THE ROLE OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES IN IMPROVING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE IN TAUNG RURAL AREAS

by

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Submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

in the subject

EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROF. J.N. VAN WYK

NOVEMBER 2006

DECLARATION

I declare that **THE ROLE OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES IN IMPROVING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE IN TAUNG RURAL AREAS** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted, have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

……………………．   ………………..
Signature   Date

(Dr K.P. Quan-Baffour)

DEDICATION

<div align="center">

To Live, To Learn, To Love, To Leave a Legacy

-S. Cove

</div>

This work is dedicated to

My parents, Peter and Mary, through whose sacrifices I have become what I am today

ffour, Junior (aka 'Mr Kofi' or 'Papa') who is to take the mantle and complete what I started.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ivation, guidance and scholarly supervision. I learnt a lot from her throughout the study.

I am sincerely grateful to the following people without whose support this study would not have been possible:

Ms N.P. Ngcobo (Mpume) who assisted me with the typing of the work;

Mr Kofi Adu-Boffour for arranging the meetings at the various schools;

All the participants for sharing their knowledge and thoughts with me,

Professor E.M. Lemmer for her professional editing; and

Ms Diana Coetze and Ms Milly Daweti for typesetting the work before the report was bound into a book.

Merci!

ABSTRACT

The South African Schools' Act No 84 (SASA 1996) replaced Parents, Teacher and Students' Associations (PTSAs) with School Governing Bodies whose members are democratically elected to perform mandated duties. The study focused on the role of SGBs in improving school performance in rural areas. The purpose was to investigate the role SGBs play in improving school performance in the rural areas of Taung.

The SGB, as a concept and praxis, emanated from the need to involve communities, especially parents, in education. The assumption was that school improvement is dependent on responsibilities delegated to community members, especially parents, in the affairs of public schools. The study investigated the topic by a literature review on school governance, observation and interviews conducted with SGB members in three selected schools. Six focus group interviews were conducted on parents and educator components of the SGBs. The principals of the three selected schools were interviewed individually for the views on the topic. The data collected were arranged under selected themes and manually analysed and interpreted.

The study reveals that
- community members, particularly parents, caregivers and guardians are beginning to see themselves as equal partners with educators in education of children
- the improvement in learner performance is the co-responsibility of the home and the school
- community members (parents and guardians) must be empowered with relevant skills to enable them perform their tasks as school governors.

The study recommends further research into greater representivity and involvement in Education.

Key terms used in the study

Rural Areas

School Governing Bodies

School Performance

School Governance

Community Members

Parents

South African Schools Act (SASA)

Role of School Governing Bodies (SGBs)

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM FORMULATION, AIM AND ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Education is a social phenomenon and a very important institution in every society, community or country. It is through education that knowledge, skills and values are transmitted from one generation to another in order to ensure economic, political and social stability, continuity and advancement of a country. Acknowledging this fact Matos (2000:16) writes: It has now been accepted that an educated population is the primary resource that every nation must strive to build. Unlike the situation in the past, when natural resources counted most, today only an educated population can contribute meaningfully to development and participate significantly in national and international distribution of labour and wealth.

Despite its socio-economic and political importance (as emphasized in the foregoing paragraphs) in South Africa during the apartheid years education was divorced from large section of the country's population. The system of education in this country prior to 1994 was designed and delivered along racial lines with the majority population group receiving the most inferior education. Before 1994 there were a national department of education, four provincial departments of education and separate departments for White, Indian, Coloured and Black schools respectively; there was also an education department in each of the four independent and national states (Heystek & Paquette 1999:187).

Thus while education is seen by many people all over the world as a tool to forge national cohesion and unity in contemporary multi-cultural societies the reverse was the case in South Africa. As appropriately mentioned by Soudien and Baxen (1997:449):

> During apartheid, education was used not only to achieve social separation but insofar as it was guilt around a social philosophy, it was also the legitimating arena for white supremacy and for the complex ordering that evolved around it.

Within the old order's traditional educational institutions, the hidden and explicit curricula were configured to produce, reproduce and validate racial separation and hierarchy.

The legacy of different systems of education for different population groups of the same country had to be confronted by the new democratic government which came into being in 1994. This might explain why education has become one of the focus areas for radical transformation in South Africa. After 1994, the independent and national states were included in the boundaries of South Africa. All these education departments were assimilated in one national Department of Education and nine new Provincial departments (Heystek & Paquette 1999:187). The drastic and unprecedented restructuring of the South African education system meant to do away with the previously fragmented, inequitable racially and culturally oppressive system of education into one that will satisfy the aspirations and requirements of democracy, equity, equality, redress, social and cultural empowerment. The preamble to the South African Schools Act (RSA1996: 1) for example states inter alia, "The achievement of democracy in South Africa has consigned to history the past system of education which was based on racial inequality and segregation". The Act thus ensures equality in education for all citizens of South Africa. The South African Schools' Act (RSA1996: section 1) further states the purpose of the Act in the following words:

> This country requires a new national system for all schools which will redress past injustices in educational provision, provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners and in so doing lay a strong foundation for the development of all people's talent and capabilities, advance the democratic transformation of society, combat racism … protect and advance our diverse cultures and language, uphold the rights of all learners, parents and educators and promote their acceptance of responsibility for the organization, governance and the funding of schools in partnership with the state.

Thus in order to bring about proper transformation in education the new democratic government of national unity initiated, formulated and enacted a number of policies that could lead to social justice for all citizens of the country. In the words of Midgley (2000:4): "social policies are public policies that affect the welfare of citizens". One such policy which was put in place to enhance the welfare of learners, parents, guardians and communities at large is the South African Schools Act (SASA) (RSA 1996). The main structure which was specifically instituted by SASA (1996) to ensure participation of local communities, parents and guardians in education is the

school governing bodies (SGBs). The South African Schools Act (1996) thus set to change the structures of education by giving schools back to local communities to govern.

1.2   INCREASING THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN EDUCATION

Every child is born into a home and the first education of every child is received from the home (i.e. the first teacher being mother, father or guardian). School education is supposed to build on the foundation laid by the home through partnership with parents and guardians. However, as van Schalkwyk (1993:10) points out that the state in modern society has taken over the control of formal education to an extent that there is little for the parent in the running of the school. The control of education by the state has contributed to the school being run like a factory. The complexities of the modern society, however, makes it imperative for parents and guardians to come together with the school in order to offer the child suitable education that will benefit all – child, parent, guardian and society. Supporting this fact Decker, Gregg and Decker (1994: 18) say "because increasing numbers of children come to school with problems caused by poverty, divorce, drug use and teenage pregnancy schools may no longer be able to limit themselves solely to academic roles. Nor can schools act in isolation to overcome such obstacles to learning. Experts agree that schools, families and communities all share responsibility for children's development and learning."

Many children neither do home work nor study at home. A recent random visit by this researcher to homes of many rural learners in Taung revealed that many of them either watch television right after school or roam the streets till late night. Many of these learners experiment with drugs, alcohol and sex at very early stages in their lives. In many instances learners may leave home in the morning to go to school but may not set foot in the school. Schools may notice much absenteeism among learners which parents and guardians may not be aware of. This happens mostly because there is very little or no link between the school and the home. Most of the time, schools are the centre of a community and schools and communities should therefore be linked together (Heystek & Paquette 1999:189). Indeed it is the responsibility of the home to make sure children do not bonk classes. Lemmer and van Wyk (2004:261) affirm that parents must ensure school attendance of every learner for whom he or she is responsible, from age seven until fifteen years or the ninth grade, whichever comes first. Wolfendale (2000:8) adds that parental contribution to education comes from among other things their (parents') engagement with school life, its routines, its learning opportunities and the reciprocal extension of these into the

home via, for example, family literacy and numeracy programmes. The problem of truancy among learners could be identified and solved earlier where and when there is a working relationship, a link or co-operation between the school and parents (through their SGBs) as partners in education. Although government may enact very good policies on drugs, alcohol, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), Culture of Learning and Teaching (COLTS) and so on, these policies affecting the welfare of learners and communities at large cannot be effectively and fully implemented without parents and guardians' support and involvement in school matters or governance. In affirming the important role of parents as partners in education Callison (2003:85) writes: The crucial foundation for student growth stands on two pillars of parent and staff support. It is no surprise that the students with best overall performance come from loving and responsible homes where what the student learns at school is reinforced.

Indeed parents as partners in education can communicate or 'chat' with their children on education issues – asking them questions, explaining some learning aspects, motivating and giving children positive feedback on their school work. Such discussions with learners can improve their academic performance. Wolfendale (2000:8) points out the contribution of parents to education comes from major dimensions such as

- the formulation and transmission to children from adult care[givers] of beliefs, values, attitudes, including attitudes towards education, learning and career aspirations
- the 'home curriculum', that is what opportunities, activities, conversations, etc are provided from birth onwards.

The school and the community, especially parents and guardians through the SGBs therefore, have equal and co-responsibility in educating the child in totality. As SGBs are parents/guardians representatives they need to support schools in their communities in order for the former to achieve better education results. Heystek and Paquette (199:195) appropriately state: "parental participation is not only important in governance, but also at other levels in the school. At the lowest level of management and decision-making, parents can assist their children with their homework and motivate them to be positive towards school and their education."

In recognizing the vital role parents and guardians and indeed communities at large can play in supporting school achieve education goals, the Government of National Unity enacted the South African Schools Act in 1996. The Act (1996: section 16) vests the governance of every public

school in the hands of its governing body. It therefore requires every school to establish governing bodies which will enable the representatives of the main stakeholders of the school system – parents, guardians and educators – take the responsibility for the school's governance. The South African Schools Act thus makes parents, guardians and indeed the entire community aware of their rights, responsibilities and roles in their children's education and encourages them to participate fully in it.

Parents and guardians naturally spend more time with their children than schools or educators do and have in mind the kind of education they want their children to receive. Thus schooling [should] be provided by teachers in a way which is responsive to parental wishes and in conjunction with parents' co-educational actions, but within an administrative and curricular framework informed by professional judgement (Macbeth 1993:195). Parker and Leithwood (2000:38) for instance mention that advocates of decentralization base their reforms on the premises that to ensure improvement in schools, those closest to the students should be given the authority to make decision. This fact might have motivated the South African government to offer parents and guardians (through their representatives, the SGBs) a dominant role in school governance. The governing body must, according to SASA (1996: section 20), consist of a majority of parents/guardians thus affording them the dominant role. The following tasks of the SGB relate specifically to education of learners:

> promote the best interest of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school. Support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions.

The South African Schools Act (SASA 1996) thus offers parents and guardians more power and role to play in the governance of schools and indeed in the education of their children. Summing up the rights and responsibilities of parents and guardians, the South African Schools Act (op. cit) emphasizes that "parents or guardians have the primary responsibility for the education of their children and have the right to be consulted by the state authorities with respect to the form that education should take and to take part in its governance."

Unfortunately, experience indicates that despite the emphasis on parents and guardians role in school governance many of them, especially in the rural areas, are either not involved in any school matters at the grassroots level or do not support schools to improve their performance.

Perhaps as Decker, Gregg and Decker (1994:1) put it "many parents and educators shared the opinion that once a child enters school, it is best to leave education to the professionals. After all the argument went, they are the ones trained to do this job". Such a view may have negative impact on school governance, school effectiveness, academic performance and achievement of educational goals in many rural schools.

1.3   SCHOOL PERFORMANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

All over the world education is regarded by many people as a catalyst for human (social) and economic development. For this reason the constitution of every democratic nation emphasizes the right of all citizens to education. Democratic constitutions entrench this right in order to give everybody equal opportunity to schooling, employment, leadership positions and services. In South Africa however, this was not the case prior to the demise of apartheid. Under the previous political dispensation education was both a right and a privilege for whites who constituted a very small percentage of the country's population. As noted by Heystek and Paquette (1999:190) most of the former blacks-only schools, which by far the majority, received less funding and material resources than the white schools. The country was fragmented into unequal societies with stark contrast between white and black education provision. The majority of the country's black population lived (and still lives) in rural areas; unfortunately, however, the policy of unequal funding made education for blacks inferior as compared to that of whites. Describing this unequal education for black and white citizens under apartheid, King (1998:1) has this to say; "It must also be recalled that South Africa entered this new policy environment with a human development situation in which the black population was on par with the Democratic Republic of Congo and white population on par with Canada."

As indicated by King (op cit) prior to the democratic dispensation of 1994 whites enjoyed a well funded first world education which prepared them for better career opportunities whilst their black counterparts were given very little funding and for that matter an inferior education. Financing schools and education in general under the old political dispensation was based on principles of segregation hence the per capita expenditure for black learners was very low as compared to the high funding of their white counterparts. Citing the journal *Educamus* (1991) Sibuyi (1997:15) for instance mentions that the budget for education in South Africa was R16,1 billion. Black education received only R6,833 billion. Since education is what determines who gets what job, the inadequate funding of black education had serious implication for resources,

infrastructure, staffing and the quality of teaching, learning, examination results and graduates who enter the job market.

Although since 1994 the new dispensation is restructuring education to achieve equity there is still much to be done for schools in rural communities in order to bring black education in South Africa at par with that of whites. This need to revamp rural schools is informed by the historic policy of under funding which has left in its trail a legacy of under resourced schools with poor infrastructure and under-qualified educators culminating in poor teaching and learning culture and poor academic performance. Heystek and Paquette (1999:190) affirm that the historical disadvantages of former black schools were caused by the previous government, which spent less money on them. These same communities do not have sufficient money to contribute to improving education standards in their schools. A cursory look at the 2002 matriculation (grade 12) results of a few schools taken from Tshwane South Education District in Pretoria for example indicates that former white schools still perform better than their black counterparts because they are resourced (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: A sample of disparity in academic performance between five formerly white schools and five black schools (2002 matric results).

Name of school	Number of candidates that wrote examinations	Number passed	% passed
Afrikaans Hoër Meisies	149	149	100
Afrikaans Hoër Seuns	207	207	100
Cornerston College	112	112	100
Cramford Secondary	92	92	100
Centurion Secondary	253	253	100
Tsako Thabo Secondary	137	80	58.3
Lehlabile Secondary	140	76	54.2
J Kekana Secondary	89	41	48.1
Edward Phatudi Secondary	72	45	44.4
Modiri Technical Secondary	55	23	43.40

Culled from 2002 matric results of Tshwane South Education District

Through teaching in rural schools for over 15 years I have experienced that rural schools lack resources (ie, libraries, books, equipments, laboratories, furniture, over head projectors, chalk boards, etc), infrastructure (ie classrooms, staff rooms, offices, sports grounds etc), have many under-qualified educators (some with very little knowledge and skills of the subjects they teach), are poorly managed, experience increased nepotism and political interference from education officials (some of who are not qualified for their positions) and obtain very little or no parent and community support or involvement (in school matters). The scenario given here does not seem to bring about better academic performance among learners. Lamenting the poor academic performance among rural matriculants van den Berg (Sunday times July 4 2004) writes:

> About one third of matric candidates and 40% of black fail altogether, and another 45% do not even achieve a D-aggregate (50%). If teachers don't know their subject, have classes without books, furniture, security or operate in a school so badly run that nobody knows where they are supposed to be or to whom they are responsible, results will not improve. Local and international research indicates that the common-sense view is right : school performance depends less on inputs than on hard-to-measure factors such as the quality of the school principal, teacher commitment and involvement.

The issues raised here clearly indicate that more still needs to be done in order to improve the academic performance of rural learners. Perhaps one way of improving the academic performance of rural learners might be the formation of some kind of partnership among the major stakeholders in education – national and provincial departments, school managers, educators, parents, learners and communities at large. Partnership can recognize that much education happens at home and that parents and teachers have differing but complementary educational functions which must operate in harmony to be most effective (Macbeth 1993:194). Good academic performance is cherished by all the stakeholders mentioned here in the discussion because it above all assures learners the opportunity for further education and training and its concomitant better career prospects. It is for this reason that many parents from previously disadvantaged communities take their children to much more expensive and prestigious schools which are well organized, stable, have resources and good educators that can guarantee the quality education and good academic performance.

1.4 SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

In the past rural schools in black communities in South Africa were governed by school committees. The members of these school committees were not democratically elected. The members of the school committee were hand picked by the *induna* (village headman) of the community in which the school is situated (Mkhonto 1998:1). The management structures of rural schools were thus unrepresentative and therefore illegitimate and undemocratic. With the advent of majority rule and a democratic constitution the need to change education in the country became apparent and crucial. As an extract from Namibian Ministry of education (1993a:41) reads: "To develop education for democracy we must develop democratic education to teach about democracy; our teachers and our education system as a whole must practice democracy". To make schools governance and its structures reflect democratic ideals of the country, the South African Schools' Act (1996:16) made a provision for the establishment of SGBs.

The constitutional provision made it possible for the key stakeholders in education (parents, communities and learners) to exercise their rights and responsibilities by involving themselves in the governance of local community schools. The SGB structure has been given a wide range of powers and tasks (RSA 1996: sections 20 and 21). All the tasks of the SGB are aimed at improving schools and as such could be included in this research. However, because of limited time and restraints on length of the study, emphasis will be placed on the tasks of the SGB which relate directly to the improvement of school performance. These will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2. A brief exposition is provided here.

1.4.1 Developing a vision and mission statement

According to Gallagher (1992:28) the vision and mission statement is "the official choice of a school board (governing body) or local school to achieve a purpose systematically and consistently". The school's vision statement is a dynamic image of what the school could and should be like, while the mission captures the character, identity and reason for a school's existence and therefore provides the parameters within which the school acts. (Gauteng Province, Department of Education, undated).

It is the duty of the governing body to determine the school's vision and mission and to explain it to all the people affected by it. It is also the responsibility of governors to ensure that this policy

is so clear, consistent and reasonable that it can be implemented and that all the staff comply with it in the performance of their duties (Marishane 1999:84). The vision and mission should also capture what is expected of the school regarding academic performance.

1.4.2 Setting goals and objectives

One of the main functions of the governing body, apart from determining the school's vision and mission, is to set goals and objectives for the school. These goals and objectives (or aims) are concerned with the type of educational experiences the school desires to give its learners.
There are general aims, which are fixed by law and common to all schools, and specific aims which are applied to individual schools and give each school a distinct character. Specific aims fall within the jurisdiction of the SGB.

In South Africa, school governing bodies are advised to link the goals and objectives of their schools to a school development plan which clearly sets out what should be done, how it is to be done, by whom, by what date, and how the success thereof will be monitored. This is often a formidable task for governors unfamiliar with a contemporary schooling system.

1.4.3 Selecting suitable educators and ensuring their development

The governing body exercises its powers in areas affecting the discipline, grievances, appraisals, promotion, recruitment, selection, appointment and dismissal of educators. The school governors therefore need to be familiar with legislation and government notices affecting personnel and labour relations. Consideration is also given to ensure that a spirit of partnership prevails when decisions affecting personnel are made. This implies that all stakeholders (except learners) should come together and jointly discuss staff problems and related issues with the ultimate intention of achieving consensus and taking decisions that will enjoy the respect and support of every one in the school. The SGB should also ensure that educators have the opportunity to develop.

Section 20(1) of the Schools act (RSA 1996a) clearly states that it is the duty of the governing body to "support principals, educators and other staff in the performance of their professional duties". Supporting the staff includes staff development, which involves the identification and satisfaction of the professional needs of individual staff members for pursuing their careers. Schools' staff development programmes may include exposing educators to in-service training,

professional and career development experiences, which should be incorporated within the broader school development plan.

1.4.4   The school governing body and the curriculum

Governors world-wide do not find the involvement in curricula matters easy. Likewise, teachers too whose professional expertise is centred upon curricular theory and pedagogical practices have not always welcomed what they have seen as the intrusion of lay people into their expert domain (Creese & Earley 1999:30). However, as a partner in decision making, the governing body represents the interests of ordinary community members, parents, educators and learners in monitoring and overseeing the implementation of the curriculum in the school and ensuring that it is not divorced from the aims of the school. This does not mean that governors are empowered to dictate to educators or principals how they should educate, but that they should be seen to show 'an interest in the nature of the curriculum and standards achieved' (Harding 1987:154). Thus the role of the governing body in the domain of curriculum is to monitor standards, to support plans to meet development pertaining to the curriculum and to cater for and meet parents' needs and expectations on how the school should educate their children.

In South Africa, the national Department of Education has introduced a new national curriculum called Curriculum 2005 which is based on the ideals of lifelong learning for all South Africans and aims at equipping all learners with knowledge, skills and competencies needed outside the world of schools. To achieve this, parents, educators, the community, the state and the private sector are to take major responsibility in 'helping to determine how learners should be prepared for adult life, including the world of work' (Gauteng Department of Education 1997:13). The partnership envisaged in this regard calls for a closer cooperation between the governing body and the principal.

The tasks of the SGB which include drawing up a code of conduct for learners, being involved in learner and educator misconduct, ensuring sound financial management of school funds and encouraging parent involvement are all aspects which will indirectly enhance school performance. However, these will not be included in this study.

1.4   THE RURAL AREAS OF TAUNG

According to Sharpely and Sharpely (1977:22) "rural areas comprise the people, land and other resources, in the open country and small settlements outside the immediate economic influence of major urban centres." Rural areas are usually less developed, unspoilt (both physically and culturally) and very close to nature. Many people in rural areas are outside the formal sector of economy. They are mostly unemployed, peasant farmers or poorly paid labourers of commercial farmers, living in conditions of extreme poverty and hopelessness. The main occupation of rural residents is agriculture – food and animal production. Supporting this view point Sharpely and Sharpely (1977:24) write: "the influence of farming and agriculture on the countryside cannot be overstated. Farming has always been the dominant land use in rural areas and, prior to the rapid industrialization of Western societies from 1800 onwards, virtually all social life was agrarian in character". Apart from tilling the land rural areas are characterized by poor services and facilities, for example, clean water, electricity, clinics, good schools and motorable roads. A parent from the rural area in the Eastern Cape talks about rural hardships in this way:

We go to towns because living conditions are better there than in rural areas. There are water taps inside the house. I know because I have a property in a township. There are subsidies and I have everything inside, even the toilet (Emerging Voices 2005: 6).

