

EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES IN THE RURAL SCHOOLS
OF NGCOBO DISTRICT

BY

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DECLARATION

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In accordance with Rule G 4.6.3, I hereby declare that the above-mentioned dissertation is my own work and that it has not been previously submitted for assessment to another university for a qualification. I further declare that the sources used in this work have been appropriately acknowledged.

Signature:

Date:

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my late mother, Mrs Nomagungqu Lugalo, who passed on while I was a student in 2014.

ABSTRACT

This study focussed on school governing bodies in the rural schools in Ngcobo. In this study, the researcher established that in rural schools, parent members of school governing bodies are still reluctant, or ill equipped to do their duty as governors of the schools. They rely on what the principals ask them to do. They need more training and empowerment to fulfil their duties as members of the school governing bodies. Most of the parents who are members of school governing bodies are older and their level of education is generally low.

The principals are complaining that not enough training was being given to parent members to fulfil their task as school governors. However, it remains the principals' responsibility to coach SGB parent-members in order for the school functionality to go on. The findings of this study show that much more need to be done to empower parental-members of SGBs in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape and most probably in most, if not all, rural areas of South Africa.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|------|--|
| ABET | Adult Basic Education and Training (Lately AET = Adult Education and Training). |
| DoBE | Department of Basic Education |
| DoE | Department of Education |
| HOD | Head of Department |
| JSS | Junior Secondary School |
| SASA | South African Schools Act |
| SCA | Supreme Court of Appeal |
| SGB | School Governing Body |
| SSS | Senior Secondary School |

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1: Gender distribution of participants

Figure 4.2: Employment status of SGB members

LIST OF ANNEXURES

- Annexure A:** Parents' member questionnaire
- Annexure B:** Parents' member group interview schedule
- Annexure C:** Individual interview for principals
- Annexure D:** Principals' questionnaire
- Annexure E:** Consent form for principals and SGB members
- Annexure F:** Department of Education`s permission

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| DECLARATION | i |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | ii |
| DEDICATION | iii |
| ABSTRACT | iv |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS | v |
| LIST OF FIGURES | vi |
| LIST OF ANNEXURES | vii |

CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

| | | |
|-------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1.1 | INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.2 | PROBLEM STATEMENT | 1 |
| 1.3 | RESEARCH QUESTION | 2 |
| 1.3.1 | Primary research question | 2 |
| 1.3.2 | Secondary research question | 2 |
| 1.4 | AIM AND OBJECTIVES | 2 |
| 1.4.1 | Research aim..... | 2 |
| 1.4.2 | Research objectives | 3 |
| 1.5 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK..... | 3 |
| 1.6 | RESEARCH APPROACH..... | 4 |
| 1.7 | RESEARCH DESIGN..... | 5 |
| 1.8 | DATA ANALYSIS | 8 |

| | | |
|------|--|----|
| 1.9 | LITERATURE ON IMPORTANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF SGBs | 8 |
| 1.10 | CONCEPT CLARIFICATION..... | 9 |
| 1.11 | ETHICAL CONSIDERATION..... | 10 |
| 1.12 | SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY..... | 10 |
| 1.13 | SEQUENCE OF THE CHAPTERS..... | 11 |
| 1.14 | CONCLUSION..... | 11 |

CHAPTER TWO

**LITERATURE REVIEW ON EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES
IN RURAL SCHOOLS**

| | | |
|-------|---|----|
| 2.1 | INTRODUCTION | 12 |
| 2.2 | COMPOSITION OF SGBs..... | 13 |
| 2.3 | ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SGB MEMBERS | 14 |
| 2.3.1 | Determining school policies | 15 |
| 2.3.2 | Maintaining discipline..... | 16 |
| 2.3.3 | Financial management..... | 17 |
| 2.4 | CHALLENGES FACED BY SGBs | 18 |
| 2.4.1 | Lack of literacy..... | 18 |
| 2.4.2 | Lack of financial management experience..... | 18 |
| 2.4.3 | Clarity on roles..... | 18 |
| 2.4.4 | Policy development..... | 19 |
| 2.5 | EMPOWERMENT OF SGB PARENT MEMBERS | 19 |
| 2.6 | TRAINING OF SGBs | 21 |
| 2.7 | CONCLUSION..... | 22 |

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

| | Page |
|--|-------------|
| 3.1 INTRODUCTION | 23 |
| 3.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT | 23 |
| 3.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS..... | 24 |
| 3.3.1 Primary research question | 24 |
| 3.3.2 Secondary research questions | 24 |
| 3.4 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES | 24 |
| 3.4.1 Research aim..... | 24 |
| 3.4.2 Research objectives | 24 |
| 3.5 RESEARCH APPROACH..... | 25 |
| 3.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY | 25 |
| 3.7 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES | 26 |
| 3.8 PILOTING THE QUESTIONS..... | 28 |
| 3.9 DATA ANALYSIS | 29 |
| 3.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS | 29 |
| 3.10.1 Triangulation..... | 29 |
| 3.10.2 Validity, reliability and credibility | 30 |
| 3.11 CONCLUSION..... | 31 |

CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| 4.1 INTRODUCTION | 32 |
| 4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION | 32 |
| 4.2.1 SGB members | 32 |

| | | |
|-------|--|----|
| 4.2.2 | Principals | 34 |
| 4.3 | THEME ONE: TRAINING NEEDS OF SGB MEMBERS | 35 |
| 4.4 | THEME TWO: RELATIONSHIP WITH GENERAL PARENT BODY | 37 |
| 4.5 | THEME THREE: LITERACY LEVELS OF SGB MEMBERS | 40 |
| 4.6 | CONCLUSION..... | 41 |

CHAPTER FIVE

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

| | | |
|-------|--|----|
| 5.1 | INTRODUCTION | 42 |
| 5.2 | DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION | 42 |
| 5.2.1 | SGB Members | 42 |
| 5.2.2 | Principals | 44 |
| 5.3 | THEME ONE: TRAINING NEEDS OF SGB MEMBERS | 44 |
| 5.4 | THEME TWO: RELATIONSHIP WITH GENERAL PARENT BODY | 45 |
| 5.5 | THEME THREE: LITERACY LEVELS OF SGB MEMBERS | 46 |
| 5.6 | LIMITATION OF STUDY | 47 |
| 5.7 | RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDIES..... | 47 |
| 5.8 | CONCLUSION..... | 47 |
| | BIBLIOGRAPHY | 48 |

CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Education should be one of the first focus areas in improving a community's standard of living. For this reason, the governance in public schools has been emphasised in the new Constitution for a democratic South Africa (SA Constitution, 1996:11). The involvement of representatives of stakeholders, such as parents of learners, learners, educators and non-teaching staff in public education, is mainly channelled through School Governing Bodies (SGBs). As such, individual members contribute to a democratic practice that contributes to the governance of schools by bringing their skills and expertise such as good management practices, ideas on discipline and financial planning skills. Unfortunately in most rural schools of South Africa there is a lack of such skills and expertise to assist in good governance practices to support the management of the school on various levels.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although the SGBs were given governance powers by the South African Schools Act (SASA), such powers are not utilised by these bodies, especially in the rural areas. This is cause for concern, as it renders school governance ineffective. Although the South African School's Act (SASA) provides for the inclusion of parents in SGBs, parents are often not aware of what their obligations and duties as SGB members are, and also often lack the skills (in some cases even basic literacy skills), and the appropriate training needed to contribute optimally to the management and governance of the schools. In this regard many SGB members do not support the principals in maintaining discipline at the schools and lack skills in financial management; the two most pressing issues in school governance in rural areas.

Sadly, in most rural schools in the Ngcobo District many SGB members do not attend SGB meetings regularly or do not inform other parents about activities taking

place at the school. It is therefore perceived by the researcher that many parents serving as SGB members are not suitably committed, skilled or prepared for their school governance task as members of the SGB.

From the above mentioned problem statement, the following research questions were derived:

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.3.1 Primary research questions

- How effective are the school governing bodies in the rural areas of the Ngcobo District?

1.3.2 Secondary research questions

- What aspects may influence the effectiveness of the SGBs in the Ngcobo rural areas negatively?
- How can members of the SGB be supported to become more effective in their governance involvement at the selected schools?

Following the research questions, the following research aim and objectives arose:

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1.4.1 Research aim

- The aim of the study was to determine how effective the SGBs in the rural areas of Ngcobo District were.

1.4.2 Research objectives

From the research aim, the following research objectives were derived:

- Identifying the aspects that may influence the effectiveness of the SGBs in the Ngcobo District negatively.
- Determining ways in which members of the SGBs can be supported to become more effective in their governance involvement at the selected schools.

