

**IMPEDIMENTS TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN
THE GOVERNANCE OF SELECTED PRIMARY
SCHOOLS IN THE BLOEMFONTEIN AREA**

by

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Place: Bloemfontein

DECLARATION

I, Itumeleng Percival Morolong, declare that the dissertation entitled:

IMPEDIMENTS TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE GOVERNANCE OF SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE BLOEMFONTEIN AREA

hereby submitted by me for the Magister Technologiae Degree: Education at the Central University of Technology: Free State, is my own independent work and has not been previously submitted by me at any other University. I furthermore cede copyright of the dissertation in favour of the Central University of Technology, Free State.

SIGNED: _____

IP MOROLONG

DATE

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my late brother, **Ngakanyane Philby (My-Pa) Morolong**, who encouraged me to aim for the stars at all times.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank God for His love and guidance. Without His divine assistance, I would not have accomplished anything.

To my parents for their constant love, support and encouragement. I am blessed to have you in my life. I thank God for you.

To my younger sister, Pamela Setshameko Gaongalelwe Morolong, thank you for everything.

To my one and only daughter, thank you for reminding me of the importance of education. You are the reason why I never gave up.

To my brother, Maruping, thank you for being there for me during the most difficult times.

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- Kgabane Primary School;
- Monyatsi Primary School; and
- Kgato Primary School.

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I would like to thank the Central University of Technology, Bloemfontein, Free State, for their financial assistance in this research.

ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to determine the impediments to parental involvement in the governance of selected primary schools in the Bloemfontein area. It also examines the impact of the principals' attitudes as perceived by the parents towards their involvement in the governance of the school; the means of communication between the school and parents; whether co-operation between the principal and parents affects school governance; and whether familiarity with parents' roles as stipulated in the South African Schools Act affects their participation in school governance.

The literature was consulted on the segregated education of the previously disadvantaged people under apartheid. The transition from apartheid to education under the new political dispensation, as set out in the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 also received attention. The study further addresses the issue of parents' reluctance to participate in school governance and the views of teachers and parents on their roles in school governance. Ministerial investigation into the effectiveness of school governing bodies is presented and an international perspective on school governing bodies is also provided.

A quantitative method using survey research method was employed in this study and a questionnaire was used to collect data. The aim was to elicit responses from the parents in as far as impediments to parental involvement in the governance of schools is concerned.

It was revealed, however, that despite the parents' reluctance to take part in school governance, principals' attitudes were found to have a positive effect on parental participation in school governance. Methods of communication between the school and the parents were

found to be effective, though a suggestion is made for improvement. Parents were found to be willing to co-operate with one another for the betterment of the school. Furthermore, parents were found to be familiar with the roles of members of the school governing body, irrespective of whether they are members of the school governing body or not.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Co-opted parents

Co-opted parents stand for parents who are chosen to become members of the school governing body for their experience and skill. They are there to widen the experience of the governing body, so that it reflects the local community (RSA, 1997: 10). Gann (1999: 84) explains that co-opted governors reflect the life of the local community.

Educator

Educator stands for a teacher and vice versa, depending on the literature used (RSA, 1997:10). In addition to teaching, an educator plays a vital role, including “carrying out or facilitating consultation” between stakeholders in school governance (Gann: 1999: 13).

Guardian

Guardian stands for an adult who acts as and performs the duties of a parent towards the learner (RSA, 1997:10). The Cambridge International Dictionary of English (2002: 629) defines guardian as a person who has the legal right and responsibility of taking care of someone who cannot take care of themselves, such as a child whose parents have died.

(SASA)

SASA stands for the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1997:10). It is generally understood that the primary aim of this act is to encourage the various stakeholders, e.g. parents, teachers, learners and members

of the community who have an interest in the school, to participate in the activities of the school and thus guide them in the process.

(SGB)

SGB stands for the School Governing Body (RSA, 1997:11). According to Gann (1999: 77) the school governing body is responsible for determining the aims and overall conduct of the school

(SMT)

SMT stands for the School Management Team (RSA, 1997:11). In the view of Van der Westhuizen (1991; 55) management is a specific type of work which comprises regulative tasks or actions executed by a person or body in a position of authority in a specific field as to allow formative education to take place. The SMT is that body in a position of authority.

(PTA)

PTA stands for Parent-Teacher Association (RSA, 1997:11). It is an organisation to which the parents of children at a school and teachers at the school can belong, and which tries to help the school, especially by arranging activities that raise money for it (Cambridge: 2002: 1026).

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The idea of getting parents involved in the running of a school is not an easy task and is different from what used to happen a generation ago. This view is supported by Foskett (1992:67) when he explains that, "a generation ago, the means of harnessing the relationship between the school and the community was hardly developed, certainly not on a large scale". Closer involvement of parents in school policy and decision-making was much less common. He further declares that some schools and teachers were undoubtedly reluctant to share their position with a potentially strong power group; and some parents felt that teaching was the teachers' business and that they were best left to get on with it.

Since the new education dispensation, schools in South Africa are faced with many challenges, one of which is the involvement of parents in the governance of the school. The law, namely the South African Schools Act of 1996 (as amended) Section 16.1 requires that the principals have to involve parents more in the governance of the school (Republic of South Africa, 1997a:23).

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study is to highlight the impediments to parental involvement in the governance of the school. Van der Westhuizen (1991:49) states that parents are not conscious of the nature, purpose and way in which schools are run. This is not in line with the South African Schools Act which asserts that parents should play an effective role in the running of the school (RSA, 1997a:23). Therefore, the

researcher has decided to explore this issue further. Hoping to determine what could be the reasons for parents not to participate in the education of their children.

1.3. AIMS OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 General aim

It is generally acknowledged in South Africa that parents have never assumed their rightful place in assisting principals towards the better governance of their schools. The study therefore, aims to look at the impediments to parental involvement in the governance of the school.

1.3.2 Specific aims

The following are the objectives or specific aims of this study:

- i. To highlight the impact of the principals' attitude as perceived by the parents towards their involvement in the governance of the school.
- ii. To determine if communication between the school and parents affects the parents' participation in school governance.
- iii. To determine if co-operation between the principal and parent affects school governance.
- iv. To determine whether parents' familiarity with their roles as stipulated in the S.A. Schools Act affects their participation in school governance.

1.4 LIST OF THE HYPOTHESES

This research study aims to test the following hypotheses:

1.4.1 Hypothesis 1:

The impact of the principal's attitude as perceived by parents towards their involvement in school governance contributes to parents' positive or negative attitude towards the school.

1.4.2 Hypothesis 2:

Communication between the school and parents affects the parents' participation in school governance.

1.4.3 Hypothesis 3:

Co-operation between the principal and parents affects school governance.

1.4.4 Hypothesis 4:

Familiarity with parents' roles as stipulated in the S.A. Schools Act affects their participation in school governance.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The researcher identified the following four research questions as the backbone that underpins this research study:

- How do parents perceive the principal's attitude towards their involvement in the governance of the school?
- How does communication between the school and parents affect the parents' participation in school governance?

- Do parents' familiarity with their roles as stipulated in the S.A. Schools Act affect their participation in school governance?
- Does co-operation between the principal and parents affect school governance?

1.6 THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND ITS FEASIBILITY

1.6.1. General Approach

The research approach followed in this study will be mainly quantitative in nature, backed by an extensive theoretical research conducted through literature study. Using an "explanatory survey method" which is a form of casual comparative research. The survey research method will enable the researcher to "explain the attitudes and behaviour of the respondents on the basis of the data gathered at a point in time" (Ary, 2002:406). Face-to-face questionnaire interviews will be held with the randomly selected respondents; the idea being to ensure a greater completion rate, control over the order of questions, information from people who cannot read or write and finally to guarantee confidentiality.

The researcher finds this survey approach most suitable due to the envisaged willingness of the intended subjects to participate. This view is supported by Leedy and Ormrod (2001:101) when they pronounce that "the people being studied must be willing participants in it" and that quantitative research is used to answer questions about relationships, with the purpose of explaining, predicting and controlling phenomena. Ary (2002:24) asserts that quantitative research uses objective measurement and the statistical analysis of numeric data to understand and explain phenomena.

1.6.2. Population and Sample

According to Bailey (1987:87), the first step in research studies is to specify the group of persons or things to be studied. The objects of study are called the units of analysis. The unit of analysis most often used is the individual person, but it may also be a club, an industry, a city or a state. The sum total of all the units of analysis is called the population. Each entity from the population that is the ultimate sampling objective is called the sampling element. In a random sample, each person in the population has the probability of being chosen for the sample and every collection of persons of the same size has an equal probability of becoming the actual sample. This is true regardless of the similarities or differences among members of the population and sample, as long as they are members of the same population.

All that is required to conduct a random sample, after an adequate sampling frame, which Ary (2002:380) defines as “a complete list of all individuals in the population which the researcher obtains or constructs, is to select persons without showing bias for any personal characteristics”. The adequacy of the random sample depends on the adequacy of the sampling frame. The randomly sampled respondents in this study will be drawn from 250 parents of primary school learners from the previously disadvantaged schools found within the Bloemfontein area. The reason for choosing 250 parents of primary school learners from the black schools found within the Bloemfontein area lies in the fact that the researcher has decided to sample only 20 parents per primary school.

The researcher decided to concentrate only on the primary schools, since it is the beginning and the foundation of the child's formal

schooling. It is therefore important for parental involvement to start there. It is the opinion of the researcher that a sample of this study will be representative of the population of this study. Ary (2002:381) further points out that because researchers cannot survey an entire population, they select a sample from that population. It is very important to select a sample that will provide results similar to those that would have been obtained if the entire population had been surveyed.

1.6.3. Data Collection

Data will be collected through the use of questionnaires and four assistants will be employed to help the researcher in both the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. Each assistant will be assigned a school and serve as the liaison officer. The questions in the questionnaires will come from the objectives of the study and also from the literature consulted. Questionnaires will shed some light on how the involvement of parents can be encouraged and maintained towards the effective governance of schools. The questionnaires will be administered directly to all randomly selected participants. Respondents will also be assured that all information will be treated confidentially and be used for academic purposes only.

Babbie (1998:148-151) says with regard to questionnaires, “researchers have two options. They may ask open-ended questions, in which case the respondent is asked to provide his or her own answer to the question; or they may ask closed-ended questions, in which the respondent is asked to select an answer from among the list provided”. For the purpose of this study, both closed-ended and open-ended questions will be used in the questionnaires. It is also important that items in questionnaires should be clear and unambiguous. The

researcher should also ascertain that respondents are willing to answer and also that questions asked in questionnaires should be relevant to most respondents (Babbie 1998).

1.6.4. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics will be used to analyse data in order to make the quantitative information meaningful because, as Ary (2002:118) points out, they enable the researcher to organise, summarise and describe observations.

1.7. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study lies in the fact that parents have an important role to play in the effective running of schools. The starting point for principals is to see parents as sources of potential help, which will generate a relationship that will encourage participation (Ainscow, 1994:44). Parental involvement in the running of the school will also lead to improvements in teaching (Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997:21), in the sense that it will encourage the principal to be more analytic, thus resulting in better teaching and learning, and these will improve the image of the school as a whole.

The necessity for this study to be carried out lies in the fact that, as Owen (1992: 38) points out, it will make parents and guardians more aware of their statutory right to view pupils' records. This study will also encourage parents to request and receive reports about the discipline and behaviour of learners.

This study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge by developing a strategy that will enhance the relationship between the principal and parents towards effective school governance.

1.8. DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.8.1 Co-opted parents

Co-opted parents stand for parents who are chosen for their experience and skill to become members of the school governing body. They are there to widen the experience of the governing body, so that it reflects the local community (RSA, 1997a:10). In addition, Gann (1999: 84) explains that co-opted governors reflect the life of the local community.

1.8.2 Educator

Educator stands for a teacher and vice versa, depending on the literature used (RSA, 1997a:10). In addition to teaching, an educator plays a vital role, including "carrying out or facilitating consultation" between stakeholders in school governance (Gann: 1999: 13)

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1.8.4 SASA

SASA stands for the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1997:10). It is generally understood that the primary aim of this act is to encourage the various stakeholders, e.g. parents, teachers, learners and members of the community who have an interest in the school, to participate in the activities of the school and thus guide them in the process.

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PTA stands for Parent-Teacher Association (RSA, 1997a:10). It is an organisation to which the parents of children at a school and teachers at the school can belong, and which tries to help the school, especially by arranging activities that raise money for it (Cambridge: 2002: 1026).

1.9 THEORETICAL RATIONALE

The notion of parents shaping educational provision is a considerable extension of previously held views on parental involvement in schools. A clear understanding is thus required of the kind of involvement that parents desire and of the conditions necessary to make such involvement productive. But it is the experience of many schools that parents have no wish to interfere in professional matters relating to the organisation and governance of the internal affairs of the school (Cave & Wilkinson 1990:6).

The major problem that principals have to deal with is thus the reluctance on the part of parents to play a meaningful role in the education of their children and thus, in the running of the school. This view is supported by Theron and Bothman (1990:161) where they make a point that “unconcern is a phenomenon which often occurs in modern society and a lack of interest in the parent community”. Bernand in Theron and Bothman (1990:147) identifies three categories of parents: firstly, those who are completely indifferent with regard to the school; secondly, those who have a half-hearted attitude towards the school; and thirdly, those who are really interested in the child and put his/her interests first. Theron and Bothman (1990) identify the many possible causes of parental non-involvement when they suggest that parents are often too busy to devote attention to their children or they avoid the school on the basis of a personal unpleasant experience. For these reasons, headmasters often experience the most problems in getting this group involved.

Van der Westhuizen (1991:424), on the other hand, pronounces that the lack of communication between the school and the parents is an

important reason for parents' lack of involvement in the school's education programme.

Badenhorst (1993:109-110) brings a whole new dimension to the problem of parents not being involved in the education of their children when he states that neither the parent nor the teacher alone can fulfil the education task completely. As partners they should collaborate in the closest possible way. Even though this might be the case, parental involvement and acceptance of responsibilities for their children's education are still very unsatisfactory. Badenhorst & Scheepers (1995:119) identify the following obstacles in the way of effective parental involvement: victimisation: some parents fear that their children might be on targeted by the teaching staff at school, bad news: other parents say their children's school only contacts them to inform them of their child's unbecoming behaviour, atmosphere: some schools, in the opinion of parents, the atmosphere at schools is not conducive to parental involvement in school matters and lack of opportunity: some schools do not create opportunities for parental involvement in school matters.