Thus the lack of employment opportunities and facilities compel many young people to migrate to cities and towns in search of better life. This migration of the youth usually results in very few people in the rural areas. The scenario described here indicates that rural residents live under very harsh environment.

The rural areas in Taung (which is of special interest to this study) fall under the Vryburg Region or Bophrima District of the North West Province. It used to be one of the 'islands' of the former homeland of Bophuthatswana. Geographically the area lies between Kimberly (in the south) and Vryburg (in the North). The people here are predominantly Tswana speakers and live in small communities of over 20 villages under headmen. The principal chief lives at Taung village, the traditional capital of the area. Although van Wyk (1996:5) is of the opinion that to return to the education arena, undoubtedly, schools must work harder in urban areas than anywhere else to involve parents I think the reverse is the case. My experience as a teacher in the rural areas for 16 years has taught me that in view of illiteracy parents generally perceive school and for that

matter education issues as the domain of scholars and educators – the only people with knowledge and expertise to educate and solve education problems. Commenting on lack of parents' involvement in education Decker et al. (1994:6) write:

> Too often, teachers [and administrators and other school personnel] assume that parents who do not actively demonstrate an interest in their child's education are apathetic and unconcerned. This is not always true, however, chances are these parents want very much to be a part of their child's education, but feel they cannot.

There are many obstacles in the rural areas including social circumstances of parents, educational level and poverty which could prevent them from getting actively involved in school matters. Since neither the government, the educator nor the parent alone can educate the children in rural schools it is crucial to encourage parents to form partnerships with all stakeholders of education in order to get better education for children.

1.6   PROBLEM FORMULATION

The South African education system has seen major changes since the democratic dispensation of 1994. Democracy has brought in its trail the right of all citizens to education (RSA, Constitution 1996:14 section 29). Thus as a democratic society (where education is a right) all citizens have the responsibility to be involved in the provision and governance of education. To this end partnerships with civil society and indeed all stakeholders (eg parents, educators, schools, communities and government) need to be formed in order to encourage all to get involved in the governance of schools. This is in line with the aim of the ministry of education's 'Tirisano' (Setswana word meaning working together) programme which promotes a spirit of togetherness in the task of improving the quality of teaching, learning and governance of schools. The task of educating the child cannot be done by schools alone which is why the South African Schools Act (RSA1996:16) gives schools back to local communities to govern. As Kader Asmal (City Press 21/12/2003) rightly states 'given the magnitude of the task ahead we will continue to call on all South Africans to join hands in building the type of education system we all aspire to". Against the background described above the need to investigate the role local communities, through their representatives, (the SGBs) play in improving school performance becomes imperative. This curiosity to find out how SGBs support schools to improve their performance in the rural communities informed the choice of topic for this study.

Therefore, the problem to be investigated in this study is:

What is the role of SGBs in improving school performance in the rural areas of Taung?

1.6.1 Sub-problems

- What are the prevailing theories on decentralized school governance and the role of SGBs in improving school performance?
- What are the tasks of School Governing Bodies in improving school performance in South Africa?
- What are the perceptions and experiences of educators and parents of the role SGBs in the rural areas of Taung are playing to improve school performance?
- How can these findings assist in providing guidelines to improve the role of SGBs play in improving school performance in the Taung district?

1.7 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this study it to investigate the role of SGBs in improving school performance in Taung rural areas. To achieve this broad goal the following operational goals need to be achieved first:

- Discussing the prevailing theories on decentralized school governance and the role of SGBs in improving school performance.
- Defining the tasks and responsibilities of SGBs in improving the school performance in rural areas.
- Investigating and analysing the experience and perceptions of SGB members in the rural areas of Taung and how these (experiences and perceptions) assist in the improvement of school performance.
- Providing guidelines for SGBs to improve the performance of schools they govern.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

A detailed explanation of the methodology and research design is furnished in chapter three. However a basic overview is given here. In an attempt to find out the extent to which SGBs in the Taung rural areas support schools to improve their performance I did a literature study on the topic, employed a qualitative research methods and personal experience (I was a former educator in the area).

1.8.1 Literature study

In order to conduct an investigation of this nature one needs to take into consideration what is already known in the particular area of study. Literature review of relevant sources related to the investigation therefore featured prominently in this research effort. Literature study as a research tool has a unique advantage. As Anderson (1990:45) appropriately notes, "the researcher is able to direct new investigation based on previous knowledge and experience". In view of this a wide range of journals, Government Acts (educational legislations), monographs and articles which have relevance to the study formed important secondary sources of the investigation.

1.8.2 Qualitative research

A major research approach employed in this study is qualitative method of data collection. This research approach is deemed useful to the study in view of its unique feature of allowing the researcher to get closer to subjects for an in-depth inquiry into the phenomenon under investigation. This method also allowed me to discover the views and experiences of the subjects regarding school governance. Supporting this view point Best and Kahn (1993:185) state:

The researcher has direct contact and gets close to the people, situation and phenomenon under study; researcher's personal experiences and insights are an important part of the inquiry and critical to the understanding the phenomenon.

The qualitative method of research makes it possible for the researcher to get closer to the SGB members so that through observation and in-depth interviews with them he can understand how they work to support schools to improve their performance. One notable feature of qualitative method is its flexibility. The method allows the researcher to formulate, reformulate and modify

concepts while the process of data collection goes on. In acknowledging this fact Anderson (1990:148) contends that the advantage of using the qualitative methodology is enabling researchers to use approaches that emphasise inductive analysis and description and perception in the natural setting. The investigation here is a case study of SGB school improvement functions in the rural communities of Taung. The qualitative research technique will therefore assist the researcher to approach the subjects in their natural setting or context. In this regard three high schools in the rural areas of Taung would be selected through purposeful sampling technique for this study. Focus group interviews would be conducted on parent and teacher components of each of the selected schools. In addition the three principals of the selected schools would be personally interviewed. The findings of the interviews with the principals would be compared to the findings from the focus group discussions conducted on parents and teacher components of the SGBs before writing out the final report. The details of how this qualitative method was used in this study appear in Chapter 3 of the investigation.

1.8.3   Personal experience

Personal experience of the researcher as a former educator in the rural areas for over 15 years could be of value to this study. As a member of a school management team (SMT) between 1998 and 2002 the researcher happened to attend meetings with the SGBs and educators. He made some observations which can add value to this investigation

1.8.4   Research design

It was necessary to formulate a research design according to which the investigation would proceed. A research design deals with the overall planning and execution of a research project. It involves the strategy, the plan and structure of the research project. A research design is the common sense and clear thinking that is necessary for the management of the entire research endeavour, the complete strategy of attack on the central research problem (Leedy, 1980:96).

The research design for this project was founded on the importance of engaging the research subjects who were involved in the investigation process in a dialogue that could reveal their perceptions, role and experiences in school governance. In this regard three high schools in the Taung rural areas were purposefully selected for the investigation. The three selected schools have similar characteristics. For example they are all relatively new, situated in remote rural

areas, lack resources for teaching and learning and serve learners from poor socio-economic backgrounds and disadvantaged communities.

I conducted six focus group interviews with parents and educator components of the SGBs and one on one interviews with the principals of the three schools. Copious notes were made during all the interviews since participants refused tape recording of the discussions. The data were categorised under related themes and manually analysed. More detail on the research design is provided in chapter three.

1.9 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

It would be ideal to investigate the role of all SGBs in the North West Province in improving school performance, however, time, logistics and finance made this impossible. To this end this investigation was limited to the SGBs in the rural areas of Taung. The rural areas of Taung have more schools than many districts in the province and it is assumed that the problem under investigation may be similar to what prevails in the other rural communities in the North West. The findings made from this study may therefore be utilized by all rural community schools in the province.

1.10 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

The terms used in the title of this study as well as others employed in the text of this research need elucidation. Among others, the following terms are of great importance

- **School Governing Bodies**

  School Governing Bodies or SGBs comprise elected community members (usually parents and guardians) to govern local schools. This is in line with the provisions of the South African Schools Act (1996:16) which seeks to make community members part of school governance.

- **Rural Areas**

  Rural areas in this study refers to the countryside; smaller and least developed settlements where people mostly work on the land as either peasant farmers or labourers on

commercial farms. Rural populations are always small and as noted by Van Wyk (1999:81) due to isolation and low population density in rural communities, rural schools are typically small compared to schools in more populated communities.

- **Parents and Guardians**

  Parents and guardians are usually used to refer to adult males and females who care for children attending schools. In this case a parent or guardian can be a biological or social caregiver of a child or as van Wyk (1996:8) puts it: "a person who has care, custody and control over and concern for the child".

- **Policy**

  Policy here refers to a law enacted by government to determine the direction and pace of changes in schools in order to achieve educational aims and objectives. Webster's High School (1986:697) for instance describes policy as "a frame of reference or a set of principles or rules determining what and how things are done by a person or a group; a government regulation.".

- **School Performance**

  School performance means the ability of a school to do better; produce good results or achieve educational goals.

- **A School Management Team**

  A School Management Team (SMT) used in this study refers to an inner group comprising the school principal, deputy principal and heads of departments. This small team (of about 3-4 people) deals with the professional day to day running of the school.

1.11   ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

This exploratory study has been organized into five distinguishable chapters with the following content:

Chapter 1 sets the stage for the study and therefore comprises the introduction, (background) and context of the study, problem formulation and statement, delimitation of the study, aims and objectives of the study, clarification of terms, research methodology and chapter divisions.

In Chapter 2 prevailing theories on decentralised school governance and the role of SGBs in improving school performance are examined. Emphasis is placed on the SGBs support for schools in the rural areas where schools lack facilities.

In Chapter 3 the methodology used in investigating SGBs' support for school improvement is provided. The rationale for qualitative research approach is also discussed. The chapter also deals with data collection strategies used in this study.

Chapter 4 provides an exposition of data analysis. The chapter describes the data collected and discusses the results (findings) of SGBs' support for school performance.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the research as well as suggestions for the ways in which SGBs can play a greater role in improving school performance in the rural areas.

1.12   SUMMARY

Economic and social advancement among individuals in the contemporary modern world depend very much on the level of education and training. Unfortunately many rural schools do not have infrastructure, equipments, good educators and support from communities (including parents and guardians) to enable them to improve their academic performance.

It has therefore become imperative to establish partnerships among the major role players in education as a first step towards the improvement of school performance in the rural areas. As the South African Schools Act (1996:16) requires; communities, parents, guardians and schools must come together to govern schools so that by working together the academic performance of rural schools can improve. Here in lies the justification for the establishment of the SGBs. Indeed community support for schools through the SGBs is a necessary prerequisite for academic success among learners, particularly in the rural community schools. This study was informed by the urgent need for SGBs (as community and parents' representatives) to support rural schools to improve their performance. A study of the SGBs' school improvement role may enable the researcher to offer suggestions that can make their work better and less difficult.

CHAPTER 2

SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

2.1   INTRODUCTION

In the pervious chapter school performance in South Africa, the increasing role of parents in education of their children, school Governing Bodies (SGBs) and the problem to be addressed by this study were discussed.

The current chapter attempts to review the relevant available literature on: factors that determine learner achievement, decentralised school governance and the role of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in improving school performance.

2.2   FACTORS THAT DETERMINE LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT

Every society tries to educate or enculturate in its youth knowledge, skills and values they may need to function or lead their communities politically, socially and economically in the future. To this end education has become the responsibility of the state, communities, chieftains, parents and indeed all citizens of any contemporary nation.

In an effort to achieve learner success all stakeholders in education – state, political parties, chiefs, communities, educators, schools and parents – need to work together for the benefit of learners – the future leaders. In trying to provide quality education for these future leaders governments, communities and parents spend huge sums of money to build new schools or improve existing ones and train educators to transmit knowledge, skills and values to the youth. However, notwithstanding the infrastructure – classrooms, laboratories, furniture and teaching learning resources – the most critical factors that can contribute to learner success are the home, the educator and the school environment. In putting it more succinctly Saunders (2000:11) mentions that the key characteristics or correlates of effective schools and effective teaching are:

- professional leadership
- a learning environment
- purposeful teaching/achievement orientation

- monitoring progress
- a learning organization
- pupils' rights and responsibilities
- home–school partnership.

In rural communities where a large number of the adult population is illiterate and there is paucity of resources support for the school to educate the child is often lacking. In reality if the school is to provide children with any meaningful education parents must get involved and offer the necessary support.

2.2.1 Support of learning by home/family

Not too long ago, many parents and educators shared the opinion that once a child enters school, it is best to leave education to the professionals. After all, the argument went, they are the ones trained to do this job (Decker, Gregg & Decker 1994:1) This apparent narrow view point may still exist in some rural communities where most parents are illiterate and may not be aware of their rights and responsibilities in their children's education. As Atkin, Bastiani and Goode (1988:160) lament; there may be parents who think teachers are paid to teach and that unskilled help will damage their children's education. This kind of belief makes some educators see themselves as the only source of education. The prevailing socio-economic and political conditions of contemporary societies, however, make it clear that the job of supporting learners to achieve academic success is too big and complex for schools alone to handle. This makes it imperative for parents and educators to work together collaborative effort to educate the child. Wolfendale (1996:92) for instance proposes a model of collaboration and intervention in which:

- parents as primary carers and first educators are perceived as co-operating partners in the educational enterprise.
- parental expertise is seen as equivalent and complementary to that of professionals
- family heritage is valued.

When parents and teachers work together as equal partners they bring out the best in children. As Bastiani (2000:18) points out when parents and teachers work together and education is made a priority at home, children develop beyond their peers and beyond expectations. The input of the

home (parents and caregivers) in education of children is very crucial for academic achievement. Families are strong pillars of every child's education. As first primary educators children are bound to their parents socially, economically and spiritually. Parents have enormous influence on their children. In fact, an effective school could become one in which parental involvement as one of the key characteristics is seen to be pervasive and predominant. Sibuyi (1997:8) for instance outlines parents' responsibilities in education as sending children to school, ensuring that the children attend school regularly, maintaining continuous contact with the children's teacher and principal and volunteering time, skills and resources when needed and where possible. This researcher is, however, of the view that the responsibilities of parents in education should go beyond sending children to school. They must find out what their children study at school daily, be involved in their children's education by spending some time to teach, supervise, guide, assist and ensure that children do their home work and are given the necessary support to enable them study at home. Such direct involvement can contribute tremendously to children's academic success. Experiences as a school teacher for over 18 years in many rural schools in four African countries has made this researcher aware that most of the learners who achieve academic success are those who receive some kind of learning support at home.

Trafford (1997:9) suggests that parents be involved in school activities and governance. They should be made aware of their roles in their children's education. Educators and school management teams (SMTs) must therefore establish a partnership between the school and the home. Such a home – school partnership could ensure co-operation and understanding among the major stakeholders and also encourage them to work hard towards the achievement of educational goals.

2.2.2   School environment

To realize higher learner performance teaching and learning must take place in a safe, secure, clean and supportive environment. A school environment which has the above characteristics could be an ingredient for quality teaching and optimum learning. For the past several decades teachers, researchers and the public have usually sought to explain low learner performance by either the characteristics of the individual student or the family background. Both of these explanations of the learner's learning have largely ignored the influence of the principal and teachers (that is the school) with whom learners interact. The discovery that some schools are effective in teaching students from disadvantaged family backgrounds makes plausible the

conclusion that the nature of the school environment can make a difference in the level of student learning (Brookover, Beamer, Efthim et al. 1982:1–2).It is the responsibility of the principal and teachers to make the environment physically and psychologically safe and motivating for learners to learn without any hindrance. The physical environment (both inside and outside the classroom) must be devoid of intimidation, threats and harassment from the principal, teachers or fellow learners. The school management team, educators, learners and support staff must interact without fear of any member of the organization or physical threats from outside the school premises. Such a conducive school learning climate can only be realized under a good leadership that is democratic, listens to the views of educators, learners and parents and works towards the achievement of culture of teaching and learning (COLTS). Brookover, Beamer, Efthim, Hathaway et al. (1982:2) are of view that school learning climates are characterised by the degree to which they are effective in producing the desired learning outcome among the students. Our use of school learning climate is specifically designed to explain and help increase student achievement. The onus is therefore on the school principals and their management teams to ensure school environments where teaching and learning are the dominant activities. The belief that students can learn and that teachers can teach is an important characteristic of any effective learning environment. This belief must also be associated with the expectations of teachers and all school authorities that given a conducive learning environment (i.e. a good learning climate) learners can and will achieve at high levels. Saunders (2000:4) adds that equally, schools cannot be effective learning environments for all learners unless the basic material conditions for learning – health, access and equity – are realized. In practice the delivery of 'educational goods' and the achievement of educational goals cannot take place under the climate of terror or chaos. A safe school environment does not only motivate learners to learn but also encourages educators to provide the learners with guidance and quality teaching. Glatthorn and Fox (1996:9) are more than apt when they state that the school as a work environment can either foster teacher motivation or exercise a negative influence on it. In reality a teacher may be competent or knowledgeable but can hardly provide quality teaching if the school environment is volatile, chaotic, characterized by intimidation either from the management, learners or parents. Educators must feel that they are in a safe, orderly and comfortable environment before they do their best. The prevalence of violence in the schools – much of it directed at teachers – makes safety the most important of all (Glathorn & Fox 1996:18). The hostage drama at Montevideo Primary School in Cape Town in which Ms Joy van der Heever, a grade 2 teacher, was shot and wounded by the hostage taker is a case in point (*Sunday Times* 13/2/2005). A school environment has a tremendous impact on teaching and learning. It is therefore crucial for school

management teams, School Governing Bodies, communities and education officials to ensure the safety and security of both educators and learners at all times.

The school management team may also create an environment in which learners can sometimes study on their own with little or no interference from educators. The school environment must empower learners with the freedom to take initiative in learning. When learners are empowered to be responsible for their work they could develop self- confidence and ultimately become effective learners. As Trafford (1997:10) points out; empowering learners is not so much concerned with neutralizing their dissent as allowing them to feel able to explore, to experiment, to learn to argue and negotiate within the sheltered environment of the classroom, the peer group, the school council; thus learning will prepare them to do likewise – and better in the larger, less protected world outside. In the same token educators must be given power or control over some critical aspects of their work such as the way they teach and how they assess learners. It is assumed that a teaching and learning environment that offers educators and learners some autonomy could motivate them to increase academic achievements. The belief that they have the power and initiative to make a difference in teaching and learning could encourage teachers to go the 'extra-mile'. If teachers lack autonomy with respect to curriculum, instruction and assessment, put more succinctly, they will tend to feel that they are not different from assembly line workers who simply operationalize what others have decided (Trafford op. cit).

The school environment should also provide educators some quality time to enable them to plan, prepare, study and collaborate with colleagues by engaging in professional dialogue which could enhance their teaching. The school leadership – Principal, SGB, and the Management Team – should become increasingly aware of the fact that to achieve the ultimate goal (quality learning and improved academic achievement) there is a need to create a school environment in which quality teaching can take place. Without a conducive atmosphere both teaching and learning could suffer; making it impossible for the achievement of academic success among learners. Brookover, Beamer, Efthim, Hathaway et al. (1982:45) warn that as professionals we [educators] should stop trying to use a student's home environment or social status as an excuse for poor academic achievement. Instead, we should help our peers and the public to understand the real importance of the school social system, the classroom environment and our own teaching activities. As teachers we must recognize the high achieving economically disadvantaged schools are living proof that poor children can be educated to high levels of achievement. We should get

on with the business of creating classroom environment and school learning climates that promote high achievement.

2.2.3 Teacher quality, training and motivation

It is widely presumed that higher-quality teachers will engage in higher-quality teaching practices in their classrooms which will lead directly to improved student learning outcomes – the main expectation of all stakeholders of education. Touching on the quality of the teacher Boe and Gilford (1992:32) contend that teacher competency has a direct relationship to:

> Teacher qualifications and tested ability.
>
> Teacher professionalism – the degree to which teachers are given responsibility and authority over their work.
>
> Classroom teaching practice, that is, teaching quality as distinguished from teacher quality.

Although it may be difficult to realize a universally agreed standard quality for teachers, a teacher's training, qualification, duration of training, knowledge of a subject, application of appropriate teaching strategies and commitment to teaching as a career or profession are very important factors in effective teaching and learner achievement. Saunders (2000:12) for instance argues that effective teachers at a mature stage of development tend to:

- know their subject matter
- use pedagogy(ie, teaching strategies) appropriate for content
- use appropriate language of instruction and have mastered that language
- create and sustain an effective learning environment
- find out about and respond to needs and interests of their students and communities
- reflect on their teaching and children's responses and make changes to the learning evironment as necessary
- have a strong sense of ethics
- are committed to teaching
- care about their students.

In practice it may be difficult, if not impossible, to realize quality teaching where a teacher lacks knowledge and competence of a particular subject or a learning area. Glatthorn and Fox (1996:1) for instance points out that quality teaching is teaching that maximizes learning for all students. Learning in this definition, is a comprehensive growth- continuing development in knowledge, skill and attitudes. Increased academic performance or comprehensive growth in knowledge and skills among learners can be easily achieved where a teacher knows his/her subject matter and has the skills for teaching it. The point emphasized here is that teacher's knowledge of a subject (content) and how to teach it to learners (delivery) are a strong foundation for effective teaching and learner achievement. The teacher who is competent and knowledgeable of a subject and teaches it well is more likely to establish a good rapport with learners, create a democratic classroom climate, maintain orderly and learning – focused environment, motivate learners and provide co-operative interaction that can maximize learning. For a teacher to be competent and knowledgeable, however, he/she must undergo a comprehensive pre-service training and continue to learn throughout the teaching career.

