

# **THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL VALUES AND BELIEFS ON SCHOOL GOVERNANCE: A CASE STUDY OF TWO EKURHULENI SCHOOLS (GAUTENG S.A.)**

Babili Phillip Mayisela

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## ABSTRACT

The research project aimed at understanding how culture and history shape the role of governance in public schools. It has highlighted the role that parents can and should play in school governance, as supporters, as governors, as co-teachers, as informed consumers and as partners. All these roles are within the legislative framework of the South African School Act 84 of 1996 (SASA). However, this study suggests that much of the literature has not looked at specific ways in which parents participate that are influenced by their interests, values, cultural background and beliefs.

One of the major insights in the study is the cultural understanding of the role of school governance, which translates into a very different conception of justice and how it is articulated in the role of governing in conflict management. This study has shown that through the particular cultural practices that privilege restorative justice over retributive justice, traditional conceptions can be a strong force for conflict management and stability at schools. More specifically, this study has shown how governors can consciously use the framework legislation, i.e. the SASA, to reinforce particular social or cultural identities.

## DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any University.

*Babili Phillip Mayisela*

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\_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2009

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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Education systems around the world are subject to ongoing change and reform. As societies develop, societal structures respond in kind to the mutable contextual realities in which they operate. Traditionally in South Africa and elsewhere, school governance and management have been hierarchical and authoritarian in nature. The locus of control and decision-making powers has resided mainly with the school principal, with minimal participation from teachers, parents or learners. Over the past years, parents have been given new rights over their children's schooling, and among these rights is the right to be involved in all school activities. Wolfendale (1993), one of the proponents of parental involvement in school governance, provides the useful notion that parents are the primary educators and experts on their children, therefore schools alone cannot successfully educate children. Parents as 'complementary educators' must use these rights in ways that reinforce or extend what is being undertaken in schools. In South Africa, Outcome Based Education (OBE) requires a high level of parental involvement. Furthermore, the importance of parental involvement in South Africa is emphasised by legal literature such as the South African School Act 84 of 1996 (SASA). This act of parliament endorses the importance of parental involvement in education system by proclaiming through section 23(9) of South African School Act (1996).

One of the earliest writers on parental involvement philosophy, Munn (1998), attests that the main objective of parental involvement in schools is, amongst others, to give parents influence over school policies. A level at which parents can be directly involved in school is through the school governing body. Indirectly, they can be involved through choice of the school. Parental involvement proponents like Wolfendale (1993) argue that research experience and practice have demonstrated how effective parents are in supporting their children's learning and well being.

Papers, acts, bills, policies and regulations have been developed, some of which have been directed at the national level and others at school level. Some of those that were directed at the national level, for example, the National Educational Policy Acts (NEPA 1996), were concerned with the restructuring of the former departments into one unified and coherent Department of Education. The South African Schools Act, (no. 84 of 1996) is amongst those that were directed at the school level, and may be regarded as the most comprehensive fundamental piece of legislation empowering parents to contribute meaningfully in the education of their children. The South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA) promotes democracy in schools. The idea underpinning democratic school governance is that if education is shaping democracy, democracy must also shape education. In other words, authority over education should rest with the entire body of citizens, and at school level it should rest with the School Governing Bodies (SGB)

SASA hands over a great deal of responsibility to SGBs, which are expected to take the lead in developing the mission statement of the school, laying down its policies and setting the standards for the quality of education. SASA further ensures that parents, educators and learners form a “partnership” with the state. This partnership, according to Maybour (1989), should be a constructive partnership since parents are recognised as partners in a shared task (Maybour 1989:109). Maybour states that partnership is not without obstacles. Parents still experience a feeling of inadequacy that they do not wish to expose to others.

SGBs provide a space for communities to voice their educational concerns and to deliberate on the schooling needs of their own children. Sayed and Carrim (1998) note that participation by citizens in civil society may create conditions for generating a common good.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The study will explore the following questions:

- a) What are the patterns and practices of school governance?
- b) How does the community or cultural background influence or shape the nature of parental involvement in school governance?

### **1.3 PURPOSE**

The purpose of the study is to examine how parents as governors interpret their roles in school governance. The study focuses on the deeper patterns and practices of parental participation in school governance and how cultural values, norms and beliefs influence patterns and practices of parents as school governors. The study confines itself to two particular public schools in Ekurhuleni, both of which are situated in the semi-formal sector of the Ekurhuleni region. They are urban schools typical of the institutions serving the majority of children in the province.

### **1.4 RATIONALE**

It is important for the country to evaluate the successes of legislation such as the SASA (1996). We need to know what parents as governors are doing at schools within the legislative framework. The study is important because it attempts to focus on how to address problems around parental involvement in school governance. While there have been a number of key studies on parental involvement in school governance, it is not known how parent involvement is influenced by culture, norms and values.

The research study will further contribute to existing literature on parental involvement in school governance. A substantial amount of literature on parental involvement in school governance focuses on a range of issues, most of which highlight shortcomings, pitfalls and hindrances, notably Squelch (1999) Sayed (2002), Mkhwanazi (1993), Sayed and Carrim (1997). However some researchers disagree on the nature of parental involvement.

This study explores how contextual factors have some bearing on parental involvement. Parents as governors interpret their role in school governance in different ways. However, the degree and nature of their participation in the policy-making process depends to a large extent on a particular school setting, especially the school ethos and culture, which can either promote or inhibit their participation. For example, an institution characterised by closedness and non-consultation can inhibit participation, while a school characterised by openness, democracy and consultation can promote parental participation.

The study further argues that despite the fact that there are research studies on parental involvement in education, the research needs to be updated. Therefore this study could shed further light on the nature of parental involvement in schools and make a contribution to policy implementation research. Bastiani (1995) notes that there is a steadily growing acknowledgement of the value of parents as an important educational resource. There are many things that parents know and can do that are of immense value in the education of their children, which schools are only beginning to recognise.

Furthermore, this research also intends to stimulate debate amongst policy-makers and institutions responsible for the implementation of the SASA (1996). Debate may facilitate an awareness of how SASA is understood and interpreted in different ways, and the challenges confronting the implementers. Debate may also facilitate an understanding of the potential challenges regarding parental involvement in school governance. The rationale for this study arises out of its advocacy that greater community involvement in the governance of schools improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the education system.

## **1.5. CONCLUSION**

The chapter has outlined the need for change in our understanding of parents and schools. The role of parents as governors in particular needs to be better understood. Previously, school governance and management were hierarchical and authoritarian in nature, and the locus of control and decision-making powers resided mainly with the school principal, with minimal participation by teachers, parents or learners. It was not until 1996, when a new legislative framework, SASA, was formulated, that democracy was promoted in schools.

The chapter also outlined the purpose of this study, which is to examine how parents as governors interpret their roles in school governance. The study focuses on the deeper patterns and practices of parental participation in school governance, and how cultural values, norms and beliefs influence patterns and practices of parents as school governors. The study further argues that despite the fact that there are research studies on parental involvement in education, the research needs to be updated. Therefore this study could shed more light on

the nature of parental involvement in schools and make a contribution to policy implementation research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE ORIGIN OF PARENT PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will provide a legal background to the South African context of parents as governors, beginning with a history that relates to the struggle against Bantustans and apartheid education. This chapter shows how aspects of that struggle found their way into provisions of the South African Schools Act and how in so doing the people's struggle was institutionalised within the law.

#### **2.2 ESTABLISHMENT OF PARENTS TEACHERS STUDENTS ASSOCIATION (PTSA) PRE 1994**

During the zenith of the anti-apartheid struggle of the 1980s, the Soweto Education Crisis Committee developed "Parents Teachers Students Associations" (PTSAs) as an alternative to the illegitimate Department of Education and Training (DET) school committees. Throughout urban townships, structures such as school committees were undermined by the community because they lacked proper democratic representation of parents who were affiliated to a particular school. Because of the pressure from the community and the political movements, the apartheid government had no alternative but to allow democratic structures like PTSAs to be established. The idea of PTSAs became associated with National Education Co-ordinating Committee (NECC). For some within the anti-apartheid movement, these structures were seen as a mechanism to resolve and manage conflict among different constituencies at the school level. Nzimande (1993) argues that PTSAs were more than merely school structures, but were an instrument of the struggle and organs of people's power. Gardiner (1990) echoed Nzimande's (1993) assertion that PTSAs were also seen as the basic building blocks of People's Education, a concept developed to express a democratic and non-racial alternative to Bantu Education. Collective responsibility and democratic decision-making were undermined,

however, as various sectors or components of the PTSAs tended to promote narrow, sectoral interests. Nevertheless this did not stop the PTSAs from playing a role in decision-making, problem-solving, fund-raising and monitoring of the usage of school funds in some areas of the country. The different interest groups were able to monitor, manage and make decisions about the usage of school resources, and to defuse common sources of conflict. Fleisch (2002) points out that the number of PTSAs grew rapidly, particularly after 1990, when repression from the state diminished and they gained a high level of popular legitimacy, thus paving the way for their popular acceptance in school-level structures among formerly oppressed communities.

### **2.3 DEFINITION OF PARENTS TEACHERS STUDENTS ASSOCIATION (PTSA)**

The PTSA was a representative school governing body comprising parents, teachers and students of a particular school. At primary school level, a Parent–Teacher-Association (PTA) operated. The student component was excluded, because at that level students were considered to be too young to be involved in such matters. Sithole (1994) notes that parents' representatives might not necessarily be parents of pupils enrolled at that particular school. A guardian or other member of the community who had a vested interest in education and the welfare of the school could have been co-opted by parents to serve as a member of the PTSA. School principals were sometimes involved as ex-officio members or acted as chairperson of the PTSA, while in some cases they did not participate in the PTSA at all. Teacher's representatives were either elected by the teacher constituent of the school or appointed from existing school committees, or co-opted from the executive of the staff association. Mda (2000) however argues that parents had little say over substantive educational issues and that their involvement in education was limited to that of an advisory body by way of the PTSA.

### **2.4 BASIC FUNCTIONS OF THE PTSA**

Sithole (1994) describes the functions of the PTSA as furthering the educational aims of the school within the community, inculcating a democratic approach to decision-making, problem-solving, fund-raising and monitoring the usage of school funds. Sithole (1994) argues that the method of operation of a PTSA depended on the material conditions on which it existed. This

structure was faced with a large number of challenges, including the state education departments, such as Bantustan authorities, which undermined the process of implementation. In some rural areas chiefs were opposed to PTAs, especially the participation of students in school governance. School principals saw PTAs as eroding their administrative control, particularly the students' participation. An evaluation of the PTAs, conducted by the Education Policy Unit (EPU) 1993, showed that PTAs did not have a clear idea of their functions, and that they struggled in practice to move much beyond conflict resolution within schools. Fleisch (2002) argues that the persistence of PTAs up to and beyond 1994 suggests a strong desire among many communities to develop systems of democratic school governance in order to deal with the problems of instability in schools, and to give previously powerless communities a voice in the provision of education.

## **2.5 WHAT IS A SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY?**

Mphela (2005) (in Maboe 2005) defines a school governing body as a government of the school, established in terms of the South African Schools Act. It is mandated to set policies and rules that govern the school, and to monitor the implementation of the rules. The SGB gets its mandate from the different members (learners, parents, teaching and non-teaching staff) of the school community. These members of the school community elect the SGB, whose members then represent the school community. Once it is put in place, the SGB acts on behalf of the school, because the school is a juristic person. This means that the school governing body act on the school's behalf. The school governing body can therefore sue or be sued. The SGB exists independently of its members, which means that even if all its members resign, the school governing body may be held responsible for the legal contracts entered into on behalf of the school. Mphela (2005) further attests that this definition is further enhanced by the Education White Paper 2, No 130 of 1996, which defines the school governing body as the body entrusted with the responsibility and authority to formulate and adopt policy for each public school in terms of national policy and provincial education regulations. This body performs functions defined in terms of laws, regulations and proclamation (Beckmann, 1995:68).



## **2.6 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES (SGBs)**

Part of the reform of school governance in post apartheid South Africa was the formulation of the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996, which attempted to give shape to the principles of access, redress, equity and democratic governance, as outlined in the first White Paper on Education and Training. School Governing Bodies (SGBs) were established because the education system prior to 1994 was based on racism, inequality and segregation, causing schooling, particularly in Black townships and rural areas, to have very little legitimacy.