The principal's task of eliciting and maintaining effective parental involvement in the running of the school could be made a lot easier if he or she attempted to earn the confidence and co-operation of the parents. Once this happens, parents will accept his/her guidance (Buchel, 1995:119). Thus, the management of parental involvement can also play an important role. To support this view parental involvement should be planned, i.e. goals should be set and a school policy devised. Furthermore, parental involvement should be organised, i.e. leaders should be supervised and evaluated, i.e. parent programmes should be evaluated by comparing outcomes with

original goals and adjustments should be made if goals are not reached (Badenhorst & Scheepers 119-120).

Piek (1992:43-44) suggests that it is important for the principal to be able to maintain good public relations with the parents and it is the view of the researcher that by so doing, the principal will be encouraging those parents who do not participate in the running of the school to do so. Parents should know that school education cannot replace home education, but should be considered complementary to it. The principal and staff should also endeavour to meet with parents at every possible opportunity; consideration should also be given to visiting parents at home and parents should be invited to call at the school, for example, in the form of a parents' day where parents are given the opportunity to meet the principal and staff.

1.10 THE SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Only primary schools from previously disadvantaged schools in the Bloemfontein area will form part of this study. The result of this study cannot therefore, necessarily be used as a measure of parental involvement or non-involvement in black primary schools in South Africa, since this research will be conducted only in the four randomly selected primary schools.

The results of this study cannot be used as criteria for the selection of the parent component of the school governing body. In the school governing body, parents represent other parents and are elected by other parents (RSA: 1997b:10).

1.11. STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION.

Chapter 1:

The aim of this chapter is to give a broad overview, background and introduction to the study, the problem statement and the objectives of the research study.

Chapter 2:

Chapter two focuses on a literature review of all the various sources relevant to the study.

Chapter 3:

Chapter three will address the issues of methodology, data collection and sampling strategies used in this study.

Chapter 4:

Chapter four will focus on the research results/findings and the analysis and interpretation of the results.

Chapter 5:

Chapter five provides a summary, conclusions, and makes some compelling recommendations that could be used for further study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter two aims to help the researcher, as Ary (2002:64) points out, to collect data in order to develop perspectives or strategies which will help to overcome the impediments to parental involvement in the governance of schools. Ary (2002:64) goes further by saying that a thorough review of related theory and research enables researchers to put their questions into perspective. An extensive literature review on, amongst others, the pronouncements on the role and functions of the governing bodies in the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996, as well as the history of black education, are some of the areas this chapter intends to explore.

2.2 A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Mabasa and Themane (2002:2) show that one of the challenges in school governance has been the lack of preparation for new governors before they take office. They go further to identify the following as some of those challenges:

- Governors tend to be unfamiliar with meeting procedure;
- There are problems with the specialist language used;
- The difficulties of managing large volumes of paper for example, budgets, code of conduct of learners, minutes of meetings, etc;
- Not knowing how to make a contribution;
- The lack of knowledge of appropriate legislation;
- Feeling inhibited by the presence of other colleagues who seem to have more knowledge; and

- Perceiving their role as simply “rubber stamping” what others have decided on.

Lack of preparation of governors can be traced back to the apartheid years. School governance used to be characterised by authoritarian and exclusive practices and structures that were in place for the purposes of “school management” and were referred to as school committees. The structures did not advocate stakeholder participation and were dominated by school principals reporting directly to government bureaucracy responsible for education (Mabasa and Themane, 2002: 2).

Mbokodi, Msila and Singh (2004: 301) also mention a number of factors that discourage involvement in the governance of schools. According to these authors, the South African Schools Act of 1996 envisaged a partnership between parents and schools in school governance to ensure quality education. It was hoped that involving parents in education would give them insight into their children’s progress, encourage them to participate in decisions involving schools and where necessary make them critical of information on educational issues. It was further hoped that their involvement would influence communities to support their schools.

The introduction of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) also paved the way for greater parental involvement in education. The system requires the parents to share the responsibility of education with the state and to use the knowledge gained to build and develop their communities and the country as a whole. The success of such a system depends on both the parents’ and the teachers’ preparedness as implementers (Mbokodi, Msila and Singh 2004: 302).

But a study conducted recently by Mbokodi, Msila and Singh (2004: 304) found that 90% of parents do not know much about OBE. It appears that there has been little emphasis and focus on parent empowerment. This suggests that the limited success of OBE in South Africa to date is at least partly due to the lack of involvement of parents, especially the insufficient participation of previously disadvantaged parents in managing schools (Mbokodi, Msila and Singh, 2002: 302).

There has to be an urgent national focus on these issues. Parents have to be helped to believe in themselves as they assist their children with school activities. If South Africa wants to be a successful nation, our parents have to be at the forefront of education, in dialogue with teachers and learners. Schools should not alienate parents. If teachers can be convinced of the importance of bringing parents to schools through a number of programmes and if parent-councils do their part in promoting a positive image of schools, then we will be closer to our goal of quality education (Mbokodi, Msila and Singh, 2004: 303).

There needs to be a change of attitudes and perceptions about the way teachers and governors (parents) see each other. The best interests of the child and the school should override any feelings of suspicion, uneasiness and lack of trust that may exist between the two parties. In this regard, Early (1994) in Middlewood and Lumby (1998: 120-121) suggests that governors often have a fairly limited view of their role in school improvement, seeing themselves principally as facilitating the work of the professionals; thus governors are reluctant to monitor the performance of head teachers and/or principals.

The head teacher/principal may be reluctant to allow governors to impinge upon what is seen as the preserve of the professionals.

Governors, because of their lack of knowledge, may feel inhibited about questioning the judgements of the professionals. For whatever reason, many governing bodies have found it difficult in the past to make any meaningful contribution to improvement in their schools (Middlewood & Lumby 1998: 120-121).

Even though the governance of schools is an important aspect of the South African education system, it should be borne in mind that school governors have other aspects of their lives which they deem as more important. This highlights the important issue of time management. Here, Middlewood & Lumby (1998: 130) state that governors have limited time to devote to school governance. Most governors are busy people, often working full-time and it may well be that they need to review carefully the way in which they spend the time which they are able to devote to the governance of the school. The school should thus design the activities of the school governing body around the schedule of the governors and not the other way round.

2.3 THE EDUCATION HISTORY OF PREVIOUSLY DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE

Le Roux (2001:35) mentions that South Africa has a history where the pigeon-holing of categories contributed towards creating a system of beneficiaries (white superiority) and exploitables (black inferiority). The apartheid regime adopted different Education Acts for different population groups in South Africa. An example of this appears in Mothata & Lemmer (2002: 107) where they say that during the apartheid era in South Africa, the divisions between communities were based mainly on race and different laws governed education: the Bantu Education Act No 47 of 1953 was promulgated for Africans, the Coloured Persons Education Act No 47 of 1963 for Coloureds and the

Indians Education Act No 61 of 1965 for Indians. Thus, the governance of schools, in essence, was not important; the division of the population of South Africa into racial groups took precedence over everything else.

In the view of researcher this was an attempt to crush any resistance to apartheid. If there had been an Act of Parliament that had made provision for the governance of previously disadvantaged schools, it goes without saying that the oppressed people would have been in a position of power and influence and this would have encouraged them to take part in the affairs of their schools and in the general education of their children.

According to Le Roux (2001: 31), the ideologisation of educational science in South Africa, resulting in the distortion of the transformative interest thereof, occurred when certain knowledge was produced and appropriated in such a way that a position of power of one group over others was legitimised and sustained. In addition, Le Roux cites Mokgoba (1998: 50) saying that the function of South African education was to mould the African along European lines, to ensure that the educated individual was alienated from his/her roots. Maintaining the supremacy of the white race was more important to the apartheid government than anything else; thus, school governance did not matter at all. Giving previously disadvantaged people the opportunity to govern schools would have put them in a position of power to question the policies of apartheid.

Apartheid education became unsustainable as a result of its connection with an untenable structuralist education theory, which in turn, manifested itself in several unequal practices in schools (Waghid & Schreuder 2000: 85). Structuralism's claim for finality in knowledge

production, the control of people and its unwillingness to foster participation among people problematised and broke down the culture of teaching and learning. Waghid & Schreuder (2000: 85) further state that prior to the 1990s, education in South Africa was seen by many as a structuralist (positivist) instrument to promote inequality in education provision and to deny epistemological access and quality education to the majority of its population. Especially during the late 1970s and mid 1980s, as a consequence of this deliberate exclusion and marginalisation of disadvantaged voices through the promulgation of several repressive legislative Acts, education became an unprecedented site of contestation.

The word "structuralist" derives from the word "structure" which, according to the Cambridge International Dictionary of English (2002: 1446) means "the way in which parts of a system are arranged". Moreover, in the phrase "unequal practices in schools" (Waghid & Schreuder 2000: 85) in the opinion of the researcher, fall just short of saying that previously disadvantaged people were given an education inferior to that of white people; that their classrooms were poorly equipped compared to those of whites; and that their teachers were grossly underpaid compared to their white counterparts.

Oppressed people had no say in their destiny as a nation, let alone in their education; thus, the "educational programmes during the apartheid years were designed with imperialist imperatives and imposed on the majority of South Africa's indigenous population ... education policy under apartheid was manipulated to reflect the values of the dominant power" (Waghid & Schreuder, 2000: 86).

2.4 THE TRANSITION FROM APARTHEID EDUCATION TO OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION

Since the dawn of democracy, a massive reconfiguration of the South African society took place, education was clearly not an exception. It is generally perceived that parental role was very minimal if non-existent during the racially separate education system of the Apartheid regime. The introduction of a single education system, saw the birth of Curriculum 2005, which was later changed to Outcomes Based Education, fostered participation and involvement of parents in the education of their children.

The introduction of outcomes based education created an outcry particularly among those people the researcher terms "the sceptics", i.e. those who doubted the successful implementation of outcome based education. Some of their utterances include remarks such as "Outcomes-based education is doomed to fail". These predictions would be uttered during workshops, in the queue at the automatic teller machine or even in doctors' consulting rooms. With outcomes based education the new political dispensation was trying to teach learners to look at their world with critical eyes and to see how the different parts of the learning areas were linked, thus forming a whole.

With apartheid education, on the other hand, learners relied extensively on rote learning to acquire facts and teachers had limited freedom in terms of the prescribed, formal curriculum (Waghid & Schreuder, 2000:86). Outcomes based education requires a great deal of parental involvement, whereas during the apartheid years, parents were uninvolved and teachers were subjected to a range of formal and personal controls by principals and inspectors (Waghid, & Schreuder, 2000).

There were also no mechanisms put in place in order to bolster the involvement of parents in the education of their children. This was as a direct result of apartheid, resulting in a “lack of respect, trust and co-operation among management (departmental inspectors and subject advisors), principals, teachers, students and parents. This rejection of human values made it difficult for co-operative action (say between management, teachers, students and parents) to occur in the planning, management and implementation of educational matters and problems in schools” (Waghid & Schreuder 2000).

2.5 THE BEGINNINGS OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE: MANGAUNG CASE-STUDY

Prior to the introduction of the South African Schools Act, which empowered and encouraged participation of parents towards the smooth running of schools, it is essential to reflect on the past approaches followed by schools to encourage participation of parents. With specific reference to the Mangaung area, there were various structures which were based on ethnic grounds. For example, for the Tswanas the board was called Mocwedi with its head offices at Sehunelo S.S.S. For South-Sotho speaking people, the board was called Tiyang with its head-offices at Lereko Senior Secondary School (Mofokeng, 1999).

“Educators at school became aware that they also had rights which were ignored by the school committees. Therefore, the Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA), which were relatively inclusive, came into being. The very last structure to be formed by the erstwhile Department of Education and Training was the Parent Student Teacher Association (PTSA). This body was more inclusive and also somewhat more democratic in nature” (Mofokeng, 1999). He went further to say that

because the school boards were not all inclusive, the then Department of Education and Training decided to replace the school boards with the all-powerful school committees which enjoyed absolute power.

Van Rooyen, Van Rooyen and Terblanche [s.a.] (168 – 169) mention some of the “powers, functions and duties of a school committee which include the following:

“to expel any pupil on the grounds of morality, continual misbehaviour, lack of cleanliness or any other reason which the school committee may consider of sufficient importance to the school, provided that the parent of such a pupil shall have the right of appeal to the school board against such expulsion. The principal of the school had the right to suspend any child on his own authority should there be reasonable grounds for believing that such a child should be expelled for any of the reasons specified above.”

In the course of 1984, a communication structure was devised by the erstwhile Department of Education in order to effect a liaison between parents, teachers and pupils. Bodies such as the representative pupils' council, the parent-teacher association and the school liaison committee were proposed for the necessary liaisons. These bodies were not controlled by regulations because each school constituted such bodies according to its own needs and circumstances. The aim of these bodies was to cater for the needs of a specific school; thus, the need for national action fell away, meaning the national government did not interfere (Department of Education and Training, 1991: 2).

The fact that each school constitutes such bodies according to its own needs and circumstances (Department of Education and Training,

1991: 2) resulted in a cumbersome situation. Policy guidelines germinating from this were very vague. What was supposed to have happened is that the state had to provide guidelines that would guide schools.

2.6 REFLECTIONS ON THE VIEWS OF PARENTS AGAINST THOSE OF PRINCIPALS REGARDING THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

A point is made by Lello (1993: 56) that “not so long ago the general concern was that schools were too forbidding for parents to enter. Teachers and heads of schools (principals) were considered unapproachable and most parents felt intimidated when they entered the school”. Though this might have manifested itself in different ways, the fact remains that there was a time when principals wielded a lot of power in terms of school management and governance. Teaching was considered to be the domain of teachers and principals.

Nowadays it is imperative that the principal, teachers and parents trust one another, otherwise misunderstandings and suspicions will stand in the way of effective school governance. According to Harris, Jamieson and Russ (1996: 40) difficulties will occur, if for some reason, the local community, with its particular culture and values, is indifferent to the benefits of school. Cullingford (1985) is quoted by Harris, Jamieson and Russ (1996: 41) saying that it is clear that mutual suspicion between parents and teachers still continues. Beneath the surface of well-intended meetings lies misunderstandings and indifference.

There are many parents with no professional qualifications and as a result, they may feel inferior to their children's teachers and as Sayer

and Williams (1989: 110-111) point out this could be an impediment to parental involvement in the governance of schools. What is needed here is not an emphasis on parental power, but on partnership and responsibility. The parent is the educator of the child and his/her responsibility does not end as the child enters school on the first day. A school should thus be more than a centre of learning; it should be a place where teachers, parents and the governing body all have roles to play. One does not need academic qualifications to play such a role or to be a parent. This fact can be the starting point for school principals: making parents feel that they are important, irrespective of their background. The researcher believes that there can be no co-operation if the parents are not made to feel that they are important to the school.