To improve the quality of the teacher and for that matter teaching schools should offer teachers incentives and opportunities to learn. This continuous professional learning can equip teachers with the state of the art in teaching. In the modern technological world no knowledge or skills acquired during training can stand the test of time hence the need for continuous professional development. As the saying goes; a lamp cannot light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame. In view of the importance of continuous professional development, Glatthorn and Fox (1996:16) suggest that the school structures itself as a centre for inquiry, where teachers and principals work together in the pursuit of their own professional development. Everyone in the school is expected to be engaged in the continuing process of inquiry, studying and reflecting. This requires the school to see itself as a learning organization where its members – principal, teachers, learners and supporting staff – are constantly engaged in learning. Through continuous learning teachers in particular may be able to innovate their teaching skills and techniques and provide, a framework for transforming their high expectations into actual high achievement among learners. This culture of learning and innovation can lead to improvement in academic performance among learners.

A teacher's teaching load, responsibilities and number of learners may have either positive or negative effect on teaching and for that matter learner achievement. For instance, a school which has a learner ratio of 1:25 (1 teacher to 25 learners) is most likely to obtain individual attention

for its learners than an overcrowded classroom with over 50 learners to a teacher. The scourge of HIV/AIDS pandemic has got negative effect on teaching performance among many teachers. Teacher attrition emanating from the disease has led to overloading of teachers in many schools. Govender (23/10/005) reports that a recent survey conducted by the Human Science Research Council involving 3909 teachers from 900 schools nationwide reveals a tremendous increase in educator workload since 2000. The teachers complain of stress as a result of too much workload. The report added that a post-level one teacher is expected to teach 90% of the seven-hour school day. This writer himself used to teach in rural areas between 1989 and 2002 and realized that when a teacher passed away it took the department of education more than two years to replace him/her. A situation of this nature compelled the existing teachers to take on extra-teaching load and responsibilities. In many cases teachers could teach two or three subjects or learning areas at different levels with over 50 learners in a class. In some cases teachers might not have studied some of learning areas added to their work. This tendency of schools giving teachers too many lessons per week and in some cases teaching complete strange subjects could put teachers' competency to the test and also result in poor learning output.

2.3   SCHOOL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The previous section discussed the factors that can contribute to improved learner achievement. The current section focuses on decentralized school governance.

2.3.1   School governance in South Africa prior to 1994

School governance in general is not a new concept and practice in South Africa. Under the old political dispensation there existed Parent, Teacher and Student Associations (PTSAs) in various community schools which assisted principals in running of schools. The PTSAs'role was, however, limited to signing of school cheques and contract forms of newly appointed teachers and accompanying learners on school trips (Mkhonto1998:8). The typical school committee members of the past were just there to endorse the authority of the principal. For example, they could not decide on the curriculum of the school and medium of instruction to be used at schools. This initial attempt at school governance, albeit, lacked legislative backing from the government and was less democratic in structure.

In the view of Masheula (2003:22) it, however, served as an alternative governance structure which operated in township schools in the mid-1980s as part of the initial campaign to develop new democratic system of school governance. Before 1994 education was the responsibility of the state and public schools (primary and secondary) were administered in each province through highly centralized government departments. During those years school governance was determined centrally with tight control exercised through an inspectorial system (Republic of South Africa 1995:15). Adding to this, Sayed (2002:39), reports that the apartheid state adopted a style of management that directly intervened in processes of educational provision and delivery. Under the post apartheid dispensation, state control is indirect, 'after the fact' and exercised through controlling the outcomes rather than the inputs.

2.3.2 Deentralised school governance in South African

With the democratization of the country in 1994 the old system of school governance via the PTSA became unpopular and outdated since it did not involve representatives of all the major role players e.g. parents, educators, school supporting staff and the broader community in which schools situated. Moreover the vast disparities among schools in South Africa necessitated the establishment of a new structure of school organization and system of governance which would be transformative, inclusive, flexible and democratic in order to accommodate the different contexts in which schools operate. Transformation of education has become crucial in ensuring its accessibility to all citizens of the country. Steyn and Squelch (1994:182) point out that reforming education involves restructuring it in such a way that among other things, school governance, organization and management are decentralized while at the same time empowering the people closest to the learners in the classroom. Decentralisation is a concept that is often used but generates more heat than light. It is used as a wide range of contexts from signalling changing forms of educational governance and management to changes in the classroom practice and pedagogy. For those approaching it from a political perspective, the success of decentralization is measured by the extent to which political involvement and participation is enhanced – in other words, the extent to which a state redistributes authority and power. The general view is that educational decentralization redistributes, shares and extends power and enhances participation by removing centralized control over educational decision-making (Sayed 2002:35, 37). By redistributing and sharing power a decentralized policy in education empowers communities to take charge of schools within their jurisdiction. It is assumed that when communities get involved in education matters their schools could improve.

Sergiovanni (1994:xi) maintains that if we want to rewrite the script to enable good schools to flourish, we need to rebuild community. Community building must become the heart of any school improvement effort. Whatever else is involved – improving teaching, developing sensible curriculum, creating new forms of governance, providing more authentic assessment, empowering teachers and parents, increasing professionalism – it must rest on a foundation of community building. A classical example of a community building in schools is the establishment of a democratic structure which consists of true representatives of all major role players in education e.g. parents, educators, broader community members and learners. It is for these ideals that the government enacted and promulgated the South African schools Act 1996 which mandated the establishment of School Governing Bodies and vested the governance of every public school in its Governing Body. Marishane (1999:78) for instance points out that this concept of decentralization of school governance emanates from the belief that the state alone cannot control schools, but should share power with other stakeholders, particularly those close to the school on a partnership basis. Indeed, the complexity of modern society requires a closer co-operation or partnership between the home and the school in order to achieve educational goal – improved learner achievement. In the words of Squelch and Lemmer (1994:92) home and school are no longer separated by the 'white line' on the playground. The South African Schools Act (1996:17) recognizes parents and community role in education of children hence it has made it obligatory for parents to be actively involved in the education of children. Parents, guardians and community members are seen by the government as equal partners in education and are expected to assume greater responsibility not only in governance of schools but also as educators and supporters of teaching and learning both at school and at home.

The decentralized system of school governance which came to effect as a result of the South African Schools Act of 1996 has unique characteristics. For example, SGB members should be local community members democratically elected to govern schools according to community and national needs. As van Wyk (2004:49) appropriately points out the advocates of decentralized school governance base their assumption that to ensure improvement in schools those closest to the learners should be offered the authority to make key decisions. Perhaps this fact might have influenced the government's decision to give back schools to local communities to govern. As a matter of fact, all schools are situated in communities where children who attend such schools usually live. More over community members know and understand their environment and context better than any body else.

2.3.3   Types of participation in decentralized school governance

In South African educational policy discourses, four competing notions of participation relating to school governance can be discerned; namely community participation, stakeholder participation, regulated participation and weighted participation (R.S.A 2004:41).

Community participation

It is difficult to define the concept *community* precisely because a modern community is not usually fixed, stable and homogenous in structure. Kruss, Sayed and Badat (2001:171) point out that although community is difficult to define its participation in education is a virtue in and of itself. In view of this lack of homogeneity and stability school governance should reflect the interests of the particular community within which it is located and serves. The community as a major, constituent of the SGB is clearly spelt out by the South African Schools Act (1996:16).

Stakeholder participation

Stakeholder participation refers to individuals and groups who have more legitimate rights of participation in school governance. In the words of Kruss, Sayed and Badat (2001:172) not all things are open to all people all of the time. Indeed the South African Schools Act (1996:16) specifically mentions parents (including caregivers and guardians), educators, learners, principals and supporting staff as the stakeholder groups in education matters.

Regulated participation.

This group of participants in school governance is seen as the advisory school governing Council to the Minister of education. As the *Review of School Governance* (2004:43) reports, this statutory Governance Council should at both national and provincial levels.

Weighted participation

Weighted participation in school governance structures embraces all the three groups discussed above. The principle of weighted participation is embedded in the South African Schools Act (1996:16–17) that parents must have majority say on school matters. Perhaps as suggested by

Kruss, Sayed and Badat (2001:174) some constituent parts of the School Governing Bodies (SGBs) could be given more voting powers than others; such as parents having two votes for every one of the educator. Already parents are in majority on School Governing Bodies. It is my view that the two votes for each of the parent component as suggested by Kruss et al. (op. cit) could put too much power in their hands as against the professionals (i.e. educators) who actually deliver the goods. This may lead to conflict between parents and educators; something which could have negative impact on effective teaching and learning and for that matter learner achievement.

2.3.4   The composition of the school governing bodies

The notion of two heads is better than one seems to be an important factor in the establishment and composition of School Governing Bodies (SGBs). The involvement of the broader community in the decision – making process of school governance can also be explained by the premise that education is everyone's business (Marishane1999:3). Indeed, what touches all must be deliberated by all hence all interested parties in education must be given the opportunity to participate in the education decision making process and enjoy the right to shape the direction of the education of future community leaders. The SGB structure is also seen as a platform for parents and, for that matter, community members to contribute to the transformation of education at the grassroots level. It might be for these good reasons that the South African Schools Act (1996:23) spells out clearly that the governing body of every public school must comprise members who are elected by the community, the school principal in his/her official capacity (as professional, administrative and academic, head of the school) and co-opted members (not elected by community members).

The elected members of the governing body must comprise a member or members each of the following categories:

Parents of learners at the school who are not educators, educators at the school, members of staff at the school who are not educators and learners in grade eight or higher at the school.

Sub-section 23 of the Act 1996 South African Schools further stipulates that a parent who is employed at the school may not represent parents on the SGB in terms of sub-section (2)(a).

A governing body may co-opt a member or members of the community to assist it in discharging its duties or functions but such co-opted members do not have voting rights on the governing body.

The number of parent members must comprise one more than the combined total of other members of a governing body who have voting rights.

If the number of parents at any stage is not more than the combined total of other members with voting rights, the governing body must temporarily co-opt parents with voting rights.

The South African Schools Act (1996) provisions outlined above indicate that parents as people with children at every public school must be given much say on how the school must run for the sake of their children and the larger community.

As people who are responsible for supplying children with school kits they may know what they want for their children. The one who pays for the piper must call for the tune, goes the saying. It is assumed that parents as majority members of the SGB would not make decisions or endorse decisions that could be detrimental to their children's education and for that matter their future. The idea of co-opting some members of the community or parents to assist the SGB sounds laudable but raises some concern. The fact that co-opted members cannot vote on issues renders their presence on the governing body useless. They may act as toothless, bull dogs who can only bark but cannot bite. Indeed, if co-opted members are to play any meaningful role on the SGB then they must be given voting rights.

2.3.5   Office bearers and term of office of school governing body members

The South African Schools Act (RSA 1996:29) also makes a provision for each SGB to elect office bearers from amongst their members. The office bearers must include at least a chairperson, a treasurer and a secretary. It is only a parent member of the SGB who is not employed by the school may be elected to serve as a chairman. The term of office of a member of SGB other than a learner may not exceed three years. An office bearer who is a learner may not serve more than one year and the term of office of an office bearer of a SGB may not exceed one year; however, an office bearer may be re-elected or co-opted after expiry of his/her term (RSA 1996: section 31). The limit put on the term of governing body members has much significance. As a democratic governance structure, SGB members must be elected frequently. An element of accountability exists in this democratic structure. The possibility of re-election for

office bearers and ordinary members of the SGB indicates that those who serve the school well stand the chance of being elected when their term of service expires. The provision for limit of term does not only make office bearers accountable but also offers other community members, parents and educators the opportunity to stand for election and serve their community and school in particular. The decentralized school governance thus empowers community members in the service of schools and communities of which they are members.

2.3.6   Functions of the school governing body

The governance of education was highly centralized during the former political dispensation. The rationale for decentralized school governance under the present government, according to the South African Schools Act (1996:16), was to place the real authority of school governance in the hands of broad representatives of local communities. This, by implication, is to offer local communities opportunities to become more responsive to local educational needs. Involvement of local communities in school governance could empower them to transform education at the grassroots level. The decentralized school governance or what others call site based-management could reduce inefficiency and unnecessary delays in decision making. Supporting this view point Cotton (1997:5–6) points out that,

A school improvement impetus and authority emanating from outside the school does not produce the responsibility and commitment necessary to sustain consequential improvement. Site based management and shared decision making strategies directly challenge and seek to change the complex and well entrenched patterns of institutional and individual behaviour that have remained untouched by to-down reforms. To this end, the South African Schools Act (1996:20) prescribes a whole lot of functions to be performed by the SGB and gives it considerable amount of powers to perform such functions.

2.3.6.1   Main functions of the SGB

The core functions of the SGB as prescribed by the South African School Act (1996:20) can be put under the following broad categories:

- Supporting the principal, educators and other staff of the school in performance of their professional functions.

- Development of school policies\determination of staff needs of the school.

- Financial management and budget.

- Management and maintenance of resources.

2.3.7   Supporting the principal, educators and other staff

The South African Schools' Act (RSA 1996:16) states that the SGB must support the principal, educator(s) and other school staff in carrying out their professional duties. This indicates that the SGB does not manage but governs. The day to day management of the school is the responsibility of the principal who is the academic and professional head of the school. Although their functions are clearly spelt out, in some rural communities where this researcher taught for over 10 years, interference from some SGB members in school management was a common experience. In rural communities most SGB members are semi-literate or illiterate and this perhaps makes it difficult for them to discern boundaries of their operation. Margaret (1996:84) appropriately points out that governors should make clear that they are not there to try to catch the head or staff out but to support, explore and promote a spirit of enquiry within the school. In supporting the school principal and staff to improve the school in general and school performance in particular the governing body members can advice, guide and direct the principal on issues relating to conflict resolution, improvement of staff and learner motivation (in teaching and learning) and hiring of relevant and qualified educators for the school whenever a vacancy arises. To be able to support the school principal and staff the governing body must have a good team work spirit and establish a working relationship with the school management team and the entire staff. The governing body must also have a strong commitment to the school and avoid party politics as this could interfere with its work. As Creese and Earley (1992:21–22) point out;

The way in which it faces conflict and confronts all difficult issues is an important indicator of its effectiveness. In an effective team the members support and trust one another and are able to handle conflict openly and constructively and collective responsibility is maintained.

2.3.8   Development of school policies

The SGB has the responsibility for developing policies regarding the vision, mission, discipline or code of conduct for the school. The Department of Education (1997:49) requires school

governing bodies to help the school develop policies on rules about school hours (times), religious observance, dress code, language for teaching and learning, code of conduct for learners and code of rights and responsibilities. In describing a school policy, Cadwell and Spinks (1988:90) mention that it is a statement of purpose with one or more guidelines as to how that purpose is to be achieved which taken together provide a framework for the operation of the school programmes. Policies outline what outcomes the governing body wants for the school (i.e. Vision) and how to achieve them (i.e. mission). Beare et al. (1989:107) for instance describe vision as a mental image of a possible and desirable future state of an organization. They regard it as something vague as a dream or as precise as a goal or a mission statement. As stipulated by the Department of Education (1997:45) both the vision and mission statements must show the school and the outside world what

>
> the values of the school are;
>
> direction the school wants to go; and
>
> the culture of the school should be.

Indeed, for an organization like a school to operate in the best interest of learners it needs policies to guide its members – governing body members, principal, educators, learners and supporting staff – on how to operate in order to achieve educational goals. The SGB for example should discuss with the relevant stakeholders (eg principal, educators, learners, support staff and parents) and develop a behaviour policy which can be used in maintaining discipline at the school. This is in line with the South African Schools' Act (1996:20), mandate that school governing bodies must adopt a code of conduct for learners at their respective schools. A code of conduct is a document that guides behaviour of learners and those responsible for their conduct at the school (National Department of Education 1997a:50). For a Code of Conduct to be effective or worth its while it must have the following elements:

>
> say what the rights, responsibilities and duties of the learners are;
>
> state the rules of the school regarding learners' conduct;
>
> state how the school community thinks learners should conduct themselves and why;
>
> guarantee that all resources and equipments will be protected;
>
> define the daily school programme, mention the sanctions and processes that should be followed when a learner goes against the Code of Conduct of the school (National Department of Education 1997a:51).

Once school policies are developed by the SGB, they are given to the professionals – principal, educators and supporting staff of the school – to implement while the governing body remains at the background as a 'watch dog'. Margaret (1996:85), however, points out that the governors have a right to advise on policy and a duty to see that the policies are implemented appropriately. She adds that all policies should be set in the context of the aims and ethos of the school and the school development plan should be the vehicle for their monitoring and review.

School policies are very useful documents. They may not only make the principal's work a little bit easier but can also reduce conflicts that may arise between educators and the principal and between the entire school staff and the SGB. In the view of Gann (1998:48) policies express what the governing body wants the school to achieve (and) the staff decide how to achieve it – taking into account any constraints the governing body wants to make.

In developing a language policy for the school the governing body must consult widely and hold discussions with all stakeholders – parents, learners, educators, business (i.e. possible employers) and the entire community. In a country where every ethnic language is official it is absolutely necessary for the SGB to consider both local and broader contexts of the community, school and learners before choosing a language for instruction. With the focus on globalisation too much emphasis on local languages as media of instruction in a school may not be in the interest of the learners' future. A language policy that has the future in mind may be the best option.

2.3.9   Determination of staffing needs

The South African Schools Act (RSA 1996: section 20) prescribes determination of staffing needs of the school as one of the major functions of the SGB. The SGB identifies suitable candidates for existing vacancies at the school and recommends them to the head of Education Department in the Province for appointment as principals, subject heads or educators. The governing body must work very closely with the school principal and educators to achieve educational goals. The SGB members have children in the school, are parents representatives and local community members. They therefore stand a better position to determine the staffing needs of their school and recommend the best educators to be appointed to fill vacant positions. In practice, this function may be abused due largely to illiteracy among some key governing body members. Being a teacher in predominantly rural area schools for over ten years made this

researcher experience how some local education officials could 'twist the arms' of the powerful but illiterate members of the governing bodies in order to appoint their favourite candidates as principals or school heads of department. Some of such people appointed as principals or heads of department of Middle or High schools are holders of primary school teaching diplomas. This defeats the aims of transformation envisaged by the South African Schools Act (1996) because little or no improvement may take place in the school's performance. One wonders how a primary school educator with very little or no management experience could guide and supervise colleagues who are more qualified and experienced than him or her. In a number of schools in the rural areas where this researcher taught nepotism has made more qualified and experienced educators (including himself) subordinates to those junior in qualifications, rank and experience in teaching and management.. Political affiliation and educators' background seem to be a stumbling block to the appointment of more qualified and experienced candidates to school management positions. The appointment of under-qualified educators at managerial positions can seriously undermine transformation, democracy and school improvement. This situation could keep rural schools below expectation and make them lag behind their urban counterparts. To avoid the pitfalls discussed above it is important for school governing bodies to be empowered in procedures of employment so as to minimize the tension between themselves and educators. The school governing bodies also need to understand what is essential in employment of educators. Kani (2000:35) adds that SGB members need to have guidelines on the following matters:

existence of vacancies;

assessment of school needs;

job descriptions and personal profiles [of candidates];

job advertisements, applications and references;

selection and interviews and

induction and placement procedures.

2.3.10   Financial management and budget

The management of schools' finance is very important. Schools run on money and where a school's financial position is not sound important teaching equipments or hiring of extra educators to teach specific learning areas. Poor management or mismanagement of school funds can have a negative impact on teaching and learning, namely learner achievement.

The South African Schools Act (1996:37) stipulates that the governing body of every public school must establish, maintain and administer a school fund. The SGB must also open and maintain one banking account although with the approval of the Member of Executive Council (MEC) of education in a particular province the SGB can invest surplus school funds in another account. All money received by the school, for example, School fees and voluntary contributions must be paid into the schools bank account (i.e. the school fund). This makes the SGB responsible for controlling school finances. It must also plan and prepare an annual budget for the school. The annual budget must, however, be prepared in line with departmental guidelines indicating income and expenditure of the school for the following financial year. The annual budget must be presented to a general meeting of parents for consideration and approval through voting. The SGB must ensure that the school's financial books are kept up to date. The school fund must be used for educational purposes relating to the needs of the school. For example, money from the school fund may be used for purchasing books, chalk, duster, duplicating sheets, photocopying machine or over-heard projector to enhance teaching and learning. The SGB has the responsibility to determine and charge school fees with the consent of a majority of parents at a general meting.

When a majority of parents adopt the resolution it must indicate the amount of fees to be charged and the criteria and procedures for partial or conditional exemption of parents who are unable to pay school fees (South African Schools Act 1996:39). In order to check misappropriation of school funds by SGB members, educators or the principal, the Act stipulates that governing bodies keep records of all funds received and disbursed by the school; of its assets and liabilities and financial transactions. The SGB must draw up financial statements, appoint an experienced accounting personnel to balance its books and submit an audited financial statement to the Auditor general within six months of the close of the financial year (ie before the end of December). It is believed when the school governing bodies Control and manage school finances within the guidelines provided by the Act unauthorized use of school funds could be minimized or avoided.

2.3.11   Resource management and maintenance

For better teaching and learning to take place in a school dilapidated classrooms, broken tables , windows, doors, louvers, and gates must be repaired and maintained. During harsh cold winter or

dusty windy days learners may not be able to concentrate on their learning under such poor physical school conditions. A lack of maintenance of school buildings, furniture and learning materials may lead to poor academic output. To this end the South African Schools Act (RSA 1996:7) makes provisions for school governing bodies to manage, maintain and improve school buildings, property and the environment (including school grounds and sports facilities). A SGB can enter into agreement with the relevant government department to erect new buildings, improve existing ones or provide electricity and clean water for the school under their jurisdiction. The governing body of every public school must take all reasonable measures within its means to supplement the resources supplied by the state in order to improve the quality of education provided by the school to all learners (South African Schools Act 1996:36). As local community members and parents who have a stake in the school, the SGB members and indeed all parents and the entire community must look for better means to provide resources to supplement government's efforts. The government supplies furniture (e.g. tables, chairs, desks) books, stationary and other equipments to the school. These may not be sufficient or could be damaged. It is therefore the responsibility of the SGB to ensure that buildings, louvres, windows, doors, tables, desks, chalkboards, computers, toilets and typewriters (and all school resources) are maintained and kept safe. The SGB must also provide the school with a safe and clean learning environment. School governors must see to it that their schools are fenced or broken fences and gates are repaired to keep both learners and educators from undue interference from stray animals, passers-by and even criminals. The school grounds must also be maintained by the governors through planting of trees and flowers to keep the compound green, clean and attractive. The SGB must draw up a school development plan and seek voluntary helpers from amongst the parents or community members who have skills in repairing and painting buildings, or fencing to give the school a facelift or a new outlook. As caretakers of the school buildings and properties the governing body members must decide on when other community groups, for example, church, political parties or adult learners can use the school facilities for their activities.

