrs Marumo stated:

> "We experience a challenge with regard to the drawing of school policies. Only two parents attended the meeting and others gave excuses, saying they are at work. We therefore continue in the drawing of policies without their inputs. Thereafter, present the policies to parents to make inputs."

Mr Zola referred to parents' lack of know-how in policy-making. He remarked:

> "The parent component is not conversant in the drawing of the school policies, due to lack of skills and knowledge. Furthermore, the department's policies changes now and then and policy adherences is not vital to other members."

Ms Mathe provided a somewhat rounded account of the situation. She stated:

> "The challenge boils down to the relationship among SGB and teachers. The teacher component felt it is the duty of the parent component to draw school policies and, in turn, parents have no knowledge and skills to draw policies. Therefore the implementation of policies is impossible."

Ms Deliwe gave an account of their situation and explained that "... because we do not have the skills and the knowledge, what we usually do in our school, we go to the former model C school and borrow a policy, and thereafter change it here and there."

Mr Kobue cited parents' low level of education as hindrances in achieving their objectives. He said:

> "In the SGB, the parent component are mostly illiterate. As a result, they are unable to draw a policy, let alone the implementation thereof".

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This response seems misinformed as it is the duty of the entire SGB to draw up policies and the school, specifically educators, are supposed to see to its implementation. Most educators, however, pointed out that they had school policies, but that their implementation was the challenge.

Mr Ncokoane remarked on the lack of knowledge, skills, commitment and consistency in the implementation of school policies. He said:

> "We sit as different committees and draw policies, but the problem is
> with the implementation thereof. Policies are just not implemented."

Mr Padi also echoed the sentiment. He said:

> "We have nice policies at our school but the problem is the
> implementation."

Mr Neo also indicated the same challenge. He commneted:

> "We involve all stakeholders when drawing policies. But at the end of the
> draft, you find that these policies are not implemented correctly."

Mrs Nomsa felt the same as the educators above and remarked:

> "We got different policies that guide us, but experience a challenge in their
> implementation."

Mrs Lebo indicated: "We have drawn almost 90-98% of policies but faced a challenge in terms of implementation."

Mrs Kedi seemed to suggest that all was well in this area, although she related more to team-work than to the issue directly. However, this seemed to suggest that there were no challenges in this regard. She commented briefly: "Right now, we do have a school plan and work as a team."

Mr Ngema cited a functional SGB, which motivated and encouraged stakeholders to participate in policy-making. He said:

> "We organised different committees, tasked them with a mandate to draft a policy. From there, the SGB compiled a genuine policy."

Mr Charles made the following remark: "We normally sit down as educators and draw school policies. Parents are not supportive because they are semi-illiterate and do not understand what a policy entails and how to draw it. We experience a challenge with regard to implementation." Clearly he was strongly suggesting that policy-making and implementation was a function of parental education.

From these responses, it is clear that policy implementation at these schools poses a major challenge. A common and ironic feature in all these accounts is that, while they said parents were not knowledgeable and lacked policy-formulation skills, the policies were drawn up in English, which is a factor cited as the reason for parents' reluctance to participate in meetings. The next section presents parents' views on the aspects of school governance.

4.4.6   Challenges facing the parent component with regard to aspects of school governance

4.4.6.1   *Relationship among SGB members*

Responses on these aspects show that challenges exist due to *perceived lack of commitment, failure to attend meetings and poor relations among SGB members. Educators' behaviour* was also cited as a reason for poor relationships with educators at schools. Parents articulated the feeling that educators perceive parents as elders and not as equals. Mr Sipho referred to other SGB members, in particular parents, as a stumbling block towards the creation of healthy relationships among SGB members. He remarked that parents were not committed to the SGB and "... every time, they got excuses for not attending the

meetings". Ms Nomvula expressed a similar view and stated that they experienced a "... lack of commitment, especially with the parent component. This angers other members and I understand why then relationships become strained." Ms Busi indicated that this lack of commitment was seen in parent-governors not attending workshops.

The non-attendance of meetings and workshops was mentioned frequently. Mrs Puleng also stated that parents did not attend the meetings regularly. Mr Dolo also expressed comments alluding to the parent component's unavailability for ·meetings as one of the challenges they face. He further cited the reason: "... our members are always absent, especially the parents' component. They complain about the usage of language during the workshops ...".

Another problem seemed to relate to parents resigning or staying away from the SGB. Mr Xolani from Tshepisong Primary School remarked that SGB parent members often left the SGB and as a result, they were faced with a situation where "we have to hold a by-election. We are supposed to teach new members how to run the school. The newly elected members do not understand their roles and responsibilities."

This was also echoed by Mr Ngema from Vukani Primary School who complained in his own words: " ... parents (who) agree to being elected and never show up in meetings. They are not committed and do not attend workshops. You will find the principal running the school alone." Mrs Mali from Tladi Primary School also highlighted this problem. She pointed out that, even after holding by-elections, the mew members did not attend meetings, so that their SGB lacked parent representatives and could thus not be functional.

A rather unusual problem was raised related to *remuneration for SGB members*. Mr Tsatsi commented about the remuneration aspect as a problem and stated:

"Our SGB members lack commitment and a sense of voluntarism. They volunteer to be members of the SGB with a hope of getting paid or remunerated for their participation in the SGB. Later on, they absent themselves without a reason after realising that there is no payment".

This sentiment was also expressed by Mrs Letima who said:

"We have a challenge in terms of parents that are working and cannot attend meetings but whenever there is a problem at the school, they sacrifice their time to come. Also, there is nothing that we do to motivate. There is no refreshment, catering or transport money. Whereas in the LETU (Local Education and Training unit), members receive reimbursement or a stipend. I think the department should make a provision for the SGB members too."

Mention was also made of good relationships among SGB members. Mr Kehla mentioned that there were positive relationships among SGB members and stated that these promote shared values, shared ideas, and a shared mission and vision. He actually indicated: "We work harmoniously with other stakeholders, educators and the principal." Mr Nzimeni also indicated that there were good relations among members of the SGB. He stated that they work as a team with other stakeholders. This was also expressed by Mrs Mawa who stated that parents in their SGB were very co-operative and supportive towards the school. This was also reiterated by Mrs Vivian who proudly stated:

"We have a functional SGB with members who attend meetings regularly. As a result relations are good and improve all the time as we get to understand each other."