Blase and Blase (1997: 76) quote Lieberman, saying that tension exists between parents and teachers due to the fact that parents have been separated for so long from the school by educational bureaucracy. Furthermore, it can be noted that teachers often doubt that parents want to be substantially involved in schools (Blase and Blase: 1997).

In support of the statement that the impact of the principal's attitude as perceived by the parents has a positive or negative impact on their involvement in school governance, an unnamed district staff person is quoted in Clark and Lacey (1997:24) as saying that, during a workshop, the principals were ignorant of what consultants could do and some even joined their staff in expressing hostility. The researcher is of the view that the word consultants in that context could have meant parents.

One of the reasons for the evident lack of effectiveness among governing bodies is the hostility displayed by head teachers (principals)

and teachers to governing bodies' increased power (Early, Fidler and Ouston, 1996: 150). Additionally, as Hargreaves and Goodson in Bell and Harrison (1998: 49) remark that it is what teachers are actually doing that constitutes professionalism. Given the above, it is not surprising that the attitude of the principal will be negative towards parental involvement in the governance of schools, since parental involvement might be seen as an intrusion on their (principals' and teachers') profession.

In some instances, education professionals have been criticised for adopting a so-called 'conversion approach' to parental involvement, seeking to change parents' attitudes and bring them round to the professionals' viewpoint (Crawford, Kydd and Parker (1994: 20).

There is also a tendency among principals and teachers to draft a school policy then hand it over to the members of the governing body for their approval. The result, as Middlewood and Lumby (1998: 125) demonstrate, is that members of the governing body may question the content, layout and wording of such a document. Such a situation will not help to encourage co-operation between the school governing body and the school, because the principal and the teachers might feel that their policies are being significantly altered and that the school governing body does not appreciate the work that went into the writing of such a policy. With regard to this, the researcher feels that parents will not be at fault, since they would not have been consulted when such a policy was developed and written.

It is also the view of the researcher that parents should not only be given the opportunity to govern schools, as the law requires, but should also be given the opportunity to address carefully the question of how the school policy and practice should be improved in the light of what

they say about the school (Crawford, *et al*, 1994: 215). In addition, the afore-mentioned authors go on to say that in such a situation, it is apparent that the initiative for change as a consequence of school evaluation rests firmly with the school's head teacher (principal). This gives the school personnel the opportunity to ignore or explain away unpalatable criticism.

Involving parents in school governance has never been an easy task. Chapman, Froumin and Aspin (1995: 20) declare that members of (newly-created) school councils lacked competence in those areas in which they were now required to be capable. Another difficulty is the fact that many school council members lacked the qualifications and even the enthusiasm for the now necessary participation in decision making.

The researcher supports the view of Wolfendale (1989: 121) when she mentions that there are fundamental differences between the rights and responsibilities of individual parents for their own children and the collective rights of parents to influence the way school runs and further questions whether schools are to work, instead of the parent or on behalf of the parent. The researcher feels that even though it is right for the principal to have this in mind, he/she should bear in mind that the parents are not there to take his/her duties, obligations and responsibilities away from him/her as the educational manager of the school; they are there only to help with the governance of the school.

Basicia and Hargreaves (2000: 217) cite Hargreaves and Fullan commenting that teachers experience more anxiety about their relationship and interactions with parents than almost any other aspect of their work. From an ideal point of view, parents and teachers usually live in conditions of mutual distrust and enmity (Basicia and Hargreaves

2000: 217). The principal, who is considered by the parent to be bureaucratic, i.e. making and implementing decisions, will lose out on the importance of collaboration, which gets persons involved in owning the decision-making process, as well as making the decisions themselves (Brubaker and Coble, 1997: 57).

The redeployment of educators from one school to another has created a kind of competition for many learners in South African schools and has inevitably led to a situation in which the importance of parents in the governance of schools has taken a back seat as compared to securing that educators are not redeployed from their schools. This situation will, in itself, make parents feel that they are not important to schools. In a situation like this, it is inevitable that the principal will overlook the fact that parents have a very broad and democratic choice as to where to place their children. Thus, the principal has to ask him-/herself, as Glatter (1992: 68-69) puts it, where the parents would get their information; how the perception on which they base their decisions would be formed and how individual decisions would be affected by individual networks and by "group psychologies", if they are not made to feel that they are important to the school.

Glatter (1992: 69) goes on explain that there are practical features that parents desire; for example, geographical convenience, educational characteristics, traditional academic qualities and good discipline. If parents have the perception that the principal holds his/her own interests and those of his/her staff above these, it is highly possible that parents will simply avoid sending their children to such a school.

2.6.1 Areas of contestation between parents and teachers

The following are identified as some of the problems that stand in the way of establishing strong partnerships between teachers and parents (Bascia and Hargreaves, 2000: 217-219):

- The problem of the unit of concern: Parents are primarily concerned about their own individual child; whereas teachers should be concerned about and balance the needs of all children in a group.

- The problem of time and scope: Time after school is often taken up by, for example, increased paper-work and a proliferation of meetings. It is thus hard for teachers to find time to interact with all the parents of the learners they teach.

- The problem of increased accountability: Increased accountability makes many parents more aware of and attentive to their educational rights. Teachers may find themselves under pressure to explain and justify what they do, rather than being treated as classical professionals who exercise their judgement to the best of their ability.

- The problem of unpreparedness: Few teachers are trained in how to interact and work effectively with adults in general and parents in particular.

Calitz, Viljoen and Van der Bank (1992: 102) comment that most parent-teacher contact in urban areas is inevitably, on occasions, deliberately planned for this purpose by the schools. However, many of these meetings turn out to be impersonal, stereotyped and therefore

of low communication value, because they take place only on rare occasions; because there are so many parents, the teacher-parent ratio is a problem and the classroom context of the meeting often has unpleasant associations for many parents.

Similarly, Badenhorst (1993: 110) maintains that parents do not want to get involved; do not know how to get involved and what is expected of them; do not have time to get involved and find it difficult to get involved in rural and urban areas. Teachers, on the other hand “regard themselves as superior and think that they know better; do not want to work with parents; do not know how to involve parents and how to utilise them; are negative towards parents and regard them as inferior, intruding and troublesome; are very often afraid of parental involvement and therefore keep them at a distance and do not see the role and function of the parent in the teaching “factory”.

In some cases however, individuals become involved in school governance to further their own interests. This view is supported by Piek (1992: 8) when he shows that in many communities, the parent association is not representative of all parents, but is dominated by a small clique which uses the organisation as a way to further their personal social ambitions. In addition, Van Deventer and Kruger (2003: 257) maintain that in a community there are always vested interests and go on to identify a number of areas which might be sources of potential conflict between the principal and the community in which the school is located. They state that when these interests are threatened by change, the principal can expect resistance and even open hostility. The principal's failure to involve others may well encourage members of the community to undermine his/her authority. Van Deventer and Kruger (2003: 258) also mentioned parochialism, which might lead to interference by, for example, political office-

bearers and local dignitaries, since some communities are under the impression that the government school in their community belongs to them entirely. Many school principals have found themselves rejected by the community because of their appointment in a region where the ethnic majority is different from the one to which the principal belongs.

Another challenge for principals could be in the form of external pressure exerted by parents. "Some parents expect special treatment or favours because of contributions they have made" (Van Deventer and Kruger, 2003). If, for example, a parent has donated twenty litres of paint to the school, he/she might expect that his/her child will automatically pass his/her examinations, even though such a child's academic progress does not warrant it (Van Deventer and Kruger, 2003). There are also conflicts that arise due to inter-group rivalry within the community. These conflicts "can adversely affect the operation of the school" (Van Deventer and Kruger 2003: 259). Educators, whose backgrounds differ from that of the community, might find that their efforts to involve the community in school activities are rejected due to their different religious, social and political background (Van Deventer and Kruger 2003).

The exclusion of parents from school activities results from the fact that "some educators believe that parents and other members of the community are impinging on their professional terrain by becoming involved in school activities. Principals who believe that parents are impinging on their professional terrain, usually resist all attempts to involve the community" (Van Deventer and Kruger 2003: 259).

2.7 UNPACKING THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT NO. 84 OF 1996

The democratisation of education includes the idea that stakeholders,

such as parents, teachers, learners and others (e.g. members of the community near the school) should participate in the activities of the school. Through representation on the school governing body, all the stakeholders can share in the decisions made by that body. The members of the school governing body are also accountable to those stakeholders (Department of Education, 1997: 6).

According to RSA (1997a: 19) as a school leader, one needs to plan with stakeholders, get feedback from them and plan with them again if something is not working. The Act goes on to say that change involves everyone at school and if people feel that they are important to the change process and understand why the change process is important, they are more likely to co-operate in change.

2.7.1 Governance

School governance as regards the governing body's functions, means determining the policy and rules by which the school is to be organised and controlled. It includes ensuring that such rules and policies are carried out effectively in terms of the law (Department of Education, 1997: 7).

The following are some of the responsibilities of the school governing body (Department of Education, 1997: 14).

The governing body should:

- Promote the best interests of the school;
- Ensure the development of the school by providing quality (high standards) education for all learners at the school;
- Adopt (accept) a constitution;

- Develop the mission statement of the school, which refers to what the school wants to achieve;
- Adopt (accept) a code of conduct that refers to rules of behaviour for the learners at the school;
- Support the principal, educators and other staff carrying out their professional functions;
- Decide on school times, taking into account the employment provisions of staff members;
- Control and maintain school property, buildings and grounds;
- Encourage parents, learners, educators and other staff to render work willingly for the school;
- Recommend and advise the HoD on the appointment of educators and non-educator staff;
- Decide on the extra-mural curriculum; that is, after school hours;
- Decide on choice of subjects according to the provincial curriculum policy;
- Buy textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school;
- Try to add to the funds provided by the State to improve the quality of education in the school;
- Start and administer a school fund;
- Open and maintain a bank account for the school;
- Prepare an annual budget; that is, planning the school finances for the next year;
- Submit the budget to parents;
- Ensure that the school fees (school funds to be paid by the parents of learners) are collected according to decisions made by stakeholders;
- Keep the financial records of the school; and
- Meet with or consult parents, learners and educators where required by the Schools Act.

It stands to reason that evidently, the South African School Act contains very crucial and significant guidelines, which clearly explains the roles of the various stakeholders in the governance of schools. Through this Act, parents and teachers know where they stand in terms of their roles and responsibilities.

2.7.2 Professional management

Professional management refers to the day-to-day administration and organisation of teaching and learning at the school and the performance of the departmental responsibilities that are prescribed by law. It includes the organisation of all the activities which support teaching and learning (RSA, 1997: 11). The Schools Act also stipulates that the professional management of a public school must be undertaken by the principal, under the authority of the HoD. It is the view of the researcher that HoD as used in this context refers to the Head of Department who is under the authority of the particular provincial MEC of education and not the head of department at school level. The HoD has the power to expect co-operation and compliance from the principal in matters of school management (RSA, 1997: 12).

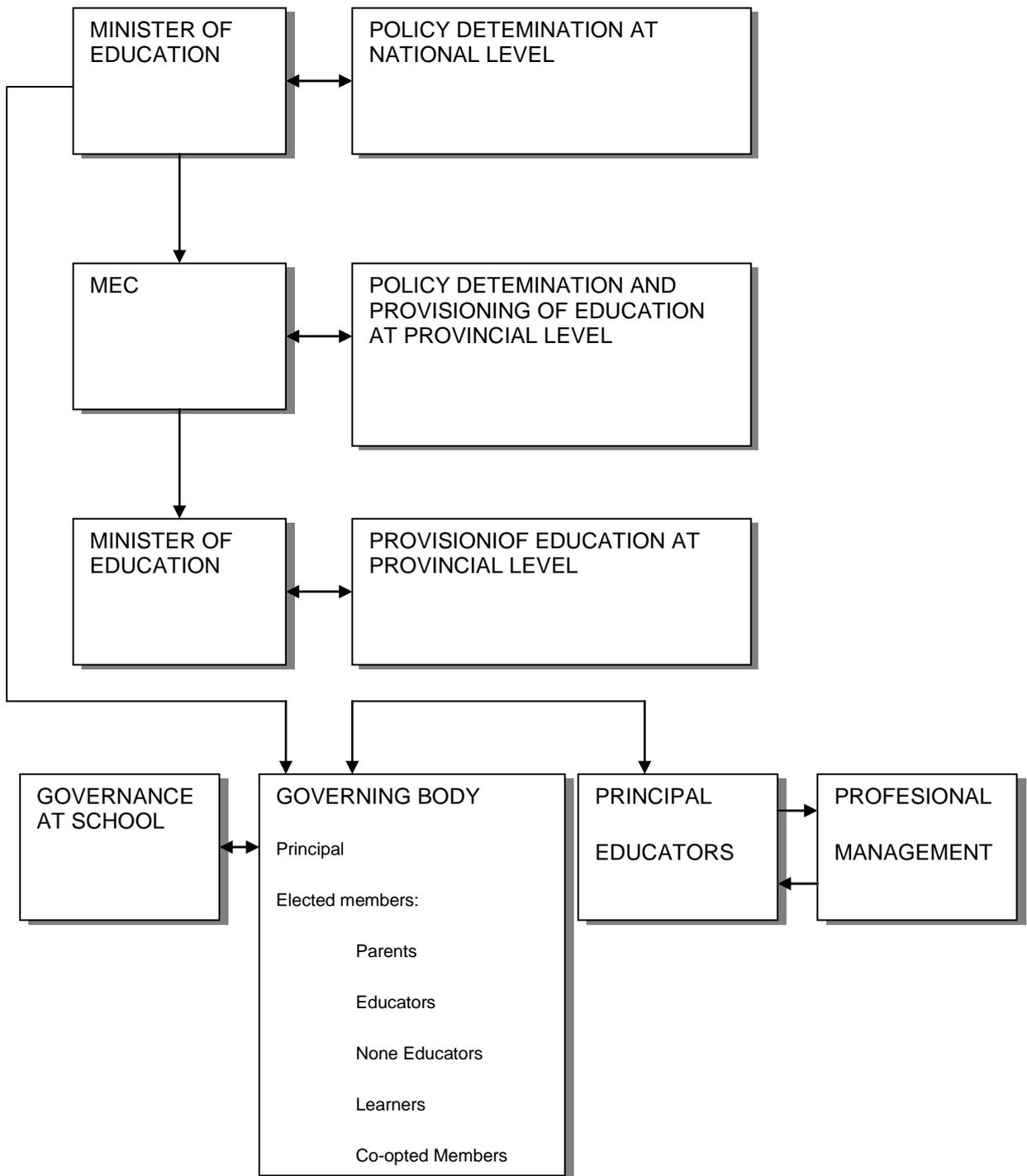
The following are some of the responsibilities of the principal (RSA, 1997b: 14):

- The principal should carry out and perform professional (management) functions;
- The principal is responsible for the day-to-day administration and organisation of teaching and learning at the school;
- The principal must organise all the activities which support teaching and learning;

- The principal manages personnel and finances;
- The principal must decide on the extra-mural curriculum; that is, all the activities that assist with teaching and learning during school hours;
- The principal should decide on textbooks, educational materials and equipment to be bought.