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was based on the Governance theory as a framework for empirical research by Toikka (2011). According to Toikka (2011:03), governance is one of the most popular buzzwords in recent political science and education debates. According to this theory, communication between individual organisations leads to the development of network structures and patterns. The latter shows similarities with what happened in the South African situation in education after the country received democratic government in 1994 where school governance is an important focus area of the present government. According Toikka (2011:03), governance refers to complex policy-making situation, in which a variety of public and private actors collaborate in order to produce and define policy as it is in the school governance. In this process communication is developed between role players and structures, almost similar to the network structures and patters of the Governance Theory.

To Toikka (2011), governance is a process of autonomous, self-organizing networks of organisations exchanging information and deliberating. This agrees with the situation of my study because in school governance, different stakeholders are involved in order to make schools better places for learning. According to Toikka (2011), the involvement of the stakeholders is very important in governance and each stakeholder has to play its active role. The researcher applied the above

mentioned theory to this study in order to establish the effectiveness of SGBs in school governance and the network structures that should be present in school governance. In this study focussing on the role of SGB's on good school governance, the communication and network links between different stakeholders are important as effective communication and network links support empowering all SGB members. In this study the researcher tried to find out how effective is the parent component in school governance in the rural schools.

1.6 RESEARCH APPROACH

The study was based on an interpretive paradigm, because the proposed focus was on the participants' views of their experiences in their life world (Creswell, 2005:8). Morrison (2002:18) asserts that in interpretive research, the researcher is, or becomes part of the context of the topic investigated and that reality is not out there as an external phenomenon to be uncovered, but is grounded in people's personal experience.

In this regard, McFarlane (2000:28) argues that in terms of the interpretive paradigm, the researcher needs to be actively involved with the research participants and share their world and experiences in that world. Considering that the focus of this study it was the experience of SGBs in the governance of their schools, this study opted for a paradigm that would support credible, valid and relative information about what the members of the SGBs were experiencing as reality in the execution of their tasks.

A qualitative research approach was used for this study. Qualitative research describes and analyses people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions (White, 2005:104). Qualitative research is an enquiry in which researchers collect data in face-to-face situations by interacting with the selected participants in their familiar settings (MacMillan and Schumacher, 2001:395). According to Gay and Airasian (2000:202), qualitative research questions encompass a broad range of topics, with most focusing on participants' understanding of life in their particular context. These authors state that qualitative research seeks to probe deeply into the research setting in order to obtain an

understanding about the way things are, why they are that way and how the research participants in the context perceive them.

The researcher chose a qualitative approach, because such an approach would enable him to interact with the participants in their natural settings in order to gain a better understanding of their perception and experience of serving as members of an SGB and their understanding of the value of having a functional SGB at the school.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

MacMillan and Schumacher (2001:219) describe a research design as a plan of action (using specific methods) for selecting participants, research sites and data collection procedures in order to answer the research questions. It includes who will be participating and when, where and under which circumstances they will participate, the main aim being to obtain credible results and limit any error or bias.

The research design selected for this study is an exploratory descriptive design. Such an exploratory descriptive design allows the researcher to explore and obtain the perspectives of the participants about the phenomenon under investigation.

- **Methodology**

Methodology is a more generic term that refers to the general logic and theoretical perspective underpinning a research project (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003:31). Methodology gives an indication of how the research will be conducted. According to White (2005:930), the researcher needs to select a research method as part of the research design, to conduct his research in such a way that he/she will find answers to the research questions. In this study, the findings were generated from interviews and questionnaires that were administered to the participating school principals and SGB parent members. These methods were also considered the most useful to obtain information from the participants situated in this rural area as the participants' views and opinions would inform the topic.

- **Sample**

A sample comprises a group of participants selected from a larger group. Sampling is the process of selecting a number of participants for the research in such a way that they stand on behalf of the larger group from which they were selected (Gay & Airasian, 2000:121). The schools were selected randomly from the Nkondlo circuit of the Ngcobo District of Education. These schools were randomly selected to represent two different levels of schools in the area and were considered to be representative of all schools in the Ngcobo District. In this study the sample comprised three Junior Secondary schools and one High School selected because each had more than a 300 plus learner enrolment base.

Among the selected participants were the four principals and all SGB parent members. All parents serving on the SGBs were invited to participate, but were under no obligation to do so, it was imagined that at least four parents from each school would be willing to participate in this study.

- **Data collection instruments**

The qualitative research approach uses various data collection strategies, such as interviews, observations, diaries, photographs, and perusing official documents and newspaper articles (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003:85). For the purpose of this study, a structured interview schedule and a questionnaire were used to gather the data.

- **Interviews**

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003:68), in structured interviewing, the interviewer asks all participants the same series of pre-established questions, with a limited set of response categories. The interviewer therefore has better control over the type of information received and may ask specific questions to elicit more information for clarity (Creswell, 2005:204) as was done in this study. There is very little flexibility in the way questions are asked or answered in a structured interview setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003:68). Interviews were used as a data collection instrument in this study

because people in the rural areas generally feel more comfortable talking than writing because many are illiterate.

In qualitative research, interviews are used to gather descriptive data in the participants' own words so that the researcher can develop insight in how participants interpret their own world (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003:95). According to Gay and Airasian (2000:219), during interviews the researcher can explore and probe participants' responses to gather more in-depth information about their experiences and feelings.

In this study, individual interviews were conducted with four principals, while focus group interviews were held with the parent members of SGBs from different schools who agreed to participate. The principals were considered to be key role players who possessed specialised knowledge to share regarding the functioning and effectiveness of school governing bodies. The data collected from the principals were important in understanding how effective the SGBs were and how their functioning affected the governance and the management of the schools. During the interviews, questions were posed in both English and isiXhosa, and the participants were allowed to respond in either of the two languages with isiXhosa responses being translated when transcribing was done.

- **Questionnaires**

According to White (2005:126), a questionnaire is an instrument used to gather data through posing open-ended or close-ended questions to which participants must respond. Questionnaires are often used in face-to-face interview schedules. They can also be administered efficiently in groups or entire classes rather than individually (Guthrie, 2010:129). Open-ended questions were used in this study, as skillfully designed open-ended questions are high on validity, because they generate comprehensive answers in participants' own words (Guthrie, 2010:130).

Questionnaires were implemented to gather information from parent members and the principals of the selected schools. All questions in the questionnaire used in this

study were open-ended. Two separate questionnaires were developed for the principals and for the parental SGB members.

1.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis of qualitative data takes place simultaneously with data collection. This means that while the researcher is busy collecting the data the researcher starts analysing it at the same time (White, 2005:186). The researcher used a qualitative method of data analysis to analyse the collected data. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003:147), qualitative data analysis means the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts and questionnaires to analyse and interpret to the point of giving meaning to any trends.

In this study analysis of data obtained from interviews and questionnaires was done through reading and re-reading all material, including the transcriptions from the interviews. Coding of specific aspects that seemed to re-appear time and again was done and these codes were categorized into themes.

1.9 LITERATURE ON IMPORTANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF SGBs

According to White (2005:07), an important outcome of a literature review is to guide the researcher's frame of reference; the literature review should therefore not be left until late in the research process, as it provides substantially better insight into the dimensions and complexity of the research problem. White further states that a literature review may disclose that another researcher or scholar has already conducted the same or similar research and/or the new trends in the field. For the purpose of this study, the literature review also helped to shed some light on the possible ways of empowering SGBs regarding the effectiveness and responsibilities related to successful school governance.

In this study, a review of the literature included scrutinising professional journals, scholarly books, and government documents, such as Department of Education (DoE) policies and SGB training manuals, dissertations and newspaper articles.

These provided a broad understanding of the role of school governing bodies as a factor in establishing the effective functioning of a school. It also threw more light on aspects like the composition of the SGB, roles and responsibilities of the SGB, maintaining discipline, determining school policies, financial management, and capacitating SGBs and the problems experienced by the SGBs. This information was of importance to my study, because it exposed shortcomings in existing SGB structures at the selected schools (and most probably at many other schools who experience the same challenges).

SASA (1996:31) stipulates that SGBs must draw up or amend a school development plan that promotes the interests of the school through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school. According to the South African Schools Act (1996), numerous other functions may be given to governing bodies. Clarke (2009:12) states that if the SGBs want to be responsible for these additional functions, it must apply to the head of the department (HOD) who may allocate the functions in writing to the SGBs; if the HOD is satisfied that the SGBs can perform the functions. This information is of importance as it is clear that extra functions can be taken on if the SGB members are suitably qualified and/or trained.