Ms Sonti also shared the same sentiment. She stated that they were working harmoniously with other stakeholders and usually agreed to and disagreed finally

find a way forward. Mrs Matlakala also shared this view, stating that they worked harmoniously with other members of the SGB, which in her opinion was a great achievement, since it had not been always like that. Echoing the same views, Mrs Lindi and Mr Bongani also alluded to the sharing of a common vision and mutual respect among SGB members, such that educators regarded them as their elders, in the sense of respect and cooperation.

From the above statement, it can be concluded that parents seem not to understand the positive relationship among SGBs. They prefer to be regarded as elders rather than as equal partners in the SGB. The Constitution emphasises the fact that all persons are equal before the law and should be treated equally, with justice and dignity. However, quite clearly, a significant number of parents also indicated a situation where relations among SGB members were cordial, harmonious and respectful. What were clearly raised in some instances where relationships were perceived as less than positive, was that such situations resulted because of the difficulty experienced with executing governance functions. This could be due to lack of capacity, which could be misconstrued as lack of commitment or seriousness.

4.4.6.2 *Relationship with educators at the school*

From some parent's responses, it is evident that challenges indeed exist with regard to relationships with educators at schools. While not referring explicitly to educators, parents-governors alluded to issues that seemed to create tension and misunderstanding between them and educators at schools. Among other issues, they related to issues involving *learners' conduct, educators' cliques, educators' attitudes, school finances and late deposit of allocated funds.* Some parents, however, felt comfortable about relationships with educators at school.

Mr Sipho referred to the prohibition of corporal punishment as a stumbling block to a positive relationship with educators. He commented that learners committed serious offences, with the knowledge that they would not be punished. This led to

tension between parents and educators. They, as governors were helpless regarding such issues, because, on the one hand, parents in general would want learners to be punished while the law prohibits it.

Mrs Lindi alluded to the lack of financial management skills as a stumbling block to a healthy relationship with educators at the school, as well as problems regarding school finances and late deposit of the government subsidy. Consequently, relations became strained when educators needed resources, which could not be purchased, due to a lack of money. Ms Nomvula commented that, as a result of this late payment of subsidies, educators often had negative attitudes.

Mrs Mali expressly mentioned educators who wanted to have their way without following laid-down procedures, especially regarding the use of monies. She stated:

> "The teachers are taking advantage of the principal's kindness and
> abuse it. Whenever they need money from the principal they get it,
> and I as the chairperson am different from the principal. I want them to
> give me reasons for their requests and do not sign a cheque without
> the full details."

Most disheartening was the notion that educators undermined parent governors. In this regard, Mr Kwena from Vukani Primary School stated:

> "Educators fail to understand us as governors of the school. They
> regard us as illiterates who have no say in education and do not
> recognise us as governors."

This view was confirmed by Mr Tloung from Zonke Primary School who stated (*emotionally*):

"Educators look down upon parents and call us names. They dislike our presence at the school and yet they want to use us to sign blank cheques."

This was also echoed by Mr Tsatsi who felt that educators looked down upon parent governors "... since they regard us as illiterates. When we voice our concern as SGB members, educators do not acknowledge our inputs. As a result, we end up being passive and disillusioned."

Mr Xolani highlighted another aspect of educator behaviour, which he stressed was spoiling relations with them:

"Some educators think we are biased and favour the principal. They complain about the principal's style of management and nepotism."

It is also evident that there were conflicts of interest at some schools since educators did not regard themselves as part of the SGB and only wanted to have their own way. For example, Mr Tau, a parent from Boitumelo primary school said:

"We experience difficulties with regard to relationships with educators at the school. For instance, educators in the fund-raising committee thought that fund-raising activities are meant for them and not for the school services."

While relations with educators seemed good, Ms Zuma from Zonkizizwe pointed to a serious breach in their participation in the SGB and blamed the principal. She commented:

"We had a healthy relationship with educators at the school. The principal is the only person who gives us a problem. The principal is very strict when coming to the use of school funds. She wants things to be done her own way. She is the one who organises service providers."

Relations at some schools seemed to be negatively affected by relations between the principals and educators. Mr Xolani stated that educators often accused parent-governors of being biased in favour of the principal, whose style of management they complained about. They accused him of practising nepotism. This apparently related to the appointment of staff in favour of his relatives and friends. Mr Xolani remarked that there was clearly no trust and respect between educators and the principal. Related to this issue, was the formation of cliques of educators at schools. Mrs Vivian pointed out that negative attitudes caused by educator cliques were a hindrance to positive relationship among educators at the school, and this affected their relations with them as well. Seemingly, at times, they were faced with situations where they had to take sides.

It was, however, also found that in most schools, relationships between parent-governors and educators were healthy, which made it easy for them to work together. Mr Bongani actually cited positive relationship with educators as a remedy to promote the best interest of learners and that of the school. He commented: "... we are working harmoniously and have mutual understanding with educators". This sentiment was shared by Mr Kehla, who remarked that there were good interpersonal relations and healthy relationships with educators at their school. The positive remarks about relations between parent-governors and educators at schools were further echoed by Mr Nzimeni, Mrs Mawa, Mrs Puleng, Ms Sonti, Ms Busi and Ms Matlakala, who all expressed that they worked harmoniously with educators at their schools.

From the parent-governors' accounts, it is clear that there are serious relationship challenges between parent-governors and educators in most schools. It is disheartening that these are caused by, *inter alia*, educators' attitudes towards parents. This can be a serious barrier to parental involvement at school, but can also lead to acrimonious relations that most definitely will not promote the learners' best interests. It is also encouraging that in most other schools, there appears to be good and healthy relationships between parent-governors and educators. This

is also indicative of SGBs whose main purpose is the promotion of the best interests of their schools, and in attempting to do so, take into cognisance that healthy relationships are a part of governance that can lead to the attainment of this role.

4.4.6.3 *Team work in the SGB*

From the three parents' responses, it is evident that there are challenges with regard to *lack of commitment, disappearance of parents from the SGB and not implementing decisions taken.*

Responses with regard to team work in the SGB revealed a number of challenges. One reason cited for lack of team-work was expressed by Mr Xolani as relating to poor working relations among staff members at schools, which in this case related to the principal and her deputy. Mr Xolani remarked that there was poor team-work in the SGB "since the principal and her deputy do not see eye to eye. As a result, the deputy is not using her office, but prefers to use a classroom instead. This reaction has caused a division among staff-members since some (SGB) members side with the principal and others with the deputy."

Another challenge related to what Mr Tloung expressed as "... our members do not like one another. Educators are operating on their own without involving the parent's component. Parents are only called when there are problems at the school", which is indicative of a school situation where there is no team-work. This sentiment was also expressed by Mr Kwena who stated: "Educators hold their meetings as educators and we meet as the SGB and discuss issues."