Arising from the Hunter Commission Report, the Education White Paper No.1 was developed in 1995. This White Paper focused on the role of parents and emphasised that they should become involved in the education of their children. This was followed by the Education White Paper No. 2, which agreed with the Hunter Commission Report, which had argued that School Governing Body (SGB) structures should be introduced in schools. This policy was enacted by the South African Schools Bill (1996), which made it compulsory for all South African schools to establish school governing bodies. After the SGB elections of 1997, local area committees and associations of governing bodies began to emerge. In Gauteng these structures were encouraged by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), on the understanding that they would promote and support governing bodies, and within some local areas or neighbourhoods they began to collaborate in identifying common skills and capacity building they needed in order to perform their legislated functions. To ensure and facilitate parental involvement, the GDE established various booklets, which included information on the background of SASA (1996), the place of the governing body in the governance of schools, and the nature and functions of a governing body.

The Act provided a significant decentralisation of power at institutional level (i.e. schools) through the establishment of SGBs at all public schools. It makes provision for the representation of parents, teachers, learners, non-teaching and teaching staff, and the principal. The Act however gives more representation to parents than other groups. Section 23 (9) of SASA (1996) states that “the number of parent members must comprise one more than the combined total of other members of a governing body who have voting rights” (Republic of

South Africa, 1996). Fear for the power of teachers in a partnership with parents arose from the fact that the number of non-educator members of a SGB, and therefore the number of votes held by these non-educators, would outweigh the number of educators. Those fearing decentralisation of the education systems at institutional level were concerned that teachers might play a secondary role in the partnership. This marginalisation of teachers, away from a primary role in decision-making on educational matters, has caused widespread concern.

The representation of learners applies to learners in Grade eight and higher grades only. The SASA (1996) further makes provision for the co-option of community members who have particular expertise. A parent who is elected to the SGB must have a child or children at the school, however, a parent who is employed at the school as an administrator, may not serve as a parent governor. When interpreting and applying this provision, the word 'parent' must be read to include a person who is the learner's guardian, or is legally entitled to custody of the learner, or who has undertaken to fulfil the obligations of a parent or guardian with regard to the learner's education. Dekker & Lemmer (1993) argue that reference is usually made to "the parents" as a collective term; however, not everyone has the same understanding of the concept. Dekker & Lemmer (1993) refer to "parents" as neither an amorphous nor a homogenous mass, but as all having one trait in common, namely that they all have children. Fleisch (2002) notes that there was little conflict over establishment of local school control. Fleisch notes further that in the first SGB elections in Gauteng in 1997, 98.4% of public schools in the province elected governing bodies and that by the end of the year 95% of SGBs had elected office bearers and were operational. Karlsson et al (1997) reported a similarly successful process in KwaZulu-Natal in 1997 and the completion of SGB elections in all provinces by February 1998. Furthermore, Motala and Pampallis (2005) claim that empirical research tends to indicate small improvements in the functioning of SGBs over time. The Education 2000 Plus longitudinal study of 27 schools shows various developments over the three years from 1998 to 2000. For example, the number of SGBs that had adopted constitutions increased from 34% in 1998 to 100% in 2000. The same period was also marked by some increase in learner participation in SGB meetings and a slight increase in female representation in SGBs, although they still remained male-dominated.

## 2.7 LEGAL STATUS OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

Shaba (2003) contends that one of the characteristics of the law as an instrument for order is that it creates legal relationships, which give rise to specific legal status. The relationship between the parents and the school in South Africa is one such relationship that has been created by law. By virtue of this kind of creation, parents acquire legal status in their involvement with the school. Their rights and obligations are determined by law to establish their value in the education system. In the context of this study, 'the law' refers to the introduction of the South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996, which is the cornerstone of the national legislative framework for education management and governance (Beckmann & Visser, 1999:152). This Act views a school as a juristic person in terms of section 15 and decrees that the school governing body shall be constituted to govern the school. The school governing body acts as the organ of this juristic person.

Section 16(1) of the School Act places governance of every public school in the hands of the parents. The law expects this partnership to be based on mutual interest and mutual confidence. The parents in this instance are expected to put the interest of the school and the learners above their own personal, political, religious and language interest in terms of section 16(2) of the School Act. The relationship of trust in terms of the law applies to the handling of finances, attendance at meetings, drawing up of the constitution and adopting the code of conduct.

The partnership referred in the preamble of the School Act can be explained differently. It can refer to different stakeholders. But the way it is explained in terms of section 16 of the School Act, it conveys the notion of a partnership between the principal and the lay members of the school governing body regarding the governance and professional management of the school. This notion of a partnership is explained further by Calitz et al. (2002:81) from the common law perspective:

- A partnership is an association of people.
- After negotiations, partners agree voluntarily to work together on an equal basis to achieve specified goals.

- The aim of a partnership is to make profit. In the case of the partnership contemplated in the School Act, the aim is to provide good quality education and to share it equitably among all the people in the country.
- The means used to achieve the aims of a partnership are capital and labour.
- Partners have the right to manage the affairs of the partnership.
- Partners' duties include the following: to deliver on promises and undertakings; to manage joint interests as if they were their own; to report to one another and to maintain the confidentiality of the business vis-à-vis strangers.

The school as a juristic person cannot control itself. The parents take decisions as to how the school should operate. They enter into legal transactions on behalf of the school and represent the school in its interaction with the outside world. Sections 20 and 36 of the Schools Act give the school governing body these controlling and representing powers.

The school governing body is expected to do only what is allowed by the law. Any decision and action taken by the school governing body should be in line with legislation. For examples, the law expects the lay members of the school governing body to have skills to draw up a budget. The school governing body is expected to be knowledgeable enough to be able to perform their duties as laid down by legislation. Being able to do only what is allowed by the law can mean, amongst other things, keeping information confidential. The law requires everybody who is in a legal relationship or contractual relationship to respect the element of confidentiality. To be able to respect information that is confidential is one of the requirements for being a good school governing body member. As the statutory body, the school governing body must decide what is and what is not confidential.

In terms of the conditions of the Schools Act, the school governing body is to function in collaboration with other stakeholders such as educators, managers, learners, parents, senior government official, members of the Executive Council (MEC) in the province, community members and Union members (Shaba, 2003:24). The Education White Paper regards this involvement as a measure to encourage tolerance, rational discussion and collective decision-making. The different rights and interests in the composition and operations of the school governing body becomes an important matter in terms of the law. The school governing body

must be seen operating in its services within the legal and professional parameters of its task (Loock, 1998:37-39).

## **2.8 FUNCTIONS OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES**

Section 20 and 21 of the SASA (1996) stipulate the prescribed functions of all governing bodies. According to these sections, the governing body of a public school must:

- Promote the best interest of the school and strive to ensure its development.
- Adopt a constitution.
- Adopt the mission statement of the school.
- Support the principal, educators and other staff in performing their professional functions.
- Determine times of the school day consistent with any applicable conditions of employment of staff at the school.
- Administer and control the school's property, buildings and grounds, which include school hostels.
- Encourage parents, learners, educators and other staff members at the school to render voluntary services to the school.
- Recommend to the head of department on the appointment of staff at the school.
- At the request of the head of department, allow the reasonable use under fair conditions of the facilities for educational programmes not conducted by the school.
- Discharge all other functions given to the governing body by the Schools Act.
- Discharge functions that are set out by the member of the executive council in the Provincial Gazette.

The Governing Body may apply in writing to the head of department to be allocated any of the following functions, which are stipulated in Section 21.

- To maintain and improve the school's property, buildings and grounds.
- To determine the extra-curriculum of the school and the choice of subject options according to the provincial curriculum policy.
- To buy textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school.

- To pay for services to the school
- Other functions consistent with this Act and any applicable law.

Squelch (1999) notes that, as in the case of other countries surveyed, South African SGBs have been given more control over a number of school matters. Typically, site-based councils or governing bodies are given greater control over financial matters, school buildings and general school policy and school improvement. However, unlike other countries, South African SGBs can recommend employment of teachers and principals. They can appoint school governing body teachers. However, decisions concerning the choice of textbooks and instructional matters fall under Section 21, which means that not all governing bodies have been allocated these powers.

## **2.9. THE NATURE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS**

In terms of the School Act, the lay interest constitutes a majority in school governance. The Act regards parents as valuable stakeholders in the decision-making process of school governance even though they may have little or no education. The success of parental contribution also depends on the attitude of other stakeholders. Parents may feel inferior but they wield decisive power because legislation declares so (Bush & Gamage, 2001). Engelbrecht et al (1999) attest that it is difficult to view parents as a source of a deadlock that could impact negatively on the performance of the school governing body. They cite reasons, for example that of parents who are elected to the school governing body on the basis of their history of their involvement with the school. Education White paper 2 (1996) gives a number of guidelines. It states that governing bodies are to be involved in “policy determination”, meaning that SGBs are to be “entrusted with the responsibility and authority to formulate and adopt policy” (Education White Paper 2, 1996:17) for their school. The Act (1996:50) dictates that “the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body”. The teachers and the school principal are to be responsible for “the day-to-day organisation of teaching and learning” (White Paper 2, 1996). The White Paper 2 (1996) further proposes responsibilities of SGBs in terms of determining the behaviour code of staff and learners. This responsibility is one indication of the shift in accountability from the state to parents. Beresford (1992) noted that most parents do not want to control educational matters. This view is reflected on White Paper

2 (1996), which states that different groups of parents will have varying capacities of involvement, which by implication means that the type and nature of accountability will differ from group to group of parents. Heystek & Louw (1999) note that the school act does not divide parents according to their area of settlement, whether that is urban or rural. However, geographical areas may have influences on the involvement of parents in school activities. Heystek & Louw (1999) also note that the present era of school governance does not determine participation according to the type of school, and that research has revealed that participation of parents in primary schools is better than in secondary schools.

## **2.10. CONCLUSION**

This chapter has traced the origin of parental participation in school governance. It has also reflected on the formation of governance structures pre-1994 and post-1994. Informal structures such as PTSAs in secondary schools and PTAs in primary schools were not recognised by the the previous government. The two structures were established at that time in response to the desire to further the aims of the school within the community, including a democratic approach to decision-making and problem-solving, fundraising and monitoring of the usage of school funds. The problems these structures then faced included being undermined by Bantustan authorities and also by school principals, who viewed the structures as eroding their administrative control, particularly with regard to student participation. SASA (1996), made it compulsory for all South African schools to establish a school governing body by July 1997, and made provision for the representation of parents, learners, non-teaching and teaching staff, and the principal. To date all SGBs are required to adopt a constitution, administer and control school assets, make recommendations to the provincial departments for the appointment of staff and develop a budget.

After thirteen years of democracy in South Africa, it is important as a country to trace changes from the apartheid era to the democratic era, and to take note of how democracy has changed school governance. The key questions to ask following the implementation of SASA (1996) relate to actual patterns and practices of parents in SGB, and how cultural values and beliefs influence or shape the nature of parental involvement in school governance.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This section will focus on and review literature on school governance, particularly on the patterns and practices of parents in school governance. While it focuses on literature specific to South Africa, it attempts to locate it within a wider international context. There is a substantial body of local and international literature on school governance and parental involvement in schools. However, very little has been written on the influence of cultural background that shapes the nature of parent involvement in school governance. The theoretical framework provides an explanation for the gap between what the legislative framework articulates and what is actually happening on the ground.

For the purpose of this study it is important to define the two concepts that are key in this study, namely, parent and governance. The Oxford Dictionary (1998) defines a parent as a person who has begotten or borne offspring or as a person who has adopted a child or who holds the position or exercises the function of a parent. "Parent" in the context of this study refers to the biological parent of the learner, or legal guardian or caregiver who has children at a particular school. According to Heystek (1999) these are parents who are responsible for the child, and who must and can get involved in school activities. A parent as cited in Maboe (2005) can also be a caregiver i.e. a person who has spontaneously taken over the parenting role because the biological parents are incapable of caring for the children. A parent can also be used as a collective term because it can include the entire parent community of a specific school in a specific environment.



Governance in terms of the Education White Paper 2, 1996:1, relates to policy determination, in which the democratic participation of the school's stakeholders is essential. In terms of section 16(1) of the School Act, governance is vested in the school governing body.