2.4 THE ROLE OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES IN IMPROVING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

School performance is part of the general improvement of a school. However, as Creese and Earley (1999:1) point out:

School improvement is about more than simply getting better results, important though that is, and, in any case, it may not be easy at first sight to see how governors can contribute to the raising of standards when they are not actually teaching the pupils. Notwithstanding the fact that school governors are not officially engaged in actual teaching they have a major contribution to make in improving school performance. Schools need to produce good results and turn out graduates who could be useful to themselves, their families, communities and the country at large (to justify their existence).

As Harber and Davies (1998:18) point out:

One or more 'outcomes' of schooling are established and schools are compared on their results. Conventionally, these outcomes will be in terms of examination or test results, less often in terms of social behaviour or employability of students. Whereas 'league tables' (as in football scores) rank schools only on results, school effectiveness research uses a 'value added' approach: it looks at he intake of students (that is, their ability and background) and explores how much individual schools manage to 'add value' to their intake). If schools do indeed vary on this 'input-output' measure, then the implication is that there must be something which characterizes the more successful school.

For a school to be successful, that is, attain good results in both internal and external examinations important stakeholders particularly the SGB and parents in general must contribute to that. The improvement of school performance is, thus, not the responsibility of educators alone.

The SGB's role in improving school performance may cover matters relating to curriculum, provision of resources and general support for the school principal and staff.

2.4.1   Curriculum issues

A curriculum may be described as a planned teaching and learning activities or programmes for which an educational institution is responsible. It covers all that is considered necessary to be taught to learners by an educational institution (Quan-Baffour 2000:4). A school curriculum also represents what society wants or expects from education. The simple definition of curriculum as stated above embraces all the elements of education provided by the school in order to achieve educational goals. These elements include content, teaching, learning, assessment and rules for

implementing the curriculum itself. The SGB has the responsibility to foster and enhance the educational goals of the school. As governors of the school and parents' representatives the onus is on the SGB members to promote and complement the work of the educator. This means they must encourage students to learn and show high level of commitment to children's education through direct and indirect involvement in teaching. As Atkin, Basiani and Goode (1998:98) succinctly put it, "they may take action to compensate for perceived failing in the school curriculum by undertaking covert teaching themselves or hire a tutor for extra tuition in problematic areas". The SGB may solicit the voluntary service of parents who have expertise in particular 'problem' subjects of the school e.g. Physical Science, natural science, mathematics or accounting. In a situation where none of their members or parents can teach any of the 'problem' subjects the governing body can create an "SGB teaching post', engage the services of an experienced and qualified educator to teach the learners till such time that the department of education offer the school grant to appoint the teacher permanently.

In most rural areas schoolchildren do not have sufficient information on career options and this can have a negative impact on their motivation to learn and for that matter on academic achievement. The SGB in collaboration with the school's staff can organize career exhibition programmes for students in order to boost their motivation.

Again the governors can invite professionals like medical practitioners, academics, lawyers, accountants, engineers, nurses and social workers to talk with the learners about their professions. Information received from these professionals can have positive motivation on learners; because they want to be like one of the speakers they will study harder. The SGB can also initiate, plan and take learners out on educational trips to agro-based industries, mines, water treatment plants, dam sites and institutions of higher learning. Such trips can have positive impact on learners and learning for example the may expose learners to various careers in the world outside the school and encourage them to learn harder to reach there. Margaret (1996:99) for example points out that underlying everything they (governors) do and every decision they make should be the clear understanding that the staff and pupils are central to any school and all decisions or choices should be made within the context of – how does this affect teaching and learning in this school? In deed the responsibility of raising academic standards and maintaining quality teaching and learning must be a dominant concern of every SGB. Effective teaching and learning cannot take place under an atmosphere of chaos or violence which is why the governing body must make rules for the learners. In this regard the governors must ensure that there is order

at school. Behaviours that impact negatively on academic achievement e.g. absenteeism, drunkenness, lateness, dodging of classes, violence or failing to do home work must be minimized or controlled by the SGB.

Working in collaboration with the principal and educators school governors can offer learners counselling on the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the negative effects of drugs and alcohol on learner performance. As a result of ignorance and peer pressure many learners indulge in early sexual activities and may either fall pregnant or contract HIV/AIDS. School governors, as parents and parents' representatives, could advice learners and make them aware of the consequences of drugs and unprotected sex on learners' academic progress and their future. Being parents learners are more likely to take their advice and concentrate on their studies, instead of drugs, alcohol and early sexual relationship.

2.4.2   Provision of resources

SGB members could assist the school to improve learner performance by donating resources to augment government's efforts. As representatives of parents the governors can appeal to parents to donate teaching and learning resources such as books, computers, type writers, cyclostyling machines, over head projectors, tables and chairs (including desks), duplicating papers, chalk , pens and pencils and other teaching and learning materials which can enhance learning. Many rural community schools lack basic resources for teaching and learning. This lack of resources is partly historical. As Margaret (1996:189) points out

Most of the former blacks-only schools, which were by far the majority, received less funding and material resources than the white schools. The historical disadvantages of former black schools were caused by the previous government, which spent less money on them. These same communities do not have sufficient money to contribute to improve education standards in their schools.

This bizarre situation makes it imperative for school governing bodies to supplement the meagre resources of their schools to enable them to improve academic performance.

2.4.3   Support for principal and staff

The school governing bodies should support the school principal and his/her staff in order to improve the school's performance. This need to support the school principal and staff is enshrined in the South African Schools' Act (1996:20). One way of supporting the principal and his/her staff is by creating a school atmosphere which is conducive to teaching and learning. Brookover, Beamer, Efthim et al. (1982:22) point out that every school has a learning climate. Some are effective, others are not. Schools with effective learning climates have high achievement regardless of the type of community served by the school. By the same token, ineffective school learning climates are associated with low levels of achievement.

In the rural areas many schools are characterized by violence, riot and vandalism. The violent attacks on school principals, teachers, fellow learners and destruction of windows, doors and offices in some of the schools hardly permit effective teaching and learning. A situation of this kind can impact negatively on learner performance which is why the SGB should help prevent violence at school. The governors must advice students – their own children- not to disorganise the teaching and learning climate of the school as that can negatively affect their academic achievement. Creese and Earley (1999:17) appropriately point out that the challenge for governors and senior staff remains the 'moving' category and this means firstly that they must look to the school's internal condition and seek to foster the right climate. The SGB may from time to time organize seminars on conditions for good teaching and learning and the effect of disruptions in school programmes on learner achievement. Seminars may lead to dialogue between school authorities and learners. It can enforce self-discipline and establish culture of learning and teaching (COLTS) at the school. This could reduce discipline problems of a school and allow educators and learners to concentrate on teaching and learning and by so doing improve learner achievement. The SGB can also support the school through the rendering of communal labour. The governors may look for parents who have relevant skills as volunteers to repair broken doors, fence, windows, tables, chairs (desks) and paint classrooms or erect gates to the school. The governors may also support the school by identifying the professional needs of educators and organizing relevant programmes to address them. Staff development can equip educators with new ways of teaching and new knowledge in their fields of study. As Joyce & Showers 1998:5) state:

To ensure that education personnel are in continuous growth is our goal. The idea seems innocuous enough. Given the awesome responsibilities of educating the young and the rapid changes in knowledge and social conditions of the times. Creating environments that enable teachers to be continuously supported in a high rate growth seems like an obvious and natural thing to do.

In many rural schools educators may lack Outcomes-Based Education teaching methodology and assessment skills or even basic programmes of computer. In collaboration with the school management team governors can organize staff development programmes to equip educators with the relevant skills and knowledge. Wolfendale (2000:2) adds that: "The influences upon pupil learning (as manifested by measurable performance) impinge from all directions – from experiences and learning opportunities not only in school but from home, kingship and friendship networks and the wider community."

Thus the responsibility of learner achievement rests on all stakeholders- parents, educators, learners and all community members. They (parents) may look for people with relevant knowledge and skills from the local community or even outside to train the staff. Such proactive and supportive interventions from the SGB could enhance teaching and learning performance of the school.

As an organization the school is made up of different people from diverse backgrounds and interest groups. Sometimes conflicts may occur among the members of the school community, for example, principal, teachers, supporting staff and learners. Where and when there is a lack of unity or *esprit de corps* effective teaching and learning can hardly take place. The School governing body can support the school by looking into the complaints of teachers, learners and the principal and trying to resolve them amicably. When peace is maintained teaching and learning can progress and school performance improved. Callison (2003:33) points out that by exchanging information, sharing in decision-making, helping at school, and collaborating in children's learning, parents can become partners in the educational process. When parents and families are involved in their children's education, children do improve as well. For the school to excel in cultural activities (e.g. singing, dancing, games and sports) it needs to support of the governing body. The SGB could identify parents who can train the school choir, teach students traditional dances and games to enable them to compete well with other schools. In this way learners may be empowered with knowledge and skills outside the classroom. It may also assist

the school community – learners, educators, support staff and principal – to form a valuable and enduring identity of which all stakeholders will be proud. School performance goes beyond academic achievement and the support for extra – curricula programmes are equally important for the general improvement of a school.

2.5   SUMMARY

In this chapter the relevant literature on learner achievement, decentralized school governance and the role of school governing bodies in improving school performance have been reviewed. The study of the literature revealed the following interesting and important information. The main factors that determine learner achievement are the home/family, the school environment and teacher quality.

Under the centralized school management system the South African Schools Act 1996 has made provision for the establishment of school governing bodies for all public community schools. These school governing bodies have been given legislative powers to govern schools under their jurisdiction. The school governing bodies therefore have important role to play by influencing the three factors above (home, school and educator) to improve schools' performance.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1   INTRODUCTION

In order to determine the extent to which School Governing Bodies assist schools to improve their performance the researcher utilised the quantitative method of research. This chapter provides an account of how the study was designed and conducted. It encompasses the methods of data collection and the research design. It was briefly discussed in chapter one (1:3) that the qualitative research approach would be used in this study. Here (in chapter 3) the researcher explores the qualitative approach in more details.

3.2   THE QUALITATIVE APPROACH AS A METHOD OF RESEARCH

Qualitative Research approach deals with how people experience situations or how they feel about their experiences. This research approach gives opportunity to participants to express a variety of ideas and views. Qualitative research approach has a theoretical basis.

3.2.1   Theoretical basis of qualitative research

Qualitative research is a type of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of quantification. It may refer to research about persons' lives, stories, behaviour and organisational functioning, social movements or international relationships (Straus & Corbin 1990:17). The qualitative research approach regards participants in an investigation as a rich and prime source of information. McMillan and Schumacher (1997:392) for instance point out that the qualitative approach focuses on the understanding of social phenomenon from the perspective of participants.

A qualitative research approach enables the researcher to interact very closely with participants. Borg and Gall (1989:24) are more than apt in their assertion that the research data arise out of these interactions in the form of what people reveal to the researcher and the researcher's impressions. Indeed it is through interaction with participants that the researcher may observe actions by the SGB members in improving school performance. It may also enable the researcher to understand the feelings, thoughts, ideals and beliefs SGB members hold and share about their

roles. Hoberg (1999:51) is of the opinion that qualitative methods are used when the researcher aims to understand human phenomena and investigate the meanings that people give to events they experience. Thus in their own settings the researcher can contact his /her subjects for the kind of information needed.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992:29–33) put forward the following five important characteristics of qualitative research:

1.   Qualitative research occurs in natural settings. Qualitative researchers go to specific settings for data because of the view that actions can be observed and understood in the settings in which they occur.
2.   Qualitative research is descriptive. The data collected from the field are in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. The results of the research may contain quotations from the data which the researcher uses in illustrating and substantiating his/her presentation.
3.   Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply the outcomes or products.
4.   Qualitative researchers tend to analyse their data inductively. They do not search for data to prove or disprove hypotheses before entering the study; rather they build abstractions as data collected are grouped together.
5.   Meaning is the dominant concern in the qualitative research approach. Qualitative researchers are more concerned with the perceptions held by participants.

These features of the qualitative research approach made it most appropriate method for exploring the role of the School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in improving school performance in the rural areas of Taung.

3.2.2   The researcher's role in the use of qualitative research

In a qualitative investigation, the researcher is the data-gathering instrument because he/she talks to people in their natural setting, observes their activities, reads their documents and written records and records this information in field notes or journals (Ary et al. 1990:447). This researcher concurs with Mazibuko (2003:41) that in qualitative research it is important for the researcher to build a relationship with research subjects in order to obtain reliable information

from them. In deed the quality of data a researcher obtains from the field depends very much on his/her relationship with the subjects. An informal interaction for example, could yield more reliable data than a formal relationship where participants may be tense or behave artificially. Bogdan and Biklen (1992:58) advice qualitative researchers to proceed as if they know very little about the people and places they visit. The researcher must not come to the participants as an authority figure who must be obeyed or someone who knows too much. It is important that the qualitative researcher identifies with the participants and learn from them. To get access to important information the researcher must be a participant- observer. In the view of Glesne and Peshkin (1992:36) the researcher must be a learner, a curious learner, who comes to learn from and with research participants.

3.3 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The methods of collecting data are simply the ways and means of seeking and gathering information on the problem being researched. Patton (1990:10) confirms that qualitative methods of research consist of three kinds of data collection, namely in-depth interview, observation and documents. In this research however, in-depth interviews and observation were used.

3.3.1 In-depth interviews

I used in-depth interviews (focus group and individual interviews) to gather data for this investigation. The use of in-depth interviews enabled me to get closer to the subjects – SGB members and the principals. As information reach subjects on school governance the use of in-depth interviews provided me the opportunity to meet, observe, listen and note their views, feelings, knowledge and experiences on the problem under investigation. The method also allowed me not only to approach the subjects in their natural setting but also to formulate, reformulate and modify concepts while the process on folded.

3.3.2 Observation

The data from observations consist of detailed description of people's activities, behaviours, actions and the full range of interpersonal interactions and organisational processes that are part of observable human experiences. I lived and taught in the rural areas of Taung between 1989 and 2002 and therefore familiar with the area, schools, some of the principals, educators,

students, education officials, parents and the community at large. As a guidance and counselling teacher for over 12 years I was a member of the School Management Team (SMT) for the schools where I taught. Between 1999- 2002 I served as a teacher component member of a SGB. This offered me the opportunity to observe and participate in the activities of the SGBs (e.g. meetings, school improvement programmes, conflict resolution etc). As a participant in governing body structures I learnt more about the day to day operations of the SGBs. This knowledge added to the richness of the investigation. Supporting this view point Streubert and Carpenter (1999:17) point out that researcher participation in the inquiry has the potential to add to the richness of data collection and analysis.

3.3.3   Focus group interviews

Citing Carey (1994) Streubert and Carpenter (1999:24) describe focus group as "a semi-structured group session, moderated by a group leader, held in an informal setting, with the purpose of collecting information on a designated topic". It is a strategy of eliciting information from small group of about six to eight people through a discussion on specific themes. Focus group interview is a strategy for obtaining a better understanding of a problem or an assessment of a problem, concerns, a new product or idea by interviewing a purposefully sampled group of people rather than each person individually (McMillan & Schumacher 1997:433). The use of focus group interviews to collect data is of great value in qualitative research. As Krueger (1994:19) points out; the strategy presents a more natural environment than that of the individual interview because participants are influencing and influenced by others, just as they are in real life.

Focus groups are particularly suited to the collection of qualitative data because they have the advantages of being inexpensive, flexible, stimulating, cumulative, elaborative, assistive in information recall, and capable of producing rich data (Streubert & Carpenter 1997:24). Focus group interviews save time and money because six to eight people could be interviewed as a group for the same duration as used for an individual person's interview. The researcher used focus group interviews for the teacher and parent components of the SGBs because they are information rich and as noted by Krueger (1994:19) this strategy produces qualitative data that can provide insights into the attitude, perceptions and opinions of participants.

Van Dalen (1979:159), however, warns that the researcher should guard against the situation whereby one person dominates the interview or what Streubert and Carpenter (op. cit.) describe as 'group think' - a process that occurs when stronger members of a group or segments of the group have major control or influence over verbalisation of other group members.

3.3.4   Reliability and validity of research tools

Whatever data collection method used in research, the intent must be accuracy or reliability of the research instruments. Brink and Wood (2001:184) for instance see reliability as the consistency, stability and repeatability of a data collection instrument. A reliable data-collecting instrument does not respond to chance factors or environmental conditions; it will have consistent result if repeated over time on the same person or if used by two different investigators. Indeed a research instrument can measure a wrong concept in a more stable and consistent manner hence reliability of a data collection instrument may not necessarily lead to validity of a research result. Supporting this view Best and Kahn (1993:208) point out that reliability is a necessary but not sufficient condition for validity. In other words a test must be reliable for it to be valid, but a test can be reliable and still not be valid.

In the view of Streubert and Carpenter (1999:333) while reliability refers to the consistency of an instrument to measure an attribute or concepts that it was designed to measure validity is the degree to which an instrument measures what it was designed to measure. Reliability and validity are crucial in social research. The data collected from the field must be accurate and reliable in order to represent reality. Miles and Huberman (1994:38) appropriately point out that in qualitative research issues of instrument validity and reliability depend largely on the skills of the researcher. Where the researcher lacks research skills appropriate data gathering instruments may not be employed in data collection and this can compromise validity and reliability of research results.

In the view of Shimahara (1988:87) measures to enhance reliability of research results involve a complete description of he research process so that independent researchers may replicate the same procedures in comparable settings. These measures include

- a delineation of the physical, cultural and social contexts of the study

- a statement of the researcher's roles in the research setting
- an accurate description of the conceptual framework of the research
- a complete description of the methods of data collection and analysis.

One way of ensuring validity is to use a multiple data collection instruments (eg focus group and individual interviews) so that the data obtained from one instrument may serve as a triangulation of the other. The idea that multiple realities exist and create meaning for the individuals studied is a fundamental belief of qualitative researchers. Instead of searching for one reality- one truth- researchers committed to qualitative research believe that individuals actively participate in social actions, and through these interactions come to know and understand phenomena in different ways. Because people do understand and live experiences differently, qualitative researchers do not subscribe to one truth, but rather, to many truths. They are committed to discovery of the truth through the use of multiple ways of understanding (Streubert & Carpenter 1999:15–16). In order to obtain reliable data that can make the research more valid the researcher used a variety of data collection instruments to form a triangulation. Triangulation involves the use of a variety of data collection techniques such as structured instruments, observations and intensive interviews which have been selected because each taps a different aspect or dimension of the problem being studied. The main purpose of using triangulation is to overcome the intrinsic bias that comes from single method, single observer, single-theory studies (Knafl & Breitmayer 1991:234). Indeed, the use of triangulation is not just to combine different kinds of data collection approaches but it is an attempt to relate them in order to counteract the threats to validity identified in each.

3.3.5   Selection of three schools

In this study three high schools were purposefully selected. The selected schools resemble other secondary schools in the rural areas of Taung. These schools are all in rural areas and have common characteristics: relatively new schools (opened in the early 1990s) and lack of resources (ie library, laboratory, science equipment. In these schools less than 10 % of the educators have got Mathematics and Science as part of the teacher training courses they did either at the college or university. Many of the learners come from farms and informal settlements an indication that the area is of a poor socio- economic background.

Since this research project focuses on school performance the researcher purposefully selected the three high schools to investigate what the SGBs are doing to assist them improve their academic performance. Being a resident and educator in the area for over 14 years the researcher was very familiar with the three schools. He used to live within 20-30 kilometres away from the selected schools. All the schools were established between 1990- 1991 when the researcher was already teaching in the area. Some of his colleagues joined these new schools as principals, heads of department and teachers. He used to visit his colleagues who offered guidance and counselling at the schools on regular basis. Although this served as an advantage it could also pose challenges. For example the knowledge of the status and background of a school may make the principal and staff suspect or perceive him as a spy for the department of education who might want to know more about their weaknesses and expose them to the authorities. However since the researcher no more works for the department of education the participants did not exhibit any reluctance. They cooperated with him and willingly participated in the data collection process.

Between 9 and 11 January 2006 the researcher visited the schools to make appointments in advance for interview with principals, educators and the parent members of the SGBs. The principals introduced him to the staff and SGB chairmen. The researcher explained to them the purpose of the research and the conditions for the interviews were negotiated. The researcher was requested to conduct interviews after school, namely between 3 and 5 pm. The researcher requested the names and positions of all the SGB members. Being smaller schools membership of SGBs ranged between six and eight and each school had two teachers serving on their respective governing bodies. Both the teacher and parents components of the SGBs agreed to participate in the focus group interviews. Before leaving the researcher discussed with them the suitable dates on which the interviews could be conducted in each school. He thanked the principals, staff and the SGB chairmen for the opportunity offered him to conduct interviews with them.

3.3.6   Participants in the focus group interviews

The participants in this research were made up of six educators (two from each of the selected schools), principals of the three selected schools and fifteen parents who were SGB members of the three selected schools.

The six educators are all professionally qualified to teach although two of them teach in high schools with primary education diplomas. One of them has a BA (Ed) and another a Master's degree. The other two have secondary teachers' diplomas. Of these six educators three have taught for over 15 years and three under ten years.

Of the three principals one has Master's, one has a BA (ed) degree and the third a teachers' diploma and still working towards a B.Tech (Ed) degree. None of the educators or the principals lives in the communities where they work. They travel in and out everyday.

Of the 15 parents (SGB members) who took part in the focus group interviews only 2 have completed Grade 12 (Standard 10) and rest attended school up to between Grades 7 and 11 (Standard 5 and 9). Two of the chairpersons were fluent in English whilst the third had difficulty expressing himself in English. This background information made it necessary for the researcher to engage the services of a research assistant to interpret views expressed in Setswana during the group discussion.