A pertinent challenge which seems to recur throughout relates to the parent component's non-attendance of meetings, parents leaving the SGB and parents not being knowledgeable. The latter challenge seems to be the reason why parents "stay away" or do not attend meetings. These sentiments were expressed thus:

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"Some of our members seemed to be falling along the way to an extent that we struggle to reach a quorum in our meetings. Furthermore, some of our members do not understand the contents of the circulars and when we try to explain them, it creates even more problems" – Mr Masilo.

"We elect different committees, such as safety and security, fund-raising and financial committees, but they are dysfunctional. Members cited excuses that they are working and have other commitments" – Mrs Refeiloe.

" ...non-attendance of the parent component. Why? Because there is nothing that motivates them. Earlier, I alluded to the fact that parents serving in LETUs receive a stipend and this surely motivates them. But there is nothing given to parents serving in SGBs" – Mrs Letima.

"There is no team-work since SGB members do not attend meetings. Decisions are made but at the end, there is no implementation" – Mr Nkutha.

"Duties are delegated to SGB members. The challenge is about the accountability. Our members do not adhere to their delegated tasks. Many times, people are pointing fingers at one another. Some cited the principal's interferences" – Ms Zuma.

Despite the challenges poised above, there were some positive accounts of team work in the SGBs.

"We are working harmoniously as a team and hold regular meetings, to discuss important issues pertaining to the development of SGB members and the school" – Mrs Matlakala.

4.4.6.4 *Challenges regarding maintaining school property, buildings and grounds*

From parents' responses it was evident that there were challenges with regard to the maintenance of school property, buildings and grounds. Most problems cited related mainly to *burglaries and damage to school buildings.* Some problems cited related to *old and dilapidated buildings* as a result of, among others, not being properly maintained over the years.

Common comments mostly were:

"Learners break windows and we replace them. It is a never ending story" – Mr Sipho.

"We are experiencing a challenge with a regard to dilapidated buildings, falling ceilings and window frames. The school assets are often stolen and this results in draw back" – Mr Kehla.

"We are facing a challenge with regard to burglary. Burglary is rife in Orange Farm. Safety to school property is a pipe dream' – Mrs Lindi.

"We are experiencing challenges with regards to broken windows. Passing pedestrians throw stones and break windows. Furthermore learners use side-cutters to cut a hole in the school fence, in order to gain unlawful entry to the school premises" – Mrs Mawa.

"We experienced a challenge with regard to burglary at the school. Our school is situated in the outskirts of the location and thieves take advantage. Moreover, the surrounding community have no children at the school" – Mr Xolani.

"Coming to school property, I feel like crying because our money and government money is wasted due to continuous burglary of school

properties The thieves used the keys to gain entry to the computer room and we have installed alarms" – Mr Tloung.

In addition to the problems listed above, some parents pointed out that their schools did not have maintenance policies and, if they had them, these were not implemented, which was pretty similar to sentiments expressed by principals and educator governors. In this regard, Mr Bongani stated: "We do not have a policy regarding maintenance of school property, buildings and grounds."

Some problems mentioned related to section 20 schools' difficulties in acquiring the procured equipment from the Department. Ms Nomvula cited her frustrations because of a time-consuming procedure followed by section 20 schools in order to receive goods. She stated, "The school completes a requisition from, sends it to the district office, which, in turn, sends it to head office. This long procedure just to be able to fix a leaking pipe because of our section 20 status."

Most section 21 schools lamented the inadequate amount of money allocated for maintenance, especially since "the funds are 'ring-fenced' and moreover the money allocated to the school is too little. As a result, we do not succeed in maintaining school property, buildings and grounds.

Another recurring problem in addition to school burglaries relate to the theft of metal components of equipment, especially copper, which were reportedly stolen and resold to scrap-yards and traders in copper. This was mentioned as a major problem, not only for schools, but also for the entire community, where copper cables were also targeted by thieves. Water taps and window fittings were items stolen regularly.

Some parent-governors relate positive accounts, although they made it clear that they have also experienced problems around the maintenance of school facilities as a whole. Mr Nzimeni cited their positive involvement as member of the SGB. He said, 'they (SGB members) are the ones who prepare and maintain school

grounds, clean buildings and make sure that the school property is secure. In this regard, we are working harmoniously with the sports management of the school." Mrs Puleng proudly stated that their "school properties, buildings and grounds are intact", also mentioning that theirs was a relatively new school, while Ms Busi pointed out "The SGB members ensure that the school properties are secured. We have representatives who take care of our grounds."

Clearly there are major challenges regarding the maintenance of school facilities at schools. While there were also positive stories regarding this aspect of school governance, it was clear that problems experienced were generally beyond the SGB's scope of control and required law enforcement. In addition, the issue of security and the maintenance of school facilities seemed to present challenges, especially in light of inadequate funding for the maintenance of school facilities.

4.4.6.5 *Communication and accountability*

In their accounts, parents expressed similar sentiments as those expressed by principals and educator-governors. The following statements highlight this challenge and were commonly expressed:

> "Parents do not honour our invitations" – Ms Nomvula.

> "We have a challenge with regard to communication. It is not clear since educators undermine the parent component. In turn, this increases a burden on top of parents' weaknesses. How do we as the SGB account to parents when we as the SGB do not respect each other? Furthermore, our parents do not attend parents' meetings, as expected. When asked they give different excuses such as attending funerals, tombstone unveiling and other rituals" – Mr Dolo.

> "Letters are sent out to parents, indicating the agenda, but parents do not attend meetings" – Ms Nomvula.

Mrs Letima bemoaned the non-attendance of meetings by parents and pointed out that, as a result, issues are left for a long time before being resolved, which creates a backlog of unattended matters. A serious comment related to SGB members' attitudes. Mr Kehla mentioned that SGB members did not support and trust one another. As a result, they always blamed one another for the misfortune of the school. In that sense, he remarked that with mistrust and finger-pointing among SGB members, it was difficult to account truthfully to the parents.

Other challenges mentioned related to communication and the understanding parents attached to such communication. Mr Sipho cited his frustrations regarding the inception of the quintile system at schools. He stated: "Earlier on, the Department promised the SGBs that a day-to-day fund would be allocated to the schools. Therefore the SGBs were not supposed to charge any fee from parents. The schools only received an amount of R24 000-00 from the Department and as a result, parents do not understand why there was fund-raising at the school.