The following diagram shows where the governing body fits into the structure of school governance (Department of Education, 1997: 14). For the purpose of this study only the roles of the governing body, principal, educators and non-educator staff members, parents and learners will be discussed.

Figure 1: The place of a governing body in the structure of school governance.



Below is the explanation of what is depicted in this diagram. It clearly shows that:

- The governing body is part of the governance of the school under the authority of the national and provincial structures, namely the Minister of Education, the MEC and the HoD;
- The governing body is responsible for the making of policy or the laying down of broad guidelines for planning and decision-making at the school; and
- All stakeholders are represented as elected members of the governing body.

The Department of Education (1997: 17), as depicted in Figure 1 shows that the principal:

- Is responsible for the professional management of the school;
- Serves as a member of the governing body in his or her official capacity; and
- Must help the governing body to perform its functions.

The Department of Education (1997: 17–18), as depicted in Figure 1 shows that:

- The educators and non-educator staff members serve on governing bodies;
- Parents must see to it that a learner attends a school from the first school day of the year in which a learner reaches the age of seven years, until the last day of the year in which a learner reaches the age of fifteen years, or Grade nine, whichever occurs first;

- Parents must see to it that a high standard of education is provided by schools; and
- Learners in the eighth grade or higher, serve as elected members (elected by the Representative Council of Learners) of a governing body to represent the interests of the learners of a school.

2.8 NATURE AND FUNCTIONS OF A GOVERNING BODY

Here the researcher sees it as fitting that sections of the S.A. Schools Act relevant to this study should be discussed (RSA, 1997b: 23 –34).

2.8.1 Section 16 (1): The nature of a school governing body

This section, which deals with the nature of a governing body states that a governing body is a statutory body of people who are elected to govern a school. This means that a governing body is set up by an Act of Parliament, in particular, the Schools Act. The school governors, who are the people serving on a governing body, represent the school community. The governance of every public school is vested in its governing body.

2.8.2 Section 16 (2): The purpose of a school governing body

The purpose of a governing body is to perform efficiently its functions in terms of the Schools Act on behalf of the school and for the benefit of the school community. A governing body is therefore placed in a position of trust in a school. In other words, a governing body is expected to act in good faith, to carry out all its duties and functions on behalf of a school and be accountable for its actions. All school

governors must know what their duties and functions are and how these fit in with the duties of the principal.

2.8.3 Section 29: The election of office bearers in a school governing body

It is stated in this section that members of an elected governing body should, amongst themselves, elect office bearers. The office bearers must include a chairperson, a treasurer (to look after financial matters) and a secretary. A governing body can choose whether to have additional office bearers such as a vice-chairperson, vice-secretary and so on.

2.8.4 Section 31: Term of office of office bearers in a school governing body

This section deals with the office bearers' terms of office. A member of a governing body who is not a learner may not serve on the governing body for longer than three years, unless he or she is re-elected. A learner may not serve on the governing body for longer than one year, unless he or she is re-elected. An office-bearer of the governing body, for example the chairperson, secretary or treasurer may not hold his or her position as office bearer for longer than one year, unless re-elected.

2.8.5 Section 18(2): The requirements for the constitution of a school governing body

Here, the requirements for the constitution (of a governing body) are dealt with. The constitution of a governing body will contain many

principles and rules guiding the way in which the governing body must function. The following details must be written into the constitution:

- The governing body must have a meeting at least once every school term;
- The governing body must have a separate meeting with each of the following groups of people at least once a year: parents, learners, educators and other staff at the school;
- Minutes of the governing body meetings must be kept; in other words, a brief summary of proceedings and decisions made of every meeting must be written down and kept safely; and
- The minutes (written record) of governing body meetings must be made available for inspection by the HoD.

The governing body must report on its activities to parents, learners, educators and other staff of the school least once a year.

2.9 INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

Since the 1980 Education Act central government has legislated that all school have their own governing bodies, including elected parent governors and elected teacher governors (Blandford, 1997: 45). Thomas and Martin appear in Blandford (1997: 45) saying that the constitution and functions of governing bodies were set out in Instruments and Articles of Government and model articles which dated back to 1940. The 1986 Education Act determined the type and number of governors according to the size and status of the school. Governing bodies of maintained schools are to include representatives of the LEA (Local Education Authority), parents, teachers and members of the local business community Blandford (1996: 45).

According to Levacic (1995), in Hansraj (2007: 35), one of the distinctive features of the English and Welsh version of school-based management is the significant, formal power of the SGB. In Britain, the official Guide to the Law for School Governors states that the SGB has a general responsibility for managing the school effectively, acting within the framework set by legislation and the policies of the LEA. One of the major responsibilities of the SGB is the management of the school budget. The principle of the Local Management of Schools (LMS) is that the SGB, together with the principal, decides how to spend the overall budget, taking the needs of the school and its learners' needs into consideration.

The SGB in conjunction with the principal (head teacher) is best able to judge the particular needs of a school, rather than local government working from the 'office'. In keeping with the perception of "the parent" as a neutral political figure, it was felt that SGB, with the professional guidance of head teachers, would be able to counteract any excesses of local authority policy. To that end, the 1986 Act required that LEAs make a sum of money available to each SGB, which they could spend on books and materials in a way they felt to be appropriate, subject to the permission of the head teacher. Such a development would enable governors to have a real input into the curriculum of the school, since the principal (head teacher) would have to discuss with them how to spend their money (Hansraj, 2007).

According to Blanchard, Lovell and Ville (1989: 11), in Hansraj (2007), in Great Britain, the 1986 Education Act was an important step towards reworking the balance of power between LEA's teachers, central government and the SGB. The 1986 Act not only helped this process by changing the balance of governing bodies - reducing the number of LEA governors to equal the number of parent-governors - but also gave

governors, among many others, enhanced responsibilities, the power to modify the LEA's curriculum policy statement and the responsibility for a part of the school budget. The new responsibilities meant that governors had to be accountable to the parents. The 1986 Act required the SGB to furnish parents with an annual report, detailing their work during the year and to hold an annual parent's meeting to discuss the report (Hansraj, 2007: 35-36).

The following as stated by Early (1994: 78) are the main features of a governing body:

- Gives time to school;
- Supports school, staff and pupils
- Has knowledge of educational issues;
- Has a balance of skills and expertise - representative of local community;
- Shares tasks and responsibilities within the governing body - teamwork;
- Works well with head and staff;
- Visits school; sees school "at work";
- Involved in key functions
- Promotes school in the community and develops links;
- Is aware of roles and responsibilities (governance and management);
- Clear view and understanding of school's ethos, aims, etc.

Early (1994: 81) also identified the following factors as the main ones that prevent governing bodies from functioning effectively:

- Lack of time;

- Insufficient knowledge and understanding of educational issues;
- Unwillingness and a lack of commitment;
- Imbalance of skill/expertise/experience;
- Constant change/innovation overload;
- Political partisanship/functions;
- Lack of awareness of how school works;
- Unsure of proper role and function;
- Information overload;
- No clear idea of committee's role;
- Financial problems/funds retained at centre;
- Overcrowded agenda;
- Too many demands/responsibilities.

2.10 NATIONAL INVESTIGATION INTO SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

The then (2003) Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, launched the Ministerial Committee on School Governance in Cape Town. The Committee was tasked by the Minister with investigating the present state of governance in schools (issued by the Ministry of Education, 18 March 2003, Department of Education).

The South African Schools Act created space for a new landscape for schools and their governance. The Act, which provides for the election of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) for a three-year term of office, granted schools and their constituent communities, a significant say in important matters about school life for the first time. It stipulates that a simple majority of members on a SGB should be parents and the remainder must be drawn from educators, learners (in secondary schools) and non-educator school support staff.

The Act and its regulations empower the SGB to make decisions with respect to matters such as school fees, school development plans, school policy, language policy, educator appointments and the custodianship of school monies. With these responsibilities come certain duties that include the need to operate the school within the provisions of the Constitution of South Africa; the need to keep the school in good financial standing and to make sure that the school supplies good quality education.

It has become clear that while many schools have successfully begun to implement the policy with respect to governance, there are a significant number of schools where this is not the case. As a result, the Minister believed that the functioning of SGBs had to be reviewed. The Minister's concerns were based on reports that some SGBs were not working completely within the spirit and mandate of the South African Constitution. In some instances, SGBs in both their practices and constitutions were violating the access to education and language provisions of the Act, while others were not setting fees and managing their finances in keeping with regulations. As stated elsewhere in this discussion, this is a serious breach of the law.

It has also been reported to the Minister that some SGBs rarely meet and have not taken any significant decisions during their terms of office, leaving the school leaderless. This is thus not in line with Section 18 (2) of the S.A. Schools Act which states that the governing body must have a meeting at least once every school term (issued by the Ministry of Education, 18 March 2003, Department of Education).

2.11 THE DICTATES OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

How do parents perceive the school, the principal and the teachers? Do these individuals in the teaching profession understand “where parents come from”? Or are parents simply ignorant of the important role that they have to play in the governance of schools? In an attempt to answer these questions, reference is made to the results of a study conducted by Smit and Liebenberg (2003:2) which showed evidence that parents experience school staff as being out of touch with the realities of sub-economic living conditions.

It is further explained that teachers should be more in touch with the realities of the communities in which they work and that parents and children should be treated with empathy and respect, as well as offered the opportunity of empowerment (Smit and Liebenberg 2003). From the above, it becomes clear that the socio-economic status of learners and parents plays an important role in parental non-involvement in the governance of schools. For example, if the school was to send home those learners who did not pay the school fees with letters reminding parents to pay school fees on a regular basis e.g. weekly, this might be viewed as being out of touch with the socio-economic status of learners and their parents.

That the socio-economic status of learners and parents plays an important role in parental non-involvement in governance of schools is very true. For example, at certain schools, such as the one where the researcher is employed, parents who do not pay school fees are often asked to stay behind after a parents’ meeting. Alternatively, letters are given to learners to remind parents that they have not paid their school fees, which is embarrassing to both learners and parents. This might be

seen as the school staff being ignorant of parents' socio-economic status and as pointed out, not being in touch with the realities of the communities in which they function. The staff at schools should take cognisance of the socio-economic factors that shape the communities in which they work.

It becomes evident that teachers and school principals wield a good deal of power in sub-economic communities that they are perhaps unaware of. The treatment parents and their children receive from school staff may very well be sending parents and learners the message that they are no better than the context in which they live, thereby maintaining low levels of morale and initiative (Smit & Liebenbrg, 2003: 2). This point of view is also supported by Van Wyk & Lemmer, (2007: 5) as mentioned earlier. It is thus important for teachers to keep in mind how they regard learners from impoverished families and what attitudes they demonstrate towards such families. This largely determines the nature of home-school relations in schools embedded in these communities. It is unfortunate that some parents feel that they are judged by virtue of their economic status and not on the content of their character; particularly in as far as school governance is concerned.

Parents' own experience of school is also important. Some parents may have felt that school is not a place with which they would associate themselves, due to, for example, the attitude of teachers. It is thus not surprising that some parents seem to show no interest in the activities of the school. In dealing with such parents, Gann (1999: 81) concurs that those schools are starting from a position where parents may distrust all organisations, all large institutions; parents whose own experience of life is that society excludes them from decision-making and, indeed, from any significant power over their own and their

children's lives. Parents' own experience of school may well have been negative and they will expect that their experience as parents of schoolchildren will be somewhat unrewarding too, of poor results negatively reported to them, of blame and of failure. Teachers, too, will recognise that no-one has thought to prepare them for this vital aspect of their work.

"Schools which are complacent about their relationships with parents say one of two things (sometimes both). They say that parents (those that don't turn up to parents' meetings) are apathetic; they don't think that their children's education is important. Or they say that parents don't feel the need to come, because they are happy with everything the school does. Parents feel like intruders in many schools and some schools are happy that this should be the case" (Gann, 1998). If this is the way in which parents are viewed by educators, then school governance is in a serious state of affairs, or as Gann (1998) puts it, any governing body that accepts these views is doing its parent body – even if only a small part of it – a grave injustice.

2.12 FACTORS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO NON-INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS IN GOVERNANCE OF SCHOOLS.

Challenges facing effective involvement of parents in the affairs of the school, stem from factors both inside and outside the school. They do not always lie within the school only. There are certain factors outside the school which impede on parental involvement in the governance of schools, and the researcher would like to discuss them.

The study by Chaka and Dieltiens (2006) found that, up until now, black parental involvement in the education of historically disadvantaged

schools has been beset with problems that undermine initiatives to promote involvement. Some of the factors that discourage involvement include:

- **Unemployment** which gives rise to the parents' low socio-economic status and which in turn does not permit parents to provide books and other relevant learning materials necessary for successful study. This also limits their means to give their children the levels of privacy and comfort that enhance serious study. At the end of the day, children go home to parents who have no resources to help them achieve their educational objectives.

- **Lack of support programmes that empower black parents** to participate fully and meaningfully in education.
- **Lack of guidance teachers' services** that empower learners to enhance their skills. Those employed by the department of education are few in number to cater for learners previously disadvantaged schools
- **Lack of library facilities** that would solve some of the black learners' problems experienced at home. For example, there are only two libraries in the township where this research was carried out.
- **Education that is made irrelevant to community needs** by ignoring cultural traditions and marginalising the learners by teaching them curricula that ignores indigenous knowledge.

One possible way forward is for provincial departments of education to form regional parent representative councils that would operate under a provincial parent representative council. These in turn would fall under a national parent body representing all South African provinces.

The function of such a body would be to garner the necessary support for all parents, especially those with a low socio-economic status, so that they are sufficiently empowered to play their part in their children's education.

Democratic governance in the post-apartheid era also holds the promise of transforming schools along the lines of social justice and human rights. SGBs provide an opportunity for local people to take part in school-based decisions, providing a platform for previously unheard voices and undermining structural hierarchies and authoritarian principals.