### **3.2 WHY PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS?**

Parents' involvement in education has many advantages similar to those of participation by other stakeholders such as teachers and learners. According to Griffith (2000:162) involvement of parents in their children's education has long been advocated as integral to positive childhood development and school success. Griffith (*ibid.*) adds that the beneficial effects of parent involvement are mostly visible in children's academic learning and performance. In addition Squelch and Lemmer (1994) claim that parental involvement is vital, in that it has benefits such as improving school performance, reducing drop-out rates, decreasing delinquency and developing a more positive attitude towards the school.

Sykes (1990) has noted that one of the most crucial challenges facing schools is that many have become isolated from the communities they were built to serve. This phenomenon is disturbing because local people feel they no longer understand what is going on inside their schools. Rivalland (1989) cited in Wolfendale (1992) mentioned a combination of initial premises underlying parental involvement in schools, including that which stipulates that all parents care about their children's welfare and well-being. The premise 'all parents care...' is the spur to action by teachers and others to find ways for encouraging and welcoming traditionally indifferent parents into a partnership. Parents want to do what they believe to be in their children's best interest. Teachers and other professionals have capitalised on this latent good will when inviting parents to be participants in school projects.

Parents will respond to invitations to participate in school if they can see the benefit to their child. Similar to the 'good will' premise is that which upholds parents' interest in and commitment to their own children as overriding an altruistic belief in education and other children's welfare. It is therefore an acceptable springboard to parental involvement. Parents

are the primary educators of their children and are experts on their children. This is more than axiomatic, the basic premise being that as this is known to be the case, better use of these parental skills and experience can be exercised.

Parents' and teachers' skills complement each other. The evidence is in terms of joint enterprise parents and teachers offer a set of different but complementary skills, perspectives and insights. Parents often have vital information and insights concerning their children. This is a truism, admittedly, but the point here is that teachers and other professionals have not made the best use of these. The parents' views have hitherto been confined to annual parents' evenings or the 'case conference' setting, which is limiting, and at which parents are often outnumbered by professionals. These are not conducive circumstances for the effective sharing of information and concerns. The final two points concern parents' rights to be involved, and have been fundamental to many of the parent-professional initiatives.

### **3.3 NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DEBATE ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Parental involvement in South African schools is not a new phenomenon, rather it dates back from 1993, just before the new legislation, the SASA (1996). Mkhwanazi (1993) is amongst the first South African writers to write about parental involvement in the school. Her work focuses on parental involvement in educational policy discourse in South Africa. Amongst the points that she highlights is that the concept "parental involvement" has been used differently by different groups. The apartheid government, for example, used it as a means of constructing political hegemonic policy. Mkhwanazi (1993) further argues that parental participation is considered as a way of providing resources and facilities, helping the school to become relevant to local needs and conditions, as well as making it more effective and efficient. Similarly Nene (1993) argues that the South African government had a tradition of encouraging a limited form of financial parental involvement and only involved parents in an attempt to legitimise unpopular government policies. Nene (1993) further viewed parental involvement in governance structures in South Africa as taking two forms: collaborative, which is advisory at best, or participative, which implies real decision-making power as well as involvement in their

children's school and other educational activities. In response to Nene's (1993) argument, Mkhwanazi (1993) indicates that this particular limited form of parental involvement was used by the apartheid government as a means of constructing political hegemony over African people.

Mhlongo (1995) was critical about the control of financial responsibility that was given to parents. Despite such responsibility, parents were deprived of all powers needed for effective involvement in school governance. This, according to Mhlongo, appears to give parents a feeling of lack of ownership of the school. Mhlongo further argues that parents, together with other stakeholders, were to form a partnership to bring about educational changes and be part of school governance. To Mhlongo, school governors were responsible for making policies on various issues of the school such as admission, uniform, code of conduct, conditions of service and disciplinary actions. They also met to discuss reports by the principal on school progress and problems encountered. The involvement of parents depended on various factors, which included the leadership style of the headmaster, the existence of structures, the nature and the culture of the school and the organisational design of the school. Mhlongo (1995) suggests that involvement of parents in policy matters was influenced by various contextual factors. These contextual factors cannot promote parental involvement alone, but the availability of such activities as fund-raising and special tasks for parents are essential to promote parental involvement in school governance. However lack of communication, report-back and feedback meetings inhibited the role parents played in the management level of the school.

The South Africa School Act (SASA) of 1996 was a response to all concerns about parental involvement in South African schools. The philosophy behind SASA was to promote democracy in schools, amongst other objectives. Democracy in education would be strengthened if people took part in making the decisions in their local schools. Democracy would also provide the space for communities to voice their educational concerns and to deliberate on the schooling needs of their own children. The idea underlining democratic school governance was that if education shapes democracy, democracy must shape education. In other words, the authority over education should rest with the entire body of citizens and, at school level, it should rest with the SGB. SASA hands over a great deal of responsibility to SGBs.

The Act (SASA) further ensures that parents, educators and learners form a “partnership” with the state to determine the policies and rules that govern schools. SASA also makes it clear in its preamble that education policy must redress past injustices in educational provision and set uniform norms and standards. The introduction of SASA was welcomed by Sayed and Carrim (1998), amongst others, who noted that participation by citizens in civil society may create the condition for generating a common good. Although Sayed (1997) initially criticised the notion of parent participation, Sayed argued that SASA, which empowers parents to govern the school, is essentially part of the South African decentralisation discourse. Sayed (1997) notes that this discourse is informed by international agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Sayed further noted that through its commitment to decentralisation, SASA attests to the fact that the South African state is unwilling to submit total educational control schools. School governance is thus controlled by the government through a process of devolution of power to the SGBs, amounting to the right to collect school fees. (Sayed, 1997:358).

Internationally, in Britain for example, parental involvement was promoted by the “Parents’ Charter”, which gave parents the right to information, the right to choice of available schools and the right to a hearing if they were not satisfied with the kind of education being provided (EDUPOL, 1993:8). Presently in Britain, parents have the right to assess, and advise on both instructional and non-instructional education issues such as the curriculum, evaluation, teaching methods and conditions of service. However, despite the introduction of “The Parents Charter”, parents in Britain still criticise schools for not producing pupils with the necessary skills or qualifications to drive the economy. Teachers did not see the need to enlighten parents about their new teaching approaches, when these approaches differed from those previously used, and also from those to which parents had been accustomed during their schooling. Using the information at their disposal, parents came to the conclusion that the new teaching methods introduced by teachers were the cause of the failure of schools to meet the needs of the economic system. A British scholar, Poster (1982) argues that by and large, it is in the structure and composition of the school governing bodies that change has been most marked in recent years. One of his major concerns was that the number of parents in the governing body is inadequate to fully represent the parents. Poster (1982) further notes that

parent membership of the governing body is insufficient to achieve the full involvement of all parents in the life and activities of the school.

Hatry et al (1994) examined a number of American schools. Their findings were that parents were minimally involved in the decision-making process through membership on school governing bodies such as site councils and school management teams. They suggested that school governance councils should include more parents than teachers or other school personnel. Hatry et al (1994) further made an assessment on science and mathematics and discovered that both science and mathematics faculty members did not perceive substantial influence of the parents in their educational activities. They then made an assumption that either it was an accurate assessment or that parent input might not be obvious as it filtered through site council decision making.

In her study of European School Governance, Riley (1998) notes that most schools adopted the “no parents beyond this point” principle in the 1960s. In the 1970s, Tyndale (cited in Riley, 1988) argued the issue of parental involvement and questioned the legitimacy of parents in school governance. Tyndale’s findings were that parents are legitimate partners and that they should be given a legitimate say in the management of the school through representation on governing bodies. The study, conducted in Canada, Denmark, England, France and USA on parental involvement in schools, points that children’s learning become more effective if their parents participate in education (Riley, 1998: 132)

Parental participation, as noted by Crozier (1998), is in its nature the forging of a “partnership” between educators and parents. Whilst the market promotes individuality, the parent-educators partnership aims at promoting involvement, commitment and responsibility. It is furthermore argued by Crozier that although parents can use the “partnership” to hold educators accountable, the “partnership” between parents and educators has been legislated as a means of monitoring/controlling parents and “engendering” disciplinary power. This ensures that parents learn to be ‘good’ parents as defined by the educators, and to adopt a set of values that match those of the school. The conceptual framework that Crozier provides could be used to argue that the identity of the parent is determined by the educator-parent partnership. This

rationale links with Soudien's (1999) argument that the identity of the "learner" is constructed by SASA (1996).

A "good" parent, as viewed by Vincent (1996), is firstly one who promotes the school's image; secondly, the "good" parent provides the child with the foundation for schooling and, thirdly, the "good" parent behaves in a certain acceptable way at school. Parents thus have to learn how to behave as "good" parents. Bemstein (1990) juxtaposes the notion of "good" parent with that of "social relationships", and argues that social relationships have rules, and that people have to learn as part of the particular relationship. Parents thus have to learn how to behave as parents, and to become in Vincent's (1996) dialectic, "good" parents. Vincent maintains that the school should provide opportunities for parents to interact with educational programmes and actively assist parents with parenting methods, because parents do not have a clear idea of how to help their children. These views are echoed by Rosemary (1993), who calls for increased parental involvement in the running of schools, as members of the community, and responds to the desire to make the governing of schools more representative.

There are multiple ways in which parents are involved in a school, and a number of authors have undertaken research in schools to show that parental involvement is not a single formula, but has multiple interpretations. Gordon (1969) (in Wolfendale 1993) one of the earliest to write on the topic, outlines a five-point scale identifying different roles parents might assume, including parents as supporters, parents as teachers, parents as learners, parents as helpers and parents as policy makers and partners.

### **3.3.1. PARENTS AS SUPPORTERS**

Apart from teaching and learning, parents are major supporters in social events. Atkin (1998) argues that listening to parents is an invaluable way of uncovering and building upon the skills and expertise they possess, but are not always aware of. Katzin (1989) further notes that for parents to feel a vital part of the school, they should be given a chance to sometimes organise activities and decide what assistance they can render in class. Parents at school can become active in fund-raising and resource development.

### **3.3.2. PARENTS AS TEACHERS**

Griffiths and Hamilton (1984) assert that children learn first from their parents. Parent and teacher skills complement each other; however, teachers remain role experts by virtue of their professionalism. Although learning can take place at home, teachers will still have to exercise their professionalism when parents are asked into school. Parents as educators can make a significant contribution to children's acquisition of reading and literacy skills.

### **3.3.3. PARENTS AS LEARNERS**

Wolfendale (1992) is of the view that giving parents new insights and understanding about their children builds bridges between home learning and school learning. This can promote a better understanding between parents and teachers. Teachers can invite parents to their children's classrooms for observation and to be shown how to play educational games. Fine (1980) also suggests that teachers invite parents into the classroom to discuss ideas on how to make the classroom attractive and conducive to learning. Parents are seen to be playing an important role in the education of their children, and are eager to be involved in school life thus "endorsing the power of the key relationships between families and school" (Bastiani in Wolfendale and Bastiani, 2000:19).

### **3.3.4. PARENTS AS HELPERS**

Stacy (1991) attests that children become excited when they see their parents within the school premises, helping, or being invited to be part of the class. This view is developed further by Atkin (1998), who states that where possible, parents have to be given a chance to teach or to help children with other class activities. Parents can be involved in the planning of curricular and support programmes, and the teaching and learning processes. Katzin (1989:22).

### **3.3.5. PARENTS AS POLICY MAKERS**

According to Dekker and Lemmer (1993), parents can be involved as co-policy makers by providing some input on school policy and programmes as members of governance bodies. They can also be members of textbook committees, and report card committees, and can be involved in improving teaching in general. Members can also advise and formulate policies.

Deem (1988) argued that if planning is to be left to groups of parents and governors, who will often have short term and particular interests, continuity and constancy will be more difficult to achieve. Deem (1988) illustrates her point by making the example that if school A has many white middle class pupils and a well-off and generous parent body, it is not likely to worry about school B's falling numbers, lack of resources and disadvantaged pupils. The SASA (1996) has similar aims to those of the Education Reform Act (ERA) implemented in England and Wales, and the same questions raised in those countries can be raised in the South African context.

Deem (1988), considers the nature of parental participation in schools, whether or not parents want to have a voice in their children's education; and whether or not the members of the SGBs are true representatives, who report back to parents. Deem concludes by stating that, "running a school is difficult if you are never or rarely in it when it is in operation; it is also difficult if you have other things to do, like a job, childcare, or indeed any other responsibilities, which take up a lot of the day and week (Deem 1988:187).