1.10 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

- **Effectiveness:** Producing a desired or intended result (*South African Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 2006). For the purpose of this study, effectiveness meant producing good results and being able to establish positive governance at school in different areas, as prescribed by the DoE.
- **School Governing Body:** According to SASA (1996), a School Governing Body is a group of people who have been elected from educators, parents, learners and non-teaching staff to help in the smooth running (governance) of the school.

- **Rural:** The term ‘rural’ implies characteristics of the country-side rather than the town (*South African Concise Oxford Dictionary, 2006*). In the South African context, a rural area refers to a remote area far from town.

1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research observed all protocols prescribed by the Faculty of Economics and Business Studies of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University to maintain and enhance ethical credibility. In this regard, participants were informed of their right to anonymity, their right to participate on a voluntary basis, and their right to withdraw from the study at any point without any negative consequences. All the participants were fully informed in writing by the researcher about the purpose of the research, and permission to audio-tape all interviews was received.

The Department of Education gave permission to the researcher to conduct the study at the selected schools. This was mentioned in the letter to the school asking for permission to access the school sites and also mentioned when the researcher was briefing the participants before the interviews and questionnaires were administered.

1.12 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of the study lies in the fact that it illustrated to what extent school governing bodies were functioning (or not) in some rural schools and with what challenges and demands most such schools are confronted. The identification of common problems could lead to the development of recommendations to guide SGBs to function at optimum levels in order to make a meaningful contribution at their respective schools.

1.13 SEQUENCE OF THE CHAPTERS

In Chapter One, an overview of the research was given, which included a discussion of the context and the statement of the problem, followed by the research questions and the aim and the objectives of the study. It also included what research approach was chosen, tools used to collect data, how the data was analysed, and the significance of the study.

In Chapter Two, an overview of the literature related to the effectiveness of school governing bodies is presented, while Chapter Three deals with the research design and methodology followed in this study.

Chapter Four presents the findings, interpretation of the results and a discussion of the results. Finally, the conclusion and recommendations concerning the research findings are presented in Chapter Five.

1.14 CONCLUSION

Chapter One introduces the study and detailed the background to the research and rationale for choosing the topic. This chapter also provides a brief concept clarification in order to assist readers in understanding the content of this study. After presenting the theoretical framework, the research approach and design are discussed, before a discussion of the ethical considerations that were adhered to.

Chapter Two provides a literature review on aspects relevant to this study. This is relevant and valuable, as a thorough literature review highlights what is already known about the topic and what aspects still need to be researched.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW ON EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES IN RURAL SCHOOLS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

After the inaugural democratic elections held in South Africa in 1994, the new government identified key areas for political change; education was to receive priority attention. Amongst other aspects, school governance was considered as problematic; in fact, the new South African Schools Act (1996) came into being in order to address problems regarding governance.

The South African Schools Act (1996) emphasises the importance of the direct involvement of stakeholders in the governance of the schools, encouraging communities to become personally involved in the education of their children by participating in the organisation and governance of their schools. In this regard, Van Wyk and Lemmer (2002:126) maintain that the main threat of the South African Schools Act (1996) is that the state lacks adequate financial and organisational capacity to provide in all the needs of schools. It is therefore important for stakeholders, such as educators, parents, learners and the local community, to become actively involved in the organisation, governance and funding of the schools. This idea stems from a belief that schools will be functioning efficiently and effectively when governed by local people who have a personal interest in them, since such people are well placed when it comes to identifying the problems and needs of their schools, provided they are prepared to accept the responsibility to effectively execute their task as SGB members (Van Wyk and Lemmer, 2002:129).

An SGB is expected to stand in a position of trust to a school and to assist the principal on behalf of the school community in organising and managing the activities of the school effectively and efficiently (SASA, 1996:5). This legislation further states that creating governing bodies in schools can be seen as part of a cooperative governance system in which national, provincial and local spheres of government

are both independent and interrelated. SGBs have been given more responsibility than what the school committees pre 1994 used to have. As a statutory body, the SGB ensures the opportunity for the participation of parents, educators, non-academic staff members and learners in an official forum (Beckman and Blom, 2011:1).

Since SGBs are supposed to play an important role in school governance and have substantial influence on the everyday running of a school, it is important for the school community to know who the SGB members are, what their responsibilities are, and how they may be supported. On their part, SGB members should understand their role and responsibility in promoting the effective governance of the school in which they are involved. Educators, parents and learners need to work together in a relationship of mutual trust and understanding as such a partnership will serve the benefit of the school and the community at large.

2.2 COMPOSITION OF SGBs

According to SASA (1996), the membership of an SGB comprises elected members from educators, parents, non-teaching staff, learners and co-opted members (members of the community who do not have children at the school, but who carry the best interests of the school at heart). Parents should be in the majority, and at least be one more in number than the total of the other members combined, as they have the most important stake in the school's governance.

The number of the members of any SGB is determined by the size of the school enrolment and whether the school is a primary, secondary or comprehensive school. SASA (1996) dictates a formula for calculating the members of the governing body to be elected in each category (referred to in Section 23(2)). However, such formula must provide reasonable representation for each category and must be capable of application to the different sizes and circumstances of public schools. According to Clarke (2009:65), most education departments have seven parent representatives elected by the parents of learners in the school (five for primary schools), two teacher representatives (elected by teaching staff), one non-teaching representative

(elected by non-teaching staff), two learner representatives (elected by the Learners' Representative Council (for schools with pupils in grade 8 and above), and the principal of the school, in his or her capacity as principal. However, other members who can provide specialised skills, such as financial management skills and/or good organising skills, may also be co-opted to the SGB.

In the absence of non-teaching staff, the number of parent representatives must be reduced by one. For primary schools, no learner component is included.

SGB members normally serve three years (except learners from the Learners' Representative Council, who serve for one year only, unless re-elected, provided they are still at school during their term of office) (Department of Education, 2003:78). Before the term ends, the provincial departments of education must remind the public schools about the election of the new governing bodies.

2.3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SGB MEMBERS

An SGB has the power to support the effective and efficient governance of the school (SASA, 1996:12). As such, the task of this governing body is to promote the best interests of the school, thereby ensuring that learners at the school receive the best education possible. As part of this task, SGBs should help school principals to organise and manage the school in an effective and efficient way (Department of Education, 1997:7) by, amongst others, undertaking the roles and responsibilities explained below.

In the first place, an SGB is required to develop a mission statement for the school and to adopt a code of conduct for the learners at the school. This code of conduct can be regularly revised, and all learners should be familiar with the content of such code of conduct.

The SGB should support the principal, educators and other staff members of the school in the performance of their professional duties, namely teaching and learning. This can be done with the help of the DoE by ensuring receipt of educational

resources, such as books and stationery, in order for staff members to do their job properly and for learners to learn (SASA, 1996:12). Linked to this, establishing an inviting and stimulating learning environment will influence learning in a positive way.

Regarding the above, an SGB may also be involved in the administering and control of the property, buildings and grounds occupied by the school. It is also its duty to encourage educators, parents, learners, and other staff members at school to render voluntary services, such as cleaning and maintenance. This may include organising donations from people interested in education and the protection and success of the school (SASA, 1996:13).

It is also the role of the SGB to recommend the appointment of educators to the Head of Department, subject to the Employment of Educators Act (Act No. 76:1998), and the Labour Relations Act (Act No. 6:1995). School governing bodies also play a very important role in the management of school finance and must consequently have financial skills or a financial background.

Due to the limitations of the scope of this study only the most important duties and responsibilities of SGBs have been mentioned. While the above mentioned are the most important functions to ensure the effective governance of the school, the practical aspects of implementation, as discussed below, are of critical importance to the capacity of SGBs regarding school governance.

2.3.1 Determining school policies

According to Clarke (2009:36), some policies are stipulated by legislation, while others are introduced by the schools themselves in order to ensure their smooth running. It is the responsibility of the SGB to formulate such school policies, such as an admissions policy, an assessment policy, a policy for attendance and absenteeism of learners, and policies pertaining to bullying, discipline and the handling of school finances.

This includes that the SGB should clearly state its goals concerning matters such as discipline, extra-curricular matters, staff development, educational visits and excursions, meeting the special education needs of learners and any other matters it considers of importance. SGBs should also ensure that all policies are clear, consistent and reasonable to promote their easy implementation and compliance by the school community (Van Wyk and Lemmer, 2002:130). Unfortunately, often policies, such as directing the school's ethos, are drawn up with minimal or no input from the SGB members. As a result, their buy-in for vital and important policies is often not received, and this lack of commitment on the part of SGB members inevitably affects the successful implementation of such policies.