Table 3.1: Characteristics of the three selected schools

Characteristics	School A (Secondary School)	School B (Secondary School)	School C (Secondary School)
Medium of instruction	English	English	English
Number of learners	390	200	286
Number of educators	22	9	11
Number of classrooms	12	5	8
Staff room	Yes	Use a classroom	Yes
Principal/office	Yes	Yes	Yes
Deputy Principal	None	None	None
HOD	2	1	1
Adms. Staff	None	None	None
Telephone	None (Principal's	None (Principal's	Yes

	own cell phone)	own cell phone)	
Electricity/water	Electricity but no water	Electricity but no water	Electricity/one broken tap
Photocopier	None	None	Yes
Library	None	None	None
Computers	None	None	None
Tuckshop	None	None	None
SGB	Yes	Yes	Yes
Code of conduct (Learners)	Written	unwritten	Written
LRC (SRC)	Yes	Dysfunctional	Yes
Laboratory	None	None	None
Security	Yes (fenced)	No (not fenced)	Broken fence

Table 3.2: Matric results the selected schools since 2003

Schools	2003	2004	2005
School A	No presented: 60 % passed: 35	No presented: 66 % passed: 36	No presented: 67 % passed: 46
School B	No presented: 20 % passed: 30	No presented: 18 % passed: 36	No presented:16 % passed: 64
School C	No presented: 40 % passed: 50	No presented: 48 % passed: 29	No presented: 47 % passed: 32

3.3.7   Selection of SGB members

The SGB members (educators and parents components) of the three selected schools were also purposefully chosen to participate in the focus group interviews. In each of the schools only two teachers serve on the SGB. The two teachers serving on the SGB in each of the schools and parents component (comprising: the chair, vice chair-person, secretary and treasurer) were purposefully selected to participate in the group interviews. The four parents (SGB members) as well as the two teachers from each of the three schools were involved in separate focus group

discussions in order to gauge out information on how they are assisting to improve the performance of their respective schools. These particular groups were chosen purposefully to be interviewed because their number was not large and as elected members of School Governing. Bodies they could give relevant information on their roles. As Best and Khan (1993:13) point out; the primary purpose of research is to discover principles that have universal application, but to study a whole population to arrive at generalisation would be impracticable if not impossible.

Indeed some populations are so large that their characteristics cannot be measured; before the measurements could be done the populations would have changed. In view of the above stated fact the researcher observed the characteristics of a sample and made inferences about the characteristics of the pop from which it was drawn.

3.3.8   Gathering of data

In gathering data for the study the researcher used individual and focus group interviews. The two strategies enabled the researcher to meet respondents personally to get in tune with them, discover how they perceive reality in different ways, clarify issues and ask follow up questions. Streubert and Carpenter (1999:16) for instance assert that instead of searching for one reality (one truth) researchers committed to qualitative research believe that individuals actively participate in social actions, and through these interactions come to know and understand phenomena in different ways. Because people do understand and live experiences differently qualitative researchers do not subscribe to one truth, but rather to many truths. This fact informed the researcher's choice of data gathering instruments.

3.3.9   Individual interviews with principals

The researcher conducted individual interviews with the principals of the three selected schools. Since School Governing Bodies were established to assist principals in their work the latter know to what extent school governors in their respective schools are fulfilling that role (ie assisting principals to achieve educational goals).

The principals of the selected schools accepted to participate in the interviews on conditions that their responses were not tape recorded in view of the sensitive nature of SGB issues in the villages. Secondly, for the fact that the interviews were conducted in a second language –

English – made them feel that tape recording might reveal some of their grammatical inadequacies. The principals agreed that interviews are held very early in the morning (between 7 and 8 am) before official school hours). This gave them privacy to speak freely on issues as there were no interference from learners, educators and visitors to the schools.

In view of the lack of permission to tape-record the responses the interviews took more time than anticipated. This is because the interviewer had to repeat responses for respondents to confirm what was said earlier on before proceeding to the next item on the guide. It also enabled the researcher to make very sure that he has captured all important details of the responses. The slow process necessitated the extension of each interview into two sections.

The researcher used semi- structured interview and interview guide which consisted of open-ended questions. Although interview guide was used the researcher encouraged respondents to reveal as much relevant information as possible to enrich the data. He also requested respondents to raise topics and explore the aspects they deemed very important to the discussion and their work.

The use of semi- structured interviews allowed new material which was not thought of earlier to be introduced into the discussion. The semi-structured interview thus provided for a greater degree of freedom, that is, free flow of information between the interviewer and interviewee.

3.4 PROCESSING OF DATA

The researcher kept a diary in which observations and responses from the subjects were written throughout the interaction focus group and individual interviews. The nature of the SGBs (groups of illiterate and semi-literate people) and suspicious among principals of the selected schools made it impossible to tape-record the interviews. The researcher, therefore, made copious notes throughout the interviews. In order not to forget details of information jotted during the interviews, the researcher wrote them out fully immediately each session ended. The keeping of a diary also enabled the researcher to write down facial expressions and gestures (body language) which could have slipped out. This was done because there is always the danger that transcribed words may loose some meaning as tone, volume, emotionality and accompanying facial and body gestures (body language) and disposition cannot be portrayed (Van Wyk 1996:164). The capturing of the non-verbal cues was very important in the analysis of

the qualitative data because they conveyed useful meaning which enriched the data and their interpretation.

3.4.1 Analysis of data

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time consuming, creative and fascinating process (Marshall and Rossman 1995:111). As indicated from the above statement research does not end with data collection. The data obtained from the field must be organised into descriptive themes, analysed and interpreted before findings can be written and presented.

The data of this investigation consisted of transcripts and notes taken during the interviews. Immediately after each session of the interview the researcher read all transcripts and the prepared notes and transcribed them whilst still fresh in order not to loose any aspect of the data. The data were then arranged under related themes and manually analysed. The analysis was in search of general statements with regard to specific themes. This arrangement made the analysis of data and interpretation logical and less cumbersome.

3.4.2 Measures to ensure reliability in data collection

Reliability and validity are crucial to the effectiveness of any data gathering procedure Reliability is the degree of consistency that the instrument or procedure demonstrates. Validity is that quality of a data-gathering instrument or procedure that enables it to measure what it is supposed to measure (Best and Khan 1993:208). These, however, depend on the researcher's skill in research. To ensure reliability and validity the researcher employed a combination of data collection strategies- observation, individual and focus group interviews. This combination of data collection strategies enabled the researcher to write down verbal conversations and direct quotations from the respondents. He repeated written answers for affirmation from respondents. The researcher also asked the same question two to three times in different ways to make sure there is consistency in responses. This was done to ensure that information recorded were exactly what respondents provided. A major method of verification of the truth of data lies in the use of multiple methods itself. Interview materials are always verified by direct observation of the event, interaction with persons (Brink & Wood 2001:192). The use of multiple data collection approaches served as a triangulation to ensure that the data collected were reliable and valid. The

triangulation helped the researcher to emphasis the strengths but reduced the weaknesses in each of the techniques employed in data collection.

The researcher triangulated the data by doing the following:

1.   Comparing the responses of SGB members from one school to those of the other schools.
2.   Comparing parents' responses to those of educators of all the three selected schools.
3.   Comparing the responses of the individual interviews of the three principals to those of the three focus group interviews conducted on the teacher components of the SGBs.
4.   Comparing the notes taken from observations during the interviews to the answers provided by all the respondents.

3.5   SUMMARY

In the foregoing chapter the methods and techniques used in collecting data for the investigation were outlined. The discussion emphasised that because of the nature of the investigation (being an exploratory study) the qualitative method was deemed the most appropriate for the collection of data. For example, the use of observation, individual and group interviews used in the investigation provided opportunity for interaction, listening and observation of emotions and responses of interviewees.

The next chapter describes the analysis and interpretation of data.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 focused on the research design and methodology. The current chapter deals with the analysis, presentation and discussion of the data collected from the six focus group sessions held with fifteen parents (SGB members), six educators (SGB members) and individual interviews with principals of the three selected schools. The names or identities of the schools, educators, parents and principals involved in the research are not disclosed here because the researcher assured them of confidentiality and anonymity during the negotiation for interviews. The participants in the research were both males and females who are either natives of the Taung area or have lived and worked there for a very long time.

4.2   THE CONTEXT OF THE SELECTED SCHOOLS

The three selected schools are all found in the rural areas of Taung. They have similar characteristics (see Table 3.1 in chapter 3). The three communities in which the selected schools are located are very poor. They lack facilities and resources such as good roads, clean water, shops, clinics, libraries etc. Many parents are either unemployed or do not have access to formal employment due to a combination of factors such as a lack of education, skills training and a lack of employment opportunities. There is generally a very high rate of poverty in the area. As a result thereof many learners do not wear prescribed school uniform and shoes. They make do with whatever footwear and attire they have. Most people in the area travel long distances to fetch water from one or two wind propelled bole holes in the villages. As a result of this most of the learners are often late for school and some leave early because they cannot stay awake due to hunger. School dropout rate is very high amongst the youth of the area mainly because of poverty.

The schools in these rural areas lack resources such as libraries, science equipments, laboratories and proper fencing etc. The only municipal library which is yet to be completed is on average 30 kilometres from the schools under study. The three communities in which the selected schools are located are found within commercial farming areas where people (including teenagers who dropped out of school) work as labourers for very low wages.

Another possible reason for high rate of unemployment in the Taung area could be the absence of institutions of higher learning. The only college of education in the area was closed down after 1994 and people who can afford further education now travel to Gauteng, Free State, or Mafikeng (in the North West). Those who study at the institutions in the areas mentioned above are not likely to come back to the villages to live there because of a lack of employment opportunities and basic amenities, for example, modern houses, clean drinking water, clinics, tarred roads etc. Many adults migrate to work on the diamond mines around Kimberley and come home only once per month or per the festive seasons (Christmas and Easter).

During the rainy seasons (as reported by *City Press* 2/4/ 2006) the areas are cut off from the outside world for weeks because the roads become flooded and cars cannot travel on them.

4.3   PARENT PARTICIPANTS IN THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

The parent component of the SGB of each participating school was included in focus group interviews. Details of the parents are included in Tables 4.1 to 4.3**.**

Table 4.1: School A: Profile of parent component of SGB

Gender	M	F	F	M	F
Age	60–65	50–55	30–35	50–55	34–38
Education	Gr 8 (Std 6)	Gr 9 (Std 7)	Gr 12 (Std 10)	Gr 3 (Std 2)	Gr 9 (Std 7)
Employment	Farming (animal rearing)	Housewife	Créche attendant	Mine worker	Self-employed
Position on SGB	Chairperson.	Deputy chairperson	Treasurer	Member	Assistant secretary
Years on SGB	3	2	3	3	2

Table 4.2: School B: Profile of parent component of SGB

Gender	M	F	F	M	F
Age	35–38	30–35	35–40	40–45	34–38
Education	Gr 10 (Std 8)	Gr 10 (Std 8)	Gr 11 (Std 9)	Gr 7 (Std 5)	Gr 9 (Std 7)
Employment	Unemployed	Housewife	Telephone operator	Mine worker	Unemployed
Position on SGB	Chair person	Deputy chairperson	Assistant treasurer	Member	Member
Years on SGB	3	3	3	3	3

Table 4.3: School C: Profile of parent component of SGB

Gender	M	F	F	M	F
Age	40–45	30–35	28–32	30–34	36–40
Education	Gr 12 (Std 10)	Gr 11 (Std 9)	Gr 10 (Std 8)	Gr 11 (Std 9)	Gr 8 (Std 6)
Employment	Self-employed	Unemployed	Small business owner	Mine worker	Housewife
Position on SGB	Chair person	Treasurer	Deputy chair person	Assistant secretary	Member
Years on SGB	4 (Re-elected)	4 (Re-elected)	2	4 (Re-elected)	2

Three separate focus group interviews were held with the parent components of the SGB of the selected schools. As indicated by the tables above the parent components of the SGBs comprised two men and three women for each of the selected schools.

This is an indication that probably there are more women in the area as most men may be working outside their home villages. Although the participants met on different days, times and

venues each of the focus groups was given the same items or topics to discuss. The focus group interview for Schools A and B took place in the homes of the respective SGB chair persons whilst that of school C took place at the school in an unused classroom. Each interview session with the parents took an average of 3 hours because of the use of an interpreter. The parent components of the participating schools included chairpersons, deputy-chairpersons, the treasurers, assistant treasurers, assistant secretaries and ordinary members. Before each session of the interview commenced the researcher explained to the participants the purpose of the whole exercise.

The researcher also read each item, explained it and waited for responses from the participants. As the respondents discussed issues put before them the interviewer made copious notes of both consensus and even divergent view points. After each session the researcher met with the interpreter for about an hour to discuss and compare notes. This was done to make sure each detailed information was captured whilst still fresh in their minds.

4.4   EDUCATOR PARTICIPANTS IN THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

The researcher held three separate focus group interviews with each of the educator components of the SGB of the three selected schools. In each of the three schools only two educators serve on the SGB. Perhaps because of their knowledge and skills in writing and recording information educators either serve as secretaries, assistant secretaries, treasurers or assistant treasurers on the SGBs.

Table 4.4: School A: Profile of SGB (educator component)

Gender	F	M
Age	30–35	28–33
Educational background	Matric, STD, FDE	Matric, UDE (Sec)
Teaching experience	10 years	7 years
Position held at school	Biology Educator	HoD for HSS
Years serving on SGB	2	2
Position on SGB	Assistant Treasurer	Secretary

Table 4.5: Profile of SGB (educator component)

Gender	F	M
Age	26–30	35–40
Educational background	Matric, UDE (Sec)	Matric, BA Ed.
Teaching experience	8 Years	11 Years
Position held at school	Language (Setswana) Educator	HoD Mathmematics/Science
Years serving on SGB	3	3
Position on SGB	Assistant secretary	Secretary

Table 4.6: Profile of SGB (Educator Component)

Gender	F	M
Age	36–40	30–35
Educational background	Matric, STD	Matric, UDE(Pry)
Teaching experience	14 years	12
Position held at school	EMS Educator	Life orientation educator
Years serving on SGB	3	3
Position on SGB	Secretary	Assistant secretary

Key:

EMS: Economic and Management Science
HSS: Human and Social Science
STD: Secondary Teachers' Diploma
UDE: University Diploma in Education
FDE: Further Diploma in Education
BA Ed.: Bachelor of Arts in Education.

The tables above indicate that all the six educators serving on the three SGBs are professionally qualified with an average of 8 years teaching experience each. With school teaching experience of 8 or more years and SGB membership of between 2-3, the educators were information rich,

that is, they knew more about SGB activities and roles. The focus group interview for SGB (Educators components) from the three selected schools took place in the respective schools. In schools A and B the interviews were held in unused classrooms where books (both new and old books and stationary) are stored. The interview for school C educators (serving on the SGB) took place in the principal's office. The principal gave the participants permission to use his office whilst attending principals' meeting in another school.

4.5 INTERVIEWS WITH PRINCIPALS OF THE SELECTED SCHOOLS

The researcher held face-to-face individual interviews with the principals of the three selected schools. The interviews with the three principals were held behind close doors in their respective offices for confidentiality. The principals who took part in the interviews were all males and fall between the age group of 31 and 50. They have an average of 15 and 8 years teaching and principalship experience respectively.

Table 4.7: Profile of the principals

	School A	**School B**	**School C**
Gender	Male	Male	Male
Age	31–36	48–50	36–40
Academic qualifications	Matric, BA, MA	Matric	Matric
Professional qualification	B.ED	PTC, STD	BA (Ed)
Further field of study	N/A	B.Tech (Ed.) yet to complete	N/A
Years of experience as educator	8	25	12
Years of experience as principal	2	15	7

Key:

BA: Bachelor of Arts

B.Ed: Bachelor of Education

B.Tech.(Ed): Bachelor in Education from Technikon

MA: Master of Arts.

PTC: Primary Teachers Certificate

STD: Secondary Teachers'Diploma

4.6   UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLE OF SGB IN SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

The SGB is an elected body comprising representatives of parents and educators with the school principal as an ex-officio member. Both parent and educator components of the SGB who participated in the focus group interviews concurred that as elected governors they have the responsibility to assist the school principal and staff to ensure improvement in school results. This acknowledgement is in line with SASA (1996:20) stipulation which makes it mandatory for the SGB to support the school principal and staff in performance of their duties. The support could be in a variety of ways, for example, ensuring quality teaching and learning at all times. The SGB chairman of school C was more than apt when he said:

> I visit classrooms to see how teaching and learning take place. If an educator or a learner is absent I jot it down in my file and follow up the matter.

The above is an indication that the SGB concept is making community members, especially parents, to understand that they have rights and responsibilities towards children's education. The introduction of the SGB is an acknowledgement of the need for democratic school governance by the government. The SGB concept makes it obligatory for all role players in education-community (parents) and the school (educators) to take active part in education. It has given parents an insight into the responsibilities associated with the running of schools. One parent representative from school A summed it up in the following words:

> I now understand the problems of the school regarding truancy, lack of resources for teaching and learning better.

It is believed that with this understanding of the reality of things on the ground community members, especially parents would be in a better position to assist the school principal and staff to improve in all areas where there may be deficiencies. Thus through their involvement in the

governance of local community schools parents participate in the democratic transformation of education at the grass root level. In short, it is clear that development and local participatory democracy are inseparable and complementary (Emerging Voices 2005:xiii).

The three principals agreed with the educators of the SGBs that for parents to understand their role very well they must be given assistance in the form of training as requested by SASA (1996: 20(20). They further pointed out that the transformation in education has given learners too much freedom and eroded the authority of the school especially that of the principal and educators. For example, the participants pointed out that with the abolition of corporal punishment in the schools (SASA 1996:10) there is a general break down in discipline. Learners do as they please with no respect for educators or school authorities. Principals and educators said they do not know how to handle discipline problems so that they would not be accused for 'abusing' children. Expressing her frustrations one lady educator from school C said:

> We (educators) are now like chickens set before eagles. We are supposed to educate, admonish and guide learners who now see themselves as superior and more powerful because of too many rights with no responsibilities. We all fear to admonish wrong behaviours because some educators, especially women, are often targeted by learners.

Discussion

The concept of SGB is relatively new in South Africa and is part of transformation of education through democratisation. With the establishment of the SGBs the government has acknowledged parents' (and indeed the whole community's) rights and responsibilities in children's education. The rights and responsibilities of community members (parents) might be incomplete and impaired if parents are excluded from participating in children's education. As SGB members and community members parents are not only exercising their civic rights and responsibilities at the grass roots level but are also advancing democratic transformation of society (SASA 1996: preamble). Through their involvement in the SGBs community members (including parents and caregivers) have begun to understand their role in education. Although all role players welcome transformation school authorities need an effective alternative measure to corporal punishment because when discipline is taken away from teaching, moulding and up bringing of a child the result might be counter productive.

4.7   DRAWING UP A MISSION STATEMENT

In view of the fact that parents are in the majority of school governing bodies (SASA 1996:23,(9)) it became necessary to get the views of all the participants regarding the rationale to develop a mission statement for the school they serve. The educators and principals agreed that mission statement is like the radar (i.e. a device that provides direction) of the school. They explained that when a school's mission statement is tied to its motto it summaries the aims of the school to the general public, prospective learners and parents. However, most of the parents admitted that they know very little about mission statement and how to draw it up for the school. The discussion from the educators and principals provided parents with reasons for a mission statement for their schools. For example they explained that may make learners aware of what the school can offer them, market the school to the public by stating its aims and provide learners with motive and direction. Parents, educators and principals shared the view that as school governors it is their responsibility to develop mission statement for their respective schools they serve because current learners, prospective learners, parents and the general public need to know why learners must attend that particular school and not the other. One SGB member from school A summed up the rationale for a mission statement thus:

If you know where you are going you try every possible means to get there. This is why we need a mission statement to motivate and guide our learners to become good adults in future.

These responses, inputs and ideas from the parents, educators and principals relate to their core function as S.G.B members. They are required to develop the mission statement of their respective schools (SASA 1996:20c and d).

Discussion

A mission statement of a school refers to its official task, function and aims. The responses from the parents indicate their desire and responsibility to create some awareness among learners what they can achieve by attending the particular school. Again both parents and school authorities (principals and educators) see a mission statement as a marketing tool. Mission statement indicates the goals of a school and can promote identity among the organisation's members - learners, educators and parents. By making blazers, jerseys and track suits with school's colours,

symbols and motto inscribed on them a school may not only improve its financial position but also markets itself to the community, that is, prospective learners and educators.

4.8   ESTABLISHING A CULTURE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING (COLTS)

Effective teaching and learning can only take place under a conducive atmosphere. In recent times many schools in South Africa face crises which make teaching and learning difficult. In the light of this participants' views were solicited on how to ensure that the culture of teaching and learning is established or prevail in their schools. The participants pointed out that various proactive measures have been taken by the SGBs to install the culture of learning and teaching in their respective schools. These measures include regular meetings with learners to know their problems, frequent visit by selected motivational speakers and regular visit to school by SGB members.

The above responses from parents, educators and principals indicate that all the participants agreed that the culture of teaching and learning is the very foundation of improved learner performance. To ensure the existence of conducive teaching and learning climate the SGB members said that they invite important people from the community and outside to talk to learners on issues ranging from violence, drugs, alcohol to careers which can make them useful adults in future.

Another way through which the SGBs maintain conducive teaching and learning climate at their schools is by visiting and holding regular meetings with learners. Sometimes the SGBs meet with the Learners Representative Council (LRC) made up of school prefects, to know some of their problems. The parents' representatives then make the School Management Team (Principal and HoDs) aware of learners' grievances and as partners seek solutions together. For example, if a teacher bunks classes or comes to school drunk, the parents and the SMT would investigate the allegation and find solutions to the problem. One parent on the SGB for school C gave an example of a case in November 2005 where she requested three learners in grade 11 who were drunk to go home. These learners' behaviour was reported by the Learner Representative Council (LRC). Their parents were called to discuss the issue and they promised to deal with the problem at home.