Ranson (1983), cited in Woods (1988), maintains that parental involvement occurs when contact is affected between various stakeholders, for the mutual benefit of the different parties involved. She regards the "essence" of participation as being the bargaining process whereof the result is unpredictable. Chisholm et al. (1996) note that parents, as important stakeholders of the SGB, perform an administrative work for the department without remuneration. It is suggested that, to ensure consistent parental involvement, there be 'sine qua non' for successful governing bodies. Factors which militate against this involvement such as work and travel commitments must be given serious thought (Chisholm et al., 1996:7). This alludes to the government having to facilitate time off from work for parents, without loss of income, if they are working.

O'Sullivan (1989) was mainly concerned with powers that were given to parents, arguing that there was a need to openly address the issue of 'parent power' alongside 'teacher power' and 'church power'. To this end she recommended active parent associations, a clear strategy for parental involvement in individual schools, and full participation of parent representatives in the Board of Management. This concern stems from fears on the part of teachers that increased



parental involvement in decision-making implies that parents and teachers will be given equal status in all matters pertaining to education. However, some of those arguing for parents to be involved in decision-making will argue that parents and professionals “bring different but equivalent experience and expertise” (Wolfendale, 1993:3).

Sandler (as cited by Wolfendale, 1989) advises that parental involvement may lead to certain assumptions: Firstly there is the probability that the more parents know about their children’s school and the process of education, the better it will be for their children. This assumption rests on the notion that knowledge about the school and its working will in itself produce a spin-off for the child to do better in some aspects of social or academic achievement. On the other hand, Bailey and Taylor (1980) contend that there is little evidence that pupil enhancement occurs in such a simplistic way, and parents themselves tend to find their level with respect to understanding the processes and mechanism of schooling. Those who understand most may even choose to stand aside from the school and watch with satisfaction as their children progress smoothly, while other parents, despite massive interest and proximity to their children’s school, remain intimidated and ignorant of the vast number of hidden agendas of the school as a system, and of education as a multi-level, multi-purpose social institution.

Another assumption about parental involvement is that parents should or could contribute more to the curriculum of the school. This raises a number of questions about the nature and content of the curriculum and the types of knowledge or skills to be acquired. The main problem is that many parents’ expectations of school are shaped by their own experience of having been pupils themselves. Sometimes that experience bears little resemblance to the ethos of a modern schooling. For many parents, their held view is that arithmetic, reading and writing should be overseen by a stern and discipline-enforcing teacher who has little interest in children as individuals, only in their academic progress.

Badenhorst (1995) outlines various reasons that cause parents not to co-operate well with the school, and holds that in some instances parents cannot be blamed for their attitudes. According to Badenhorst (1995), the school manager and the government can also be source

of barriers to parental involvement. Badenhorst (1995) cites the following factors that can be a stumbling block for participating in school governance:

- Reluctance to adapt to change;
- Parents are confused about their roles;
- Finding duties and roles challenging;
- Lack of information on national education policy development;
- Traditional leadership style that stresses individualism as opposed to sharing and forging good relationships;
- Conflict between the parents' authority in the school governing body and the role of the principal;
- The educators' negative attitude causes parents to lose interest;
- Language usage in the school governing body meetings. Important issues discussed in a language which is not theirs;
- Lack of training about school rules.

### **3.4. STRATEGIES FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Badenhorst (1993) suggests strategies and techniques that can be employed to encourage parental involvement in schools.

#### **3.4.1. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION ON A REGULAR BASIS WITH THE PARENT COMMUNITY.**

Having parents at school who are involved in decision making can result in effective communication. Parents can easily disseminate information to other community members. Meeting with parents regularly can assist with communication, as parents will be informed about what is happening at school, since they need to understand the changing nature of the school. This can enable them to support their children with homework and other curriculum and school-related activities.

Teachers can be helpful with regard to identifying and integrating appropriate resources and services from the community to support the family, for example allowing parents to come to class and ask for clarification about the task that has been given as homework or project – welcoming parents to school as partners (Badenhorst 1993:109).

### **3.4.2. COMMUNITY BASED WORK**

Parents can be encouraged to come to school and participate in the projects that are initiated by the school. One of the projects parents can become involved in is gardening. Parents and teachers can work together in the garden to plough and plant a food garden. The product can be used to feed learners, it can be sold, or it can be taken home to feed the families (Badenhorst, 1993:109).

### **3.4.3. COORDINATION OF ALL ACTIVITIES BY MEANS OF A PROGRAMME FOR THE YEAR.**

Badenhorst (1993) encourages each home to create an environment that supports learning. The school should be providing advice on supportive learning practices that can be carried out at home, by developing two-way, jargon-free communication regarding school programmes, practices and learner progress.

### **3.4.4. CREATING AN INVITING CLIMATE**

Gololo (1998:33) lists some points that need attention in order to create an inviting climate at school, which would motivate parents to become involved.

- The behaviour of the staff should be such that parents will feel welcome and wanted at school.
- A positive attitude of the staff towards parents will create an inviting atmosphere and make parents feel at ease at school.
- A neat room reserved for the reception of parents will encourage them to render help and ideas to strengthen relationships between the parents and the school staff.

- A neat and well-appointed principal's office, which will create an atmosphere of professionalism, will impress on the parents a feeling of respect and help the parents to feel comfortable and appreciated at school. If the whole school's environment is appropriate, the climate in the classrooms will automatically be inviting. As a result, parents can also become involved in decorating the classroom to make it attractive and conducive to learning.

### **3.5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In order to develop a conceptual framework for this study, the researcher will review policy implementation as viewed by various policy analysts. This theoretical framework will shed some light on the impact of policy-makers, and the way policies are viewed and interpreted by different policy researchers and policy implementers. The theoretical framework will focus on the contesting views of various researchers about the process and policy implementation.

### **3.6. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

Ozga (1990) stresses the importance of combining macro-level policies with research of micro-level implementation. Ozga argues that there are two ways in which policy can be approached, that is "policy as text and policy as discourse". As a text, policy is non-linear, because it goes through various agendas of policy actors, resulting in arguments. The meaning of policies cannot be controlled, because the policy actors in the different contexts decode, interpret and formulate the meanings of policies as they are played out. Bowe et al (1996) note that policy is not made and finished at the legislative moment. It is still taking place after legislation. This means that Bowe et al regard policy process as being continuous, with the generation and implementation processes being central to it, whilst it is extended through explanatory texts. Alford and Friendland (1985) differ from Bowe et al, arguing that the policy process of policy generation and the process of policy implementation are indubitably different stages, with the latter following the former.

“Policy as a discourse” places policy within the big picture of possibilities and constraints. It frames a new form of politics in terms of what can be said, thought and reacted to. By establishing the terrain in which policy agendas are fought out, it reconstructs and affects power relations. In the discussion of “policy as discourse”, Ball (1994) focuses on the constraints, limitations or structure inherent in the policy. Foucault (1997) interprets discourse as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Discourses are not about objects, and nor do they identify objects, rather they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own intervention. Discourse determines whose voices are heard. The discourse framing current South African educational policies is argued by certain theorists to be neo-liberal. The possibilities and limitations of South African educational policies are thus determined by the neo-liberal discourse (Foucault 1977:49). Bowe et al. (1992) state that the role of the policy implementers is determined by legislation and that the implementation discourse resides in policy. Ball (in Bowe et al, 1992) attempts to move away from the state-control model, admitting at each stage of the policy process that the empowerment of the role-players varies.

Shaeffer (1992) points out that research has shown that the school is not only an implementer of national policies and programmes, but is also a unit of policy-making, planning and management in its own right. Such innovation processes must begin at the school level, where real change can take place, and relevant stakeholders have to be actively involved in the initial stages of policy formulation. Ball (1994) noted that policies are influenced by the “histories” of the context and readers to which they are introduced. A policy does not enter a social or institutional vacuum as a physical text that pops through the school letterbox. The ways in which policies are received depend on the different power relations and structures within schools.

Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) attest that policy implementation becomes problematic once policy-making is detached from or not informed by what goes on at the level at which implementation should take place. Availability of resources, strategic planning and the setting of timelines can be rendered futile if monitoring is not done regularly. Beckett (1991) views governing bodies as a structure that provide a forum of accountability for the school, which is local, which has a close knowledge of the school and its problems, and understands the

constraints under which staff work. Beckett (1991) suggests that educational policy should emerge from this kind of forum.

Chapman (1990) and Hargreaves (1989) further point out that when insufficient power is given to people who are close to implementation, the pace of the process becomes slower. Chapman further notes that monitoring implementation must be carried out in order to detect needed changes in the programme designs, to identify logistical weaknesses that threaten its success, to train, and to provide an incentive to implementers. While monitoring may be undertaken to serve more than one of the above purposes, not all of these purpose can be served simultaneously. In education, for instance, the pace may be slowed down if the districts and schools do not have sufficient powers to decide on certain matters relating to policy implementation. Furthermore, Chapman (1990) and Hargreaves (1989) suggest that policy implementation has to be accompanied by sufficient professional development. Stakeholders who are directly involved in or affected by the process should receive training when necessary. Chapman (1990) and Hargreaves (1989) suggest that there should be the development of a training academy for districts together with the creation of a school environment that fosters continual training.

There is a serious criticism against policy-makers by Friedman (1995), who maintains that in many countries the design and subsequent implementation of policies is done without sufficient research into the intended beneficiaries, about the options that can best achieve certain objectives, or about the actual impact of the programs implemented. This might result in available resources being wasted, in that without the basic information, prioritisation of basic needs of the population is difficult, if not impossible. Friedman (1995) further notes that in many countries, no serious attention is given to the impact of policies on efficiency, effectiveness and equity. The lack of attention to detail, and potential consequences can also be the result of policy-makers not being directly affected by the inefficiency of implementation. People who are directly affected by the consequences of bad policies, which do not take into consideration the context of implementation, are often those closer to implementation. In this case such people would be parents, teachers and learners at school level.

Similarly, Malen and Knapp (1997) note that policy implementation tends to adhere to the intentions and vision of the policy makers. They further argue that policy implementation is viewed as a separate stage in a linear progression of policy development. Rules, regulations, admonitions, resources and other media may combine to create strategies for policy implementation. Policy failure is blamed on inaccurate or ill formed resources and other media that may combine to inform inaccurate or ill-formed resourcing or difficulties experienced in co-ordinating the tasks and agencies involved in implementation.

### **3.7 COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK OF IMPLEMENTATION**

Spillane et al (2002) argue that education policy faces a challenge common to public policy, and that cognitive science scholarship suggests that what individuals make of new information has much to do with their prior knowledge, expertise, values, beliefs and experiences. Spillane et al then develop a cognitive model design that consists of components. This model is premised on the assumption that if local actors are to implement state and national policy proposals, they must figure out what these proposals mean, in order to decide whether, how and what to ignore, adapt, or adopt as policy makers' recommendations into their practices. From a cognitive perspective, a key dimension of the implementation process is whether, and in what ways, implementation agents come to understand their practice, potentially changing their beliefs and their attitude in their process. The first component of their framework involves applying mechanisms of comprehension and sense-making to an analysis of implementers making sense of policy and the complex practices of learning and teaching. Cognitive scientists have aimed to find common or universal patterns in human cognition, or what they refer as "cognitive universalism". However, some sociologists and psychologists argue for more attention to the social and situated dimensions of cognition. Individuals do not make sense in their world in a vacuum; their sense-making is situated in particular "thought communities" including, but not limited to, professions, nations, political parties, religions, and organisation. The second component of Spillane et al's framework focuses on how aspects of the situation influence what implementing agents notice and how they interpret what they notice. A third component of their framework is the policy. This component is singled out because of its special significance in considering issues of implementation. Their model

involves three core elements, namely the existing knowledge and experiences of the implementing agents, the material, social and cultural situation, and the changes sought by policy makers and how they are represented through policy signals.

### **3.8 THE IMPLEMENTING AGENT AS SENSE-MAKER**

According to this element, individuals assimilate new experiences and information through their existing knowledge structures. From this perspective, what the policy comes to mean for implementation agent depends to a great extent on their repertoire of existing knowledge and experience. Various aspects of cognitive processes that are involve in making sense of complex activities such as teaching and learning and how these processes observed findings about the influence of policy on practice.