There were, however, more parents expressing the notion that their communication with and accountability to parents was good. Mr Bongani indicated that they had a strategic plan to uphold and develop communication channels among stakeholders. In that regard, letters were sent out to parents, indicating the agenda for meetings, so that "... in essence, we report all activities that transpire at our school". In addition, the following statements were made:

"We invite parents to meetings and give them a report" – Mrs Mawa.

"... everything is explained in detail to parents" – Mrs Vivian

"There is an open communication channel and transparency prevails at the school' – Ms Sonti

"We hold meetings once a term and communicate important issues with parents" – Mrs Matlakala

"We issue invitation letters to parents, inform them of the date for the meeting. During parents' meetings, we report all activities, finances, achievements and the developments that took place at our school" — Mr Nkutha.

"We hold a meeting to draw the agenda for meetings. We write letters to invite parents to a meeting. During meetings issues are discussed with parents, and challenges and developments are reported" – Ms Zuma

Mrs Lindi pointed out a problem that related to the reasonable use of school facilities by the community. She stated: "The conflict between us and the parents is about the misuse of school property." She explained that community members misused school facilities. As a result "the SGB is at loggerheads with each over the reasonable usage of the school facilities by churches and food vendors. Some members of the SGB agreed while others disagreed. She said it that this polarised relation between the school and parents in the community and as such, made it difficult for the SGB to be fully accountable to the parents, or even communicate with them on other issues.

From the accounts above, it can be said that while there were positive accounts of good communication with and accountability to the parents, there are also numerous challenges.

4.4.6.6 *School financial management, including budgeting, accounting and reporting to stakeholders*

It was found, amongst other challenges, that there was *lack of financial management skills* in SGBs. This was evident in comments such as:

"There is a challenge with regard to finances because sometimes cheques are issued without the necessary three quotations. But when

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educators need something for teaching and learning, the issue of three quotations is pressed or forced down to their throats" – Mr Zola.

"Parents do not understand the detailed budget" – Ms Nomvula.

In some instances, educators interfered in the management of funds and wanted things done their own way, despite the financial management procedures. Mr Maduna expressed frustration at educators wanting to deviate from the budget. He stated:

> "They (educators) demand to do things their own way. They force deviations from the budget. They actually make everyone feel uncomfortable in the SGB. As a result, it is difficult to exercise proper financial management."

This view was supported by Mr Xolani, a parent-governor who said:

> "Educators ask for exorbitant funds when attending workshops. They tend to personalise issues and not agree to our financial policy. When drawing a budget, the staff-members have no interest to give their inputs and only capitalise on mistakes that occur. Moreover, most parents are uneducated and do not know how to handle school finances. They have a hope that the principal and the chairperson are handling funds in an orderly manner."

A disturbing challenge raised related to non-involvement of other SGB members in financial management. One parent, Mr Dolo, expressed dissatisfaction with the training they have received regarding financial management. He remarked:

> "We are experiencing problems with regard to finances. We have not reached a stage where we are really sure that we have received full information, skills and knowledge with regard to managing school finances. I am not satisfied with the way we have been trained. The

training took three days which was far too short for such a huge responsibility."

Mrs Refeiloe, also a parent-governor, indicated that, due to a problem of a lack of skills, they hired a person to draw up a budget for their school. "After the budget has been drawn up, the SGB discussed it. After the discussions, we called the parents' annual general meetings and unpacked it. We submitted the budget to the district, after parents have approved it".

Mr Masilo repeated the problem of the non-attendance of meetings. He stated that it was not easy to come-up with an operational finance committee "... since parents absent themselves without a valid reason. It is difficult to finalise the budget since the parent members do not avail themselves and parents do not approve it. As a result, we are to call meetings repeatedly". Mrs Refeiloe, also a parent governor, indicated that, due to the problem of a lack of skills, they hired a person to draw up a budget for their school. "After, the budget has been drawn, the SGB discussed it. After the discussions, we called the parents' annual general meetings and unpacked it. We submitted the budget to the district, after parents have approved it."

Parent-governors also mentioned the "no-fee" school challenge. Mr Sipho cited his frustrations since the inception of quintile schools and complained: "Our school is now a 'no-fee' school and parents no longer pay school fees. In turn, our school's coffers run dry."

Mrs Puleng shared a similar sentiment:

> "Our school is regarded as a 'no-fee' school, ... parents no longer pay
> for school trips, educational tours or engage in fund-raising functions."

Other problems were mentioned regarding improper attitudes and behaviour on the part of educators at schools when it comes to finances. Mrs Vivian expressed

her frustrations due to a lack of financial management skills and as a result "this leads to conflicts among SGB members. We experience challenges due to teachers' interferences in matters pertaining to school finances." Mr Kehla complained about the same thing and cited parents' illiteracy as a stumbling block to effective financial management, with the consequence that "...there is conflict between the teacher component and the principal regarding the control of school finances".

As was the case with other aspects there were positive comments that indicated attempts at proper financial management, including budgeting, accounting and reporting to stakeholders. This was expressed in comments such as:

> "We follow the correct procedures when buying assets for the school. We look for three quotations, compare quality and prices" – Mr Bongani.

> "We send out invitation letters to parents for a meeting where all the finances, budgeting are explained and discussed with all stakeholders" – Mr Nzimeni.

> "We hold meetings, table our plans and report to parents the budget" – Mrs Mawa.

> 'We hand out copies of the audited financial statement to each member and discuss the details" – Ms Sonti.

> "Openness and transparency prevail at the school. Financial books are brought to parents for verification and explanation" – Ms Busi.

> "We do not experience challenge with regard to school finances, budgeting, accounting and reporting. Different commitments are involved and meetings are held to discuss the priority lists for next year's budget" – Ms Lindi.

"We do not experiencing any challenge regarding finances. A financial report is tabled and discussed with stakeholders" - Mrs Matlakala.

The accounts from the parent-governors indicate mixed feelings regarding financial management at schools. While some SGBs seem to experience serious challenges, others seem to do well. This is indicative of the need for a scrutiny of financial management systems at schools as areas needing specialised knowledge and skills.

4.4.6.7 *Drawing up and Implementing School Policies*

From the parent-governors' responses, *the drawing up and implementation of school policies* emerged as another challenge faced by SGBs. Policy-making requires knowledge and expertise to undertake and to implement. For instance, parents' accounts included the carrying of dangerous weapons by learners and learner discipline problems, which factors alluded to the lack of policies or the lack of implementation thereof. Parent-governors cited *lack of knowledge and skills in drawing up policies and even ensuring the implementation thereof*. This was clear in comments such as:

> "We experience a challenge with regard to dangerous weapons brought to the school by learners" – Mr Bongani.