The views expressed by participants here reveal their concern for safety of both learners and educators at their schools. Indeed SASA (1996:65) strongly advocates for drug and violence free schools. It states, *inter alia*, "no person may possess illegal drugs on public school premises or enter public school premises while under the influence of an illegal drug or alcohol." Both parents and principals concurred that indiscipline among learners and some educators may not only lead to violence but also poor learning output. The prevalence of violence in schools – much of it directed at teachers – makes safety the most important of all (Glatthorn & Fox 1996: 8).

All the parent groups in this investigation agreed by pointing out that although SASA (1996) has brought positive changes to school governance it has also given challenges to schools, educators and parents. They agreed with the educators and principals and lamented that when corporal punishment was abolished no effective alternative method was suggested to schools to deal with discipline problems among learners. Instead learners talk about their rights and not their responsibilities. Many parents think learners must be taught about their responsibilities more than their rights because once you put your rights up front you tend to forget your responsibilities (Emerging Voices 2005: 9).

The three educator groups specifically pointed out that in order to achieve culture of learning learners' work must be monitored (e.g. homework, assignment, note books, portfolios etc. need to be checked time and again) discipline needs to be maintained at all times (e.g. punctuality and regular school attendance) and problems relating to bunking of classes, drinking of alcohol and drugs must be seriously discouraged.

The responses from the three educator groups indicate that the SGBs can contribute to culture of learning by enforcing discipline among learners. All the participants shared the view that for effective learning to take place the school environment must be peaceful, calm and safe. The educators of school B particularly stressed that since effective teaching and learning can occur under a good school atmosphere they (educators and parents) have established a code of conduct to assist the school enforce discipline. Indeed the school as a work environment can either foster teacher motivation or exercise a negative influence on it (Glatthorn and Fox 1996:9) which is why the educator components are particularly concerned about discipline. The realization of the fact that the culture of learning and teaching (COLTS) can only take place under conducive

school environment has motivated parents and educators on the SGB to commit themselves to ensuring discipline at all times.

According to the educator groups as SGB members of their respective schools they vigorously check punctuality, attendance of classes, home work, alcohol and drug peddling and abuse among learners. They said that they were mandated to do that by the parents ay one female educator in one school when the researcher asked if she was an SGB member. The lady became furious and pointed t the general meetings of their SGBs. SGB members should monitor learners' and educators' work. The educator groups however pointed out that most of their colleagues (educators not serving on the SGBs) see the visit by SGB members to their classrooms as interference, disruption and infringement of their professional rights. This resentment of monitoring class attendance was confirmed bat the SGB chairman and said:

> Go and ask that man there about SGB matters. He is not our principal but always enters our classes to check on us.

In practice while the educator components of the SGBs do not seem to have problem with parents visiting classes to check learner and educator absenteeism their colleagues who are not on the SGBs see it as a problem. This indicates a general mistrust between the SGB and some educators. The lack of trust among some educators and the SGB members could undermine the effective implementation of projects initiated by school governing bodies.

Discussion

The issue of culture of learning and teaching is of uttermost importance to the achievement of learner success. This culture, however, does not seem to exist in many rural and township schools. As the foundation stone to the improvement of school performance parents have realized the need to co-operate with educators and school authorities to establish and maintain it in their respective schools in order to improve learner performance. As the African adage goes; "it takes the whole village to bring up one child". This means schools alone cannot achieve the culture of learning and teaching without the co-operation of the entire community, most especially parents, guardians and caregivers who live with learners.

4.9   DEALING WITH DISCIPLINE

The image of every school is important. It relates to how the public sees the particular school - calm, chaotic, disciplined or lack of it among learners. The public may label a school as good or bad depending on how they perceive it and no parent or good educator would like to associate himself/herself with a school with bad image. Equally every good principal is more concerned with the image of his/her school. To this end it was seen as important for parents, educators and principals to provide their views on how SGBs can restore discipline in order to improve their schools' image. The general consensus among parents, educators and principals was that SGBs must assist school in discipline matters through drawing up a code of conduct for learners.

The responses from all participants (parents, educators and principals) indicated that they all agreed with the fact that the SGB has a role to play in improving the image of the school. The educators and the principals lauded the parents' role in checking indiscipline among learners. Discipline is the cornerstone of a good school climate, teaching and learning and the image of a school relates very much to its climate or the prevailing atmosphere and that school learning climates are characterised by the degree to which they are effective in producing the desired learning outcomes (Brookover, Bearner, Efthim et al. 1982). Thus all the participants concur that a good climate or image can promote effective teaching and learning while a poor school climate does the opposite. In practice the school as a working environment can either foster teacher motivation or exercise a negative influence on it (Glatthorn & Fox 1996:9). In reality a school with poor image cannot attract good educators and learners because most people would not like to be associated with bad name or poor results. All the principals and the educators confirmed that in an attempt to create good image for the school and also promote teaching and learning the SGBs of the respective schools have developed code of conduct in addition to mission statements. A school's image can be improved when learners respect the code of conduct and work towards the achievement of what the school stands for e.g. quality education through self-discipline. Indeed SASA (1996: 20c and d) requires the SGB to adopt a code of conduct for its school.

The three chosen schools for this study like their other counterparts in the rural areas face crises or problems of indiscipline amongst learners. Throughout the discussion the various participants (parents, educators and principals) mentioned drugs and alcohol amongst learners at the schools

as the main causes of indiscipline, vandalism, bunking of classes, rape and poor academic performance. One parent serving on SGB of school B puts it thus:

> If we are to improve the image of our school then we have to rescue it school from drug, alcohol and sex crises.

It is interesting to note that all participants are aware of the potential damage of drugs , alcohol and sex to the learners of their schools. They believe children need direction and guidance to achieve desirable educational goals. The provision a code of conduct enforced by both educators' and parents through Learners Representative Councils (LRCs) could go a long way to check indiscipline at the schools. All the participants admitted that since the abolishing of corporal punishment in schools indiscipline has risen among learners in their respective schools. Participants mentioned that learners generally come late to school, leave classes at any time, insult and threaten teachers because of the influence of drugs. With this situation in order to improve the school's image parents need to come together with educators to provide guidance and counselling on regular basis to the learners. One parent who is SGB chairperson of school B confirmed that since the beginning of this school year nurses, medical doctors, social workers and correctional service personnel have been invited to talk to learners at his school on monthly basis. This, according to the parent, is done to create motivation amongst learners, reduce indiscipline, give them direction and improve the image of the school. These sentiments are echoed by parents in other rural areas who express their desperation in this way:

What we need is career guidance, which will help children to follow the right direction...They must not focus on things that will make them stay at home, sitting without any kind of job. We must get teachers who will help us to teach our children not to depend only on working for others but who can work for themselves and develop employment" (Emerging Voices 2005:5).

In deed school learning climate is usually characterized by the degree to which they are effective in producing the desired learning outcome among the students (Brookover, Beanner, Efthim et al. 1982:2).

Discussion

The issue of discipline has become the greatest concern among all stakeholders of education. Effective teaching and learning and for that matter improvement in school performance can only

take place where and when there is discipline. Although a school may have the best code of conduct if it is not enforced by all role players it cannot assist the school to improve its academic performance. Learning can be fruitful when there is conducive atmosphere, respect for law and order, calmness and security for both learners and educators. Educators can also teach well for learning output to be increased when there is a culture of teaching and learning. It is for this very reason that the co-operation of parents through the SGB is crucial in providing and maintaining a conducive learning climate for schools at all times. The input of parents in maintenance of discipline is crucial to improvement of academic performance of learners.

4.10   SUPPORT FOR EDUCATORS IN THEIR TEACHING TASKS

The SGB members were asked to discuss how, as school governors, they support educators in their teaching tasks at their respective schools. The general consensus among the participants was that the SGBs contribute to tuition in a variety of ways areas, for example, planning and organizing vacation classes for grade 12 learners, a compulsory afternoon studies at school for all learners, purchasing learner support materials, ensuring regular attendance of lesson by both learners and educators and engaging temporary/voluntary educators to teach subjects without educators.

Having experienced poor academic results for over two years in succession the SGBs and parents in particular now think a more serious action must be taken to support tuition efforts of educators. For 2006 school year parents in school A said they have planned to hold vacation classes for their matriculation group. As to how the tuition could be offered when teachers are on vacation the groups said they would make use of the tertiary institution students during their vacation times. The parents' representatives of school A added that they are talking to some science students at the universities who are natives of the village. The students who would agree to teach the grade 12 learners could be given some little amount of money as a token of appreciation.

The parents' group from school B said they have decided to start a compulsory afternoon study session for all learners at their school from the school year 2006. The group argued that when school ends at 2 pm learners roam the streets without going home to study. They therefore want to keep learners at school until 4 pm and request their educator component to supervise them to study and to do homework. The parents mentioned that when the programme starts, they will

request the Learning Representative Council (LRC) to team up with the educator component to supervise the study periods at the school.

One of the parents however had a divergent view on this proposal. She argued that apart from this most of the learners come from the surrounding farms and villages and walk long distances to reach home. There are others who travel by bus. She added that apart these most learners come to school without food and may not be able to learn after 2 pm. The group considered the concerns of the member (an elderly woman) and promised to find out how many learners; especially Grades 11 to 12 may be affected by the member's concerns so that solutions could be found.

The group of parents from school C, on the other hand, argued that learners do not do well in their final examinations because their school lacks qualified educators for the subjects like English, Mathematics, Science and Accounting. The group added that it is difficult for the school to attract experienced and well qualified educators for these subjects because their area is remote and lacks basic services and amenities such as clean water, houses, clinic, post office, shops and good roads. The group pointed out that in view of this lack of basic amenities none of the educators at the school lives in the village. They have therefore planned to engage the services of temporary and voluntary educators to teach specific subjects for which they lack educators. The parents added that there are qualified educators from the college who do not have teaching posts and they (parents) have agreed with their School Management Team to engage two of them and pay them some small amount of money from the school fund.

The plan of all the parent groups to support the schools tuition programmes is an indication of good partnership efforts. In Bastiani's (2000) words: "When parents and educators come together and education is made a priority at home, children develop beyond their peers and beyond expectations."

The collaborative efforts among the key role players in education (parents and educators) emphasizes parents' new role in children's education where they volunteer time, skills and resources when needed and possible (Trafford 1997:9; Sibuyi 1997:8). The engagement of the services of temporary educators and paying for their services by SGB is part of the functions allocated to school governing bodies by SASA (1996:20–21).

Discussion

The constant changes taking place in the contemporary modern world demand that the community (i.e. parents, guardians, caregivers) and the school (i.e. educators and principals) must come together as partners in the education of the child. As an Africa adage goes; no single person's arms alone can embrace the great baobab tree. In unity lies strength.

A remark by an educator from the Eastern Cape confirms the importance of co-responsibility between the community and the school. He said:

> I wish parents cooperate with this staff. Since we help in moulding their children they should not relax and leave everything to the teachers. They must help supervise their homework and see to it that they read their books after school (Emerging Voices 2005:14).

Therefore, for learners to realize good academic performance it is very crucial for the home and the school to come together and work as a team.

4.11   INVOLVING PARENTS IN LEARNERS' EDUCATION

The group discussed at length how government ensures that communities, particularly, parents participate in the education of children. There was consensus among all the participants that parents' involvement and participation in children's education is crucial for the realization of educational goals. A comprehensive parent involvement is a prerequisite for improving the culture of teaching and learning (Lemmer & van Wyk 2004:259). It is for this reason the government has made it obligatory for parents to serve as governors for schools where their children attend. By allocating roles to communities through the SGB the government ensures that parents in particular, play a pivotal role in all aspects of their children's education. Unlike the period before 1994 now there is a forum for parents where they may not only discuss grievances about children's education but provide suggestions, support and solutions to educational problems. The participants concurred that the task of educating children in the modern society is too complex to be left in the hands of educators or the school alone. Many of the learners at the schools where this investigation was conducted are teenagers. At this stage of life many children, due in part to problems at home, poverty or peer pressure may get involved in some kind of bad behaviours, for example, experimenting with drugs, alcohol or sex. Such behaviours very often

lead to poor academic achievement or school drop out. This situation requires parents' involvement in children's education where, as parents, they could provide guidance to learners at all times. Participants concurred that parents has a role to play by making learners aware of the danger and effects of drugs, alcohol and sex on schoolchildren. The parents who participated in the discussion mentioned the steps taken to assist the schools to address the problem. Aware of the damaging effects of drugs, alcohol abuse and teenage pregnancies on learners all the three parents' groups reported on what they do to warn learners of the consequences of indulging in such activities. Parents either invite health workers, the police, correctional service personnel or sometimes they themselves talk on the negative effects of substance abuse and teenage pregnancies on the future of the teenagers in general and on their academic achievement in particular. All the participants- parents, educators and principals agreed that teenage is a period of experiment and in many cases disobedience to authority. Many children at this stage of life are prone to contracting STDs including HIV/AIDS or become drug takers and peddlers because they very often ignore advice from significant adults, for example, parents and educators. The parents agreed that it is their responsibility to ensure that their children avoid drugs, alcohol and early sex in order to concentrate on studies. The parents group from school C for example reported that at general meetings they advice parents to be closer to their children and instil in them ethical and moral values such as truth, punctuality, respect and obedience to all adults. One woman from the group remarked: "if a child respects her parents or elders she will obey them and avoid drugs, alcohol or early sex".

She stressed the need for parents to team up with educators to teach learners to emulate good qualities (e.g. punctuality, obedience and respect because educators alone cannot do everything for learners. The suggestion from this parent echoes the concerns of a parent from Limpopo who remarked that children need guidance. Because they can't judge why they are going to school parents must monitor their work (Emerging Voices 2005:1).

All the educator groups agreed that they involve parents in organizing career days and all school trips (e.g. sports, games and excursions). This the educators said could boost the motivation of learners and get the support of parents in all educative activities the schools organize.
The government acknowledges fact that parents have a major role to play hence through legislation it has made provision for parents and community members to collaborate or come together with schools to educate children. This collaborative responsibility may remove the notion among some parents and community members that educators are the ones paid to educate

and by getting involved would jeopardize their children's education (Atkini, Bastiani & Goode 1988:160; Decker, Gregg & Decker 1994:1). The principals generally agreed that it is a good idea for the government to involve parents in school governance. In appreciating the efforts to get parents involved in school matters the principal of school A said:

> In view of discrimination black schools were not properly catered for in all aspects under apartheid. After 1994 we all anticipated changes in education but the way in which the changes were implemented have brought frustrations and ineffective administrations in many schools.

Under the new governance system school principals and educators are the main implementers of school policies (De Clerq 1997:130) and must therefore form partnerships for effective implementation of changes in education at the local level. In view of the way the policy was rushed its implementation has brought a role conflict among some of the key role players in education. As reported by the principal of school C:

> The changes have brought conflict in authority and responsibility. Some SGB executives do not know where their powers start and end. They confuse school governance with school management. They sometimes want to take over the professional leadership role of the principal.

In a democratic country communities usually fight for equal quality education and this can be realized when the local people, especially parents, are given the opportunity to make decisions in local education matters. Rural schools in the country generally lack resources and it is through parents' role in school governance that significant improvements can be achieved to make them similar to city schools. As one of the parents from the SGB of school B appropriately said:

> We have been given the opportunity to transform our school into a city school.

This remark echoes and confirms the kind of education many parents want for their children. At a parents' meeting in a rural community a parent said:

> We want education here to be the same as that in the urban areas. The government says education is equal for blacks and whites but in fact ours lags behind. I blame the government.

It had not created equal education for all. Different things are taught in urban and rural schools (Emerging Voices 2005:3).

This indicates that parents in the rural areas desire to have schools equipped with resources like those in the cities because educators and learners alike can improve academic out put when they have access to modern teaching and learning resources such as computers, over head projectors, science laboratories and libraries. A better school can only be realized when parents and educators work together. Many experts in home-school partnership agree that such collaboration is of great value to parent, learners, the school and the community at large (Decker et al. 1994, Bastiani 2000, & Lemmer & van Wyk 2004).

As school governors, parents in the rural areas would like to transform their schools to be at par with well equipped urban schools but can only do so in partnership with educators and principals. It is only when this is achieved that their children's performance may improve and they would believe the government's slogan 'equal education for all.'

Discussion

Parents' involvement is an important aspect of democratization and education transformation in the new South Africa. Schools are located in various communities and residents of the communities must own the school, protect, govern and improve it the way they see fit. With the introduction of SGBs parents have been given the opportunity not only to be involved but also to actively participate in matters relating to the improvement of learning. It is only when parents are visible on the school governance structures that they can influence policies, and transformation and improvement agenda of community schools. School improvement strategies can have positive results on learner performance. In the words of Sergiovanni (1994:xi): "if we are to rewrite the script to enable good schools to flourish, we need to rebuild community. Community building must become the heart of any school improvement effort."

4.12 ESTABLISHING A PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT CONDUCIVE TO LEARNING

The physical environment of a school as a teaching and learning site is very crucial to both physical and intellectual development of learners. As people involved in school governance the

researcher engaged parents, educators and principals in discussions pertaining to the kind of physical improvement activities SGBs undertake to improve the physical conditions of their respective schools. Although the various groups met and discussed the issue separately they were unanimous in their responses that the SGBs renovate dilapidated buildings (e.g. repairing broken walls, painting or fixing doors windows), erect fence, raising follower beds, planting flowers, trees and grass to make schools' physical environment healthy and attractive.

It is important to note that through the SGB many parents are now aware that schools need funds to run and therefore assist their schools to generate their own funds. Teaching aids and other resources such as overhead projectors, chalk, computers, typewriters, cyclostyling machines, telephones, water and electricity bills must be paid. In the rural areas because of poverty many parents are not able to pay their children's school fees and government subvention is not enough to provide schools with everything. Parents must therefore engage in fund raising activities, for example, beauty contest, singing and dancing competitions, payments of building funds etc in order to raise funds to improve the physical conditions of the schools. Indeed it is a good idea for buildings, fence and school grounds to be renovated in view of the fact that all the three schools where this investigation took place have all got problems relating to the physical environment as a result of neglect, erosion, denudation and graffiti or defacing of walls of school buildings and broken furniture. For example some fences are torn, roofs are leaking and toilets, windows and doors are broken. The renovation efforts by the communities are steps in right direction. The improvement of physical environment of the school forms part of functions allocated by SASA (1996:20–21) which makes it obligatory for SGBs, among other things, to raise funds for schools, maintain and improve school property and buildings. The repair of school furniture for example may have a direct and positive impact on learner achievement. It may provide enough tables and chairs for learners to use instead of two learners squatting on one chair. Both parents and educators of school A reported a very unique and important project of establishing a computer centre. All participants from this school (parents, educators and the principal) concurred that they want their children to learn skills which would enable them to compete with their counterparts in the urban areas for work. They added that a mining company in the Northern Cape has promised 20 computers which would be delivered to the school as soon as the SGB completes renovating the building which would be used as the centre. The participants envisaged that a practical course in computer studies in the school curriculum could equip learners with additional skills, which can boost their chances of employment after matriculation. This discovery that some schools are effective in teaching students from disadvantaged family

backgrounds makes it plausible the conclusion that the nature of school environment can make a difference in the level of student learning (Brookover, Beamer, Efithim et al. 1982:1–2). In unity lies strength and so when parents and educators come together in collaborative efforts schools can improve their academic performance. The collaboration between home/school which is now becoming a world wide phenomenon is linked to school effectiveness. Parents' involvement and school improvement have been effective and reported in many parts of the world including Hong Kong, Netherlands, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand and Britain (Lemmer & van Wyk 2004:260).

Discussion

The efforts in the rural community schools where resources are limited or lacking must be applauded. It is through the collaborative efforts of the home and school that learner performance can be improved. The home and the school are no more separated by 'the white line' on the play ground (Squelch & Lemmer 1994:92). The two must work together 'for the sake of the child'. The growing awareness among community members that what happens to the school affects them too motivate parents and community members in general to sacrifice their precious time and money to improve their schools. The long-term effect of a community that collaborates with a school to improve its physical environment is the realization of improved academic performance among learners (who come from the particular community).

4.13 PRINCIPALS' ROLE UNDER NEW GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Participants were asked what they think should be the instructional leadership role of the principal under the new school governance structure. All the participants agreed that the principal as the chief executive and leader of the school has multi-roles to play under the democratic and decentralised school governance system for the realization of improved academic performance. Both the parents and educators pointed out that for the school to improve in all aspects the principal must exercise instructional, management and co-ordinating roles. The principal should provide direction, guidance and support to educators in teaching. This could be done by assisting and guiding educators in planning their lessons in ways that can enhance teaching and learning. To promote effective teaching and learning the school principal should instil and maintain discipline among learners and educators. The principal must also educate parents about their roles in school governance because without knowledge of what is expected of

them no positive change can come to the school. For the change to a shared responsibility between the home and the school to be effective guidance must be given so that all efforts in the school can be channelled correctly (Van der Westhuizen 1991:41).

Under normal circumstances the school principal is supposed to be an experienced and senior educator who is capable of 'coaching' the less experienced colleagues how to manage and teach effectively. To the contrary however is a current situation in the North West Province where since 1994 many schools are headed by the less qualified and less experienced principals with the more senior and experienced educators as subordinates. The three principals interviewed however did not fall within the category of the 'new breed' of school managers commonly referred to by some educators as 'SADTU Principals' and they could provide educators with the necessary leadership and instructional support they need and also realise respect and co-operation from them. In an era of changes in teaching methodologies (e.g. moving from teacher-centred to learner- centred teaching) educators need support and guidance from their school managers on how to prepare their lessons in ways that can enhance learning and conform to current pedagogic demands and ethos. The educators confirmed that their principals assist them to plan lessons in line with the new trends in teaching and learning and also support them with the necessary teaching and learning materials that enhance quality teaching and learning. This indicates that principals are aware of the fact that quality teaching is a school's primary task - the excellence of a school shall be marked against the quality of the teaching and learning experiences pupils have at school (Kruger 2001:3). Recognising the importance of good school atmosphere in teaching and learning the educators concurred that principals should continue to instil and maintain discipline both in classrooms and on school compounds by being visible at all times. As Donmoyer and Wagstaff (1990:21) for instance point out:

Instructional leadership is no longer a separate function distinct from a principal's managerial duties, rather the easiest, most direct way for a school principal to exercise instructional leadership is through managerial tasks he/she engages in everyday.