Recently doubt has been cast on the effectiveness of school governing bodies. Are SGB members able to represent their constituencies? Former Minister of Education Kader Asmal appointed a task team to investigate, among other things, the effectiveness and functioning of SGBs. Whether governance structures become forces for change or stalwarts of the status quo depends on a range of factors including the legislative make-up of the structures and the wider policy environment affecting schooling. Crucial, too, is the ability, drive and determination of parents, learners and teachers sitting on SGBs.

Some of the obstacles SGBs face include the basic legislative conditions for democratic school governance which were set out in the South African Schools Act, 1996, which devolved a wide range of powers to school governing bodies. SGBs were charged with writing mission statements as well as other school policies. In principle, therefore, SGBs had real leverage to change school ethos and challenge the grip of school management teams which had until then ruled with impunity. In practice, however, SGBs face a number of

obstacles in flexing their authority and becoming truly representative structures.

The **first** is the policy requirement that SGBs supplement state funds to improve education at school level, either through school fees or other forms of fund-raising (RSA, 1996b: Section 36). Arguably, therefore, SGBs function as government's arm to provide educational services as efficiently as possible. This brings private resources into areas where the state has traditionally been responsible. It is everybody's guess whether members of the school governing body will be able to perform this function in order to enable the school to function as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Schooling is not a matter of free-market choice, and SGBs are legally obliged to obtain the agreement of parents when setting fees. Nevertheless, there is an uneasy blend of both these concepts at work in SGBs. The uneasiness results from the different capacities of local communities to raise additional resources. Without a methodical calculation of what each school needs to provide adequate minimum learning conditions, and with constraints on state funding, SGBs are obliged to cover the shortfall.

This has been to the advantage of well-resourced schools, which are able to draw on the resources of their communities to bolster the quality of education despite cuts in public spending. Poorer schools, while receiving a progressively greater proportion of state non-personnel allocations, are unable to match the spending power of schools in the top two quintiles. Historically disadvantaged schools are less likely, therefore, to be able to fulfil their legislated mandate to ensure quality education. With the tightening up of state funding, SGB

energy is often focused on the budgeting and administration of school fees rather than on attending to the culture and mores of the school.

In addition, parent representatives on SGBs are forced by the pressure of financial constraint to press for the payment of fees, even where their "constituents" are unable to afford such fees. Parents may accuse each other of refusing to pay school fees. It is worth noting here that it is the experience of the researcher that in some schools, learners have been requested to bring their parents to school due to non-payment of school fees. With the emphasis on the fees function, SGBs may well be seen as an extension of school management rather than as serving their purpose of representing parents. In another way, the government has redirected conflict to the local communities.

This is frustrating to school governors. As the SGB chairperson in one Gauteng school put it, "The announcement in the newspaper by the Minister saying that no child should be turned away from school, and then he comes to you and says, why don't you collect school fees? One lady from the Department was here saying why don't we raise school fees? That is the same Department that says no child must be turned away".

The **second** difficulty SGBs face in performing their democratic functions lies in the complexity of policy, which has required intensive training of SGB members. SGBs need to be aware of educational legislation, policies and regulations, as well as laws related to labour. Without information on their legislated duties, SGB members, especially illiterate parents, often defer to the school principal for guidance, especially on technical matters such as drawing up the school budget. The inclusion of parents into overly formalised procedures, without the necessary training, may work only to increase their alienation and

frustration with decision-making. Clearly, there is very little parents can do if they have no idea what their role is all about.

Workshops were held at a distance from the school and travelling costs limited attendance. Workshops were badly timed, with participants from a rural school having to leave early to collect livestock. In some instances, only some members of the SGB were trained, while the rest relied on assimilation from their trained colleagues.

The **third** hurdle SGBs face is the slippage into forms of oligarchy. While it appears that the majority of schools have complied with the legal requirements for the election of various stakeholders onto SGBs, concern has been raised about the representivity of school governors. For example, men tended to dominate in SGB structures, particularly as chairpersons.

It must not be forgotten that principals and teachers are usually respected and trusted by the communities they serve. Moreover, principals have long-term experience in the education system and therefore are influential because of the knowledge and information they possess.

While the expectation is that parents choose to be on SGBs for altruistic reasons, improving the school for the benefit of their children, the status and power derived from an elected position cannot be underestimated. As a district official in Gauteng revealed, parents have been known to “buy” a learner, by paying the learner’s school fees, for the sole purpose of standing for SGB election. Members of SGBs have control over financial resources, but the authority to appoint teachers also gives parents significant status in some communities. According to one district official, a position on the SGB was sometimes seen as a

stepping stone to further political positions, particularly in local government. Problems with power relations are most visible in the lack of involvement of learners in SGBs (Chaka and Dieltiens 2006).

The latter statement is thus not in line with Section 18 (2) of the S.A. Schools Act which state that the school governing body must have a separate meeting with each of the following groups of people at least once a year: parents, learners, educators and other staff members at the school. Often they are not informed about the meetings or are preoccupied with exams or extra-mural activities. In one former Model C school, learner representatives were asked to leave the meeting after they had put on the table issues they wanted discussed. RCL (Representative Council of Learners) members at some other schools argued that their views or proposals were never taken seriously (Chaka and Dieltiens 2006).

Parents, however, are often accused of apathy and reluctance to attend parent meetings. SGBs sometimes have difficulty in meeting quorum requirements.

There may be a complex set of reasons why relatively disadvantaged members of a community fail either to participate or to have their interests win out in decision-making processes. Lack of expertise may explain why parents are reticent to participate in governance structures, and why those with educational advantage and social status are able to dominate. There are practical constraints, too, such as lack of time or money to pay transport costs to attend meetings.

While much still needs to be done in building inclusive school governance structures, arguments that romanticise SGBs as holding the key to transforming education should be carefully looked at. Their

scope of influence is over the school. Among others, SGBs are not the site for considerations of equity, for example. Rather, it is the state and the Departments of Education that have the appropriate tools to deal with inequalities between schools. Furthermore, the channels for pressurising government to use those tools lie outside the SGBs. Governing bodies get their terms of reference from national legislation, but they do not in turn inform national policy. A structure that could provide SGBs with such an opportunity is the National Education and Training Council, which was proposed by the National Education Policy Act, 1996.

There are other mechanisms, however, that could serve this purpose – for example, the use of media, other formal linkages with government, and the various SGB associations at both provincial and national level (Chaka and Dieltiens, 2006).

2.12.1 Human Nature Factors

At school level for example teachers and administrators might fear the self-interest and confidential issues that parents may bring to meetings with them. One example of a parent's hidden agenda was the lowering of academic standards in Kentucky to allow otherwise excluded students to participate in sporting competitions among various schools.

2.12.2 Communication Factors

Language barriers further add to the obstacles in the way of successfully involving parents. Often, due to a difference in social class or cultural background and values there is discomfort between educators and parents. The importance of the language used for

communication might be overlooked, particularly at schools where governors are from different racial groups, though not deliberately in as far as the researcher is concerned. At such schools, only English is often used since it is regarded as an international language.

2.12.3 External Factors

These factors are external to the personal characteristics of individuals, yet have a significant influence over what happens. An additional obstacle may be that teachers have families and do not have the flexibility to meet at the parent's convenience, particularly when so many women are teachers. Inadequate parent training in the various aspects of education is yet another barrier. Parents are more comfortable addressing issues such as discipline and extracurricular activities.

2.13 ACCOUNTABILITY IN EDUCATION

According to Bush and West-Burnham (1994: 309-310) accountability is a multi-faceted concept which may have several different interpretations, but the researcher would like to stick to the definition offered by Bush and West-Burnham (1994:310) which posit that at minimum, accountability means being required to give an account of events or behaviour in a school or college to those who may have a legitimate right to know. One of the central aspects of accountability relates to establishing which individuals and groups have that legitimacy.

Bush and West-Burnham (1994: 311) say that teachers ought to be accountable to the following groups of people:

- pupils and their parents as part of the community.
- teachers' employers.
- professional peers inside and outside the school.
- other relevant educational institutions, e.g. universities.
- the "public".
- industry, including trade unions

2.15 CONCLUSION

In this chapter an extensive literature review was conducted, amongst others focusing on (i) the education of the previously disadvantaged people under the Apartheid regime; (ii) the beginnings of school governance; (iii) a background to the S.A. Schools Act (1996) and its implications and stipulations for the school governing body; (iv) the national investigation into School Governance and (v) the importance of socio-economic status, etc. In conclusion the impact of all the above factors on school governance were discussed. The next chapter will focus on methodology, data and sampling.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to describe and report on the research methodology employed in this study, which is entitled Impediments to parental involvement in the governance of selected schools in the Bloemfontein area. The research design, population, sample and the data collection procedures, which were used in this study, will be discussed in order to test the hypotheses as mentioned in Chapter 1.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.2.1 Research design

The research approach employed in this study was mainly quantitative and descriptive in nature, though some elements of qualitative research are also employed. According to Bless and Higson-Smith (2000: 38), “quantitative research methodology relies upon measurement and uses various scales”. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse data in order to make the quantitative information meaningful because, as Ary (2002: 18) points out, they enabled the researcher to organise, summarise and describe observations.

A research survey was used as it uses instruments such as questionnaires and interviews to gather information. However, in this study, the researcher made use of primarily structured questionnaires (see Appendices B & C). “A significant strength of the survey method of research, is its ability to reveal the distribution of behaviours, attitudes

and attributes in a population" (Lindlof, 1995: 121). According to Isaac and Michael (1982: 128) "surveys are a means of gathering information that describes the nature and extent of a set of data ranging from physical counts and frequencies to attitudes and opinions". This information, in turn, can be used to answer questions that have been raised; to solve problems that have been posed or observed; to assess needs and set goals; and to determine whether or not specific objectives have been met.

3.3 RATIONALE FOR THE CHOICE OF STUDY

Generally, there is a perception that is wide-spread that South African parents do not want to participate and take ownership of the education of their children, especially in black communities. The researcher therefore, found this perception interesting and worthy of research and thus decided to pursue the subject, investigating it in detail.

At the end making suggestions and recommendations that can assist in fostering better participation of parents components of the School Governing Body to take their rightful place in the matters affecting their children and their education.

3.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

3.4.1 Delimiting the population

The target population of this study consisted of the parents of the learners from randomly selected primary schools in the Bloemfontein area (see Chapter 4 page 51). The sample thus came from the population. As Muijs (2004: 38) puts it, "one needs to have an unbiased

sample of the population, meaning that the sample should be representative of the population being studied".

3.4.2 Random Sampling

Random sampling was used in this study. Cohen and Manion (1994: 87-89) declare that in simple random sampling, each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected. The method involves selecting at random from a list of the population (a sampling frame), the required number of subjects for the sample. Furthermore, (Hair, *et al* 2003: 214) asseverates that stratified sampling involves dividing the population into homogeneous groups, each containing subjects with similar characteristics. For example, group A might contain males and group B, females.

The randomly selected parents of primary school learners were chosen as the population of this study. Generally, they tend to resemble similar and common characteristics in terms of literacy level, income level, socio-economic status, etc.

3.4.3 Sampling procedure

The survey method was used in this study. According to Mwamwenda (2004:14), a survey is a structural questionnaire designed to solicit information about a specific aspect of the subject's behaviour. This is another method by which data of human behaviour is collected. Both questionnaires and interviews are commonly used as means of collecting data. A specific aspect of the subject's behaviour in the context of this research will be those factors which stand in the way of parental involvement in the governance of selected schools in the Bloemfontein area.

Given the size of Bloemfontein, the researcher decided to include only five primary schools in this research. The reasons for this were given (see 3.3, page 40 in this chapter). This was done to minimise the costs which would be incurred in the distribution of the questionnaires.

3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research ethics refer to a set of principles to guide and assist the researcher in deciding which goals are most important and in reconciling values (Johnson & Christensen, 2000: 63). Ethics deals with the conduct of research with humans, which has the potential of creating a great deal of physical and psychological harm (Johnson & Christensen, 2000: 66). Researchers need to be sensitive to ethical principles because of their research topic and in face-to-face interactive data collection.

The following guidelines are important in assuring the ethical acceptability a research (Johnson & Christensen, 2000: 69; Eita, 2007: 50):

- The researcher obtained the informed consent of the participants;
- No deception was justified by the study's scientific, educational or applied values;
- It was also highlighted that the participants were free to withdraw from this research at any time
- The participants were protected from physical and mental discomfort, harm and danger that might have arisen from the research procedures.
- The participants remained anonymous and the confidentiality of the participants was protected (see Appendix A);

- It was stressed that it was voluntary to participate in this study, because, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2001:101) “people being studied must be willing participants in it”.

The participants gave the researcher their co-operation, trust, openness and acceptance. The aim of these procedures was to avoid the manipulation of participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997: 420).

3.6 DATA COLLECTION

In this research, the pilot study was conducted with fifty (50) parents from the randomly selected schools in the Bloemfontein area. A pilot study is a small-scale trial of the proposed procedure. Its purpose is to detect any problems so that they can be remedied before the proper study is carried out (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2003: 609). Isaac and Michael (1982: 35) further show that in many pilot studies it is possible to get feedback from research subjects and other persons that leads to important improvements in the main study.

After a pilot study was conducted, the responses to the questionnaires were analysed by a qualified statistician and it was found, that some of the questions had to be rephrased and the structure of the questionnaire changed.

The research was carried out using a questionnaire. The researcher decided on the use of questionnaires because he believes that they would elicit the required response from the respondents. The advantages of using questionnaires are that they are easily standardised; they have a low drain on time and finances; and they require little training on the part of the researcher. The limitations or disadvantages of questionnaires are that it is difficult to interpret the

subjects' responses; it is difficult to check if the participants understands the questions; and there is a low response rate and response bias (Bless and Higson-Smith, 2000: 112). The questionnaires were distributed at the randomly selected schools in the Bloemfontein area.

3.7 THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The research methodology and data collection were also explained (see Chapter 1, page 5). Data collection methods refer to the tools of research. In this research, a questionnaire was used (see Appendix B).

3.7.1 The questionnaire

The questionnaire is the most widely used technique for obtaining information from subjects (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997: 252). Questionnaires are relatively economical, have the same question for all subjects, can ensure anonymity and contain questions (statements) formulated for specific purposes. According to De Vos *et al* (2005: 147), the following are the characteristics of a good questionnaire:

- The questionnaire has to deal with a significant topic that the respondent will recognise as important enough to warrant attention;
- It must be attractive in appearance, neatly arranged and clearly duplicated or printed;
- Directions are clear and complete and important terms are clearly defined;
- It must be as short as possible, but long enough to get essential data;
- Each question deals with a single concept and should be expressed as simply as possible;

- Different categories should provide an opportunity for easy, accurate and unambiguous responses; and
- Objectively formulated questions with no leading suggestions should render the desired responses.