### **3.9 PRIOR KNOWLEDGE AND SENSE MAKING**

Spillane et al attest that in conventional accounts, if implementing agents' interpretation of policy signals are analysed, "misinterpretations" are often portrayed as wilful efforts on the part of implementing agencies and agents to sabotage implementation or justify their modifications of the policy. They further contend that teachers' prior beliefs and practices can pose challenges, not only because teachers are unwilling to change in the direction of the policy but also because their extant understandings may interfere with their ability to interpret the reform in ways consistent with designers' intent. Their focus was on what role prior knowledge, beliefs, and experiences play in shaping agents' understanding of policy and their relation to it. Spillane et al noted that recent empirical work illuminates the importance of agents' prior knowledge in their implementation of policy. As Cohen and Weiss (1993) wrote, when research is used in policymaking, it is mediated through users' earlier knowledge, with the policy message "supplementing" rather than "supplanting" teachers' and other implementing agents' prior knowledge and practice (Cohen & Weiss, 1993:227). Mandler (1984) & Rumelhart (1980) focused mainly on what are the implications of building new understandings of policy on present understanding of supplement rather than replacing knowledge. They located their concerns on "sense-making," rather than referring simply to "information encoding" or



“interpretation,” and to focus on the active attempt to bring one’s past organisation of knowledge and beliefs to bear in the construction of meaning from present stimuli. All acts of understanding require accessing prior knowledge and applying it, so as to guide the noticing, framing, and connecting of new ideas and events to what is already encoded in memory.

### **3.10 DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF THE SAME MESSAGE**

Proponents of this philosophy believes that a teacher with a well-articulated schema for project-based science might observe a classroom where students are engaged in multiple animated conversations around computers or desks covered with laboratory notebooks, printouts, and resources materials, and perceive it as an engaging inquiry science experience. Another teacher might perceive it as a chaotic classroom in need of better management. Similarly, different teachers may receive the same “policy message” and interpret an idea such as “inquiry” in very different ways.

### **3.11 CONCLUSION**

The chapter has outlined national and international practices and debate on parental involvement in schools. The literature has revealed that there are multiple ways in which parents are involved in schools. A number of authors have undertaken research in schools to show that parental involvement is not a single formula, but has multiple interpretations. Gordon (1969) outlined a five-point scale identifying different roles parents might assume, namely: parents as supporters, parents as teachers, parents as learners, parents as helpers and parents as policy makers and partners.

The literature has also highlighted the views shared by Mashinini (1994), that parental involvement means different things to different people. Defining what is meant by involvement is problematic. Simplistic definitions based on the number of parents who attend school events are unrealistic and inadequate. For example, Ranson (1983) viewed parental involvement as when contact is effected between various stakeholders, for the mutual benefit of the different parties involved. She regarded the “essence” of participation as being the bargaining process, where the result is unpredictable.

A concern with powers that are given to parents stems from fears on the part of teachers that increased parental involvement in decision-making implies that parents and teachers will be given equal status in all matters pertaining to education. This concern was contested by Wolfendale (1993), who argued that parents and professionals bring different but equivalent experience and expertise. Vincent (1996) encourages parents to be “good” parents and outlined a “good” parent as firstly one who promotes the school’s image; secondly, the “good” parent provides the child with the foundation for schooling, and thirdly, the “good” parent behaves in a certain acceptable way at school. Parents thus have to learn how to behave as “good” parents in a certain acceptable way at school. Parents thus have to learn how to behave as “good” parents.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH DESIGN

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This section will discuss the research method used to investigate parental involvement in school governance. According to Merriam (1991), choosing a certain research design is largely influenced by the research question and also how it is shaped with consideration to what the desired end product of the research is. For the purpose of this chapter, the researcher will discuss qualitative research design, sample, research instruments, interviews, validity and reliability.

#### 4.2 QUALITATIVE APPROACH

Neuman (1997) argues that qualitative research is linked to the construction of social reality and cultural meaning. It also focuses on interactive processes and events. A similar argument is put forward by Le Compte and Preissle (1993), who suggests that qualitative research is concerned with meanings people make, thus such studies are framed by descriptions of, explanations for or meaning given to the phenomena by both the researcher and the study participants, rather than by definitions and interpretations of the researcher alone.

Anderson (1999) attests that this approach would be relevant to a study such as this because it gives the researcher the means to explore complex realities in schools. It is a form of inquiry that explores phenomena in their natural settings and uses multiple methods to interpret, understand, explain and bring meaning to such settings. Macmillan and Schumacher (2001) note that qualitative research is an inquiry in which researchers are involved with the situation by interacting with selected persons in their settings. Because qualitative research describes and analyses people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions, it is then necessary for this project because it provides the best in-depth answers

to the research question posed by this study. Qualitative studies are important for theory generation, policy development, educational practice improvement and illumination of social issues and action. Robson (1994) views a qualitative approach as a method that is often located in positivism, and based on the belief that reality is objective and observable. Robson (1994), on the other hand, argues that whatever is not seen or observed is not real or does not exist.

Strauss and Corbin (1991) describe a qualitative approach as one that has an interpretative character, aimed at discovering the meaning that events have for the individual who experiences them and how these are interpreted by the research. Cresswell (1994) defines a qualitative approach as an inquiry process of understanding a social or complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants and conducted in a natural setting.

As the project involved exploring the patterns on the ground in the South African context, the researcher felt that it was appropriate to use a qualitative approach. The participants needed to be thoroughly investigated on site with interviews and site-based observations. Having noted the assertion of Vithal and Jansen (1997), that qualitative approach is strong on reliability, using it in this study contributed towards gaining more insight into research questions.

### **4.3 CRITERIA FOR CASE STUDY SELECTION**

The study area for this project was the Ekurhuleni East Region in Gauteng. The researcher used purposeful sampling, which requires that information be obtained about variations among the sub-units before the sample was chosen. The researcher then searched for *information-rich* key case studies. Two case studies were taken from two different schools. Both School A and school B were situated in the semi-informal area of Katlehong Township. Samples were chosen because they had a number of individuals who were knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena the researcher was investigating. The case studies focused on two public schools, both located in Katlehong township, a secondary school and a primary school. These schools were chosen on the basis of their significance for policy implementation of the SASA (1996) as they are located in poor communities.

#### **4.4 IDENTIFICATION OF INFORMANTS**

Within the cases, SGB members and the principals were the key informants because of their role in the governance of the school. A sample of teachers was also selected because of their involvement in day-to-day running of the school. I also interviewed a sample of parents, as they are an important stakeholder and because they had children attending at these schools. Learner Representative Council members were selected on the basis that they represented students and had a major role to play. The study specifically chose SGB members who were parents, teachers and students of the high school and parents and teachers in primary school.

#### **4.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

The study employed two methods of social research to gather empirical data: questionnaires and interviews using semi-structured questions. An interview protocol was a suitable instrument for the semi-formalised interview.

##### **Interviews**

Researchers in all disciplines use interviews for a number of reasons. Cohen and Manion (1989) described an interview as an oral questionnaire. In qualitative interviews, the questions are usually presented in three forms, namely the unstructured, semi-structured, or structured (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:251). An interview allows the researcher to pursue a person's response for more or richer data about the issue under study.

During interviews the researcher was guided by the interview guide that was found to be most suitable. It was divided into three parts, the first part of which was the introduction, where the interviewer established a rapport with the respondent, an introduction to each other was made, and the interviewer explained the purpose of the interview and the study. Permission to audiotape the interview was requested and confidentiality of responses was assured. The second part formed the core of the interview, where the major question of the study was addressed, followed by probes which depended on how the respondent tackled the major questions. The third part, which was very important, allowed the respondents to ask questions

and make comments on the study, and the interviewer summarised respondent answers to verify accuracy for content validity.

A face-to-face open-ended interview guide was used to collect information to address the major questions of the study. Cohen and Manion (1989) contend that an interview is a destination research technique that may be used as a “principal means” of gathering information, having a direct bearing on the research objectives. Patton (2002) moves the argument further by noting that “we interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe”. In support of his argument Patton attests that one cannot observe feelings, thoughts, intentions, behaviour that took place in the past, or the way people perceive the world or the meaning they attach to what goes on in the world.

#### **4.6. RELIABILITY**

Vockell and Asher (1995) indicate that reliability means that the data collection process is not self-contradictory; rather it is both consistent and stable. In a more detailed and similar vein, Miles and Huberman (1994) view reliability in terms of “... whether the process of the study is consistent, reasonably stable over time and across researchers and methods”. External reliability to facilitate explicability of the study was ensured by describing the methods and procedures of the study explicitly and in detail. The process of data collection, processing, condensing and drawing of conclusions was discussed in-depth. The researcher was as explicit and as self-aware as possible about personal assumptions, values, biases, affective states and how they come into play during the study.

Verbal interviews were transcribed and respondents were requested to verify transcribed interviews. Vockell and Asher (1995) refer to the types of reliability relevant to qualitative research as ‘synchronic’ and ‘diachronic’, where the former refers to the similarity of observations made within the same period of time and the latter refers to the stability of an observation over time. The study focused on synchronic reliability since observations concerning stakeholders in the institutions identified for study occurred over the same period of time. The role of the researcher was to describe what he observed, and to code checks for bias, deceit and information knowledge.

#### **4.7. VALIDITY**

Vockell and Asher (1995) indicate that validity means proving that the observation interviews, or content analysis really contain the information that the researcher thinks they contain. In the research, strategies were employed to ensure validity of data. A deliberate attempt was made to ensure that participants' confidentiality and privacy were respected. Participants were not pressured into discussing particular issues.

#### **4.8. LIMITATIONS AND POTENTIAL OF THE STUDY**

A major drawback of this study is that some members of the governing body were sceptical, unwilling and uncomfortable regarding new participation. They seemed not to be fully candid in their responses. The researcher had to persuade these members that the school would benefit from this project.

Interviews at times took the form of discussion between the interviewer and the interviewees. This led to information and opinions being thrown in at random by various participants, leading to a series of questions, which took a long time.

Although the findings of this study cannot be generalised, because the sample was drawn from two schools, they may relate to other similar situations elsewhere. This study will generate a new problem statement, which can be tested against other data or in further studies.

In some interviews, a formal appointment was given to the interviewee, and on arrival to the school, the interviewee was absent or had already left. This prolonged the interview process.

#### **4.9. CREDIBILITY**

Patton (2002) refers to credibility as the extent to which the results approximate reality and are judged to be trustworthy and reliable. Credibility is enhanced when the research design takes into account potential sources of bias that may distort the findings. Bias is a form of systematic error, a factor that influences the results and undermines the quality of the research. The goal of research is to provide a credible answer to a question, and bias reduces the credibility of the

results. By careful design, the researcher can eliminate or at least reduce sources of error or bias. Not every potential source of bias can be controlled completely in research, but there are principles for planning that minimise such influences.

#### **4.10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The ethical considerations fall into two broad categories. Firstly, there are those pertaining to the honesty and integrity of the research in generating, analysing and reporting of the data involved in the case study. The second aspect deals with respect for the interviewee by the researcher, and ethical considerations during data collection and interpretation. This involves aspects such as being honest about all areas of research and particularly how they will affect the participants. For example, it was important to explain what confidentiality means and to obtain the informed consent in parental involvement (Thomas, 1990:76).

The participants were given the assurance that their identities would not be revealed, the school would remain anonymous and the recordings of the interviews would be destroyed on completion of the study. Furthermore, the researcher undertook to provide the participants with feedback on the findings of the study, should they be interested.

#### **4.11. CONCLUSION**

This chapter has outlined the rationale for choosing a research method and indicated that the research method is influenced by the research question. The research question has necessitated use of a qualitative research method for this study. The chapter also outlined the sample used in this study, which was influenced by case studies that were information-rich. The researcher chose two case studies, located in Katlehong Township.

The chapter further outlined the target population, as well as research instruments that were used to gather empirical data. For any research to be successful the issue of ethical consideration is key, because it contains the element of honesty and integrity when generating and analysing reports.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS**

#### **5.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter reflects on the findings of the two case studies. It focuses on interviews and observations that took place between January 2004 and July 2004. It begins with a profile of each school and school governors, and further describes particular governance practices before moving specifically to the ways in which conflict management occurs.