2.3.2 Maintaining discipline

In conjunction to the development of a mission statement, SASA, Act No. 84 Of 1996 (Section 8/1) empowers SGBs to draft a code of conduct for learners, clarifying what is expected of them and what the consequences of a breach of the code will be. As recommended by the Department of Education (2001:20) South Africa, such a code of conduct should be based on an ethos that is congruent with the South African Constitution, the relevant legislation, and the vision and mission of the school itself. An SGB should therefore be aware of the school's Code of Conduct, as embedded in the Mission and Vision of the school in order to assist in maintaining discipline in the school. In this regard, Porteus, Vally and Ruth (2001:98) argue that the code of conduct must inform and educate learners of the way in which they should conduct themselves at school, in preparation for their later conduct and safety in civil society. It is therefore considered reasonable to expect from SGBs to have specific and specialised knowledge and understanding of laws and legislation relating to education in order to avoid making wrong decisions, which may involve the school in litigation (Clarke, 2009:30). Knowing of the relevant legislation will help SGBs to develop a code of conduct that will stand up in court, if needed.

2.3.3 Financial management

The financial management of the school has a direct impact on its functionality (Clarke, 2009:32). As a result, an SGB has an important role to play in overseeing the functional management of the school fees and any other money which may be paid into the school's account or spent by the school. This role may include planning, reviewing, controlling and approving the school's budget in accordance with its needs. School Governing Bodies must ensure that the budget complies with departmental guidelines (Van Wyk and Lemmer, 2002:132), and the prescriptions laid down in the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996:24-28-27).

According to SASA, the governing body of a public school is obliged to establish a school fund and administer it in accordance with the directions issued by the Head of Department. An SGB has to open and maintain one school banking account, in which all the school fees are kept. It is the duty of an SGB at a public school to, each year, prepare a budget according to the guidelines determined by the member of the Executive Council, which shows the estimated income and expenditure of the following financial year. Such a budget must be approved by the parents at a parents' meeting.

SASA (1996) further states that the governing body of a public school must keep records of funds received and all financial transactions, as well as records of its assets and liabilities. It is the task of the SGB at a public school to appoint a person registered as an auditor in terms of the Auditing Profession to audit the records and financial statements annually and submit to the DoE Head of Department the audited report within six months after the end of each financial year.

According to Van Wyk and Lemmer (2002:135), it is not always easy for members of SGBs to understand financial matters clearly; therefore, they should co-opt committee members who have a sound knowledge of financial matters and budgeting to assist in the task. Van Wyk and Lemmer (2002:136) further state that in rural areas and deprived communities, this has always proved to be difficult to achieve because those with expert knowledge often do not want to be seen

associating with people who are illiterate and as a result parent members often rely fully on the principal to take the lead in fulfilling the school's financial responsibilities.

2.4 CHALLENGES FACED BY SGBs

2.4.1 Lack of literacy

In many schools, there is an imbalance in power, mostly due to a high level of illiteracy amongst parents serving on the SGB. This is especially true in the rural areas, where teachers are often the only adults in the community who can read and write (Van Wyk and Lemmer, 2002:50). This can lead the SGB to simply ignore or not being able to fulfil some duties and responsibilities, thereby creating problems in school management and governance.

2.4.2 Lack of financial management experience

During 2005, many South African schools did not submit their audited financial statements for the end of the previous school financial year (Stone, City Press: 23 June 2000). As a result, their allocations from the Department of Education could not be transferred into their accounts. Learners were consequently being put at disadvantage because of the negligence or incompetence of their principals and SGB members.

2.4.3 Clarity on roles

The biggest problem across all schools seems to be that there is not sufficient clarity on what the role of the SGB members is. Some SGB members seem to think that they must take over the running of school, so they usually end up in a power struggle with the professional staff and principal, instead of establishing cooperative action with the school management team, which is made up of division or senior educators (Xaba, 2011:203).

2.4.4 Policy development

Some schools experience a problem with their policies and are being challenged by parents and even at times by the Department of Education. An example is the 2005 case of Mikro Primary School in the Western Cape, where the parents wanted to enrol their kids at this school, well knowing that the medium of instruction was Afrikaans. However, they wanted their kids to be taught in English. The SGB of the school and the school management voted against a change in the medium of instruction, but the MEC for Education in the Western Cape sided with the parents. The Court's decision was in favour of the SGB, and the Department of Education opted to take the case to the Constitutional Court, where it lost the case (<https://www.westerncape.org.com> retrieved 27 June, 2005).

In another case, the Rivonia Primary School in Gauteng refused to admit an additional learner, because the capacity set by the SGB admission policy had been reached. The case was taken to the High Court, which found that the Department of Education had the final word on the admission of learners, not the SGB. However, the decision of the High Court was overturned on appeal to the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA). The SCA found that the power to determine admission policy lay with the SGB. The SCA held that in terms of S5 (5), read with S5 (a), of the SASA, the SGB of a public school had the authority to determine the capacity of a school and that provincial authority may not override the policy. Also, that government must act reasonably if it insists on the admission of children over and above the capacity as set by the SGB by providing additional resources, such as teachers and classrooms (<https://www.equaleducation.org.za> retrieved 17 October, 2013).

2.5 EMPOWERMENT OF SGB PARENT MEMBERS

It is important for SGB members to understand their collective and individual roles in their sphere of governance. In this regard, Looyen (2000:32) states that co-operative governance at school level can only perform well when there is a clear understanding of the roles, responsibilities and functions of the SGB members. The concepts used in school governance have to be defined and understood by each

SGB member. It is for this reason that the training of SGB members is vitally important so that they will be able to contribute to school effectiveness and efficiency, based on the principle of democracy. Looyen (2000:33) explains that SGB members need thorough training before they assume their duties. Holt and Murphy (in Looyen, 2000:35) maintain that the training of SGB members should serve to ensure that learners are not exposed to a second class schooling system just because the individuals responsible for administering and governing their schools are inadequately prepared for their duties.

Mabusa and Themane (2002:112) are of the opinion that although SGB members are required to be involved in making important decisions that will have an impact on the quality of education, this has not happened at South African schools due to the lack of training for new SGB members before they start their work or even after being elected. For SGB members to be able to perform their duties properly, according to Xaba (2004:313), the Department of Education has to make sure that they receive proper training in the different aspects of the school governance. In this regard, Mestry (2004:129) indicates that Section 19 of SASA (1996:80) stipulates that an HOD should provide introductory training for newly elected SGB members in financial management, formulation of school policies and understanding of legislation concerning SGBs in order to enable them to perform their functions effectively. New and sitting SGB members should also, according to Section 19 of SASA (Act 84 of 1996), be provided with ongoing training in order to keep up with new developments and to re-affirm previous training.

Section 19 of SASA states that the Provincial Department of Education is responsible for providing training to SGB members, however, SGBs must take the initiative in identifying areas in which their members need training. The HOD has the responsibility to make sure that the principals and other officials of the DoE assist SGB members in identifying the key areas in which they lack skills (DoE, 2003:16) in order to arrange for training, if possible.

Van Wyk and Lemmer (2002:50) point out that government recognises that many SGBs, particularly in the rural and less advantaged urban areas, do not have the

required skills and experience to exercise their new powers and many have difficulty in fulfilling their functions.

In many cases, Non-Governmental Organisations take responsibility for training the SGB members by organising workshops. For example, in the case of the Royal Bafokeng Institute, SGB executive members are trained in legal matters as well as their roles and functions, as outlined in SASA 1996.

The South African SGB Association defines dysfunctional SGBs as those SGBs whose members lack the insight and skills to carry out their responsibilities. The Association blames dysfunctional performance on the poor training provided by the provincial departments, lack of resources, high levels of adult illiteracy and lack of awareness of the roles of an SGB (www.education.gov.za) 14 May 2009. According to Govender (*Mail and Guardian* 1 May 2010), a member of the SGB Association reported that while SGBs in Gauteng receive good training at the Mathews Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance, sadly, other provinces did not have access to such quality training.

Training aimed at capacity building should be based on situational factors pertaining to the capacity needs of the schools themselves. A capacity assessment is important, to avoid a “one size fits all” approach to training and development. Furthermore, a dedicated governance unit at district level should be established to render continuous and consistent support to governing bodies in the district (Xaba, 2011). Radoni (2009:134) is of the opinion that the involvement of SGBs in governance associations and organisations could go a long way towards educating their members about their functions, rights and responsibilities.

2.6 TRAINING OF SGBs

School governing bodies need thorough training in order to be able to perform their roles and responsibilities. Training will make them more confident in their role and educate them to know when participating in meetings as school governors.