> "We experience a challenge with regard to learner discipline, especially respect. Learners misbehave because they know that corporal punishment was abolished" – Mrs Mawa.

> "We are experiencing a challenge with regard to different policies, such as the Constitution and SASA. The SGB is interpreting these Acts differently" – Mr Kehla.

> "We experience a challenge with regard to the drawing and implementation of school policies. Educators are the ones who are

actively involved in drawing school policies and the parent component is passive. Our parent component is not conversant with SASA and the Constitution. Therefore it is difficult to use SASA and the Constitution to draw the school policies" – Mr Nkutha.

"We do not follow the drawn policy to the details. Therefore we try by all means to make some amendments" – Ms Sonti.

"Truly it is very difficult when coming to the issue of school policies and the implementation thereof. We made a lot of mistakes when drawing policies due to a lack of knowledge and skills. We instructed the principal and the teachers to implement the policies" – Mr Dolo.

"The main challenges is about a lack of knowledge since our parents seem not be in the know of what is a policy. So, in most cases, they rely heavily on educators because their voices are much stronger than that of parents. Parents just endorse what is said by educators" – Mr Masilo.

Mr Xolani remarked: "Our SGB members have no knowledge and skills on how to draw school policies. They are not creative to come up with initiatives. What they do, they adopt a previous constitution or take a constitution that comes from another school. On the other hand, educators are less interested in participating in the SGB matters. They only come to school to teach and then leave. Anything beyond their normal time must be remunerated." Mr Masilo, voicing a similar account, added that, in most cases, they rely heavily on educators "Parents just endorse what is said by educators." Mr Nkuta seemed to summarise it all, stating that they experienced difficulties with regards to the drawing up and implementation of school policies. He mentioned that educators were the ones who were actively involved in drawing up school policies since "...our parent component is not conversant with SASA and the Constitution. Therefore it is difficult to use SASA and the Constitution to draw the school policies."

Other parent participants indicated that they are comfortable with procedures applied to be able to draw up and implement policies. Mr Sipho stated:

"We do not experience challenges with regard to the drawing of and the implementation of policies, because we hold meetings, engage in discussions and give explanations whenever it is needed."

Mr Nzimeni indicated their ability to draw up policies and to implement them. He said:

"We do not experience challenges with regard to drawing and implementation of policies, since procedures are being followed to the details."

Mr Kwena also accounted a positive experience:

"We involve all stakeholders when drawing policies and different committees draw different policies. We then call parents and present the policies to them for approval. After agreement, policies are signed and put into action. Taking into cognisance the departments' policies which gives direction".

Ms Zuma expressed optimism due to training they received "recently". She remarked:

"In the past, the school policy was a new term to me. I did not know about the school policies and the procedure to draw one. Thanks to the recent training, which taught us a lot about the school policy and the importance thereof. The implementation is, however, still a problem."

From the statements above, it can be concluded that the SGB does experience challenges regarding policy-making and implementation. An appraisal of the

participants' accounts highlights the emergent themes regarding the challenges faced by SGBs in the execution of their roles and responsibilities.

4.4.7 An appraisal of challenges faced by School Governing Bodies: emerging themes

The data presented in the foregoing section indicate that SGBs are indeed facing serious challenges with regard to their roles and responsibilities. The data indicate that SGBs can be seen as doing relatively well in other areas of school governance. In so far as the challenges faced by SGBs are concerned, the following themes emerged from the data collected:

- There was generally a lack of understanding or a poor understanding of the main role of the SGB, namely that of promoting the best interests of the school, regardless of members' own constituencies. This was evident in the apportioning of blame for dysfunctionality or poor performances in certain areas. There was no stage where collective responsibility was taken. Instead, principals apportioned blame to parents and educators, educators blamed principals and parents and parents blamed educators and, to a degree, principals.

- Relations among SGB members and with educators at the school, while commendable in some schools, can be understood to be challenging within the context of the poor understanding of the role of promoting the best interests of the school. Once again, in this case, apportionment of blame for poor relations was ascribed to other members. Reasons cited included lack of commitment, non-attendance of meetings, parents being looked down upon and undermined, and poor training and the consequent lack of knowledge and skills regarding school governance functions.

- Team work was found to be a big challenge. This inference is made within the context of the lack of understanding or poor understanding of the main

role of school governance. As was the case in the foregoing deductions, team-work in SGBs was found to be affected by similar reasons like finger-pointing. In most instances lack of team work was ascribed to the non-commitment of parents to their roles as governors, as well as the fact that they were perceived to be of low educational levels that seemingly made it difficult for them to perform their roles. Consequently, they "stayed away" from their governance responsibilities. It was also interesting that parents themselves had fallen into the same trap, and seemed to agree that their lack of knowledge was a reason for poor team work and performance of their roles.

- Schools seemed beset with problems of vandalism and theft of school resources. While not articulated extensively and precisely, this seems to be a challenge at all previously disadvantaged schools and does indicate poor security at schools. This being mainly a criminal element, it is understandable that the SGB would be restricted in dealing with it. However, there was a level of realisation that schools needed to have maintenance policies that would address the everyday preventive, predictive and deferred maintenance.

- Communication and accountability, including financial management, to stakeholders and, in particular, parents seemed to be done at school. However, the contents of what was communicated and accounted for did not seem to inspire confidence that parents were taken aboard in school educational matters. It was also clear that, where it was less than ideal, parents were blamed for not being committed, for not attending meetings and for not understanding the contents of communication and accountability. This was clearly articulated in matters involving decisions around budgeting, financial management and reporting. The poor execution of this function was also ascribed to lack of knowledge about financial management. Once again apportioning blame was common, with educators

blaming principals for taking individualistic practices where finances were concerned and parents blaming educators for wanting to get their own way at all cost, despite finance policies.

- The drawing up and implementation of policies was largely seen as a challenge because of parents' low educational levels and lack of understanding of policy-making and implementation. While true and acknowledge by parents, this seems to be a function of the lack of understanding or poor understanding of the role of promoting the best interests of the school.

From the exposition above, it can be concluded that SGBs in previously disadvantaged schools do indeed face enormous challenges in performing their roles and responsibilities. It can also be averred that this stems mainly from the poor understanding of what school governance is about, as alluded to frequently in the literature review (Chapter 2).