In this study, a questionnaire was planned according to the above characteristics. Two hundred and fifty parents were provided with questionnaires (see Appendix B).

The questionnaire used in this study was divided into two sections. The first section concentrated on the biographical data of respondents concerning age, gender, educational level and employment status. The second section was made up of twenty-one sub-items representing the four hypotheses pertaining to the impediments to parental involvement in the governance of selected schools in the Bloemfontein area. A five-point Likert-rating scale ranging from "strongly agree = 5", "agree = 4", "neutral = 3", "disagree = 2" to "strongly disagree = 1" was used to assess items number nine to twenty-three.

From the questionnaire, one item namely number twenty-four, could be answered using a two-point rating scale consisting of the following categories: 'Yes' which equals one and 'No' which equals two.

The last four items, namely numbers twenty-four to twenty-eight, could also be answered using a two-point rating scale with the following categories: 'True' which equals one and 'False' which equals two.

The questions in the questionnaire were informed by the literature consulted in Chapter 2 of this study. As Hitchcock and Hughes (1989: 25) noted, the researcher should ask him/herself the following questions

in order to make sure that the respondents understand what is required of them:

- Is there ambiguity or vagueness in the questions?
- Might the presentation of the questions be off-putting to certain respondents?
- How are questions dealing with sensitive areas worded and presented?

The following questions covered in the questionnaire serve as the core type of questions that address the primary purpose of this study:

- Are parents aware of their statutory right to take part in the governance of schools?
- Are parents willing to be part of schools' governing bodies?
- Do the schools'/principals'/teachers' attitudes towards parents influence their involvement or non-involvement in the governance of schools?
- What is the parents' perception of the importance of the school governing body?
- Does the parents' socio-economic status play any role?
- How does the school communicate with parents, and vice-versa?
- Do parents receive any training for their roles in the school governing body?
- Are the schools, principals and teachers prepared to share power with parents?

3.7.2 Administration of the questionnaire

The researcher approached the primary schools' principals and requested permission to distribute the questionnaires. The principals were then presented with the covering letter of the questionnaire and the questionnaire (see Appendices A, B & C). The researcher asked the class-teachers, with the permission of the principals, to identify those learners, in the selected schools, who are considered trustworthy.

The purpose of this was that the researcher intended to give them the questionnaires so that they, in turn, would ask their parents to complete them. The researcher would then collect these after three working days. The principals of the primary schools agreed to this suggestion.

The reasons for choosing primary schools lies in the fact that high school teachers were unable to help the researcher due to, among others, the fact that they (high school educators) complained that the high school learners had a lot of work to do; thus, asking parents to fill in a questionnaire would take a lot of their time, since these learners had to prepare for the mid-year exams. The educators also said that distributing and collecting questionnaires would also present a problem as there was a lot of paperwork to be done. The researcher then turned to primary schools and was thus able to distribute the questionnaires as explained (see Chapter 4, page 51).

The researcher decided to use non-probability sampling because it is far less complicated to set up and less expensive. Non-probability sampling involves choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and to continue that process until the required sample size has been obtained (Cohen and Manion, 1994: 88).

3.8 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

All data were analysed and processed quantitatively. The services of a qualified statistician were employed with the intention of assisting the researcher with the accurate procedure of analysing and interpreting data, and extracting meaning.

3.9. STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES

Because there are a number of statistical methodologies which one may decide to use, the researcher deemed it necessary to reflect on some of the most common statistical techniques that are readily available and which one can also use to pursue doctoral studies. Even though most of them (statistical methodologies) do not have a direct bearing on this current study, these statistical techniques will nevertheless be described:

- Descriptive Statistics;
- Inferential Statistics;
- Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient;
- Multiple regression analysis;
- Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA); and
- Scheffe multiple comparison.

3.9.1 Descriptive Statistics

According to Coladarci, Cobb, Minimum and Clarke, (2004: 2), the purpose of descriptive statistics is to organise and summarise data so that the data are more readily comprehended.

Bowers (2000: 7) is of the idea that descriptive statistics may be used to describe the main features of the sample and mentions the following three objectives of descriptive statistics:

- To obtain a broad overview of the distribution of the sample data, identifying any features and characteristics of interest which may be present;
- To determine a numeric summary measure of the average of the sample value; and
- To determine a numeric summary of the degree to which sample values are spread out.

3.9.2 Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics permit conclusions about a population based on the characteristics of the population (Coladarci, *et al* 2004: 3).

“Alternatively, the same data can be used to test previously held beliefs” (Bowers, 2000: 7). The purpose of inferential statistics is to draw better inferences as to whether a phenomenon observed in a relatively small number of individuals considered in an investigation (a sample), can be legitimately generalised to a large number (a population) (Popham and Sirotnik, 1995: 6).

3.9.3 Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient

The correlation coefficient is a bivariate statistic that measures the degree of linear association between two quantitative variables and one measure of association which is widely used, is the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. (Fundamentals of statistical reasoning in education: s.a. 119)

Muijs (2004: 142) makes a point that a method used to analyse the relationship between two conditions is called the correlation coefficient. Additionally, the coefficient called 'Pearson's r' is used when one is working with two continuous variables and that a correlation coefficient is used to check whether or not a high score in one variable is associated with a score in another (Muijs, 2004: 143).

3.9.4 Multiple regression analysis

According to Hair, Babin, Money and Samuel (2003: 14), multiple regression analysis is the appropriate method of analysis when the research problem involves a single metric dependent variable presumed to be related to two or more metric independent variables. The objective of multiple regression analysis is to predict the changes in the dependent variable in response to changes in the independent variables. Whenever a researcher is interested in the amount or magnitude of the dependent variable, multiple regression is useful.

3.9.5 Multivariate analyses analysis of variance (MANOVA)

Hair, *et al* (2003: 326-327) mention that Multivariate analyses analysis of variance (MANOVA) is concerned with differences between groups (or experimental treatments). MANOVA is an extension of analysis of variance (ANOVA) and it accommodates more than one dependant variable. It is a dependence technique that measures the differences for two or more metric dependent variables based on a set of categories. It is thus used to assess the group differences across multiple metric dependent variables simultaneously.

3.9.6 Scheffe multiple comparison

Although the MANOVA allows for the reflection of null hypothesis, it does not pin-point where the significant differences lie, if there are more than two groups. However, many procedures are available for further investigation of specific group mean difference of interest (Hair, *et al* 2003: 356). Among these methods, the Scheffe method will be the one employed in this study.

Freund and Wilson (1997: 247) postulates that if the limitation to paired comparisons is too restrictive, the Scheffe procedure provides the stated experiment-wise significance level when making any or all possible post-hoc contrasts.

3.10 RESEARCH RESULTS

The results are presented in a narrative discussion, making use of tables, figures, etc. under the predetermined themes/headings. The detailed results of this research are presented in Chapter 4 (see Chapter 4 page 51-67).

3.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The reasons for the choice of the quantitative approach were given earlier (see page 48 of this chapter). Every attempt was made to ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings by enlisting the services of a qualified statistician. Who in turn assisted the researcher to ensure that validity and reliability of the results is beyond reproach. Reference was also made to the literature from South Africa, Britain and the United States of America in order to support the arguments made.

3.12 BIOGRAPHICAL ISSUES

The researcher decided to use the following essential characteristics to describe the nature of randomly sampled population namely: (i) age; (ii) gender; (iii) educational level and (iv) employment status.

3.13 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study cannot be used to form generalisations about parental involvement and non-involvement in the governance of primary schools in the Republic of South Africa, since the research was conducted only within selected primary schools in the Bloemfontein area of the Free State Province.

3.14 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The research design intended to achieve the objectives of this study was explained. Furthermore, the sample population, the research instruments, used for data collection and the quantitative statistical analyses method which were utilised were discussed. The next chapter will deal with the presentation and evaluation of results.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the study which was carried out in selected primary schools in the Bloemfontein area. A research survey was used, in the form of a questionnaire to gather data. The researcher decided on the use of questionnaires because he believes that they elicit the required responses from the respondents.

4.2 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The demographic profile of the participants in this study is provided. The statistical descriptions are given from the responses to the items in the questionnaire.

4.3 POPULATION SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

The population sample of this study consisted of the parents of learners at selected primary schools in the Bloemfontein area (see Chapter 4 page 51). For the descriptive statistics, the number and percentage of the respondents were calculated. The characteristics, namely age (see 4.4.1), gender (see 4.4.2), educational level (see 4.4.3) and employment status (see 4.4.4) will be covered in the later stages in this chapter.

A total of two hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed to the randomly selected primary schools, but the response rate was low. In

the end, only one hundred and fifty questionnaires were returned fully completed by the following schools: Kgabane Primary School (n=32); Legae Intermediate School (n=33); Kgato Primary School (n=32), Morafe Public School (n=25) and Monyatsi Primary School (n=27). These responses represent sixty per cent of the population, which is clearly a substantial representation and according to Huysamen (2001:149) "if those who have responded represent a minority (i.e. a response rate of less than 50%) an entirely incorrect picture of the population may be obtained".

4.4 INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

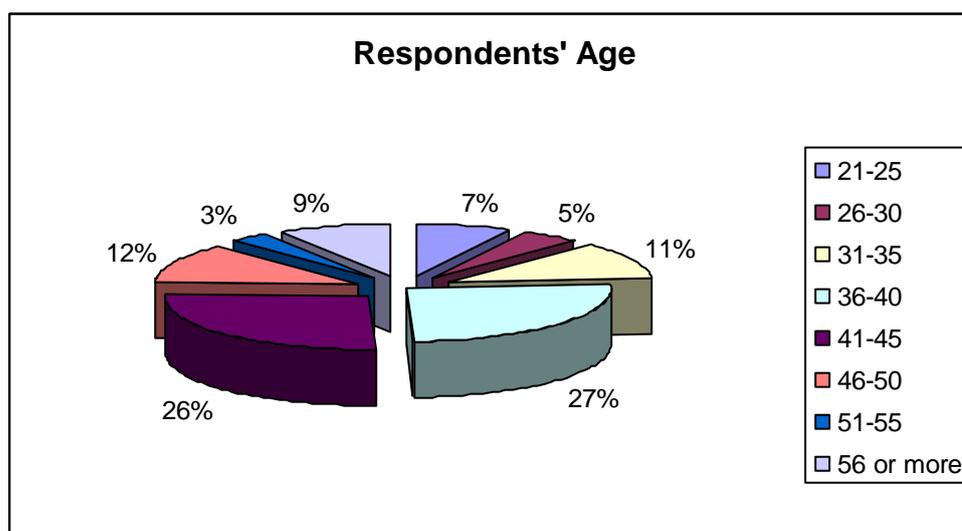
The findings are divided and presented under Section A (which is biographical data) and Section B (which are questions pertaining to the four hypotheses). They are organised under the following headings and interpreted as such:

- 4.5.1 Respondents' age group
- 4.5.2 Respondents' gender
- 4.5.3 Respondents' education level
- 4.5.4 Respondents' employment status
- 4.6.1 Hypothesis 1
- 4.6.2 Hypothesis 2
- 4.6.3 Hypothesis 3
- 4.6.4 Hypothesis 4(a)
- 4.6.5 Hypothesis 4(b)

4.5 SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF RESPONDENTS

The information contained under this topic includes, amongst others, (i) respondents' age group; (ii) respondents' gender; (iii) respondents' education level; and (iv) respondents' employment status.

4.5.1 Respondents' age group (n=150)

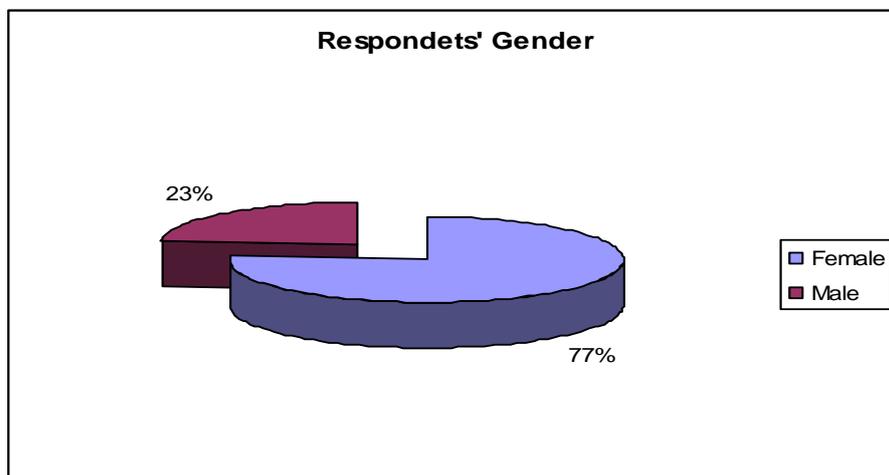


From graph 4.5.1 the majority of the respondents represent a mature proportion of the population within an age range of 36-45. This is so because 26% (39) of the participants in this study were in the 41-45 age group; 26% (38) were from the 36-40 age group; and 7% (7) were in the 26-30 age group.

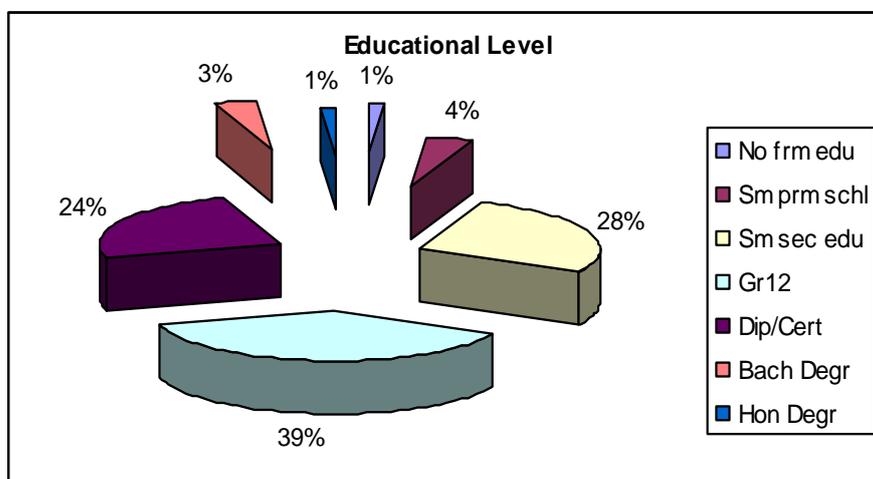
Graph 4.5.2 below reveals that more females 77% (114) than males 23. (35) took part in this study. These findings confirm a general perception that there are more female educators than males, particularly at primary schools. It is worth noting that the researcher found it necessary to include gender in this study because males and females naturally tend to hold different views (Moshodi, 2006: 98) in as far as

impediments to parental involvement in the governance of schools is concerned.