By implication a principal for example, may rely on a school policy or code of conduct for both learners and educators to make teaching and learning effective. This can be done by monitoring classroom activities of both educators and learners. One better way of providing instructional leadership however is for the principal to teach. Boyd (1996:2) for instance argues that the principal as a teacher model must teach at least one course throughout the year and still remains

primarily a principal. By participation in teaching activities the school principal may provide leadership through example and also know problems educators face in their classroom activities. This knowledge may enable the principal to assist educators to overcome such problems.

One educator from school A added:

> A school principal is a teacher foremost and a school manager. To achieve discipline and proper co-operation with educators and the SGB a principal must set the pace by being actively involved in teaching. In my view teaching lessons, class visits, checking learners' work or test results are part of principalship.

The principal under the new governance structure must continue his /her professional management functions in addition to liaising between the school and the community, that is, educators, learners and the SGB. As the manager and co-ordinator the principal must see to it that all sections of the school as an organization functions well and that members of the organization do their work to the satisfaction of all role players. While the SGB governs (i.e. advising and supporting the principal) the day-to-day running or managing the school remains in the hands of the principal.

Discussion

Under the new democratic and decentralised system of school governance the school principal has enormous task of leading, guiding and co-ordinating the activities of the school. The principal must share some responsibilities with the community (parents) and educators. To succeed in this enormous task requires a worth of experience in teaching, management and dealing with people from different backgrounds. The principal's diplomacy can make the school achieve support and co-operation from all members of the organization, namely parents, learners, educators and other community institutions. It is only when all the key players (parents, educators and the principal) co-operate with each other that they can work as a team to improve the academic performance of the learners.

This is why it is important for school principal to be knowledgeable, experienced and possess a listening ear and initiative. Principalship in an era of transformation and democratization of education is an enormous task. In the words of Gann (1998:165);

It is about addressing the issues in which the inspectors make judgements – raising the standards that schools achieve, improving the quality of teaching and learning, bringing about the effectiveness of the school and developing and communicating the school's values and ethos. These multifarious functions which principals are to perform and manage justify a well organized continuous professional learning that principals can manage and implement the new changes in education at the school level.

4.14   SGB AND IMPROVEMENT OF SCHOOL FINANCE

Schools are run with funds and this fact makes the financial position of a school important to its effective functioning. In the rural areas many parents are unable to pay fees because they are not working. The current position of the government on school fees is that those who cannot pay must not be expelled from the school. In view of the importance of finance in school activities the researcher solicited the views of the participants on that matter. The parents and educators pointed out that in an effort to raise funds for their schools they encourage parents to pay school fees of their children, undertake fund raising activities and institute school fund for parents to pay money (no matter how little) to improve the school but only few parents pay because most of them are unemployed. The desperate measures taken by the SGBs to improve the schools' financial position indicate that parents are aware of the fact that schools cannot run without money and as community residents it is their responsibility to encourage parents to try and pay fees or school funds and voluntary contributions by parents and also by undertaking projects such as beauty contest, concerts and singing competitions. Raising funds for the school is part of the functions allocated to the SGBs. They need to raise money to purchase books, educational materials or equipment and also to pay services rendered to the school (SASA1996:21c and d). Indeed the financial position of the school must be improved because basic teaching and learning materials such as chalk, duster, overhead projector, water and electricity must be paid for through the funds generated by the school. Lack of teaching basic teaching materials such as duster, chalkboard, chalk, papers to write test etc can impede academic progress of the school.

Discussion

The issue of school finance is very important in school organization and administration.

Basic items such as duplicating papers and teaching aids- maps and sketches- are necessary for effective teaching and learning. Without funds school may not get access to these teaching and learning materials. Other services like water and electricity used by the school must be paid for. It is for these reasons that in line with SASA (1996:21c and d) the onus is on the SGB to raise funds for the school and also see to it that school funds are not misappropriated. Lack of funds can impede the improvement in school performance.

4.15   TRAINING OF SGBs FOR THEIR ROLE IN SCHOOLS

As school governors parents have been elected and entrusted with enormous tasks and responsibilities in the schools under their jurisdiction. Some of their roles as stipulated by SASA (1996:20) include supporting the school principal, educators and supporting staff in performance for their duties. The support from the SGB may be in a variety of ways, for example, ensuring that quality teaching and learning happen at both school and home, management and resolution of conflicts (among staff, principal, parents and learners) assisting School Management Team and educators to improve school performance and ensuring the provision of quality education and development of the school.

In emphasizing how the SGBs assist the school to improve its academic performance one of the governors from school B remarked; "I visit classrooms to see how teaching and learning take place. If a teacher or a learner is absent I jot it down in my file and follow up the matter." This and other tasks are enormous and for the fact that many parents have no experience in their new roles makes training crucial for effective discharging of their functions. It is therefore the responsibility of the department of education and the particular schools they serve to equip the SGB members with basic skills that can enhance their work. The SGB members agreed in their responses that they have undergone workshops on budgeting, (basic book keeping), conflict resolution and holding of meetings.

These workshops, however, as explained by the SGBs, particularly parents, are ad hoc, short and inadequate. The parents said the trainers or people who offer the workshops do not engage participants in needs analysis. They added that some of the workshops were therefore not focused on the real needs of people newly elected to serve as school governors. The parents want to be trained well for their work hence they argued that the duration of workshops should be long enough for the realization of meaningful learning. They added that a workshop on important

issues like budgeting, conducting meetings and crisis management cannot empower them if it is done only once or less than a full day. They want the training to be an ongoing process in order to empower them sufficiently to tackle their daily complex tasks. These sentiments are echoed by a parent from the Eastern Cape who said:

> The community should be helped with procedures they need to follow in making applications for donations (Emerging Voices 2005:10).

The above is an illustration of how desperate parents on the SGBs are for training in basic skills which can make them competent school governors.

Discussion

The task of being a school governor in an era of transformation is complex, enormous and could be overwhelming and stressful for people who hither to might not have served in similar capacities. For parents (who are in the majority and mostly not well educated) to ensure sound financial management of the school, arbitrate and resolve conflicts, support tuition tasks of educators and improve the school's physical environment they need to continuous training.

In sum to be able to support the school principal and educators to teach effectively and also create a conducive teaching - learning environment the department of education and the particular schools must ensure that SGB members undergo well-organized training that focus on their key performance areas.

4.16 SUPPORT FOR SMTs' CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATORS

School performance relates very much to teacher quality, training and motivation. The quality of educators' knowledge of a subject and the various skills to impart the knowledge or facilitate learning depends on his or her initial training as a teacher and the availability of opportunities for continuous professional training. The parents agreed with the educators that the latter need to refresh their skills in order to be effective in discharging their classroom duties. The parents of Schools A and C pointed out that they have agreed with their school management teams to engage an expert in the new methods of teaching to provide training for their educators. All the parents agreed that changes bring new things and for educators to teach and assist learners to

improve their academic performance continuous professional training is crucial. Emphasizing the need for the SGBs and the SMTs to provide both new and experienced educators with training one educator from school B said:

With the transformation of education since 1994 many new things have been introduced into the school curriculum; most of which educators have no knowledge and skills in them and yet we have to teach and assess learners in the new paradigm.

The contemporary world is characterized by rapid and constant changes in societies and their institutions. The changes in political situation in South Africa brought in its trail a new teaching paradigm called Outcomes Based Education, Continuous Assessment and the Whole School Evaluation. Although the department of education has made some ad hoc workshops educators think more could be done even locally at the school level. For educators to be have knowledge and skill in these new teaching approaches the SGBs and the School Management Teams need to organize staff development programmes and invite people with the expertise to equip educators with new methods of teaching. As one educator added; 'the Outcomes Based Education has made school teaching a nightmare for both beginner and experienced educators because we were not trained it that'. Hargreaves and Jacka (1995:41) echo the sentiments of the educators when they write: "becoming a teacher and beginning to teach have long been and continue to be problematic for those who want to teach and for those whose task it is to assist and prepare them: school teaching remains notoriously hard to learn".

Discussion

Teaching is a dynamic profession and to be an effective teacher one needs to learn new things everyday. Whatever knowledge and teaching skills an educator acquired from college or university could soon become outdated because of the rapid changes taking place politically, economically and socially. To avert this problem, school authorities must provide both the 'novice' and the 'experienced' educators continuous learning opportunities. This is because as the saying goes; "a lamp cannot provide another lamp with light unless it continue to burn its own flames".

4.17 UNDERSTANDING AND IMPLEMENTING GOVERNMENT POLICIES

The SGBs have been established to implement government educational policies at the local school level. Before members can implement educational policies effectively they need to understand them well. Unfortunately, however, many of the SGB members in rural schools do not have sufficient reading skills to enable them to read, understand and interpret education policies. The three educator groups on the SGBs mentioned that they volunteer to read, explain and interpret the policies regarding school governance and the roles of school governors as stated by SASA (1996:20-21) to their parent counterparts. The views of the educator counterparts, which confirm those of the principals, indicate that their awareness of parents inability to read and understand policy documents related to school governance. They added that if parents, as key role players, are to be actively involved in implementing policies then they need to be assisted. The government policy documents are written in English and or Afrikaans and the fact that some parents on the SGB are illiterate or did not complete even secondary school could be a reason for their inability to read, understand their roles and interpret education policies.

Although the department of education is to provide introductory training to newly elected SGB members SASA (1996:19) circulars that come from education offices must be interpreted and implemented. It is against this background that the educator components of the governing bodies volunteer to read and interpret roles and functions of the SGB to the parent members in order to ensure their involvement and active participation in school governing matters. According to the educators on the SGBs they sometimes meet with their parent counterparts to discuss functions and roles of the SGB as well as explaining to them circulars from district offices. The educators however conceded that this process delays most of their programmes since it takes a lot of time to get parents on the 'same page' as the educators before projects can be implemented.

The SASA (1996:31) makes provision for the language of instruction to be chosen by each public school in the country. This makes the understanding of education policies by parents very crucial. There is much debate currently going on in South Africa regarding language of instruction. It seems everyone has his/her own views on the type of language which should be used in teaching learners at school. As parents who anticipate the kind of education they want for their children their views on the language of instruction and its impact on learner performance is very pertinent. The parents were of the view that language of instruction in their schools must be the same as the language used in writing the textbooks (used by learners), both mother tongue

and English must be taught for cultural and economic reasons and that a language of instruction should not put learners at disadvantage on the job market. Notwithstanding the different views parents might hold on the issue of language of instruction all the parents realized the importance of language in education. The parents' group of school A concurred with the educators and pointed out that since almost all the text books are written in English instruction must be done in English. Both the parents and educators lamented that since the introduction of mother tongue as medium of instruction learners struggle in their studies because most of the learning areas (i.e. Science, Mathematics, Business, History and Biology) are still written in English and the concepts and theories used in the textbooks do not have appropriate translation in Setswana. Moreover, examination questions, instructions and memoranda are written in English. They pointed out that when the language of instruction is different from that of examination questions and instructions their children could be put at a disadvantage. One educator from school A lamented:

This does not only make learning difficult, but also teaching of most subjects almost impossible. The department should first set up a committee for South African languages and task it to research and come out with appropriate words or terms that can explain or match concepts in all the learning areas clearly before implementing the language of instruction policy.

The educators of school B also lamented on this irony of teaching in indigenous language but writing examinations set in English. They pointed out that one of the causes of poor school performance could be the confusion in which language should be used for instruction. One educator expressed his frustrations thus:

> Schools are asked to implement the language of instruction policy and yet the department of education still sets examination questions in English. How can this assist learners to produce good examination results?

The above sentiment is echoed by a community member and a parent from the Eastern Cape, who said:

> I would like our schools to be the same as those in urban areas. Children who passed matric [here] cannot fill application forms for another school (Emerging Voices 2005:9).

Parents from schools B and C agreed that their children must be taught in languages that can make them part of their culture and at the same time give them equal opportunity for jobs in the global world. They argued that during their school days they were doing too many languages, for example, Setswana; Afrikaans and English and the school curriculum did not provide them with options that allowed them to study subjects like Computer, Accounting, and Science. The group added that all learners at their time did the same subjects (Setswana, Afrikaans, English, Biology, History, Geography and Biblical Studies) which prevented them from pursuing courses and careers in Medicine, Engineering and Science. One old lady from School B remarked:

> People let us face the fact. We should not force our children to learn Afrikaans at the expense of other subjects. How many of the Boers in our area here allow their children to learn Setswana at school? Why then should our children learn theirs?

The views expressed by parents here on the implementation of language of instruction policy are similar to those of parents in other rural areas. For instance some parents in the Eastern Cape share the view that English can make their children to get work in Gauteng but added: "we must not forget that we are black people, and that we have our own culture. Once children are sent to multi-racial schools their own culture is undermined" (Emerging Voices 2005:9).

Discussion

Policy analysis and implementation are very important but could be difficult for parents in the rural areas whose formal education may be limited. Without understanding of policies and how to implement them, schools in the rural areas may always lag behind. Parents in the rural areas may be illiterate, unemployed and lack knowledge and skills and would not want to see their children going the same route. No matter how one interprets or perceives the sentiments expressed by the parents one thing is very clear: parents are concerned about the future of their children in terms of identity and work opportunities. They live in rural areas where there are no job opportunities. Parents therefore want the kind of education which can open the world of work to their children but will not alienate them from their culture.

4.18   STORIES OF SUCCESS

SGBs were established with a clear-cut mandate and objectives. Among the objectives is to assist the school principal and staff to improve school performance. In view of this the participants were asked to state changes in their schools that can be attributed to the SGBs. The responses from all the participants – parents, educators and the principals-indicated that there has been some achievements in the school which can be attributed to the combined efforts of parents, educators and the school management. For instance school A was at an advanced stage of establishing a teaching and learning resource centre (i.e. a computer centre and a library) where both learners and educators could learn basic computer skills, school B has established a school choir while school C renovated three of its classrooms and busy erecting a fence around the school.

The principal, SGB and educators of school A concurred that they are busy renovating an old structure in the school to be used as a computer centre and a library. The SGB chairperson took the researcher round and showed him a room where some computers are kept pending the completion of the renovations to the centre. The SGB bought some of the computers with funds donated by the community and parents. Some individual businessmen and a mining company in the Northern Cape also have promised to donate twenty more computers to the school when the centre is completed. The parents added that they want to introduce computer studies into the school curriculum to boost their children's chances of employment after matriculation. In the rural areas of Taung many matriculants are unemployed because of lack of skills and employment opportunities. The parents are aware of this fact and argued that when their children acquire computer skills they can compete with matriculants from urban schools on the job market. The vision of this group of parents echoes a similar view expressed by parents in another rural community. They do not want their children to focus on doing things that will make them stay at home sitting without any kind of job (Emerging Voices 2004:5).

The other success story related to efforts by the SGBs to assist schools in improving learner performance. The issue of Improvement in school performance is a major aspect of the over all school improvement and every stakeholder in education (parents, educators, principals and the government) expect schools to produce good results to justify their existence. Schools in the rural areas generally lack teaching and learning resources such as science laboratories and kits and qualified educators for some subjects such as science, mathematics, accounting et cetera. In

helping to improve the performance of schools, the parents (on the SGBs) take some positive measures. One important strategy taken by the parents in school B to improve school performance is engaging voluntary educators to teach subjects that usually lack qualified educators at the school, for example, Science, Accounting and Mathematics. As parents and SGB members they know residents in their communities who have expertise in specific subjects. They approached them to help the learners either as volunteers or for a fee. This effort is an indication of parents awareness of their role as partners in education. The home and school are now no longer separated by the 'white line' on the playground (Squelch & Lemmer 1994:92). Engaging educators to teach either on voluntary or paying conditions is a core responsibility of SGB stated by SASA (1996:20). As partners in education parents now see the need to buy teaching and learning resources for their children's schools. Indeed the disparities between rural and urban schools could be reduced and results improved if parents (as SGB members) can raise funds to buy science kits for schools under their jurisdiction. A school improvement strategy of this nature which can be seen as part of overall community development efforts may have positive result on learners' performance. To borrow Sergiovanni's (1994:xi) words: "If we want to rewrite the script to enable good schools to flourish, we need to rebuild community. Community building must become the heart of any school improvement effort." In the view of one SGB member from school C the most effective way of assisting the school to improve its performance is to monitor both learners' and educators' work. She remarked:

I chase away learners from the street and follow them home to do their schoolwork.

Another member (who is an educator) confirmed this monitoring of learners and said he randomly checks learners' work to see who has not done homework. The parents in this group further argued that with the introduction of Continuous Assessment (CASS) strategy every schoolwork counts hence they are more particular about learners' work. The parents added that they sometimes send a representative to visit classes to see what is going on there especially when they hear too much noise from a particular class. Some educators see this as interference. In one of the schools the researcher experienced resentment from one educator regarding SGB members monitoring absenteeism amongst educators. The researcher arrived at the school at 9 am when it was raining and met a woman teacher coming out from a class. He greeted the lady and enquired about the principal's where about. The woman said, he is not here, but speak to the man over there. 'This man is not the principal but always interferes with our work by entering

our classes.' This is an example of mistrust between some educators and the SGB members; something that can undermine success and the co-operation between the SGB and the school.

Discussion

The issue of school improvement is very pertinent to the achievement of good academic results. Every local community school requires teamwork among the key players – parents, educators and school management teams (SMTs). Gone are the days when parents and community members in general perceived the school as the only organization established and entrusted with the responsibility to educate children while parents stood by the fence.

Prior to the new system of school governance many parents did not think they had a role to play in their children's education. As Decker, Gregg and Decker (1994:1) appropriately point out: "Not too long ago, many parents and educators shared the view that once a child enters school, it is best to leave education to the professionals; after all they are the ones trained to do this job."

In the new era of democracy and accountability education of children is a co-responsibility of the home and the school. Each of the partners must play his/her role (as seen from the three school under study) in order to improve learner performance.

4.19   BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

As people entrusted with enormous and complex task of governing schools SGB members might face some difficulties. In the light of this assumption the researcher asked the participants things that they perceive as barriers to their work. The parents' groups pointed out that they have very little or no education, personal commitments and lack of co-operation from some parents, educators and principals. The educator components of the SGBs agreed with the parents' views but added that there is mistrust between them and their fellow educators who are not school governors.

All participants (i.e. parents, educators and principals) conceded that the generally lack of education among parents is a barrier to the effective running of the SGBs. Many of the parents serving on the SGBs have less than grade 10. There are others who did not go to school at all.

The irony is that government policies and circulars that come to them from the department of education are written in English.

The educator participants pointed out that because of illiteracy among the parents it takes too long to implement projects at their schools because they always have to explain everything to the parents' component. Despite this some members are not able to participate in most projects because they cannot read or write. One parent from school A confirmed how lack of education hampers parents' participation in the SGB activities with this remark:

> Even workshops are done in English and that limits my participation. I went to school only to standard four when I was a child.

In the rural areas where many key figures on the SGBs are illiterate or semi-literate it is possible for the few fairly well educated ones to team up with the school principal to misappropriate school funds. Expressing his frustrations regarding these barriers the principal of school B said:

Despite the obvious fact that some SGB members are illiterate, ineffective, ignorant of school matters, problematic and pursue their own personal agenda when things go wrong in the school it is the powerless principal who receives the blame and blows from all the stakeholders.

In order to empower them the parents suggested that Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) classes be organized at the schools so that they can improve themselves. The call for ABET centres is an indication of the desire of parents to learn. This desire to learn is also expressed by parents in other rural communities. In the Eastern Cape for example some parents said: "We need schools for old people to equip them with basic skills so that they don't starve. If the government were to focus on Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), we could bring skills to our people" (Emerging Voices 2004: 5).

The irony is that the same people (SGB members) who have been entrusted to provide Adult Basic Education and Training classes at school (SASA 1996:21A) are ignorant of their mandate because of illiteracy.

In addition to the problem of illiteracy are personal commitments and lack of co-operation from some educators and principals and the absence of remuneration for school governors. At the

moment all SGB members work as volunteers. They are not paid for the services they render to schools. The parent groups particularly pointed out that some of them have small businesses to attend, for example, to tuck shops, and rearing of sheep, cattle and goats. These socio- economic commitments naturally prevent some of them from attending meetings or taking active part in SGB activities. One cannot blame them for lack of time because they need to earn a living to enable them to fend for their families. One parent who is a treasurer in school C lamented about lack of remuneration for SGB members thus:

Schools funds are to be deposited at the bank on regular basis. We are not allowed to keep money at home. From the village to the nearest bank in Hartswater is about 60 kilometres to and fro. Nobody gives me money for transport. I have to see to it myself how to get there but I am not working.

In view of this problem the woman stepped down and an educator and lives in town was chosen as the new treasurer to enable money to be taken to the bank regularly.

The lack of trust among SGB members and educators fellow educators which cut across all the responses but were particularly emphasised by respondents from schools A and C could be a very serious bottleneck to the efficient running of school governing bodies Where there is lack of trust people are not likely to co-operate with the SGBs in order to work towards the improvement of the school. As the participants said fellow educators who do not do their work and are usually queried by the SGB suspect that they have been reported by their colleagues who serve on the SGB. Such educators may not co-operate with the school governors and the SGB in general.

As participants from schools A and B pointed out there are also some parents who do not help to implement SGB decisions. One educator from school B for instance recounted how two parents whose children were caught with drugs at school refused to come to the school to help the SGB and SMT to sort out the problem. The educators added that there are also many instances where parents do not attend general meetings of the SGB. These indifferences may be barriers to the smooth running of SGB programmes.

Discussion

The issues raised by the SGB members indicate major bottlenecks to the effective functioning of the school governing bodies in the rural communities. Most parents are not educated. The few educated ones work far from home and come either at the end of the month or during their annual leave times. To enable the parents on the SGBs to be more committed to their work the department of education should look into the possibility of remunerating them and also paying for official trips to attend meetings or going to the bank (to deposit or withdraw money). Perhaps schools might also open ABET centres and encourage parents to attend. This may enable them to understand policy issues, assist their children with homework or enhance their participation in school governing activities.