5   Chapter summary

This chapter presented an analysis and interpretation of the findings of empirical results. The findings from participants' responses clearly indicated that there were major challenges in SGBs' execution of their roles and responsibilities. It was, however, also clear that some SGBs seemed to do very well regarding some aspects of school governance.

The following chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the summary of this study. The focus will be on important aspects that had emerged from the literature study regarding challenges faced by SGBs with regard to their roles and responsibilities. This presentation will, firstly, present a brief summary of the study, then present the conclusions based on findings of the empirical study concerning SGBs' roles and responsibilities in the primary schools in previously disadvantaged schools and finally, present the recommendations.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 presents the rationale of the study and outlines the research plan. The problem statement, research questions and aims are presented. The research design outlines the approach, method of data collection, research participants and selection, including details about the entire research procedure.

Chapter 2 outlines the nature of challenges faced by school governing bodies with regard to their roles and responsibilities. A historical background outlines school governance in the pre-democratic era (2.3.1) and school governance in the democratic era (2.3.2). The current legislative framework presents the provisions of the Constitution (2.3.2.1), the National Education Policy Act (2.3.2.2), the South African Schools Act (2.3.2.3), the provisions of the South African Schools Act on school governance (2.4), functions of all governing bodies (2.4.1) and allocated functions of SGBs (2.4.2). Subsequently, the study focuses on challenges regarding school governing bodies' roles and responsibilities (2.54). These are detailed with regard to school governance versus school management (2.5.1), challenges with regard to functioning according to the SGB's Constitution (2.5.2),

challenges with regard to the capacity of the SGB (2.5.3), challenges with regard to the prescribed functions (2.5.4), promoting the best interest of the school (2.5.4.1), supporting the principal and educators (2.5.4.2), controlling school property (2.5.4.3), encouraging parental involvement (2.5.4.4), recommending the appointment of staff (2.5.4.5) and challenges with regard to allocated functions (2.5.5).

Chapter 3 presents the empirical research design. The research design (3.2) detailed what can be considered as this study's research plan and included an exposition of the qualitative approach of this study (3.3.), which then culminated into the exposition of data collection (3.4). Data collection included an exposition of the interview as a data-collection technique (3.4.1), the interview setting (3.4.2), reliability and validity (3.4.3), a description of participants in the research (3.4.4) and data analysis (3.4.5). A final presentation related to a description of the ethical aspects (3.5).

Chapter 4 presented the data analysis and discussion. First, the realisation of ethical considerations and sampling was presented (4.2). This was followed by the exposition of the profile of the participants (4.3) and the presentation and discussion of findings in terms of data collected. This was presented according to data relating to challenges regarding roles and responsibilities of SGBs (4.4) and challenges regarding specific aspects of school governance (4.4.4). This discussion was presented in terms of perceptions emanating from principals, educators and parent-governors respectively. Chapter 4 then rounds off the data analysis and interpretation by providing an appraisal of challenges faced by SGBs in previously disadvantaged schools (4.4.7).

Chapter 5 summarises the entire study and presents conclusions and recommendations.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

The data from the empirical research indicated clearly that, while there are examples of good practice in a number of schools, SGBs were beset with numerous challenges regarding their roles and responsibilities. It must also be stated that the results of this study are, as is typical of qualitative research, in no way generalisable to the entire SGB population of the Gauteng Province, nor of South Africa. However, the findings have shed some light onto the workings of SGBs and, in line with the challenges exposed in the literature review, these findings may very well serve as a basis for a consideration of numerous recommendations for good practice. Following are conclusions made with regard to the data collected and as emergent from various themes that recurred from the data collected.

5.3.1 Poor understanding of the school governance role of SGB members

It appears that there is no clear understanding of the major role of school governance, namely *promoting the best interests of the school.* It also appears as if this role carries different connotations for different components of the SGBs. In this regard, the following challenges were identified:

- Principals perceived their role as that of mentoring, teaching other members their roles and functions and mediating between parent- and educator-governors. This is understandable since principals are *ex officio* and represent no constituency. This could, to them, mean that they are responsible for upholding the school governance roles. The following remarks from principals highlight this perception. Remarks like, "I am trying to close a gap that is there. Other governors believe they belong to another structure, the parent's component and teacher's component. So they are working against each other."; "I am helping them to perform their duties. Our SGB is responsible for everything, but I have to consistently help and guide

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them, to the extent that I end up doing most of their functions."; "I still have to face and strive to teach these people."

However, the very fact that there is this need could imply that principals, while knowledgeable and having undergone training on many occasions (since for every term of SGB, the principal remain a member), themselves lack capacity to manage and lead governance processes.

- Educators regard themselves as between the principal and parent-governors. They seem to apportion blame on the principal and parents. Issues cited include not being involved, lack of transparency, poorly educated parents who cannot understand their roles and responsibilities and non-implementation of policies. While clearly these are challenges at these schools, they also highlight the misperceptions regarding the role of governance at schools.

- Parents also apportion blame on educators and principals. Some of the reasons they cited for not executing their roles and responsibilities, are being undermined by educators, not being knowledgeable enough to execute school governance roles and poor training in school governance.

Promoting the best interests of the school means promoting the interests of the child at school. Consequently, all efforts should be focused on what benefits the child. This implies leaving no room for other impediments. However, in the context of SGBs currently and in the light of what had been the situation in South Africa for a long time, it is understandable that there would be contested terrains in as far as democratic school governance is concerned. Indeed, this concurs with most literature assertions regarding the constituent-based nature of SGBs in South Africa (cf. Bush & Heystek, 2003:128; Robinson et al., 2003:264; Ngidi, 2004:263; Xaba, 2004:313;Grant-Lewis & Naidoo, 2004:102; Mncube, 2007:103; Van Wyk, 2007:135).

5.3.2 The performance of roles and responsibilities is inhibited by poor training and capacity building

While not extensively mentioned by participants, one can safely assume that the training received by SGBs is generally inadequate, if not poor. It was mentioned that the training was rather short. A glaring omission is the provision of section 19(1) of the Schools Act that stipulates that out of funds appropriated for this purpose by the provincial legislature, the Head of Department must establish a programme to:

(a) provide introductory 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.