Training aimed at capacity should be based on situational factors, taking into account the capacity needs of the schools themselves. A capacity assessment is necessary in this regard, to avoid a “one size fits all” approach to training and development. That way, governing bodies would benefit from customised training programmes. Furthermore, a dedicated governance unit at district level should be established to render continuous and consistent support to governing bodies in the district (Xaba, 2011:209). According to Xaba (2011:210), it may be necessary to re-assess the terms of office of school governors, because three years is rather a short term for them to learn and master the execution of the governance function in a way that engenders continuity.

2.7 CONCLUSION

The effective participation of most SGB members in school governance in the rural areas is often hampered by a lack of capacity and inadequate levels of relevant knowledge and skills. Often, after being elected, the SGB members cannot see themselves playing an active and meaningful role in decision-making processes, because they feel overwhelmed and insecure as mentioned by Clarke (2009:34).

As schools are increasingly functioning financial organisations, the emphasis on financial management has grown. However, from the literature review it became clear that if sound principles are not formulated and implemented in this regard, the attainment of the educational aims of many schools could be negatively affected (Mestry, 2006:36).

The Department of Education must make sure that all the above activities are taken into consideration in order for the school governance to be strong in our country. A thorough advocacy should be done by the officials so that communities will be aware of what is expected from them.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, a conceptual overview of the research design and methodological approaches used in this study is presented. The purpose of a well-designed research plan is to state the research problem and objectives and explain the methodological process through which the research was conducted. A good research plan supports information generated through research to be valid and trustworthy; hence a detailed description of the process is presented, ending with a discussion on the issue of research trustworthiness and how this was effected in this study.

3.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The South African Schools Act provides that the governance of a public school is vested in the school governing body, which stands in the position of trust towards the school. However, these governance powers are mostly not utilised in rural schools. This is a disturbing fact, as it renders the schools not being governed effectively. Stakeholders are often not aware of, or capable of executing their obligations and duties as SGB members. In most schools in the rural areas of the Ngcobo District, parental SGB members lack appropriate skills (even basic literacy skills) and appropriate training that will support their effective involvement as member of an SGB. Unfortunately, in some cases, members also lack commitment, as pointed out in Chapter One.

From the above problem statement, the following research questions were derived:

3.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.3.1 Primary research question

- How effective are School Governing Bodies in the rural areas of the Ngcobo District?

3.3.2 Secondary research questions

- What aspects influence the effectiveness of the SGBs in the Ngcobo rural areas negatively?
- How can members of the SGBs be supported to become more effective in their governance involvement at the selected schools?

Following the research questions, the following research aim and research objectives arose.

3.4 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

3.4.1 Research aim

- The aim of the study is to determine how effective the SGBs in the rural areas of the Ngcobo are.

3.4.2 Research objectives

From the research aim, these research objectives were derived:

- To identify the aspects that influence the effectiveness of the SGBs in the Ngcobo District negatively.

- To determine ways in which members of the SGBs can be supported to become more effective in their governance involvement at the selected schools.

3.5 RESEARCH APPROACH

A qualitative approach was chosen for this study, as most qualitative research describes and analyses people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions (Henning, 2004:08). It was prudent for the researcher to make use of a qualitative approach, since the research participants were being studied in their natural social surroundings. In this regard, Berg (2004:07) postulates that qualitative research seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and how the inhabitants of these settings make sense and give meaning to their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles and so forth. The members of the school governing bodies were interviewed in the context of their roles and responsibilities.

Henning (2004:10) states that qualitative data is descriptive and that the data collected take the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. To this, White (2005:82) adds that in qualitative studies there is greater flexibility in both method and research process, with the qualitative methodology being descriptive, interpretative, and constituting an interactive dialogue.

Berg (2004:09) contends that qualitative researchers are concerned with experiences rather than simply outcomes, as well as with how people allocate meaning to their life experiences. In this regard, the researcher was concerned with how the school community perceived and interpreted the lack of effectiveness of the SGB and the negative impact this had on the functionality of the school.

3.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:219) describe a research design as a plan for studying a topic, selecting research sites, and deciding on ways to collecting and

analysing data. The design shows who will be studied when, where and under which circumstances, with the main aim obtaining credible results and containing the resources used or spent in the process.

For this study, a qualitative approach was selected, due to the fact that the participants' views and opinions would inform the topic. Furthermore, the research took place in the participants' "life world" and as such they were best placed to present their views and opinions regarding the topic under scrutiny.

- **Sample**

Sampling is the process of selecting of a number of individuals for a study in such a way that they represent the larger group from which they were selected (Gay and Airasian, 2000:121). By means of random sampling, three Junior Secondary Schools and one High School from the Nkondlo Circuit of the Ngcobo District of Education were selected, with reference to the fact that each had an enrolment of more than three hundreds learners.

Apart from the principals at each selected school, at least four SGB parents were selected from each of the four schools. It was envisaged that at least four parents per school would act on the invitation and be willing to participate. All SGB members were invited, and fortunately 18 members were willing to participate. So at each school there were a representative number of at least four parent SGB members.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

The qualitative research approach employs various data collection strategies, such as interviews, observations, diaries, photographs, and studying official documents and newspaper articles (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003:85) For the purpose of this study, a structured interview schedule for various interviews and a questionnaire were used to gather relevant information.

- **Interviews**

The advantage of using interviews in this study was that as many of the participants were not well educated, they would find reading and writing problematic. According to Gay and Airasian (2000:219), interviews can explore and probe participants' responses to gather more in-depth data and information about their experiences and feelings regarding the topic under study. Giving participants time to think and reflect before responding, and the researcher being there to probe, prompt and seek more information/clarification, assisted in getting information-rich data as suggested by Creswell (2005:204). White (2005:143) also commends this flexibility in interviews, as questions can be repeated when the response received, indicates that the participant misunderstood the question.

In the case of the principals, verbally answering questions in an interview setting gave them an opportunity to state things they would possibly be reluctant to state in writing on the questionnaires.

In this study, individual interviews were conducted with the four principals at their respective schools. The principals were regarded the key role players who possessed specialised knowledge to share on the functioning and effectiveness of the governing bodies at their schools. The data collected from the principals were important in understanding how effectively the SBG members functioned and how this impacted on the governance and management of the schools.

Focus group interviews were held with the members of the school governing bodies who agreed to participate. These focus group interviews took place while the parent members were gathered at the school.

During the interviews, the questions were posed in both English and isiXhosa, and participants were allowed to answer in either of these languages. All isiXhosa answers were translated into English. All interviews were recorded on a recording device with the permission of the participants. All the interviews were later transcribed for analysis.

The interviewer was also able to observe non-verbal behaviour during interviews.

- **Questionnaires**

White (2005:126) postulates that a questionnaire is an instrument containing open or closed questions or statements, to which participants need to give answers. The advantage of a questionnaire is that it assists in ensuring anonymity. Time and money is also saved. Time and money was saved in this study, because the parent members of the SGB of the different participating schools gathered at one venue for the completion of the questionnaires.

Furthermore, the questionnaires were implemented in order to allow participants to share more personal information and feelings and to record demographic information, such as the level of education, age and so forth.

The questionnaire was developed in both English and isiXhosa, because some members might have been more comfortable responding in English. All isiXhosa answers were translated into English during the transcription process.

The principals completed the questionnaires in their own time at their schools. The parents were given the questionnaires while together at one place in order to help those who experienced problems or needed more clarification.

3.8 PILOTING THE QUESTIONS

In order to ensure the clarity of questions, a pilot study was conducted with four colleagues from my school before the data collecting instruments were administered to other participants. As a researcher, I was satisfied with my colleagues' responses, showing that the questions were clear and that the responses elicited, provided relevant data.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

White (2005:186) states that specific steps need to be followed in order to analyse qualitative data. These steps are include managing the data, reading the data, describing the data, classifying the data and interpreting the data. All data was examined in depth to provide detailed descriptions of the participants and activities. The researcher followed these steps by grouping related aspects of the data to prepare it for analysis. The researcher then read and re-read the data in order to become familiar with it for identifying main themes. Categorizing and coding of data and grouping these coded items into themes were done, followed by interpretation and synthesizing the organized data into general conclusions or understandings were done. The identified themes were thus used to develop an overall description of experiences, as perceived by the participants.

3.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS

According to White (2005:203), trustworthiness establishes how confident the researcher is with the truth of the findings, based on the research design, information and context.

3.10.1 Triangulation

According to White (2005:89), triangulation refers to the use of more than one source of data to support and verify a researcher`s conclusions. In order to show triangulation the researcher used an experienced qualitative researcher to assist the researcher. The data was collected by means of personal observations, interviews and written questionnaires that had to be completed by the participants. By comparing the data from these three data generation tools validity was maintained.