4.5.2 Respondents' gender (n=150)



4.5.3 Respondents' educational level (n=150)



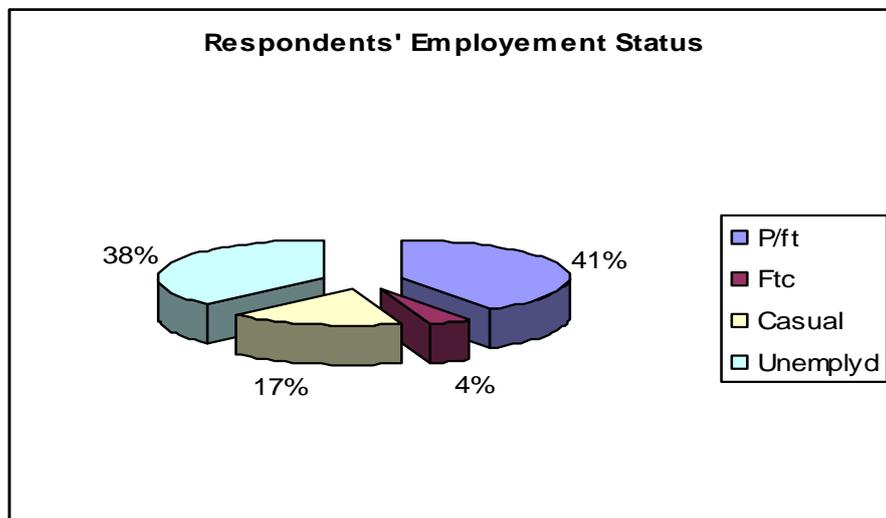
Before embarking on a discussion of gender in this study, it is important to note that:

- **No frm edu** stands for no formal education;
- **Sm prm schl** some primary schooling;

- **Sm sec schl** status for some secondary schooling;
- **GR12** for Grade 12;
- **Dip/Cert** stands for a diploma or certificate;
- **Bach Degr** stands for Bachelors Degree; and
- **Hon Degr** stands for an Honours Degree.

This graph (4.5.3) shows that the majority of the respondents have a Grade 12 certificate 39% (54); 4% (6) have some primary schooling; and 3% (5) have a Bachelors' Degree. Since most of the participants in this study have a reasonable level of literacy, it thus becomes evident that they did not only understand the items in the questionnaire, but were also able to read and understand policies, which are written mostly in English.

4.5.4 Respondents' employment status (n=150)



Please note that:

- **P/ft** stands for permanent/full-time;
- **Ftc** stands for fixed term contract; and
- **Unemployd** stands for unemployed.

According to the above presentation (graph 4.5.4), 41% (58) of the respondents have permanent/full-time employment; 4% (6) have fixed term/contract employment; 17% (24) are employed as casuals; and a staggering 38% (53) of the respondent are unemployed.

There is a general reluctance of parents to participate in the affairs of the school. One of the reasons could be employment commitments. Thus, the majority (38.7%) of the respondents in this study indicate that they are employed permanently or full-time, which might have an adverse effect on their participation in the affairs of the school.

4.6 SECTION B: RESPONSES ACCORDING TO EACH HYPOTHESIS ITEM

This section reports on the findings of the four hypotheses as presented in their various sub-items. These results will be presented item by item.

From the findings in Table 1 below it is clear that:

- More than 80% of the respondents (that is, 46.9% = agree and 42.9% = strongly agree) feel that the principal respects them, given the way he/she treats parents. The absence of those who disagree and strongly disagree respectively, with this question shows that the principals are doing a good job in making the parents feel that they are part of the school community.
- Another interesting finding on whether “the principal creates an atmosphere which is welcoming to the parents”, over 80% (40.9% [n=61]= strongly agree and 53.7% [n=80] = agree) of the respondents concurred with this statement and only nine were neutral. Thus the parents will have no problem in approaching the principals because they (principals) create an atmosphere

which encourages parents to participate in the affairs of the school.

4.6.1 Table 1: Hypothesis 1: The impact of the principal's attitude on parental involvement in school governance, contributes to parents' positive or negative attitude towards the school

No	Responses	Strongly agree (5)		Agree (4)		Neutral (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly disagree (1)	
		no	%	no	%	no	%	no	%	no	%
9	Do you feel that the principal respects you given the way he/she treats you?	63	42.9	69	46.9	15	10.2	0	0	0	0
10	Do you feel that the principal has created an atmosphere which is welcoming to the parents?	61	40.9	80	53.7	7	4.7	0	0	0	0
11	Do you feel that the principal of your school is approachable?	68	45.9	73	49.3	6	4.1	1	7	0	0
12	Do you feel that the principal of your school is sympathetic to parents' needs or concerns?	53	36.3	79	54.1	12	8.2	1	7	1	7
13	Do you feel that the principal's attitude impacts positively on the overall performance of the school?	55	38.2	68	47.2	12	8.3	6	2	3	2.1

- It is clear that respondents would not have any problems in approaching the principals about issues which affect them and their children's education. This is so because 48.9% (n=68) =

strongly agree, and 49.3% (n=73)=agree, which is an overwhelming majority as compared to the 4.7% (7) of the respondents who are “neutral” on this issue. The principal and the parents will therefore be able to put the educational needs of the child first.

- Quite a sizeable number of the respondents, just over 70% (representing, strongly agree = 36.3% [n=53] and 54.1% [n=79]= agree) feel that the principals are sympathetic to their needs or concerns. This lays a good foundation for a sound working relationship between the principals and the parents, in, for example, the school governing body.
- The majority of the respondents, making up to 85.4% (38.2% [n=55]) = strongly agree and 47.2% [n=68] = agree), felt that the principal's attitude impacts positively on the overall performance of the school. Principals, according to the above table, are doing an excellent job in encouraging parents to participate in the governance of schools they should thus be encouraged to keep up the good work.

In the final analysis it is interesting to note that a clear majority of the respondents feel that the attitude of the principal clearly impacts on their attitude or willingness to participate in the affairs of the school. This is contrary to the general perception of parents of secondary school learners in this country.

4.6.2 Table 2: Hypothesis 2: The communication between the school and parents affects the parents' participation in school governance

No	Responses	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
		no	%	no	%	no	%	no	%	no	%
14	Are methods used by the school to communicate with you effective e.g. letters?	59	39.6	68	45.6	9	6.0	12	8.1	1	7
15	There is smooth communication between the school and the parents,	50	33.3	77	51.3	12	8.0	11	7.3	0	0
16	I understand the information provided by the school.	48	32.2	82	55.0	12	8.1	6	4.0	1	7
17	The school gives me a complete report of my child's progress.	68	45.6	72	48.3	5	3.4	4	2.7	0	0
18	The school offers parents the opportunity to communicate with class teachers e.g. at parents' meetings.	78	52.3	64	43.0	5	3.4	2	1.3	0	0

- The methods used by the school to communicate with the respondents are effective because 85.2% of the (39.6% [n=59] = strongly agree and 45.6 %[(n=68] = agree) felt so. This shows that parents and the school do communicate with each other.

- From the findings in Table 2 above it is evident that a substantial number of the respondents, totalling 87.2%, (32.2% [n=48] = strongly agree and 55% [n=80] =agree) understand the information provided by the school. According to the researcher this can be attributed to using the language that is understood by the parents. For example, at a school where by the researcher is employed as a post-level 1 educator, letters to the parents are printed in IsiXhosa, Sesotho and English, since the mother tongue of the learners is IsiXhosa and Sesotho, respectively. English, in the view of the researcher, is used only because that particular school is an English medium school and there are educators from various population groups who use English as a language of communication.

- Most of the participants in this study 45.6% (n=68) strongly agree and 48.3% (n=72) agree and thus feel that the schools give them a complete report of their children's progress. Parents are thus kept up to date with the progress of their children.

- The majority of the respondents 52.3% (78) strongly agree and 43% (64) agree that the school offers parents an opportunity to communicate with class teachers. Teachers are thus aware of the realities that face their learners at home and they can thus work together in the best interest of the child/learner.

In conclusion, it can be said that there is some form of communication between the school and the parents. Even though in some quarters, letters and meetings may be regarded as outdated, they are still an effective way of communicating in this digital age.

4.6.3 Table 3: Hypothesis 3: Co-operation between the principal and parents affects school governance.

No	Responses	Strongly agree (5)		Agree (4)		Neutral (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly disagree (1)	
		no	%	no	%	no	%	no	%	no	%
19	There is good working relationship between the parents and the school.	51	34.2	85	57.0	8	5.4	3	2.0	2	1.3
20	Parents do not hesitate to volunteer whenever the school requests them to do so.	32	21.8	82	55.8	26	17.7	2	1.4	5	3.4
21	There is a prevailing spirit of collective responsibility towards the betterment of the school by both the school and parents.	45	30.6	81	55.1	18	12.2	2	1.4	1	7
22	The school Governing Body encourages me to play a role in the education of my children.	62	41.6	74	49.7	9	6.0	3	2.0	1	7
23	When I see other parents actively involved in the school, I want to do the same.	56	37.3	90	60.0	3	2.0	1	7	0	.0

A thorough look at Table 3 above illustrates that:

- There is good working relationship between the parents and the school. This is clearly indicated by the overwhelming majority of the respondents which represent a total of 91.2% (34.2% [n=51] = strongly agree and 57% [n=85]= agree). The South African Schools Act encourages the establishment of a sound working relationship between the school and the home and judging by the responses to this statement, it can be said that this objective has been achieved.
- If the responses to this item are anything to go by, parents do not hesitate to volunteer whenever the school requests them to do so. A total of 77.6% of the respondents feel this way (21.8% [n=32] strongly agree; while 55.8% [n=82] agree). By volunteering on behalf of the school, parents are taking “ownership” of the school, which is also encouraged by the South African Schools Act.
- There is a prevailing spirit of collective responsibility towards the betterment of the school by both the school and the parents. A visible majority of the respondents totalling 85.7% (30.6% [n=45] strongly agree and 55.1% [n=81] agree) believe that this is the case. It is encouraging to see both parents and teachers putting the best interests of the school and thus the child, above everything else.
- It is motivating to notice that the school governing body encourages parents to play a role in the education of their children. The response rate of 91.3% (41.6% [n=62] which strongly agrees and 49.7% [n=74] agree) bears testimony to this. It can thus be concluded that school governing bodies are

indeed fulfilling their mandate, which among other things, is to encourage parents to play a role in school governance.

- Most of the respondents felt that when they see other parents being actively involved in the school, they also want to do the same. A staggering 97.3% (37.3% [n=56] strongly agree and 60% [n=90] agree). Those parents in the school governing body and all the parents who attend meetings regularly; and also those who participate in activities of the school, are doing an excellent job taking responsibility and thus being a good example to other parents.

4.6.4 Table 4: Hypothesis 4a: Parents familiarity with their roles as stipulated in the S.A. Schools Act affects parents' participation in school governance

No	Responses	Yes		No		No response	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
24	Are you a member of the school governing body?	10	6.7	131	87.3	9	6

This item no. 24 in table 4 above, was included in the questionnaire as a stand-alone-item because the researcher wished to evaluate whether parents' familiarity with their roles as stipulated in the South African Schools Act (1996) has anything to do with the fact that they are members of the school governing body or not. The reason for this is that one would assume that those parents who are members of the school governing body would know more about school governance compared with those who are not members of the school governing body.

Table 4 shows that a small number of the respondents 6.7% (10) are members of a school governing body. An overwhelming majority of the respondents 87.3% (131) were not members of a school governing body. Only 6% (9) of the respondents did not answer this question.

A thorough look at Table 5 below illustrates that:

- The respondents in table 5: Hypothesis 4b below, making up to 89.3% (134), indicated it was true that members of the school's governing body must elect office bearers e.g. a chairperson and treasurer. Only 10.7% (16) suggested this was false. It shows that parents know what constitutes the school governing body.
- The majority of the respondents 80.5% (120) proclaimed that it was true that the term of office for office bearers on the school governing body is three years, with 19% (29) saying this was false. It shows that parents do know how a school governing body should work. Even though 19% is small, compared to 80.5%; it is nevertheless a point of concern that there are still parents who do not know that the term of office of office bearers in the school governing body is three years.
- School governing bodies in the schools which formed part of this study appear to be properly constituted because most of the respondents, up to 90.6% (135), commented that it was true that the school governing body has to adopt a constitution. Only 9.4% (14) of the respondents said 'no' in this regard. It may be concluded that the school governing bodies in the schools where the research was conducted, are properly constituted in accordance with the stipulations of the South African Schools Act.

4.6.5 Table 5: Hypothesis 4b: Familiarity with their roles as stipulated in the S.A. Schools Act affects parents' participation in school governance.

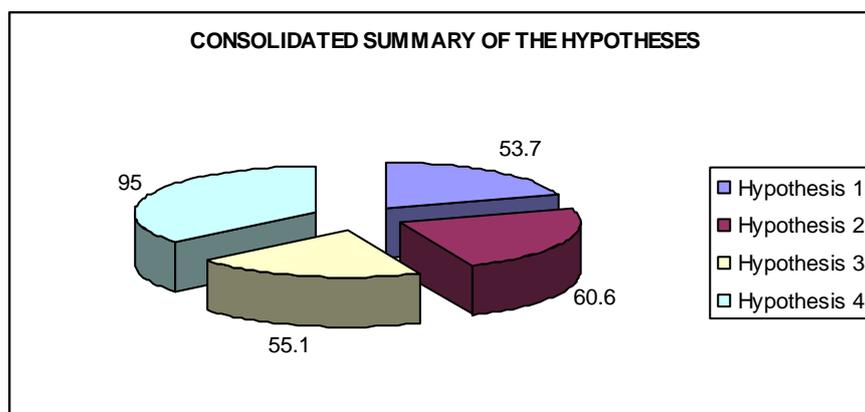
No	Responses	True		False	
		No	%	No	%
25	Members of the School's Governing Body must perform functions on behalf of and for the benefit of the school.	143	95.3	7	4.7
26	Members of the School Governing Body must elect office bearers e.g. chairperson; treasurer.	134	89.3	16	10.7
27	The term of office of the office bearers on the School's Governing Body is three years.	120	80.5	29	19.5
28	The School's Governing Body has to adopt a constitution.	135	90.6	14	9.4

By looking at Tables 4 and 5 together, it becomes evident that despite the majority of the respondents not being members of the school governing body (87.3%), they are still aware of the roles of school governors as stipulated in the South African Schools Act.