What seems to be the case is that, in most instances, introductory training is conducted, but as for continuous training, there does not seem to be evidence that that happens. Lekalakala (2006:101) reports from her research that while training was initially offered and SGB members gained a lot of knowledge, they reported not having skills to operationalise the knowledge gained. Indeed, this is understandable when considering that most functions of the SGB are of a specialised nature, for example financial management, including budgeting, accounting systems, record keeping and reconciliations. In this regard Ngidi (2004:262) reports from his research that SGBs may benefit from further training to promote and boost their effective performance, but that such training is not forthcoming and if it is, it may not be adequate. Studies by Bisschoff and Phakoa (1999) and Maile (2002) also confirm the notion that training of SGBs is less than adequate and indicate a need for such training.

5.3.3 Parent governors lack knowledge and school governance skills

By their very own admission, parents indicated that they lacked the requisite skills for school governance roles and responsibilities. This is also largely seen as a cause for the difficulty experienced in executing governance roles and responsibilities and can be ascribed to a number of factors. Firstly, as found in other studies (Lekalakala, 2006:93; Karlsson, 2002:332; Mbatsane, 2006:81), parents may genuinely be of poor education and thus lack the skills necessary to deal with governance issues, especially among the "highly" educated principals and educators. Secondly, the very knowledge and awareness of their educational shortcoming could be a factor in their seeming non-commitment and passiveness. This could be in terms of feelings of efficacy, low self-esteem and poor confidence. Finally, there could be knowledge about what roles are expected of them, but as indicated above, that alone is not enough. More skills of a specialised nature are needed.

5.3.4 School governance functions require specialised knowledge and skills

Based on the assertions made above, it becomes clear that school governance comprises much more than holding meetings, doing fundraising, recommending the appointment of staff and maintaining school facilities. While these are functions attached to school governance, they are of a specialised nature. For example, the maintenance of school facilities and drawing up of policies relevant to the maintenance of facilities require specialised knowledge of and skills in facilities and operations management (Szuba & Young, 2003:1). Another example is that of financial management, which is not only concerned with receiving, banking and spending money, but involves much more intricate operations like accounting systems, including planning, controlling, monitoring and reporting functions of financial accountability (Ngubane, 2009:17). It is in light of these specialised requirements that an assertion is made here that the SGB needs much more than

training in roles and responsibilities, but that the Schools Act should consider the roles of stakeholders in terms of the nature of prescribed functions.

5.3.5 There is lack of trust, suspicion and poor teamwork

From the participants' accounts, there was a great deal of finger-pointing and apportioning of blame for poor performance or failure to execute certain functions. Regardless of who's to blame, the result was evidently lack of trust, suspicion and poor teamwork in most SGBs. While not explicit, one can safely conclude that, as a result of not being able to function as SGBs focusing on promoting the best interests of the schools, SGB members tended to focus on symptoms of problems rather the real issue, namely a lack of understanding or poor understanding of what it means to promote the best interests of the school.

A scrutiny of the conclusions drawn above and the appraisal of challenges presented elsewhere in this text (cf. 4.4.7), pose some serious implications. The most serious of which seems to be at the core of the Schools Act itself. Recommendations to this effect are proffered in the next section.

5.4   RECOMMENDATIONS

While the study was mainly about challenges faced by SGBs in historically disadvantaged schools regarding their roles and responsibilities, the first three recommendations are concerned with the very core of legislation on school governance as provided in the Schools Act. Therefore emanating from the literature and empirical studies, the following recommendations are made:

- There is a need for the Schools Act to be reviewed in terms of which roles and functions are prescribed for SGBs. It is clear that some functions require specialised knowledge and skills. The Schools Act should be reviewed to look at which functions are specialised and who should perform such functions. For example, the execution of functions like:

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- financial management and accountability as required by the PFMA require functionaries with accounting qualifications and skills, especially since schools are receiving massive funding from the state;

- school facilities maintenance requires qualified functionaries in facilities management and operations, at least at district level;

- school safety and security require functionaries qualified in crime and intelligence operations, especially since matters like burglaries and theft of facilities and equipment seem to be driven in an organised manner.

• The terms of office of SGB members need to be reviewed. Assuming that training, as prescribed by the Schools Act, does take place initially and maybe continuously, the five-year term is over before SGB members have gained enough capacity and/or have just begun to gain capacity. Then new members are elected, basically on their campaigning strategies and a new cycle of capacity-building thus begins. Continuity is thus lost on the "promises" elections campaigns are usually notorious for. Instead, the benefits of principals who quite clearly seem to know more about governance than other members, is worth looking at. The fact that they are permanent members of SGBs, as it were, implies that they receive continuous capacitation. Therefore the researcher recommends that some functionaries of the SGB should be allowed to run for at least two terms, in order to ensure continuity and full utilisation of capacity gained during the initial years as functionaries in the SGB.

• In prescribing SGB functions, the Schools Act or, in the very least, the different provincial rules and regulations, need to be specific on exactly what the roles entail, rather than providing a general exposition. For example, promoting the best interests of the school should not be left to people's

interpretations, but should be specific. In the same breath, the roles of SGB members should be made specific, especially in relation to what it means to be a school governor, despite being elected by a constituency. Furthermore, it should be made mandatory for these roles to be explicated before nominations and elections into SGBs are made. This way school governors would know exactly what to expect. This will also eradicate such demands as stipends for being SGB members.

As regards the challenges faced by SGBs in their roles and responsibilities, the following recommendations are made:

- Schools, with the principals leading, should engage in capacity-building exercises on their own, thus providing for continuous training that is needs-based and customised to local conditions. To this end, schools could form cluster-based training sessions aimed at addressing common local circumstances, like theft of resources and facilities and burglaries.

- School-level training and capacity-building should make it a norm to use the languages most often used and understood by parents. This means developing training manuals and conducting training in these languages. For example, school constitutions should be drawn up, printed and displayed in such languages. Furthermore, schools should go out of their way to acquire various pieces of legislation in languages used in their spheres of operation and influence.

- It is incumbent on the Education Department, from Head Office through to, especially, local levels, to attend to the skills needs of school principals as leaders of schools and *ex officio* SGB members. Form the accounts of participants, principals need capacitating in skills such as problem-solving, conflict management and resolution, leading, monitoring of processes attendant to implementation of policies and team building. This must be

accompanied by on-the-job monitoring and capacitation by district officials tasked with development and support of schools.

- The Department of Education should have a system of feeding information to its various units for purposes of supporting schools. Though not mentioned in this report, it was indicated in off-the-record discussions that principals and school finance officers in many instances had been investigated for misconduct in terms of mismanagement and misappropriation of finances. The units in charge of such processes should conduct trend analyses of such cases, identify gaps and feed this information to responsible units.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This study, like many other studies, has confirmed that there are challenges faced by SGBs in previously disadvantaged schools regarding their roles and responsibilities. However, the study has not exhausted all challenges SGBs are facing in their roles. To this end, the following recommendations for further study are made:

- An intensive study is needed regarding the meaning and implications of SGBs promoting the interests of the school, especially that of the child.