3.10.2 Validity, reliability and credibility

According to White (2005:87), qualitative researchers emphasise validity in their research and serve as the primary instruments for data collection and analysis. As a researcher, I collected the data myself. Since the responses of the participants were in isiXhosa, as a first language IsiXhosa speaker, I, the researcher translated responses into English. The researcher also asked another first language Xhosa speaker to translate the translations back into isiXhosa in order to make sure that the initial translation was accurate.

- **Validity**

To ensure validity and reliability, the researcher followed proper data collection procedures when collecting the information from the participants throughout the data generating processes. For validity in qualitative research, researchers must formulate techniques that check the credibility of the data and minimise the distorting effect of personal bias on the logic of the evidence (White, 2005:201). In this study, the researcher considered the issue of bias by not favouring one side's views above others, and by not interpreting according to own personal views. Furthermore, throughout the different data collection and interpretation stages, the researcher made sure that the same procedures were being followed throughout.

- **Reliability**

The researcher ensured reliability through the elimination of casual errors such as incorrect translations, which might have resulted in incorrect interpretations and conclusions, which would have influenced the results (White, 2005:200). To White, reliability can be divided into internal reliability and external reliability. External reliability refers to independent researchers (under the same circumstances and using the same participants), obtaining the same results. The pilot study yielded the same results as the final study. The researcher concluded that the instruments used, yielded consistent patterns in the data.

- **Credibility**

According to White (2005:206), it is important that researchers compare the trustworthiness list which is credibility, confirmability, transferability with their activities to establish trustworthiness in qualitative research. The researchers should be able to write down strategy, the criteria, as well as application. In this study, to ensure credibility, the researcher interviewed the participants who had the qualities and knowledge about the research problem. The researcher also employed the services of an experienced qualitative researcher to conduct interviews and to see that correct procedures are being followed. This researcher, being a principal and educator himself, had prolonged prior engagement with the participants who were parents and principals at other schools. This person also assisted with recording and taking of the field notes. The school where the researcher is employed and the schools that are around the researcher's school were excluded by the researcher to avoid bias.

3.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter justified the choice of research approach and design for the study, followed by an outline of the research problem and a restatement of the aim and objectives of the study. The sample was described and the data collection strategies were presented. A short discussion followed on coding and analysis processes, as well as a brief discussion on how trustworthiness was ensured in this study.

In the next chapter the findings will be analysed and discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the aims of the study find expression mainly in the analysis of the interviews and questionnaires implemented towards achieving the aims of the study. In an effort to ensure the integrity and accuracy of the information provided, the researcher included verbatim responses in quotations.

This chapter starts by presenting demographic information and a discussion thereof relating to the culture and context of the participants. Thereafter, the findings are categorised into three main themes, each with various sub-themes, and discussed with reference to the demographic information and responses from the participants.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

4.2.1 SGB members

- **Age**

The ages of the participants ranged between 54 and 73 years. All the participants were the grandparents of the learners in the schools, as the parents had passed on or were working in cities, leaving their children in the care of their own parents. Because of the ages of the participants, they were from an “old-school” of thought, contending that it was the duty of the school only to educate the child. They did not understand that parents also had an important role to play in the education of their children.

Their age could also be a contributing factor in reluctance to attend evening meetings at the school.

- **Gender**

The following figure illustrates the gender distribution of the participants:

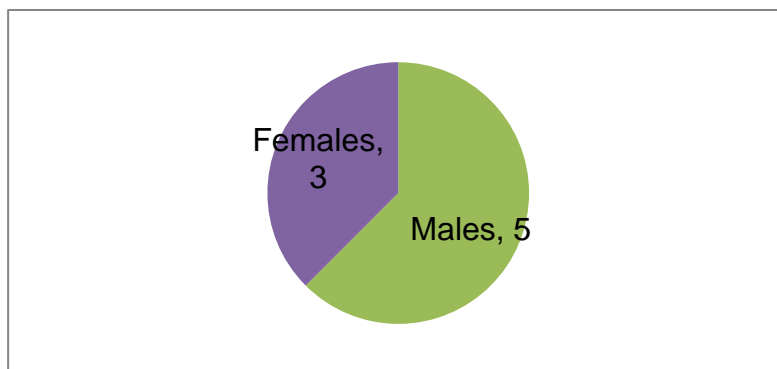


Figure 4.1: Gender distribution of participants

The above figure illustrates the gender of parental participants who took part in both focus group interviews and questionnaires. More participants were male than female, indicating that the males were more involved with the school governance. This involvement of more males in the school governance can be a positive aspect regarding the passing of information from school to the community, because males are often more involved than females in community meetings at the headman's place. Also, in rural communities males do enjoy a higher status than women (Clapman, 2006: 280).

- **Employment status**

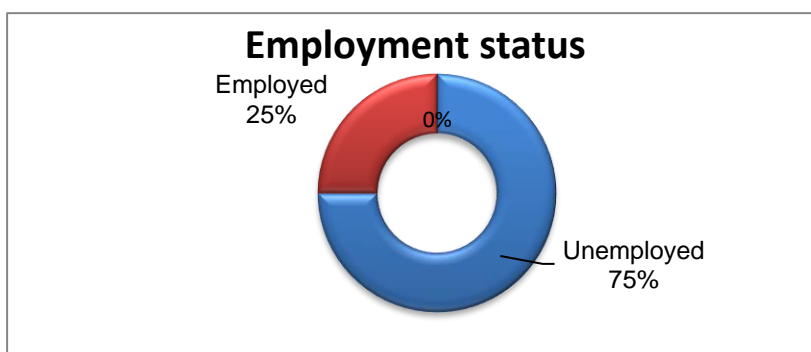


Figure 4.2: Employment status

As illustrated in Figure 4.2, most of the participants were unemployed. Therefore, the researcher assumed that this would have made it easier for them to attend School Governing Body (SGB) meetings. However, unemployed as these grandparents were, the principals of their schools complained that they did not attend SGB meetings frequently. This could have a negative impact on the school governance. According to SASA (1996), it is very important for SGB members to attend meetings once a term in order to discuss governance matters.

- **Academic qualifications**

Most of the participating principals claimed that many parent members of the SGB had limited education only; as a result they could not read the training manuals during the training workshops. Most of the training manuals were also written in English. As a result, most SGB members were not able to read the material on their own; consequently, they ended up unclear and uncertain regarding the exact nature of their role in the governance of the school. This negatively affected their effectiveness as SGB members.

This lack of literacy skills is demonstrated by the following response:

“Sir do not give me the questionnaire, because I cannot write.”

4.2.2 Principals

The four principals of the four participating schools were given questionnaires to complete and they were also interviewed at their respective schools by the researcher.

- **Experience as principal**

The principal with the least experience as principal had three years' experience, alike the one with the most experience had 23 years. All the principals, regardless of their

experience, stated that the SGB members lacked personal skills and school governance skills, resulting in diminished effectiveness regarding school governance.

“These parent members do not know what role to play as SGBs.”

- **Experience in teaching**

The principal with the least teaching experience had 12 years of experience, while the one with the most experience overall had 34 years of teaching experience. With such considerable experience, these principals should have been able to manage and secure effective school governance. However, the headmasters complained that they did not have enough time for mentoring their SGBs, as they were full-time educators. *“But we don’t have time to help these SGBs, because we have subjects that we are teaching”*

This implies that their SGBs would not be able to get the necessary skills training in aspects of school governance from the school principals.

4.3 THEME ONE: TRAINING NEEDS OF SGB MEMBERS

The participants were expected to comment on their training needs and training received. Most of the participants claimed to not having received any training on aspects regarding the governance of their schools. They claimed that only a few members were receiving training, only those serving in the Executive:

“All of us need to be trained in our duties”

All of them emphasised that they needed training in basically everything about school governance in order to make a meaningful contribution:

“Sir we need training in everything concerning the duties of SGBs.”

Both the principals and SGB parent members complained that not enough training was being given to the SGBs and that the latter could therefore not be effective in their task and role in school governance. This was hard to believe, considering the many years participants claimed to have been serving on the school governing body.

Such a lack of training is in contradiction with the requirements stated in SASA (1996), which emphasises that any parents chosen to serve on SGBs should be properly inducted and receive training. Lack of training and the consequent lack of awareness of what is expected from them will lead to failure to act properly as SGB members in their task pertaining to the governance of the school.

- **Need for personal empowerment**

Most participants viewed their presence in governance as contributing positively, as the learners would respect them, based on their age:

“Eeee these children display manners and discipline when they always see us in the school premises.”

They also claimed that older persons were expected to have high moral values, which must then be respected by the young ones (Ubuntu), (Afolayan, 2004:215).

In addition, most claimed that they used their personality, communication skills and trustworthiness gained from life experience, to distil discipline among the learners.

“Sir we always tell these children that discipline and respect are very important in our culture.”