#### **5.2. FINDINGS**

What emerges from this study are two major findings. First is the extent that culture, histories, beliefs and values influence and shape parents' role as governors, which is particularly evident in the manner in which they manage conflict. The second and related finding is that governors in these schools used restorative rather than retributive forms of justice in managing conflict. The study focuses on the deeper patterns and practices of parental participation in school governance within the South African context.

For the purpose of the study, the profile of the two schools used as case studies was sketched. The study then presented and analysed information and data collected through interviews, observation and documentary analysis. The actual names of schools and interviewees are not revealed in this study because of confidentiality. This is done as a fulfilment of an agreement with schools that their identity would be kept confidential.

#### **5.3. PROFILE OF THE COMMUNITY AND SCHOOLS**

Both schools, school A and school B, are situated in the east of Gauteng in the Ekurhuleni region. Both schools were established in an area that started as an informal settlement prior to the 1994 election and they are both classified under quintile three schools. These schools are situated in disadvantaged communities with a high level of poverty. There is a high level of unemployed parents and a high level of illiteracy among parents. Most parents in both schools came to Gauteng from KwaZulu Natal as a result of migratory labour during the 1980s and

early 1990s. The communities in which the two schools are located are predominantly isiZulu speaking. The majority of the households moved to the urban areas from deep rural homesteads. Older patterns of life have been transplanted into the new context, as evident in the cattle and goats that graze in the adjacent fields. In amongst the corrugated iron shacks, some members of the community have built traditional *rondavels*.

#### **5.4. SCHOOL A PROFILE OF SGB CHAIRPERSON**

At the time of the study, School A was the only high school in the area, with learner enrolment of 2400 with 65 staff members. The SGB chairperson had been in the position for three terms, and was a “countryman” from deep rural area of KwaZulu Natal. His father was an *induna* of the *amaBomvu* tribe, and had the reputation of good leadership. In an interview with the chairperson of school A, he claimed that he learnt leadership skills from his father, who was his role model. This was evident when the *amaBomvu* tribe was united, strong and conquering other tribes at that time. Unfortunately, his father died and due to financial constraints at home, he had to leave his place of birth after matriculating and migrate to Gauteng. At the time of the fieldwork he was enrolled as a part-time student with a higher education institution.

In Gauteng, he was involved in politics and it was due to his political involvement that he was able to influence and contribute positively to ward meetings and community meetings. It was not a surprise when he was elected as a ward councillor in the very same area where the school was situated. He was a well-known figure within the community of Qhakaza, because of a leadership style that had earned him the name “Mr fix it”. It was this ability to normalise abnormal situations that resulted in his third term as chairperson of the Governing Body. One of his strengths was being able to network widely.

A notable example was a case where he negotiated with a cellular phone company to erect a high mass network station, which earned the school R2000 – 00 (two thousand rand) every month. He negotiated with a computer company for a donation of thirty computers, giving the school a well-resourced computer laboratory. He clinched a deal with his former *umkhaya* (homeboy), who was a manager in one of the big companies in Gauteng, for a bursary for two

matriculants to be enrolled in higher education. He had a good relationship with the school community as well as with the surrounding community.

In the year 2000, school A was classified as one of the poorly performing schools, with less than twenty per cent matriculation pass rate. It was declared as an Education Action Zone School. The school was faced with a huge challenge of turning around matriculation results. The chairperson, after noting this challenge, requested that the school principal offer his assistance to improve not only school results but also the school's image. The chairperson had an advantage because, apart from being the chairperson, he was also the ward councillor. For him to be involved both at school and community level gave him the advantage of understanding the culture of the school and being able to blend it with the culture of the community around the school. As a councillor, he met parents in their community setting, in social functions, churches and in sport grounds.

Because he understood the culture of the school very well, he initiated a staff meeting to assist the principal and his school management team to give direction concerning this new challenge. As he was known as a "no nonsense chairperson" in and around the school, he governed the school through bureaucratic rules and policies which were followed by all staff members. He would put pressure on all staff members to comply with the rules and policies, so that when it was time for them to be implemented, no further negotiations were accepted. When the researcher visited the school for fieldwork purposes, the chairperson of the SGB was visiting classes as part of his daily routine. To the researcher's surprise, the principal of the school saw nothing wrong with that, but rather was delighted to have a chairperson of this calibre. The chairperson was carrying out part of the school management function, that of monitoring class attendance and the general supervision of the school.

The fact that school A was not performing well, with less than twenty per cent matric pass rate, meant change was unavoidable. One of the major problems facing the school was late arrival, especially by educators, and this had spilt over to learners. The chairperson of SGB, after a series of staff meetings, had to intervene. Since the decision to address the problem was taken, he was always at the school gate in the morning to observe and encourage learners, as well as teachers to arrive early at school. When the researcher interviewed him about his

involvement in what was normally assumed to be school management functions, he indicated that he believed the chairperson of the SGB was responsible for the conduct of all his “dependents” and theoretically answerable by law for their misdeeds. At some point he would lock the gates, as agreed at staff meetings, actions that led him to be unpopular with some teachers. They felt he was putting undue pressure on their work and that they understood the situation best as teachers. It came as no surprise when matric results turned around from twenty per cent (20%) to a seventy five per cent (75%) pass rate in 2003. This high performance also spilt over to sport, because the very same year the school soccer team won the district school soccer competition.

### **5.5. SCHOOL B PROFILE OF SGB CHAIRPERSON**

At the time of the study school B was the only primary school in the area with the learner enrolment of 1400 with 46 staff members. This primary school was the main feeder school to school A, which was a high school. According to the principal of school B, most of his primary school learners were enrolled at school A. The fact that both schools A and B were predominantly Zulu speaking school with entrenched Zulu culture, beliefs and values means that there is a strong “fit” between the two schools.

The chairperson of school B also originated from KwaZulu Natal Province, and had no formal education. He informed the researcher that, he had just been elected as chairperson of the SGB. He was a leader of the local church, and some of the children who attended at “his” school, and their parents, were members of his church. This is probably why he was well known in the area. According to the chairperson, he had been avoiding being elected as the chairperson for the past three years. This time he had accepted the position because he felt he had betrayed the school community in the past by refusing to be a member of the SGB. He also coordinated the community police forum, which worked hand-in-hand with the South African Police Service. During our conversation, I noted that the chairperson was not well informed about the school system, as compared to the chairperson of school A. He relied entirely on the information that he received from the school principal, although he had displayed a skill in running the SGB meeting, especially involving disciplinary cases.

## 5.6. PARENTS' MEETINGS

To gain a deeper understanding of the patterns and practices of parents in the SGB, the researcher had the freedom to attend parents' meeting on both schools for observation purposes.

In school A, parents' meetings included many activities, such as cultural dance, cultural poems, and praises and speeches from parents, teachers, learners, and from members of the community. For example, learners were presented with a single set of beliefs, values, and behavioural codes to be followed inside and outside the school premises. Both boys and girls were taught to tell the truth, to be honest and not to steal. No child was allowed to speak in the presence of elders or interrupt when seniors were talking.

Most females during the meeting were dressed in their traditional attire, and most men carried *knobkieries*. A parents' meeting was not just a meeting but was a very special meeting, which displayed a strong cultural flavour that existed in and out of the school. In addition there was a high level of parental attendance. The researcher interviewed two parents about the high number of parents attending the meeting. Both parents indicated that attendance of such meetings were a sign of respect to the chairperson of SGB, who was a ward councillor too. One parent even said that this was how they showed and demonstrated their loyalty to their leader. His personal strength mirrored that of his followers. This implies that non-attendance at parents meetings was viewed as a sign of disrespect and disloyalty to the ward councillor.

Parents' meetings were also used as platforms to let parents know more about their school. Various departments gave feedback to parents to report any academic problems that were affecting teaching and learning. All stakeholders had the opportunity to report back to parents. For example, the sport and culture co-ordinator would present progress, achievements and problems if there were any. The SGB would also present their progress and problems. In school A, this was coupled with the chairperson of the SGB discussing school matters as well as community issues. This made the meeting a school meeting that went beyond school matters. In this case parents' meetings became attractive and drew the attention of most

parents. Pardey (1991) encourages such meetings because the core product of the school, which is knowledge and skills, should be extended by what are call 'augmented products', which include extra curricular activities and the ethos of the school.

During the meeting, parents were also given a chance to ask questions about any matter that was bothering them, and also to present their needs. Stott (1991) suggested that parents' needs are of primary importance and by satisfying those needs the development of the school is promoted.

### **5.7. SGB MEETING**

To gain more understanding of the practices of parent participation in school governance the researcher also attended an SGB meeting in school A. Attendance was good because all members were present, except one member who sent an apology. As the meeting progressed, the researcher observed that the chairperson of the SGB was dominating the meeting. This may have been because culturally and traditionally when the leader of the community calls a meeting or *imbizo*, such a leader is the one who knows the agenda; hence the meeting will be directed and influenced by that agenda.

Learners' representatives did not participate meaningfully, as they were writing notes during the entire meeting. The researcher probed one of the learner's representatives after the meeting as to why his participation and contribution was so minimal. The researcher was told that silence during SGB meetings was expected as traditional custom. According to the learners' representative his African culture does not encourage debate or differing with elders, rather they prefer to differ and debate with people of their age. Gelfand (1964, cited in Mazibuko, 1993) echoes this view, that in traditional African culture children are not allowed to talk openly in the presence of adults. Adults do not even share meetings with children. Schapera (1967, cited in Mazibuko, 1993) attests that in traditional African culture children were taught to be subservient to their elders as fountains of all wisdom and experience. As such, unquestioning obedience was demanded from them.

## 5.8. STAFF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Schools rely on reputations, which are reinforced or destroyed daily. The ability of the school to live up to the image it wishes to project is essential. Recruitment practices and the final selection of candidates are the central factors in the public service. When the researcher interviewed the chairperson of the SGB in school A about his views on the recruitment process, he mentioned that they did not have any policy in place, but that they followed what SASA (1996) said with regard to their function of recommending employment of staff. The chairperson further explained to the researcher that because 90% of learners were Zulu-speaking, their staff demographics should reflect that. When probed further about staff demographics, he mentioned that they were very careful when it come to staff recruitment.

As a way of maintaining and keeping their culture alive, the SGB would prefer a Zulu-speaking teacher to a non-Zulu speaker. According to the chairperson of school A, they valued the importance of *IsiZulu* highly as the custodian of culture, heritage and tradition of the Zulu people. The researcher then asked what would happen if there were two Zulu people applying for one post. The researcher was told that in such a case the SGB would recommend a female teacher, preferably young. This was because, I was told, Zulu females are obedient to the law and especially to their elders. The SGB are also of the view that young people can easily influence learners because they tend to listen more to them.

The researcher further asked what would happen if a vacant post required a particular subject specialisation such as mathematics or science, and both applicants who were Zulus did not possess such qualifications. The researcher was told that it was only in such instances that they would open their vacancy to non-Zulu speaking individuals, and that such a decision would be the last resort. The researcher was also referred to SASA (1996), which envisaged a school system in which various cultures and languages would be respected, protected and advanced. Part of his job as a chairperson was to ensure that the culture of the community was restored and maintained. To achieve this goal the SGB had to recruit the “right” staff. Selection and recruitment are too often disconnected, either from specific school system goals or from a clearer vision of quality teaching. Although, in the South African context, recruitment and selection are guided by policies that are agreed upon by the employer and employee

parties in the education labour relations council, schools need to recruit teachers who have expertise in those learning areas in which posts are advertised, so that all those teachers who are competent and qualified may apply.

## **5.9. THEMES IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE**

### **5.9.1 Conflict Resolution Skills**

Conflict management is one of the most important responsibilities of all stakeholders within the school. Knezevich (1975) attests that conflict is recognised as inevitable, as a sign of the times. Furthermore, Knezevich, (1975) states that administrators must develop the competencies to cope with it. Given the legislative framework in South Africa, the school governance structures have managerial tasks that overlap with each other, which may result in misunderstanding and conflict.

The following conflict cases that took place in the case study schools will highlight that cultural values play a critical role in the way in which parents interpret or understand their roles in school governance. These conflict cases will further highlight the way in which parents bring their histories, beliefs and values to their functioning in school governance. For the purpose of the study, the researcher has used two contradictory concepts that are key for this study, namely, restorative justice and retributive justice.