- A study could be conducted to investigate the roles of principals as *ex officio* members in the SGB, and to look at, especially, recommendations to what principals should do as leaders of schools. The question to be answered in this regard is: What is the role of the principal as school leader and manager in the SGB?

- There is a need for an investigation into how parents can be capacitated to assume their rightful role as governors, without patronising them and regarding them as inferior and illiterate.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate challenges faced by SGBs in historically disadvantaged schools regarding their roles and responsibilities. In doing so, the following sub-aims were focussed on:

- an examination of the essence of SGBs' school governance roles and responsibilities;

- an appraisal of the nature of challenges faced by SGBs regarding their roles and responsibilities;

- an investigation of the current challenges facing SGBs in historically disadvantaged schools regarding their roles and responsibilities; and

- a determination of how the SGBs in historically disadvantaged schools can improve the practice of their roles and responsibilities.

The literature review addressed the first two sub-aims (cf. Chapter 2). The empirical study addressed the third sub-aim (Chapter 3 & 4) and the last chapter provided the conclusions and recommendation to the research subject, thus addressing sub-aim 4.

The research, in a way, confirmed existing research on difficulties and challenges of school governance in South Africa. Although not generalisable to all SGBs, the study has gained insights into the challenges faced by SGBs and, as is typical of qualitative research, has opened a scope for further research and debate on fundamental issues like recommending a review of the South African Schools Act.

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ANNEXURE A

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

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Ethics Committee

Dr I Xaba

Tel	+27 18 299 4850
Fax	+27 18 293 5329
Email	Ethics@nwu.ac.za

Dear Dr. Xaba

21 Oktober 2008

ETHICS APPROVAL OF PROJECT

The North-West University Ethics Committee (NWU-EC) hereby approves your project as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-EC grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the project may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Project title: Challenges faced by school governing bodies in historically disadvantaged schools regarding their roles and responsibilities

Ethics number:

N	W	U	-	0	0	5	1	-	0	8	-	A	2
Institution				Project Number					Year			Status	

Status S = Submission P = Re-Submission P = Provisional Authorisation A = Authorisation

Approval date: 29 September 2008   **Expiry date**: 28 September 2013

Special conditions of the approval (if any): None

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 project leader (principle investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-EC:*
  - *annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress 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.*
- *The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the NWU-EC. Would there be deviated from the project protocol 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-EC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.*
- *In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-EC retains the right to:*
  - *request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project;*
  - *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 NWU-EC 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.*

The Ethics Committee 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 Ethics Committee for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely

Prof MMJ Lowes
(chair NWU Ethics Committee)

Prof M. Monteith
(Chairman: NWU Ethics Committee:Teaching and Learning)

Lefapha la Thuto
Departement van Onderwys

Enquiries : Shadrack Phele MIRMSA

Tel. no. : [+2711] 355 0285

Wednesday, 25 June 2008

Mr. Kumalo Nzimeni   0827539 180
PO Box 737
VEREENIGING
1930

Dear Mr. Kumalo Nzimeni

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: PROJECT

The Gauteng Department of Education hereby grants permission to conduct research in its institutions as per application.

Topic of research : "Challenges faced by SGBs in the historically disadvantaged schools with regards to their roles and responsibilities."

Nature of project : M.Ed. [Educational Management]

Name of university : North-West University

Upon completion of the research project the researcher is obliged to furnish the Department with copy of the research report (electronic or hard copy).

The Department wishes you success in your academic pursuit.

Yours in Tirisano,

p.p. Shadrack Phele [MIRMSA]
TOM WASPE
CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER
Gauteng Department of Education

Office of the DDG: IS & KM (CIO)
Room 1807, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001   P.O.Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000
Tel: (011) 355-1514/1507   Fax: (011) 355-0734/0833   E-mail: tomw@gpg.gov.za or elridar@gpg.gov.za

ANNEXURE C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RESEARCHER: N.S.KUMALO

TITLE OF RESEARCHER PROJECT: Challenges faced by school governing bodies in historically disadvantaged schools regarding their roles and responsibilities.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH is to investigate challenges faced by school governing bodies (SGBs) in historically disadvantaged schools with regard to their roles and responsibilities.

DURATION: The duration of each interview session will be approximately 45 min – 1 hour.

PROCEDURES: The interviews will be conducted in groups. These will be audio-taped. An interview schedule will be used to guide the interviews. Participants will be identified by the school principals of the school. This will be on the basis of participants themselves being willing to participate. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time and they do not need to provide reasons for doing so.

POSSIBLE RISKS: No possible risks to participants are envisaged. However, in the event of questions that may perceive as threatening or causing discomfort, participants may decline to answer such questions without providing any reasons for doing so.

BENEFITS: No direct benefits or compensation will be due to participants except that the interviews might assist them in gaining a deeper understanding of challenges besetting in the execution of their roles and responsibilities.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: Participation in this research is completely voluntary. Participants may at any stage, refuse to participate and may withdraw at any time.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Data in this study will be confidential. As such all data collected will be coded in terms of (1) names; (2) data collected; (3) use of identification keys, which will be known only to the researcher; (4) audio tapes being kept confidential until there are erased after a year.

CONTACT: The research is conducted by Master's student, Kumalo N.S. under the supervisor of Dr. M.I. Xaba, from the School of Educational Sciences: North-West University – Vaal Triangle Campus. Dr. M.I. Xaba can be reached at 016 910 3068 (o/h) for questioning regarding this research project.

This research has been ethical approved by the North-west University Ethics Committee.

CONSENT:

I .... have read and understand the nature of my participation in this research project and agree to participate.

....

Names in full   **Signature**   **Date**

Interview schedule

1. Do you as a governor or as a principal feel that you are performing your governance roles and responsibilities successfully?

2. Why do you feel this way?

3. Which challenges do you face as a governor or as a principal in terms of:

   (a) Relationships among SGB members?

   (b) Relationships with educators at the school?

   (c) Team-work?

   (d) Maintaining school property, buildings and grounds?

   (e) Communication and accountability to the stakeholders?

   (f) School financial management, budgeting and reporting?

   (g) Drawing and implementing of school policies?

4. Do you think the SGB is executing its roles and responsibilities effectively?

5. What other challenges face the SGBs in executing their roles and responsibilities?