The above statement show that, if empowered, the SGBs will be able to perform their role in school governance, especially in disciplinary matters and in designing a code of conduct for learners, making them more effective in the governance of their schools.

- **Availability or lack of training sessions**

The relevant District Office did not offer regular training sessions for SGBs; they only trained SGB members serving in the Executive once after the elections and often not again until the next year.

Most of the participants cited lack of training from the District as well as the government.

“Only the Executive members are trained; only after we have been elected.”

Some did mention that training was offered, although they felt it was not enough. This is evidenced by the following statements from the participants:

“... because we are not so educated, we expected the government to give us more training on our role as School Governing Body”

“Hmmmmm I did have some training long time ago ... but now things are changing and I need more training in areas like financial management ... Yeaah ... (thinking). It is however nice to be a member of school governance, hence I have been a member for so long”

The above statements are contradictory to the SASA (1996), which states that all new SGB members must be inducted and be trained. This can result in the parents feeling inactive and losing interest participating in an ineffective SGB.

As a result of the above, SGBs will not be able play their governance role, which will contribute to the ineffectiveness of school governing bodies at rural schools.

4.4 THEME TWO: RELATIONSHIP WITH GENERAL PARENT BODY

The expectation is that in order for SGBs to be effective, parents, educators as well as learners have to work together and have a similar goal.

- **Co-operation**

Most participating SGB parent members and the principals claimed that the parents were not attending parents' meetings when invited by the school. This made governance difficult for the SGB, while the school struggled to pass information on and to obtain the views and inputs of the parent-body in order to develop good governance at the school.

“Sir most of the parents do not attend parents meetings at our schools.”

- **Involvement**

Most of the participants regarded other parents as ignorant, flowing from the fact that when general parent meetings were called, generally only a few parents attended. This is evidenced by the following statements:

“We write letters to invite them to the meeting, and they don't come ... we are not sure if the children do not deliver the letters ...”

“The parents are ignorant about what is happening at the school ... but if a problem is there hmmmmm ... then you will see them in numbers ...”

This was also a finding in a study conducted by Toba (2005:44), namely that parents do not generally like to attend parents' meetings. Toba (2005:50) also cites that the relationship between an SGB and the other parents is often not good.

Toba (2005:44) states that parents and teachers need each other to pursue common goals such as effective educative teaching. The participants reported they experienced no or little cooperation and support from other parents:

“... other parents who are not in the governing body criticise us a lot”

“... yeaaaahhh, the issue here is lack of togetherness. As parents, we have different views about SGB...”

A study by Mestry (2006:27-38) revealed that parents who were not part of the SGB could be very suspicious of the principal when it came to financial matters. A lack of trust in the SGB was found to be common. Such mistrust can lead to lack of cooperation. Once there is lack of cooperation between an SGB and parents, governance will not be what is supposed to be, which will affect the overall effectiveness of the school.

The researcher came up with the following themes and sub-themes from the analysis of the interviews with principals, derived from the responses of the principals interviewed by the researcher.

- **Communication**

According to SASA (1996), it is the duty of the SGB to link the school to the community. However, most of the participants in this study said that this was a tough job for the SGBs, as there is lack of co-operation between them and the parents. Some of the participants had this to say:

“... when the SGB calls a meeting, very few parents come, as they think the SGB is linked any form of corruption”

“Yeaaaah sometimes in my school, the other parents even say to the SGB that it is your school, Go! It is tough to link the school with the community ...”

Mestry (2006:27-38) established that a key result of the lack of linkage between the school and community was that parents tended to be suspicious and often did not trust anyone connected to the school, including the chosen SGB members.

Most of the participants claimed that most of the parents did not want to involve themselves in school activities, because they claimed that that was the business of

the SGB and the principal; they as parents were not involved in planning and decision-making processes:

"..... Yeeeee Even if the invitation letters for meeting are given to the learners, their parents do not attend the meeting, because they believe that discussing the school matters is not their task."

Communication plays an important role in the governance of schools. SGBs must communicate regularly with parents in order for the latter to be well informed about what is taking place at the school and to know their importance in school matters. Poor communication results in poor school governance, because other stakeholders do not know when to involve themselves in school governance.

4.5 THEME THREE: LITERACY LEVELS OF SGB MEMBERS

According to Van Wyk and Lemmer (2002:137), the main problem that besets parents in South Africa is the high level of literacy.

- **Academic qualifications**

In the parent component of the SGB that was interviewed and asked to respond to the questionnaire, the member with the highest academic qualification dropped out in Grade 10, and others around Grade 6. One member could not even write in order to respond to the questionnaire. This situation would have had a negative impact on the governance of the school by these parents.

- **Role as part of an SGB**

Most principals claimed that most of the parent SGB members were not sure of their duties and responsibilities as members of the school governing body and, as a result, they ended up wanting to take over the principal's management task. This highlights the fact that the SGB parent members lacked training around their roles and responsibilities. Xaba (2011:201) states that SGBs are not trained before they

start their work and that this manifests in problems such as unfamiliarity with meeting procedures, not knowing how to make a contribution, and lack of familiarity with relevant legislation.

One principal remarked:

“Mmmmmmmmm these people end up involving themselves in management work, and they end up confusing us.”

From the quote above, it seems that since the parent SBG members lacked training in their role as SGBs, they often clashed with the principal and claimed that he was not cooperating, whereas they were in fact disturbing the principal in his management task.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the views of the four participating principals and the parent SGB members on specific aspects arranged into themes. From the views of the parent members and principals, the researcher concluded that there seemed to be a lot lacking in the training of SGBs in the participating rural schools; something that most probably hold true for rural schools across South Africa.

In Chapter Five, the implications of the findings are discussed in order to formulate recommendations to both future SGBs and the DoE.

CHAPTER FIVE

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the focus was on the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the respondents. In this chapter, the focus will be on how the findings influence the quality of work of SGBs and the formulation of recommendations for improved practice and outcomes. This chapter concludes with some recommendations to try and lessen the problem.

5.2 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

5.2.1 SGB members

- **Age**

Most of the SGB parent members were older persons; many being the grandparents of the learners. The implication of this is that due to their age and 'old-school' thought, they did not care much about what was taking place at school, thinking that it was the teachers' domain. This way of thinking negatively affected their task in the school governance.

The researcher recommends that younger parents be encouraged to stand when new SGB members are elected. Their presence in the School Governing Body may bring new energy and fresh ideas to the meetings. Younger parents have also generally enjoyed better schooling opportunities and are therefore often more literate than the older members of the community who are taking care of usually their grandchildren.

- **Gender**

In rural African societies males have many duties, causing them not to attend SGB meetings regularly because of their engagement in cultural and other activities in the society. This implies that the gender balance should be taken into consideration when the SGB members are elected.

It is recommended that more female members of the school governing bodies be elected, so that SGB meetings could take place even if there are other activities in the area keeping the men away from the schools` SGB meetings.

- **Employment status**

All the participating SGB parent members interviewed, were unemployed. That may have a negative impact on school governance, because they might not have been attending SGB meetings as they might have been looking for jobs.

It is recommended that, if at all possible, more working parents be recruited in school governance.

- **Academic qualifications**

The lower qualifications of most SGB members could have had a negative impact on the school`s governance, because these members might have experienced a problem with reading and comprehension during any available training sessions.

It is recommended that the training manuals be in members` home language, although some of them could not even read their home language; but at least others may be able to read the manual to them.

Furthermore, the researcher recommends that the training and mentoring be continuous and that role-play scenarios be considered to help those who cannot read the manuals.

5.2.2 Principals

- **Experience as principals/teaching**

Although the participating principals had many years of experience as principals, they themselves lacked many of the skills needed for good governance. On top of that, the participating principals were full-time educators involved in the classrooms in actual teaching, in addition to attending to the administrative issues of the school; they therefore found it hard to find time for mentoring duties as well.

It is recommended that a thorough training is given to the principals on school governance and the government make sure that school principals are involved in administration only, and not serve as full-time educators also, so that they will be able to help in mentoring SGB members.

5.3 THEME ONE: TRAINING NEEDS OF SGB MEMBERS

- **Need for personal empowerment**

Lack of empowerment opportunities for SGBs leads to ineffectiveness in school governance. Radoni (2009:133) emphasises that increased training to build the capacity of SGB members in governance, including financial management, discipline, school safety, and awareness of the different laws (including labour laws that pertain to school governance), could have a positive influence on governance.

It is recommended as Radoni (2009:135) suggests on ways of empowering SGBs in regard to their duties and responsibilities be conveyed through publications in languages that the majority of SGB members can understand and through talk-shows in the media. Radoni also suggests that all training manuals should be in isiXhosa for the Xhosa speakers. SGB members should be sensitized about the importance of attending the SGB meetings while the government must monitor that thorough training of the SGBs is taking place, presented through reports and other evidence from the district levels of the DoE.