### **5.9.2 Restorative Justice**

Zehr (2002) describes restorative justice as a systematic response to wrongdoing that emphasises healing the wounds of victims, offenders and communities, caused or revealed by the criminal behaviour. Zehr (2002) further notes that restorative justice is a growing movement that strives to achieve reconciliation between crime victims and the persons who have harmed them, through the use of various forms of mediation and non-violent conflict resolution. Restorative justice has its origins in the communal practices of pre-modern societies where the offender's family and the victim's family get together and reconcile matters privately. The contemporary American interest in restorative justice can be traced to a time around 1974, when Canadian and United States courts began experimenting with victim-



offender reconciliation programmes. Restorative justice is sometimes called ‘communitarian’, ‘reiterative’, or ‘redemptive’ justice, and although subtle differences exist, according to Zehr (2002), the main objective of restorative justice is to maximise forgiveness, hope, accountability, and positive outcome for all parties, especially but not limited to communities, which have experienced the most harm and could benefit from the reversal of harm.

Redemption is the critical ingredient of restorative justice, and it is better when it is earned redemption. Braswell and Gold (2002) argue that a restorative approach would seek for the offender to experience regret or remorse, and this is precisely the point at which retribution ends and restorative justice begins. Putting victims first, or taking a victim’s right seriously, requires restorative justice. Braswell and Gold (2002) further note that restorative justice usually requires the offender and victim confronting one another in some way, as well as seeing that the victims obtain some compensation or means of being made “whole” again. The idea of restorative justice is to repair the breach in moral trust and establish lasting peace, instead of lasting hurt, regret, or conflict. Hence, Braswell and Gold (2002) refer to the restorative justice approach as a “peacemaking” ethics, including the following characteristics:

- \* Justice requires restoring victims, offenders and communities who have been injured by crime;
- \* Victims, offenders, and communities should have the opportunity to be fully active as part of the justice process;
- \* Government should restore order, but the community should be responsible for restoring peace;

The work of Van Ness and Strong (1997) focuses on the philosophy behind restorative justice, which is underpinned by certain values, amongst others, full disclosure of the perpetrator to the offenders. Both the victims and the perpetrator are attended to, apology is key for a perpetrator and both the offender and perpetrator have a say in the matter.

### **5.9.3 Retributive Justice**

Retributive justice is a systematic infliction of punishment justified on grounds that the wrongdoing committed by a criminal has created an imbalance in the social order that must be addressed by action against the criminal. Retributive justice has its origins in the time of the

Norman Conquest in England, when feudalism was developed, and servants or vassals swore allegiance or “fealty” to their king. This made any criminal offence a crime against the state, rather than a crime against another person.

Moore (1997) describes retributive justice as a theory of punishment. Retributivism answers the question “why punish?” by saying that the offender deserves punishment as the underlying meaning of this statement contains several important points about morality. Retribution as a theory of punishment requires retribution as a rationale for law. A retributionist assumes that the law exists for a reason, a moral reason. All crime, even victimless crime, is a social harm and a moral harm. Moore’s view is that violating the law not only offends the land, but also the moral code of the land. Retributivism holds to a theory of law where the only worthwhile legislation is that which addresses moral wrong.

According to Moore (1997), attributivists hold to a legal moralist theory of law, where the only worthwhile legislation is that which addresses morally wrongful behaviour, and legislates on morality. The law as written does not include a description of the criminal act, but sets out the appropriate penalties and punishment for that act. Retributive supporters, such as Sullivan and Tiffy (2001), believe that to punish is simply carrying out a moral obligation in seeing that moral law come to completion. They further believe that there is no expectation that the punishment will accomplish any purpose or consequence. Punishment is not something they “ought” to do, rather something that “is”. It is a kind of suffering, strife, or struggle that the offender must go through. They dispute the notion that a retributionist has a rather unique approach to the victim in that the average person thinks that retribution is the same as vengeance, “getting even” or taking the law into one’s hands. Likewise, some people think that if the state punishes a criminal on behalf of the victim, then that produces some kind of cathartic effect. However, retributivism holds that each offender must be punished, even if the victim wishes to forgive the offender or extend mercy. Forgiveness and mercy are not part of retributivist justice; they are a part of restorative justice, and not about resentment. They argue that resentment is something to be avoided at all costs. Hence, the necessity of punishment under retributivism must be done calmly, without emotions, and out of consideration for the state’s will to power, the motive of power being the motive worthy of ethical admiration. The following conflict cases will highlight how restorative principles were used as opposed to retributive principles.

### **5.9.3.1 The boy and the hair cut**

A lady teacher in school B repeatedly raised a concern about a boy who always came to school untidy, in particular with uncombed hair. The boy seemed not to take his teacher seriously. After several encounters with the boy, with no improvement, the teacher out of frustration decided to cut the boy's hair with a pair of scissors. She hoped that the boy's parent would appreciate this initiative as she was acting in loco-parentis. The teacher then threw the boy's hair into the dustbin and lit it together with papers. The boy's family, upon realising that the boy's hair had been cut, questioned the boy. They were very disturbed and angry over the teacher's action. The case was reported to the school principal, and it went for a disciplinary hearing. The boy's family alleged that according to their family culture, hair is cut during a particular season of the year. A family function is held where a particular person is given the task of cutting the hair of all children within the families. After this process the family ritual is performed and a feast begins. This meant that the teacher in question had violated the family's valued custom. After a lengthy deliberation, the chairperson made a ruling in favour of the boy's family. The teacher was then required to pay a fine of a sheep, or money equivalent to the price of a sheep, for interfering with the boy's family custom. A sheep is very significant in African culture, because it can be a source of food in the form of milk, it can be a good start for sheep farming or add to an existing stock. A sheep can also have a cultural significance because traditionally, particularly in rural areas, an animal like sheep, goat or a cow was more valued than money.

Mbiti (1969) an anthropologist, pointed out the importance of such rituals, which are performed within the family. The oldest member of the family performs or supervises these rituals of remembrance on behalf of the entire family, addressing the symbolic meal to all the departed in the family, with one or two of the departed being mentioned by name or position. In this instance the chairperson acted in a way that was in keeping with parents' values and beliefs. In doing so, he was culturally sensitive in that he managed the conflict in a cultural way. In African culture a sheep, goat or cow can be used for cleansing and also for communicating

with ancestors. It is believed that ancestors will be comfortable when an animal has been slaughtered and that this will stabilise the disturbed culture.

In terms of employment in Education Act, 1998 Section 18, such action will be regarded as misconduct. The dignity of the learner was undermined. However, should the chairperson have followed the strict employment disciplinary route, it is unlikely to have satisfied the complainant as the emphasis will have been on punishment rather than restoration. If a labour route was followed, this case was a punishable offence and punishment may range from verbal or written warning or a fine. In terms of African culture, it is not acceptable for any person to cut someone else's hair unless there is an agreement, as with the barber's shop, or as part of family ritual. Therefore, at the cultural level, the teacher was wrong, and hence the punishment.

#### **5.9.3.2 A black chicken and the hair**

A set of events revealing similar patterns occurred when grade two learners were playing with their pairs of scissors whilst the teacher went out of the class. One of the boys decided to cut the other boy's hair, a section of about 8cm long. Cleaners unknowingly threw all the rubbish, including the boy's hair, into the school waste. The next day a mother of the boy whose hair was cut came to school to complain about this deed. It was explained to her that boys were just playing. The boy's mother was not much worried about the cutting itself, but she was more worried about the boy's hair having been thrown into the dustbin, as such an act is associated with witchcraft. The matter was so serious that even members of the community outside the school were interested in this matter. The SGB had to intervene and the two affected families were called to a disciplinary meeting. After lengthy deliberation the mother of the boy whose hair was cut demanded a live black chicken as a form of apology. According to the aggrieved family, their belief is that a black chicken would prevent evil spirits from attacking their son. In African culture, a black chicken might symbolise evil. There is a strong belief that one can chase away evil by using anything that can equally fight an evil spirit, hence choice of the black chicken as restitution. The live black chicken was bought during the weekend and it was submitted to the aggrieved family.

#### **5.9.3.4 Teachers and a teenage girl**

Another set of events reveals a similar pattern. In this case a 14-year old schoolgirl at school A was alleged to have been involved in sexual activities with a boy learner from the same school during a school trip. A group of female teachers, upon hearing this allegation, questioned the girl in the presence of other girls. These female teachers went to an extent of checking the girl's private parts to verify the sexual allegation. The girl reported the matter to her mother, who apparently knew her daughter to be a virgin. The following day the girl's mother arrived at the school in an angry mood, demanding to hear more about the allegation. After she was told of the allegation, she took her daughter to what is known as *engomeni*, a traditional ceremony where young girls are tested for virginity status. Those who pass the test take pride in their status and are categorised as *izintombi nto*, (pure maidens). The girl was tested and the virginity test was negative, which meant that the allegations were false. When these female teachers were challenged about the allegations, they could not give a full account on the matter, especially since the virginity test was negative. The girl's mother threatened to take the matter up with the law for character defamation, however the girl's mother was persuaded by the chairperson of the SGB to allow this case to be dealt with internally. After a lengthy disciplinary hearing it was agreed that the teachers in question should compensate the girl's mother for sexual harassment and for character defamation. The girl's mother demanded six Zulu traditional blankets and four big bath towels as a form of restitution. In this particular context, blankets and bath towels are part of a cleansing process. The fact that teachers went to the extent of checking the girl's private parts is seen as equivalent to undressing the girl. Therefore, blankets and towels are symbols of dressing the undressed girl. These items were bought at a cost of more than three thousand rand.

#### **5.9.3.5 The missing girl**

A case of a missing girl learner further underlines the culturally sensitive approach to school conflict. A girl learner disappeared for a weekend, allegedly with her boyfriend. The girl's family strongly suspected that the disappearance of their daughter was linked to the alleged boyfriend, who is known to the family. The girl's parents went to the local police to lay a charge

against the alleged boy. Two days later the girl was found and it was discovered that the suspected boy was not the one who disappeared with the girl; rather it was another boy from another school. The parent of the innocent boy demanded compensation for character defamation. The matter was reported to the school and, as with the other cases, disciplinary proceedings took place. The girl's parents were very ashamed for suspecting the wrong person. Parents of the boy who was alleged to have disappeared with the girl demanded that their family's name be cleansed from defamation. The amount of R500-00 was paid towards the innocent boy's family for defamation of character. In terms of a Zulu culture, when a person mistakenly accuse another person, such a person is subject to a fine, which can range from verbal apology to a payment of any kind, depending on the circumstances.

In this case the SGB became involve in an issue that was beyond the school. This case demonstrates that these schools are not only limited to teaching and learning, but also can be used for various purposes for the benefit of the community. The fact that this case took place outside the school, between two families on a weekend, and the school found itself having to solve the problems of these two families, is an indication of the role a school plays in the community.

#### **5.9.3.6 A theft case**

A grade eight teacher was discovered to have enrolled five learners unlawfully and charged each R100-00 for personal gains. This was done after the school was declared full by the local district office. Subsequently, the matter was referred to the school disciplinary committee, which recommended that the teacher in question be given two options. The first option was to pay back the money to all five parents, and apologise to them and to the staff during a staff meeting and to the parent body during a parents' meeting. The second option was to pay back the money to all five parents and compensate each with a bag of 5kg maize meal for the inconvenience. To avoid a further embarrassment, the teacher chose to pay back the money and give each parent a 5kg bag of maize meal. The maize meal is very important in this context since, as alluded to earlier, the community in this area is poverty stricken. Therefore the compensation of maize meal addresses this need.

This case is a fraud case, and in terms of the Education Labour Law Section 17 of (1998), such an offence is a serious misconduct and is dismissible. Procedurally, the principal of the school should inform the Institutional Development Officer (IDSO), as well as labour relation personnel, in writing. Detailed information should accompany the report and subsequently the case will be investigated by labour relations officials. If there is sufficient evidence, the guilty person may be charged for misconduct and a fraud case can be instituted against the perpetrator. The employer must institute disciplinary proceedings in accordance with the disciplinary code and procedures provided for in Schedule (2) of Education Labour Law. If the perpetrator is found guilty he or she can be dismissed. However, because of the strong cultural and traditional influence and practices of the SGB, the alleged perpetrator was punished in a traditional way, by having to pay *inhlawulo* (a fine), by purchasing a bag of 5kg maize meal for each parent. A restorative approach was applied and the matter was resolved amicably. This punishment suggests that the perpetrator accepts his guilt.