4.20   EXPERIENCES

Having been elected to serve on a SGB exposes SGB members to lots of experiences. When sharing their experiences both the parents and educators reported that the new system of school governance has offered them the opportunity to serve their communities, to fully understand the role of parents in education and learn important basic life skills. The parents, in particular, emphasized that serving on the SGB has opened their minds and eyes to many things regarding education. Both educators and parents said that they feel proud to be elected to serve their communities and are ready to serve another term if the community still requires their services. Participants also added that serving their communities through the SGB has made them aware the fact that education is a co-responsibility of the community and the school (i.e. parents and educators). Emphasizing the role of (parents) community in education an SGB member from school B said:

> Communities really have a role to play in the governance of local schools. They need to ensure that schools in their localities are properly managed and that there is development and improvement in teaching and learning.

It is interesting to learn that parents now acknowledge the fact that they have a contribution to make towards their children's education. This is an acknowledgement of the fact that with the rapid changes taking place in South Africa the work of educating a child cannot be the

responsibility of any single person or body. The 'whole village' must come together to bring up the child.

The parents from school A pointed out that through serving on the SGB they have learnt many basic life skills they hither to did not know. For example, they can now chair meetings in their communities or draw up simple budgets for their families or church. All the educator groups reported that through the SGBs they have learnt work is very demanding. For example, they pointed out that even during school holidays and some weekends they still work on things such as preparation of a business plan and fund raising skills. Thus both parents and educators acknowledge the realization of unintended benefits from the voluntary work they do as school governors. The skills gained from the voluntary service could help them in their own lives and the community at large. They however conceded that serving on the SGB needs commitment because for example, attending SGB executive meetings, implementing projects such as renovation of school buildings et cetera.

Discussion

The experiences of the participants point to one important thing; that is people covertly and overtly learn new things everyday as they interact with others. There is also on the job training. The experiences gained by voluntarily serving the schools could be an asset to themselves and their communities. Both parents and educators can establish and manage small businesses to supplement their incomes. Even when their terms of office end and they are not re-elected these ex-school governors can assist the new SGB members in doing their work efficiently. Experience is the best teacher; goes the saying.

4.21   SUMMARY

This chapter described the background of the schools, SGB members and principals involved in the research. The chapter also analyzed, presented and discussed the findings of the data collected through focus group and individual interviews involving SGB members (parents and educator components) and principals of the three selected schools respectively. The concluding chapter (5) will synthesis the important findings, draw conclusions and provide suggestions for all the education role players.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 focused on the analysis, presentation and discussion of the data collected from the six focus group sessions held with SGB members and individual interviews with principals of the three selected schools. The current chapter presents a summary of the findings, conclusions drawn and recommendations to education stakeholders to assist them to address some of the crucial issues related to school governance.

5.2   SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE STUDY

This study was undertaken to explore the role of school governing bodies in improving school performance in the rural communities. The available relevant literature on school governance and community's role were reviewed. The most important conclusions drawn from the literature study are summarised in the paragraphs that follow.

5.2.1   Community involvement in education

The establishment of school governing bodies in all public schools in South Africa under SASA (Act 84 of 1996) legislation is part of the government's agenda to transform education through democratization, decentralisation and greater community involvement. Transforming education to give get local community members, especially parents, guardians and care givers, involved in school governance was to ensure that those closer to learners take greater responsibilities in school matters. Before 1994 there existed school councils but these were unrepresentative of key stakeholders in education and therefore undemocratic (2.3.1). Decentralisation of education and school governance in particular as stipulated by SASA (1996:23(1) and (2)) is to ensure the participation of local community members, especially parents, educators, other staff of the school and principals in the governance of every public school in order to improve schools (cf. 2.3.7).

5.2.2 Rationale for new school governance system

The vast disparity among schools in the country before 1994 which was the result of unequal funding necessitated the establishment of a new structure of school organization and governance system that would be transformative, flexible, true representative of main education stakeholders and democratic enough to bridge the gap between rural and urban schools and also to accommodate the different contexts of all schools in the country. The thinking behind the new school governance system and structure was that if schools were given back to local community members to govern they would improve, maintain and protect them. It is the parents, care givers and guardians who live with learners and therefore know the kind of education they want for their children. They therefore have the responsibility to create conducive learning environment and support the school to improve(cf. 2.3.6.1).Decentralisation as part of transformation in education has therefore given local community members (especially those closest to learners) a voice in governance of schools(cf. 2.3.2). That is, community members who have children in a school are given the opportunity to be actively involved in the governance of the particular school.

5.2.3 Improvement in learner achievement

Under the decentralised governance system governance of every public school in the country is vested in its governing body (SASA 1996:16(1)) while the day to day professional management of the school remains the responsibility of the principal. The general notion is that if schools are to develop and improve both physically and academically then communities must assist them to attain their goals (cf 2.3.7). The improvement in learner achievement is the responsibility of all the main education stakeholders- school(educators) and community(parents) hence these groups need to work together in a collaborative effort for the realisation of better academic achievement among learners(2.3.3). Community members should therefore form partnership with schools in order to achieve better results (cf 2.2.1).

5.2.4 Determinants of learner achievement

The main factors that determine learner achievement are the home, school environment, teacher quality, training and motivation (cf. 2.2). This is why the SGB has been given the legislative powers (SASA 1996) to influence these factors in order to improve learner performance. Parents,

guardians or caregivers live and spend more time with learners than educators and as key stakeholders in education they must play a greater role in ensuring that learners achieve good results for their school work. This they can do by taking the responsibility to support learning efforts of their children at home (cf. 2.2.2) The home must collaborate with the school and work together as equal partners in order to bring the best in learners. The input of the home in education of children is very crucial for academic achievement. Families are strong pillars in children's education because as first primary educators children have strong bound with the home (cf. 2.2.1)

5.2.5   General improvement of the school

The main objective of decentralised school governance system is to ensure efficiency, reduce unnecessary delays in policy implementation and improve schools in general.

School improvement is central to community development and for this reason all community members should be involved in school improvement activities - improving teaching/learning, creating new forms of governance, providing more authentic assessment and empowering parents and educators(cf. 2.4). School improvement is broader than achievement of better examination results. To achieve better results many things come into play. For example, there must be conducive physical environment, furniture, availability of teaching and learning materials, culture of learning and teaching (cf. 2.2.2 and 2.2.3). Although school improvement goes beyond the realization of better examination results schools are mostly judged by the results they produce at the end of the year (cf. 2.4).

5.2.6   Functions of school governing bodies

The main function of the SGB is to improve school performance by supporting the school principal, educators and staff in performance of their professional duties and to see to the holistic development of the school as a learning site. School governing bodies may contribute to improvement in school performance in a variety of ways, namely

- promote and complement educators' work at home
- involve members in teaching or hire tutors to provide extra tuition in problematic subject areas such as mathematics, science or accounting

- make policies to guide learner behaviour at school

- provide learners with guidance and counselling and the school with teaching and learning resources

- create a school atmosphere which is conducive to teaching and learning.

5.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS OF THE INTERVIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The main methods used in data collection in this study were interviews. Focus group interviews with parents and educators serving on the SGBs of the three selected schools were conducted. The principals of the schools were also interviewed individually. The main findings from the interviews are summarised in the paragraphs that follow.

5.3.1 Profile of parents on the school governing bodies and understanding of their roles as school governors

In the research it was found out that most of the SGB members' (parents') in the rural areas cannot read education policies because they have very low (and in some cases no) educational background. The SGB members are supposed to understand, analyse and implement government educational policies at the local school level, however, in view of low or lack of education many parents were not up to the task as they cannot access information. The lack of sufficient reading skills among parent school governors makes policy analysis and implementation very slow as it takes much time for the educator components to explain everything in order to bring parents to the same page. The SGB members acknowledged the fact that under the new system of school governance they have a responsibility to assist the principal and staff to ensure an improvement in school results (cf. 2.3.6.1). However apart from low education background most members have no experience and capacity to assist the school to improve its academic performance.

Recommendation

Since many of the parents serving on the SGB lack education it is recommended that schools provide them with continuous training to empower them with reading skills which will enable them perform their duties well.

To achieve improved school results the onus is on the SGB to ensure that quality teaching and learning take place in the school at all times. This is in line with SASA (1996:20) stipulation that SGB members must assist the school principal and staff in the performance of their duties. For this the SGBs also need assistance to over come skills deficit so as to do their work efficiently (cf. Review of School Governance 2004:147).

5.3.2   Drawing up a mission statement

Under the new decentralised governance system the SGB of every school must draw up a mission statement for the school they serve. A mission statement may indicate the goals of the school, promote 'we feeling' and identity among members of the organisation (parents, educators and learners), provide learners with motive and direction and serve as a marketing tool for attracting prospective learners and educators to the school (cf. 2.3.8). However, the SGB members (parents) interviewed conceded although their schools need mission statements they were incapable of drawing them because of lack of insight, knowledge and skills. They pointed out that mission statements can only be drawn with the help of educators and principals.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the educator component of the SGBs and the school principals inform parents about what the mission statement is and its relevance to the school. They should also involve them (parents) in drawing up of the mission statements for their respective schools.

5.3.3   Establishment of a culture of learning and teaching (COLTS)

In realising the importance of good school climate to academic achievement the SGBs establish and maintain the culture of learning and teaching which they see as the foundation stone for an improved school performance. In view of this the SGBs made it their responsibility to ensure its establishment and maintenance at all times. Culture of learning and teaching relates to discipline. In view of the fact that discipline is an important requirement for learner achievement it has become the dominant concern of parents, educators and school authorities. Discipline relates to the climate of a school - calm, stable or chaotic. To achieve discipline the SGB members interviewed acknowledged that they must provide the school with a code of conduct for learners

and take proactive measures to ensure the presence of discipline in the school in order to enhance teaching and learning (2.3.8).

Again, the SGB members interviewed saw the important influence the physical environment of a school can have on academic achievement and accordingly sought to improve this aspect of the school. The SGB members of the three schools stated that they contributed by renovating dilapidated buildings, repairing broken walls, fixing windows, doors, painting them, erecting fences and planting trees to protect the environment and make it habitable, attractive, healthy and conducive to learning (2.3.11).

Recommendations

To realise the culture of learning and teaching the SGB must assist the school to rid itself of drugs, rape, violence, alcohol, bullying and all types of intimidation that may impede teaching and learning. Since the school alone cannot maintain the culture of learning and teaching the co-operation of the community, especially parents, is needed in this matter at all times. Parents may volunteer to provide security at the school for both educators and learners during school times.

5.3.4   Support for educators in their teaching tasks

 The SGB members interviewed stated that they support the educators (school) in their teaching tasks by organising vacation classes for all grade 12 learners, engaging the services of voluntary educators for subjects without educators, purchasing teaching/learning materials for the school and enforcing regular class attendance among learners and educators. They also organise afternoon and vacation classes for their grade 12 learners (cf. 2.4). However, only one member mentioned the involvement of parents in learning or encouraging them to support learning at home.

Recommendations

In order for learners to realise improved academic performance it is crucial for the home (parents, caregivers and guardians) and the school (educators, SMT and principal) to come together and work as a team.

New knowledge and skills in teaching keep evolving every day and for educators to be up to date with their professional and academic work they need continuous training. In this regard the SGBs should assist the schools to provide educators with continuous professional training. The SGBS should make funds available for the training of educators through workshop on latest developments or methodologies in teaching eg Outcomes Based Education. This can enhance teaching and lead to improvement in academic achievement of learners.

5.3.5   Involving parents in learners' education

The SGBs (cf. 2.2.1). Indeed the government recognises the possible positive contributions parents can make to children's education as equal partners (SASA1996:17) hence it has made it obligatory f acknowledge the fact that involvement and participation of parents in children's education is crucial for the realization of improved learner achievement. The school governors have realised that the government has made it obligatory for them (parents) to be school governors so that they can contribute to school improvement or them to be involved in school matters. Schools are located in various local communities where learners who attend such schools live. It is therefore logical that parents living in local communities form partnerships with schools in order to achieve good academic results (cf. 2.3.2). The investigation however found out that although some parents are becoming aware of the need to be involved in children's education they do not know how to do it.

Recommendations

Since the socio-economic and political changes and realities in the contemporary society makes it impossible for the school alone to educate the child it is strongly recommended that the school and community must come together and work as a team for the realization of improved learner achievement. It takes the whole village to bring up a child hence the need for the home and the school to pull resources together for the sake of the child. In this regard the schools should assist parents to know how they can support learners, for example, supervision of home work or engaging the services of a private teacher to teach their children specific subjects after school.

5.3.6   Training of SGBs for their role in schools

School governors are elected to support the school to improve its performance. However, in the interviews it became apparent that their work is intensive and complex ranging from ensuring culture of learning and teaching, conflict management and resolution, physical development of the school and management of school finance. Most of the SGB members (especially parents) conceded that they have very little idea about how schools run and therefore feel incapable of fulfilling the functions set in the South African Schools Act of 1996.

Recommendations

The work of the SGB members is not only new to them but also complex and multi-faceted. In view of this it is imperative for school authorities and the department of education to empower them through frequent workshops. The provision of regular training could make them very skilful and efficient in discharging their duties to the schools. Training in basic accounting, fund raising, budgeting, conflict resolution, business plans, tendering and meeting procedures may go a long way to enhance the work of school governors. This recommendation tallies with an important one made by the Review Committee on School Governance (2004:118, 7).

5. 3.7   Barriers to success

The SGBs face some challenges in discharging their duties. The major challenges are poor educational background of parents, lack of personal commitment among members, lack of remuneration for school governors and lack of co-operation from some school staff members. Most of the parents serving on the SGBs do not devote much time to their tasks as SGB members. It is therefore not surprising that principals complain that most cases when the schools need them, parents on the SGB are not available.

Recommendations

To enable parents serving on the SGBs do their work efficiently with dedication the department of education should provide them with basic education and remuneration for the services rendered to the schools. When they are remunerated parents serving on the SGBs would be more committed to their work and would always be available for the cause of the school. As

mentioned in the report by the Review of School Governance (2004:159), "it is necessary for the system to know what its limitations are and to develop policy that is commensurate with the capacity it has".

5.3.7 Experiences

Through the voluntary service rendered to the schools SGB members interviewed mentioned that they have acquired unintended skills such as budgeting, preparation of business plan and fund raising which could be of benefit to them and their communities at large. These unintended benefits may assist individuals and the community at large.

Recommendations

More community members, especially parents, should be encouraged to offer their services as school governors. This voluntary service may not only benefit the school and the entire community but also individuals who offer themselves to serve the schools. It is therefore recommended that principals communicate these unintended benefits to parents when trying to recruit SGB members.

5.4   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings of this study on the role of SGBs in improving school performance in the rural areas suggest further investigation into other aspects of the decentralised school governance. Education transformation and decentralised school governance are relatively new concepts and practices in the South African education arena. Being a new element in education the SGB concept might not be wholly understood and embraced by all community members. Some parents and community members in general might not know the value of getting involved in school matters, their role, responsibilities and rights in the education of their children. This makes it imperative for more research to be done in all aspects of school governance for the overall understanding of the concept and improvement of local schools.

Specifically, further investigations may be done on the following important aspects of the SGBs:

- The problem of representing various interest groups in local communities on the SGBs.

- Strategies to get more literate parents to serve on SGBs in order to make school governance more effective.

- Strategies to make parents more aware of their roles, rights, and responsibilities as school governors.

- Determining the effects of an effective parental involvement in schools in rural areas.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The primary aim of this research was to investigate the role school governing bodies play in improving school performance in rural areas. The study, however exhibits both strengths and limitations as an exploratory investigation. The small sample size of the study (limited to only three schools) which is common with qualitative research approach (cf3.4.1) may not fully support a general theory regarding the role of school governing bodies in improving school performance at large. Thus an investigation carried out on a larger number of schools might result in different findings.

Again as an exploratory study using qualitative research approach of individual and focus group interviews its findings were descriptive and not quantified (cf. 3.2.1) as the main focus was on getting the views and experiences of the participants.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This study, the Role of School Governing Bodies in Improving School Performance in Taung Rural Areas, has resulted in a number of important findings that may assist local communities (parents), schools (educators, School Management Teams, principals, the department of education and other education stakeholders in improving the operations of school governing bodies in their local community schools. The move by the South African government to get communities involved in education matters is a step in right direction. However as a new concept and practice in a country where many rural community members have poor education background much has to be done to get the home and the school to work together as equal partners in education without much conflicts, mistrust, frustrations and tensions. In this way school performance could be improved.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE: SGB MEMBERS (PARENT/EDUCATORS)

1. How does the introduction of the new school governance system assist community members, especially parents/ guardians to be aware of their role in education?

2. Why do you think the SGB should develop a mission statement for the school?

3. How does the SGB ensure the Culture of Learning and Teaching (COLTS) at your school?

4. How do you as SGB members understand, interpret and implement education policies at your school?

5. What do you see as your role being a school governor?

6. In which way does the SGB address discipline problems at your school?

7. Why do you think community members, particularly parents and guardians, should be involved in education of children?

8. How does the SGB ensure that the physical environment of the school is conducive to teaching and learning?

9. In which way does the SGB support teaching at the school you serve as a governor?

10. Why do you think it is necessary for the school to provide educators with continuous professional training?

11. How does the school empower the SGB to perform its tasks effectively?

12. In which way does the SGB contribute to the improvement in the school's finances?

13. What does the SGB do to help the school to improve its performance?

14. What improvement programmes at your school can be attributed to the SGB?

15.   How does the government policy on language of instruction help improve school performance?

16.   What kind of guidance does the SGB offer the learners at the school?

17.   What experiences have you gained as a result of serving on the SGB of your school?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE: PRINCIPALS

1.   What are your views on the changes in school governance since 1996?

2.   How does the introduction of SGBs affect your work as a principal?

3.   In which way has the SGB contributed to the establishment of Culture of Learning and Teaching (COLTS) at your school?

4.   How do the SGB members in your school understand, interpret and implement education policies?

5.   How does the SGB assist the school principal and educators to improve teaching and learning?

6.   What are your views on community participation in school governance and education as a whole?

7.   What changes in your school can be attributed to the SGB?

8.   What type of training have you been offered by the department of education to enhance your work as a school principal and ex-officio member of the SGB?

9.   How does the government policy on language of instruction help improve school performance?

10.   What do you see as the role of the SGB in assisting your school improve its image?

11.   In which way does the SGB help you address discipline problems in your school?

12.   How does the SGB support teaching at your school?

13.   What do you see as the role of a principal under the new school governance system?

14.   What type of training have you received from the department of education in school governance?

15.   How does the school empower the SGB to perform its tasks efficiently?

16.   What experiences can you share as a result of working with the SGB as your school?

Thank you very much for your time and co-operation.

APPENDIX C

EXTRACTS FROM INTERVIEW WITH PRINCIPAL OF SCHOOL C

The principal is a male in his early thirties and his highest qualification is a Masters degree. The interview took place in his office between 3 and 4 pm on 8 February 2006 when all learners and educators were gone.

- **Views on changes in school governance**

According to the principal the changes in school governance is generally good because it has given community members, particularly parents, the opportunity to be involved in matters that affect the education of their children. There is however a bit of confusion of authority and responsibility. Some SGB members do not know the limit of their powers and as a result interfere with the principal's management and leadership role at the school.

- **SGB and its impact on the principal's work**.

In many instances the SGB is of a great assistance to me. The members support me and my staff in various ways, for example, maintenance of order at school.

- **SGB members understanding and implementation of policies**

In my school most of the SGB members are semi-literates who can hardly read and understand written information. We (School Management Team and Educator component of the SGB) therefore read, explain and interpret policies to them. This is time consuming but enables the parents to take part in the implementation of policies.

- **Views on community participation in education**

The SGB concept is a very good idea but in practice some community members, even parents, are still not eager to get involved with school matters or education of their children. This may be due to a number of reasons e.g. ignorance, illiteracy, lack of time or their own bitter experience of school.

- **Community support to improve learner performance**

The SGB of my school help us to look for voluntary educators to teach learners during school vacation. They encourage tertiary institution students to teach during school holidays. The effort of the teacher component in this regard improved the results of Accounting and Mathematics last year.

- **School improvement project by SGB**

In a very small way the SGB in my school has assisted us with chalk boards, fenced the school to keep animals and trespassers out of the school compound. The SGB has also repaired broken windows, doors and toilets. Gradually, through the efforts of the educator component of the SGB, some parents are becoming aware of their role in the education of children.

- **Views on language policy**

Sir, this is a very sensitive and politicised issue. The home language of my learners has not yet been developed to be used in teaching all school subjects. I personally believe if we teach our learners in Setswana only they will be disadvantaged when they leave school and go to the world to look for jobs. In the global world these learners cannot reach far without English. The parents themselves want their children to be taught in English hence we teach them both languages-English and to some extent Setswana.

- **SGB and the image of the school**.

As a rural school the learners generally lack discipline. The SGB therefore assists us to enforce discipline through drawing of a code of discipline for learners.

- **Principal's responsibility in era of transformation**

To me for a principal to be able to shoulder all the responsibilities in this time of transformation he/she has to learn many things e.g. leadership, management, accounting and people skills. The principal needs many skills to enable him/her provide effective leadership. As some one being looked up to by educators, parents, learners, community and the department of education you have no choice but to learn and know more in order to provide effective leadership.

- **SGB support for continuous professional support of educators.**

With the introduction of Outcomes based education methods of teaching and assessment have changed. Some educators have problems with lesson preparation and assessment. We (SMT and SGB) do needs analysis on educators and organise our own school based workshop to assist the educators. We do this because there are many new things introduced into teaching which educators have no knowledge of and yet they have to implement them on daily basis.

- **Experience with the SGB**

The SGB is a good partner in the education of the child but parents who are in the majority lack knowledge and skills. Again due to socio-economic demands parents on the SGB are generally inactive. They need to go to the field to look for food or herd their animals. Sometimes when we need them they are not there. I cannot blame them for this because they do not earn any pay for being school governors.