- **Availability or lack of training opportunities**

The lack of proper training for SGB members results in poor performance in their roles and responsibilities in school governance. It is therefore recommended that the Department of Basic Education make sure that training is given to SGB members after they have been elected, as stated in SASA (1996), as it is the responsibility of the DoE to train newly elected SGBs. The training must not be a once-off event; it should be presented at the beginning of every year in the three-year term and should be compulsory for all SGB members. As incentive, certificates of completion and/or competency can be handed out on the conclusion of training.

5.4 THEME TWO: RELATIONSHIP WITH GENERAL PARENT BODY

- **Co-Operation**

The lack of co-operation between parents and schools can result in the ineffectiveness of SGBs. It is the responsibility of schools to make sure that the parents attend parents' meetings by using relevant communication platforms. It is recommended that schools design a policy that will force the parents to attend parents' meetings. The parents must be encouraged to do some tasks in school development on a voluntary basis taking on ownership of the school.

- **Involvement**

If the parents do not want to involve themselves in school matters, that will make it difficult for SGBs and the school management to run the school effectively. SASA (1996) states that parents must involve themselves in running their schools in order for the schools to be more effective. It is recommended that more parents' meetings be organised in order for the parents to get used to their role in school matters. It would be wise for parents to become involved in committees that are involved in for instance the school's infrastructure development.

- **Communication**

Poor communication between the school, SGBs and the parents makes things difficult for these stakeholders to perform their responsibilities. It is recommended that good communication policies should be designed by the schools, with the help of the DoE in order for the SGBs to be able to communicate with the parents.

5.5 THEME THREE: LITERACY LEVELS OF SGB MEMBERS

- **Academic qualifications**

Most of the participating parent SGB members were not well educated and as a result of that, they could not even read the documents informing them about their role in school governance. Most of them dropped out in lower classes and they could therefore neither read nor interpret the English-language training manuals.

It is recommended that the communities and schools make sure that they recruit some educated members who could then even educate and inform their fellow SGB members. It is also recommended that schools encourage SGB members to join ABET classes in their areas.

- **Role as part of an SGB**

Since it is not easy for SGB members to differentiate between their role and that of the principal, they need more training on their roles in order to know their responsibilities. Often SGB parent members want to take control of the school. It is therefore recommended that training in the specific roles, duties and responsibilities of SGB members in school governance be offered to them. This can be done by the DoE by means of offering practical workshops..

5.6 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The study was confined to one district; this means that the research findings cannot be generalised to the whole Province although the researcher is of the opinion that most rural schools may experience the same challenges.

As only four schools from one district agreed to participate, and all the participants were isiXhosa first language speakers, this limited the scope of the study.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The researcher recommends that further research be done on a larger scale involving more schools in more rural areas in order to determine how effective the SGBs in rural areas are. The researcher further recommends that more research be conducted on ways to support and increase the effectiveness of SGBs and also on issues of parental involvement in schools because most of parents in the rural areas are not involved in their children's education.

5.8 CONCLUSION

This study established that there is a serious a problem with the effectiveness of governing bodies in rural schools and that the lack of training seems to lie at the root of the problem. Recommendations were made regarding the capacitation of SGBs, with the most crucial issue being training, and following up on training, as part and parcel of the DoE's budget and commitment for each school year.

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Annexure A

PRINCIPALS' INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

BACKGROUND QUESTION: How long have you been a principal?

KNOWLEDGE QUESTION: What is your understanding about the school governing body's role and task?

EXPERIENCE QUESTION: What is your experience regarding the functioning of SGB at your school?

SUB-QUESTIONS:

1. How do you involve governing body members in school matters?
2. Do you have a problem to get people who are willing to serve on SGB and how do you overcome the problem?
3. What is being done to support the functioning of SGBs after new members of the school governing bodies have been selected?
4. Do you train your new members to the SGB, if yes, what kind of training is provided?
5. How are the SGB members involved in updating, changing the constitution?
6. How do the school governing body help you in governance and management of the school?
7. Who provide the training and what kind of training is provided?
8. What do you feel could be done to improve the effectiveness of your school's SGB?
9. What specific skills would you like the SGB members to have?
10. What specific skills do some members bring to the table?
11. What are the academic qualifications of your members in general?

Annexure B

PARENT MEMBERS' INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

BACKGROUND QUESTION: What experience do you have in being a member of the SGB?

1. How did you become an SGB member of this school?
2. How long are you already an SGB member at this school?
3. What do you think the task of an SGB should be?
4. Were you involved in the drawing up of the SGB's constitution?
5. How often does the SGB meet?
6. Do you attend the meetings regularly and if not why?
7. How do you participate in the SGB meetings?
8. How is the SGB involved in the governance and management of the school?
9. How do you as the SGB members inform the parents about what has been decided in the meetings?
10. How do you think the governance of the school can be improved?
11. What kind of training, preparation for their task do you as the SGB members get?
12. What training would you like to receive to help you do a better job as the SGB member?

Annexure C
PRINCIPALS' QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How would describe the training and development that members of the SGB receive to perform their duties?.....
.....
.....
.....
2. In what extent would you say are the parents, SGB members aware of their duties and responsibilities?.....
.....
.....
.....
3. How and when are the SGB members informed about their duties and responsibilities?.....
.....
.....
.....
4. How are the SGB members informed regarding what is happening in the school in terms of problems, challenges and needs?.....
.....
.....
.....
5. Please list the problems you are experiencing at present?.....
.....
.....
.....
6. To what extent are the SGB members able to solve specific problems such as discipline experienced by teachers and learners in the school?
.....
.....
.....
7. How representative is the SGB members trained and prepared for this task?.....
.....
.....
.....

8. How representative is the SGB of the community served by the school?
.....
.....
.....
.....
9. To what extent is the SGB accountable to the community that it serves?.....
.....
.....
10. How is the SGB keeping parents and the community at large informed about the development at school?.....
.....
.....
.....
11. To what extent does the school management team at your school facilitate and encourage the work of the SGB?.....
.....
.....
.....
12. To what extent is the Department of Education involved in capacitating the SGB?.....
.....
.....
13. How can the SGB parent members be better equipped for their task?
.....
.....
.....
.....
14. What exactly is needed to better equip the SGB members?.....
.....
.....
.....
15. What can be done to effect better preparation of the SGB members for their task?.....
.....
.....

Annexure D

PARENT MEMBERS QUESTIONNAIRE

Age/ubudala :.....
Gender/isini :.....
School achievement/imfundo :.....
Trade qualification/isakhono :.....
Work status/umsebenzi :.....

1. What experience do you have in being a member of an SGB?
(Ngawaphi amava onawo ngokuba lilungu lesigqeba esilawula isikolo?).....
.....
.....
2. What is your highest qualification?
(Liliphi ibanga eliphezulu oliphumeleleyo?).....
.....
.....
3. How long are you already an SGB member at this school?
(Unethuba elingakanani ulilungu lesigqebq kwesi sikolo?).....
.....
.....
4. How often does the SGB meet?
(Sihlangana kanjani isigqeba esilawula isikolo?).....
.....
.....
5. Do you attend the meetings regularly and if not why?
(Uyazihamba iindibano zequmrhu elilawula isikolo oko, ukuba akunjalo kutheni?).....
.....
.....
6. How are the parents informed about what has been decided in meetings?
(Baziswa njani abazali ngezinto ezigqitywe kwindibano yequmrhu elilawula isikolo?).....
.....
.....
7. What kind of training and preparation for the task did you as SGB members receive?
(Qeqesho luni olufumeneyo malunga nokuba lilungu lesigqeba esilawula isikolo?).....
.....

-

8. What training would you like to receive to help you to do a better job as the SGB?
 (Loluphi uqeqesho eningathanda ukulifumana olunganceda ekwenzeni umsebenzi ngcono nje ngequmrhu elilawula isikolo?)..

9. What are your strong points that make you a good member?
 (Zeziphi ezona zinto obalasele ngazo ezikwenza ube lelona lungu lequmrhu elilawula isikolo elifanelekileyo?).....

10. Do you think that your presence as SGB member makes any difference in the school governance, if YES or NO, why?
 (Ucinga ukuba ubukho bakho nje ngelungu budala umahluko kulawulo lwesikolo, ukuba EWE okanye HAYI , kutheni?).....

Annexure E

Consent form

I principal/SGB parent member of the school been informed about the purpose of the study and no risks will be anticipated while participating and I have a right to confidentiality and anonymity and have a right to withdraw at any time.

Signature..... signed at..... on20...