#### **5.9.3.7 Dagga smokers**

Four schoolboys were caught smoking dagga in the lavatories by the principal. Because this was a drug case, the principal decided on his own to report the case to the local police station. He was heavily criticised by some staff members, including members of the SGB, for failing to consult, particularly with the chairperson of the SGB, before reporting the matter to the local police station. As it turned out, the case was dropped and the matter was attended to internally by the disciplinary committee. Parents of these boys were invited to the disciplinary hearing, together with the boys. After lengthy deliberations, the boys were given a written warning, but they also had to develop a vegetable garden, plant vegetables, and water them until they were ripe. The vegetables would then be shown to parents during the forthcoming parents' meeting.

In this case the principal was following prescribed procedure in reporting the case to the police, because it is not within the competency of the principal and the SGB to deal with serious cases such as those involving drugs. The principal was obliged to report the matter to the SAPS, after which the matter could be reported to other structures, including the SGB. However, the practices determined by cultural imperatives dictate that any conflict that takes place within the school should be referred to the SGB before any further steps can be taken. In this particular

case, the disciplinary committee under the leadership of the SGB chairperson chose to punish these boys for the benefit of the school. The vegetable garden would have to be developed and the produce of the hard labour be reaped by the parents.

These cases demonstrate a clash between two sets of frameworks and their implications for school discipline. Who determines the means of discipline? Is it the principal or is it the chairperson of SGB? The principal was being pro-active by reporting what is viewed by many as one of the major problems in schools, that of drugs. The problem arose in that the principal failed to understand the dynamics within the SGB, and the cultural influence that accompanied them.

#### **5.9.3.8 A religious dilemma**

A grade six learner failed to observe Christian religious practices during school assembly by not closing her eyes, because her religion did not allow her to do so when praying. The learner was identified by the teacher and punished for failing to respect and adhere to Christian religious practices. The learner sustained a minor injury on the head as the result of the punishment. Guardians of the learner lodged a complaint to the school. This case also drew interest and attention from the church of the injured girl. The school was even challenged to produce a religious policy, but failed. The alleged teacher was summoned to a disciplinary hearing for assault. After lengthy deliberations, the disciplinary committee made a determination in favour of the learner. The teacher was then requested to pay medical expenses and, because the learner was an orphan, she (the teacher) was also to buy groceries amounting to R600-00 (six hundred rand) as part of the punishment, and to apologise to the family of the learner. One of the key underpinning philosophies of restorative justice is apology by a perpetrator and the principle that the victim obtains some compensation or means of being made 'whole' again. The purpose of this approach is to repair the breach of moral trust and establish lasting peace, instead of lasting hurt, regret, or conflict. In terms of the Constitution of the country, every person has a right to choose his or her religion. The fact that the learner in question was exposed only to Christian religious practices, and that she was forced to observe a religion that was not hers, was a violation of her rights. A disciplinary proceeding should have been instituted against the teacher for violating a learner's rights. The



second aspect of the case involved assault, which in terms of Education Labour Relation Act, Section 18, is misconduct and may lead to dismissal of the perpetrator. Due to strong cultural influence in the area, the legal proceedings were not considered. Instead, cultural patterns and practices were followed and the teacher was punished accordingly.

#### **5.9.3.9 The boys and the pornography book**

Three boys were caught reading a pornographic material in the class whilst teaching was in progress. They were observed by the SGB chairperson, who was on his daily routine of visiting classes. These boys were instructed to leave the class and fetch their parents. When the researcher questioned the chairperson as to why such cases were not reported to the principal, he argued that a child in a community did not belong to his parents only, but was the responsibility of every adult in that community. If a child misbehaved, any adult has the right to reprimand or punish such a child. Since the whole community was interested in the child's progress, the child found his models of behaviour all around him. The following day parents came to attend a disciplinary hearing, together with their sons. During the case proceedings, it was noted that some of these boys had poor parental authority at home. Nene (1998) attests to this kind of a problem by noting, that in South Africa, the nature of the struggle against apartheid and its education system has weakened parental authority. Having noted this concern, and considering the ages of the boys, they were reprimanded. However, as part of the punishment they were instructed to pick up litter within the school premises every day after school for a period of one month.

#### **5.9.3.10 A shop-owner and the boys**

A local businessman injured a grade four learner after noticing that a group of about six learners were stealing sweets from his store. When the boys realised that they were being noticed, they ran away. However, one of them was caught and, out of emotion, the shop-owner beat the boy severely. Because the boy was an orphan, and had nobody to attend to this case, except his grandmother, the school intervened through the SGB. The shop-owner was summoned to a disciplinary meeting and after lengthy deliberations, was found guilty of assault and was requested to pay the boy's school fees and buy school uniform until the boy finished

grade twelve. The businessman accepted the verdict. Procedurally, an assault case is usually reported to the police and a legal process ensues.

It was not good for a businessman to injure the learner, especially a minor. Instead, he should have solved this case in a different way, one of which could have been to involve the parents of the learner, or to report the matter to the SAPS. While the educational legal framework had no jurisdiction in this matter, in this case the cultural framework perceived no arbitrary boundaries between the school and the community. The case also demonstrates the role that the SGB is playing in the community. The assaulted boy was an orphan and no one could have come to his rescue except the school and members of the community. Due to active participation of the SGB in community matters, the boy was represented and rescued, and a good decision that benefited the boy was taken. In this particular context buying groceries is a gesture of apology, but because the learner was an orphan, a relevant punishment that would meet the needs of the learner was instituted.

Drawing from all the cases cited above, there is a demonstration that culture and history shape the role of governance in public schools. There is an assumption that the law (SASA) essentially predetermines a uniform practice, and there is empirical research and theoretical research, which is cited and which suggests that implementation of SASA, as interpreted at local level, is subject to contextual factors. The case study has shown that in the particular cultural practices that privilege restorative justice over retributive justice, traditional conceptions can be a strong force for conflict management and stability at schools. These types of justice are aimed at meeting the needs and promoting healing of victims, community, offenders and of the relationship between them, as opposed to retributive justice, which is pre-occupied with blame and pain, and is primarily negative and backward looking. Parents bring their historical beliefs and values to their task as school governors. More specifically, this study has shown how governors can consciously use the framework legislation, i.e. the SASA, to reinforce particular social or cultural identities.

## **5.10 CONCLUSION**

In this research attention was given to the understanding of how culture, history, beliefs and values shape and influence the role of SGBs in public schools. Empirical research suggests

that implementation of SASA is usually re-interpreted at local level. As anticipated, given the theoretical insight, extensive evidence of the way in which the local context shapes the way parents participate in school governance was revealed. The functioning of the SGB in the two case studies has demonstrated clearly that beliefs, values, traditions and history influence how parents interpret their roles as school governors. Specifically, the two case studies demonstrated that the chairperson, who came from a small rural village, had a strong belief about preservation of Zulu culture, customs and the importance of traditional authority. All these beliefs influenced how he made decisions as the governor of the school, and specifically how he conducted meetings, and how he dealt with discipline, and the appointment of teachers. All these examples demonstrate how history, culture and beliefs influence fundamental decisions that have to do with governance. On the face of it, there appears to be a fairly clear and prescriptive law, where the SASA stipulates the functions of SGB. Irrespective of what the law states, the realities are that, depending on where people come from, their background, beliefs and histories, their actions as governors will be influenced accordingly.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

The study has examined how parents as governors interpret their roles in school governance. The study focuses on the deeper patterns and practices of parental participation in school governance and how cultural values and beliefs influence patterns and practices of parents as school governors. The research report has highlighted the role parents can and should play in school governance, notably, parents as supporters, parents as governors, parents as co-teachers, parents as informed consumers and parents as partners. All these roles are within the legislative framework of the SASA. Most studies on parental involvement assume that all parents will participate in the same way for the best interest of education. This research has shown that participation is influenced by the background beliefs and values and that these are significant in determining how parents interpret their best interest.

Chapter three suggests that much of the literature has not looked at ways in which parents' participation is influenced specifically by their interest, values, cultural background and beliefs. One of the major insights in this study is the cultural understanding of the role of school governors, and how this translates into a very different conception of justice, and how it is articulated in the role of governing in conflict management, (as discussed in chapter five). This study has shown that, in the particular cultural practices that privilege restorative justice over retributive justice, traditional conceptions can be a strong force for conflict management and stability at schools.

Observation of the SGB in the two case studies has revealed that beliefs, values, traditions and history, influence how SGBs interpreted their role as school governors. Specifically, the two case studies showed that the governor, particularly the chairperson of the SGB in school A, who came from the small rural village in KwaZulu Natal, had a strong belief about the preservation of Zulu culture, customs and values and the importance of traditional authority. All these beliefs influenced how he made decisions as the governor of the school, specifically how he conducted meetings, how he dealt with discipline and how he employed teachers. Drawing

from Spillane et al (2002)'s argument, that education policy faces a common challenge to public policy, and that cognitive science scholarship suggest that what individuals make of new information has much to do with their prior knowledge, expertise, values, beliefs and experiences. In both cases it was clear that history, culture and beliefs influenced fundamental decisions that have to do with governance. What appears on the surface to be clear and prescriptive law, which states the functions of SGB, is in reality dependent on background of a person, and his beliefs, history and values, which influence how he interprets and implements the law as a governor of the school.

The second insight, which is related to the first, was not anticipated in this research project. When the SGB is acting in a quasi-judicial role, their beliefs about justice influence how they administer their role. In this particular case, whilst the SASA (1996) and the Educator Employment Act (1998) tend to assume a retributive notion of justice, that is, a belief in identification of the culprit which is followed by a legal procedure in terms of Educator Employment Act (1998), and the relevant punishment of the offender. When one refers to all the disciplinary cases discussed in chapter five and handled by the SGB, the role they played in these institutions in dealing with disciplinary cases was clearly influenced by their background and cultural values. In all the disciplinary cases that they handled, they did not use the retributive model of justice or punishment as required by justice, the Educator Employment Act (1998), but rather a restorative model of justice. This is evident in the way the chairperson of SGB in school A dealt with a range of cases relating – a case relating to a hair-cut, a case that involved a learner with a pair of scissors, and alleged case of a fourteen-year-old girl involved in sexual activity. Across all these cases, one can notice that the SGB took the responsibility to administer justice, and in each case the SGB used a restorative approach rather than a retributive approach.

From these two broad arguments, it is clear that culture, beliefs, history and values have a significant influence on how people interpret their role in school governance, in terms of SASA (1996). This research report has also shown that in the case study schools, culture and cultural values play a critical role in the way in which parents interpret or understand their role in school

governance. More specifically, this study has shown how governors can consciously use the legislative framework i.e. the SASA, to reinforce particular social or cultural identities.

The implication of the findings is that at the time of writing this research, much of the literature on parents' participation has been normative, viewing parents as supporters, service givers, clerical, custodial, and facilitators of maintenance and fundraising. The literature focuses on parents as teachers of their own children, parents as teachers' aides and volunteers in a classroom, and parents as policy makers and governors. However very little has been written specifically on the influence of social background, cultural values and beliefs as they shape the nature of parental involvement in school governance. The fact that in both case studies, SASA (1996) has been reinvented echoes what Ozga (1990) argues, that there are two ways in which policy can be approached, that is, 'Policy as a text and Policy as a discourse'. In this case policy as a text appears in SASA (1996), while the discourse that emerges as demonstrated by its implementers, the SGB, shows a difference in interpretation of the policy as a text.

This particular research project shows that we cannot assume that parents will play a positive role in school governance as prescribed by SASA. The research project further shows that the role parents play in school governance will inevitably be influenced by factors other than the law. Contextual factors, such as beliefs, historical background and cultural values have remained influential regarding parental involvement in school governance.

Since evidence of this research is based on case studies emanating from two schools, it will be unwise to draw too many generalisations based on this study alone. This, therefore, suggests that there is a need for more qualitative research on parental involvement in school governance to establish whether similar kinds of practice are evident in other cultural backgrounds, which may be predominantly Afrikaans, Coloured, Indians schools or any other cultural groups. More qualitative research study needs to be undertaken and possible quantitative evidence brought forward to explain which of these practices are a pattern in all SGBs across the country and beyond. This suggests considerable new areas for research that flow from the implications of this study.

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