4.7 CONSOLIDATED SUMMARY OF THE HYPOTHESES

The purpose of this section is to reflect on the overall essence of the four hypotheses of this study. Each hypothesis's overall essence and contribution is depicted on this graph and pie-chart and the constituent deliberations follow below.

Figure no. 2: CONSOLIDATED SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESES



The fundamental purpose of the study was to investigate the impediments to parental involvement in the governance of the school. It is evident from the figure above that contrary to popular belief parents are generally willing to participate in the affairs of the school. They want to be involved and they have indicated through their responses, that they have a good relationship with the principals of their respective schools. The following summary of all the hypotheses contains the essence of the views and perceptions of parents in as far as their involvement in the affairs of the school are concerned.

Clearly, **Hypothesis 1** (see Table 1 in this chapter) shows that the principal's attitude impacts positively on the parents' attitudes towards the school, because 53.7% of the respondents said the principal created an atmosphere which is welcoming to the parents.

Similarly, **Hypothesis 2** (see Table 2 in this chapter) illustrates that there is some form of communication which is effective between the school and the parents. This statement is supported by the fact that 60.6% of the respondents strongly agree that there is communication between the school and the parents on matters such as reporting on children's progress.

According to the findings of **Hypothesis 3**, (see Table 3 in this chapter), it is clear that parents and the school governing body are willing to co-operate with each other for the betterment of the school, because 55.1% of the respondents said that that was the case.

Finally, **Hypothesis 4** (see Tables 4 & 5 in this chapter) seems to clearly indicate that parents in general, have begun to appreciate and embrace the need to be involved in the affairs of the school; this is indicated by their overwhelming response of 95% (see Table 4) to the statement "Members of the school governing body must perform functions on behalf of and for the benefit of the school".

4.8 RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

The following open-ended questions were asked and the responses to them are given below:

Question 1: Please explain an occasion in which the principal's attitude contributed to your positive or negative attitude towards the school.

The general feeling of the respondents is that principals show a consistently positive attitude towards their schools. They ask for the opinion of the school governing body at all times and they govern their schools as leaders and not as rulers.

Question 2: What is your preferred method of communicating with the school?

Most of the respondents preferred to visit the school and share their problems with the principal. Correspondence by means of letters and a quarterly parent meeting are next in preference.

Question 3: How does your familiarity with your roles in the school governing body affect your participation in school governance?

The respondents explained that they understand what is expected of them as parents. Involvement in the schooling of their children is of utmost importance and cooperating with other stakeholders is also necessary. Additionally, they felt that people on the school governing body did what was expected of them and that working together as a team makes it easier for them to accomplish goals.

Question 4: How does co-operation between you and the principal affect school governance?

An overwhelming majority of the respondents agreed that being co-operative helps and it becomes easy to govern the school. They went on to say that they make sure they reach an agreement that will benefit both the school and the learners, because they both want what is best for the school and the children.

4.9 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The age, gender, educational level and employment status of the respondents were scrutinised in this chapter. The findings of the four hypotheses were also presented and lastly, responses to the open-ended questions were analysed.

Surely, the principal's attitude does have an impact on the respondents' participation or lack thereof, in school governance; there is communication between the school and the respondents; the respondents believe that co-operating with one another will lead to

better school governance. Moreover, the respondents know what school governance is all about.

Finally, it can safely be inferred that the findings of this study clearly refute the earlier studies conducted, that seems to suggest that parents are not willing to participate and be involved in the affairs of the school. Undoubtedly, majority of the respondents indicated clearly that there is definite change of heart amongst parents, and with time, most of the will even volunteer to participate in the effective running of the school as encouraged and expected by the South African Schools Act.

Chapter 5 will deal with the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to identify and examine impediments to parental involvement in the governance of selected schools in the Bloemfontein area. This chapter aims to give a review of the whole research project, make recommendations resulting from this study and also to make recommendations for further study, as this research is not an end in itself, but a means to further research in the field of school governance.

Prior to deliberating on the recommendations of this study, it is of paramount importance to reflect particularly on the findings of Mabasa and Themane (2002) and those of Mbokodi, Msila and Singh (2002), as they impact on and serve as a prelude and a solid foundation for the recommendations of this study, as well as for its pronouncements on further research.

5.2 STRATEGIES TO FOSTER PARTICIPATION

Mabasa and Themane (2002: 3) state that one of the challenges in school governance has been the lack of preparation of new governors before they start their work. They go further to identify the following as some of these challenges/problems:

- Governors tend to be unfamiliar with meeting procedures;
- There are problems with the specialist language used;
- The difficulties of managing large volumes of paper;

- Not knowing how to make a contribution;
- The lack of knowledge of appropriate legislation;
- Feeling inhibited by the presence of other colleagues who seem to have more knowledge; and
- Perceiving their role as simply “rubber stamping” what others have decided upon.

The lack of preparation of governors can be traced back to the apartheid years. School governance used to be characterised by authoritarian and exclusive practices and structures that were in place for the purposes of “school management” and were referred to as school committees. The structures did not advocate stakeholder participation and were dominated by school principals reporting directly to the government bureaucracy responsible for education (Mabasa and Themane 2002).

Mbokodi, Msila and Singh (2002) also mention a number of factors that discourage involvement in the governance of schools. According to Mbokodi, Msila and Singh, the South African Schools Act (1996) envisaged a partnership between parents and schools in school governance, to ensure quality education. It was hoped that involving parents in education would give them insight into their children's progress, encourage them to participate in decisions involving schools and make them critical of information on educational issues. It was further hoped that their involvement would influence communities to support their schools.

The introduction of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) also paved the way for greater parental involvement in education. The system requires the parents to share the responsibility for education with the state and to use the knowledge gained to build and develop their

communities and country. The success of such a system depends on both the parents' and the teachers' preparedness as implementers.

5.3 REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

In Chapter 1 it was stated that there is a general perception that parents are reluctant to assume their rightful place in assisting principals towards better governance of schools. The aims, hypotheses and statement of the problem were also addressed in this chapter.

In Chapter 2, the literature review was conducted concerning the role of parents, as covered in the South African Schools Act in 1996 (such as an investigation into effectiveness of school governing bodies; preparation of governors; factors in- and outside the school that affect school governance; and the importance of accountability in school governance, with special reference to selected Mangaung schools) and in other relevant documents. The education of blacks under the apartheid regime was also highlighted.

In Chapter 3, the research methodology with special reference to the research design, population and sampling, as well as data collection methods were discussed.

In Chapter 4, the analysis and interpretation of the results were presented.

In Chapter 5, the summary, conclusions and recommendations are presented.

5.4 LIST OF SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

This recommendation reflects on and applies only to the first hypothesis, which reads thus: *“The impact of the principal’s attitude as perceived by parents towards their involvement in school governance contributes to their positive or negative attitude towards the school”*.

The respondents of this study look to the principal and teachers to guide their children, because they play an important role in their education. This is an enormous responsibility, which according to the findings of this study (see Table 1, page 56), the principal and the teachers have taken seriously. As one respondent puts it *“The principal always encourages parents to participate in the activities organised by the school governing body”*.

Another respondent pointed out that her child did not do what was expected of her. The principal did not expel the child but rather sat down with the child and explained to her the importance of education. To date, the researcher can safely say that the principals and teachers are doing an excellent job in educating the nation with reference to the Bloemfontein area. This kind of attitude displayed by the principals and teachers is clearly encouraging parents to want to take an active part in the affairs of the school.

The principals should be encouraged to keep up the good work since parents feel that their attitude impacts positively on them. It is the contention of the researcher that if principals enrol for the new course proposed by the Education Department on leadership, this will assist and empower principals better in executing their responsibilities.

Moreover, this will naturally translate into better relations with both parents and learners, resulting in the betterment of the school.

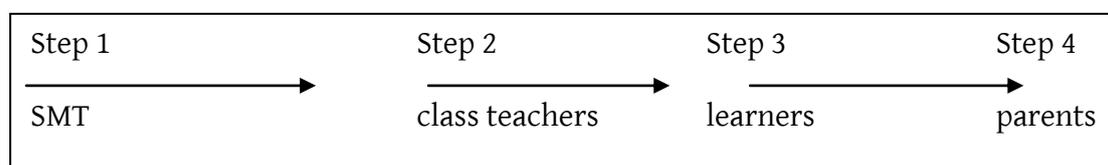
Recommendation 2

This recommendation reflects on and applies only to the second hypothesis, which reads thus: *“Communication between the school and the parents affects the parents’ participation in school governance”*.

It is evident from the study that most parents prefer the current form of communication; namely, letters and face-to-face communication with teachers (see Table 2, page 58). However, this form of communication has its own flaws and if improved, for example, by having a suggestion box at school, may yield better results. According to one respondent, she was afraid that her child might be victimised if she were to differ with the school on certain issues.

Below is an illustration of the current form of communication used by most schools to communicate with the parents:

Table 6: Current communication model between the school and the parents



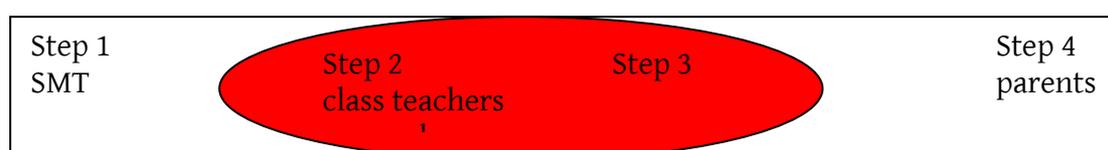
As it is illustrated in Table 6, the school management team (comprising the principal and the heads of the various departments) will decide on the date of a parents’ meeting. This will then be communicated to the class teachers in a staff meeting. If all agree on a particular date, then the letters will be drafted and issued to the class teachers who, in

turn, will give the letters to the learners. The learners will then give the letters to their parents.

Although most of the respondents said that they have no problem with this form of communication, the weakness is that this model relies on learners as messengers, which in some cases, is not effective.

The researcher strongly recommends the use of cellular phones, via short-message-system (SMSs), as a form of enhancing communication between the school and the parents. These SMSs could be used as a follow-up, since most households have a cellular phone. However, to implement this approach, the school would have to keep a database with parents' cell numbers for this purpose. Thus, the principal would simply give a short message to the class teachers about, for example, a notice of a parents' meeting and all the class teachers have to do is to send an SMS to the parents. Alternatively, the secretary could be asked to do this. Thus, the problem of reliance on learners to give parents letters informing them of meetings would be eliminated, as model 2 Table 7, in the shaded area, suggests. This could be very helpful in targeting those parents who are reluctant to participate in school governance.

Table 7: Improved communication model between the school and the parents



Even though this would be effective, the only drawback or disadvantage is its affordability. It will be difficult for poor schools to

meet the monetary costs involved, whereas for wealthier schools, this model will be most appropriate and affordable.

Recommendation 3

This recommendation reflects on and applies only to the fourth hypothesis, which reads thus, "*The cooperation between the principal and the parents affects school governance*".

Co-operation was seen as the major contributor to better school governance (Table 3, page 60) because all involved will take ownership of the decisions made. Results can improve because before the examinations, for example, everybody will know what is expected of them. A respondent in this study said that school governance ensured that everyone is afforded an opportunity to use his/her talents, thus enabling everybody to make a contribution to the school. It will not be difficult to deal with, for example, lack of discipline on the part of the learners because co-operating in school governance will present a united front against any forms of unbecoming behaviour. In the light of the above, it is recommended that principals should continue to welcome inputs from parents as this will make them feel that they are an important part of the school.

Recommendation 4

This recommendation reflects on and applies only to the third hypothesis, which reads thus: "*Familiarity with their roles as stipulated in the South African Schools Act affects parents' participation in school governance*".

The respondents displayed a sound knowledge of the workings of the school governing body (Table 5, page 63). They seem to understand that as members of the school governing body, there are primary functions, which they are expected to perform on behalf of and for the benefit of the school. These functions include amongst others, that school governing body members must elect office bearers; that the term of office in the school governing body is three years; and that the school governing body has to adopt a constitution.

With this knowledge, the researcher believes that school governing bodies will become more accountable and the affairs pertaining to school governance will be executed in a transparent manner. Given this revelation, it is recommended that principals change their perception of the role which parents can make, and instead, afford them more opportunities to assist them in diverse matters which are in the best interests of the school.

Recommendation 5

This recommendation relates specifically to the enhancement of the role of parents in the governance of schools. It is stated that schools may wish to have other committees for other areas of governance, e.g. curriculum, admissions and exclusions, and premises (Blandford, 1997: 46). A model for primary school governing subcommittees is described by Nightingale (1990) in Blandford (1997: 46). He comments on the need for subcommittees to meet the demands of the work of the governing body. While it is the responsibility of each governing body to define the role of its committees Nightingale (1990) suggests the following which the researcher recommends as a model to be followed by South African school governing bodies:

Finance Committee	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. three governors (including teacher governor) 2. three teaching staff (including deputy headteacher) 3. one parent nominated by PSA 4. headteacher 5. school secretary 6. community representative
Curriculum Committee	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. three governors 2. two parents nominated by PSA 3. headteacher or deputy headteacher 4. teaching staff – one per year group plus others for issues particularly relevant to their responsibilities
Premises Committee	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. two governors 2. teacher (health and safety representative) 3. caretaker 4. community representative 5. headteacher and chair, as required
Staffing Committee	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. three governors (including chair) 2. headteacher 3. deputy headteacher 4. teacher representing teacher associations 5. (support staff representative)

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

A comparative study on the involvement of parents of both learners attending secondary school and those attending primary school, or

even parents of learners of advantaged versus previously disadvantaged schools, would be an interesting field for further study, as it may yield similar or contrasting results to the findings of this study.

5.6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A review of the whole research project was conducted, recommendations resulting from this study were made and a recommendation for further study was also suggested.

Conclusions made from this study are that this study has revealed that the role played by the principal in encouraging parental involvement in the governance of the school is improving, if not better than expected. It is, however, interesting to note that negative perceptions of parental involvement in the governance of the school is (allegedly) still prevalent; therefore, balancing the two views could be a new challenge.

Notwithstanding this challenge of effectively engaging parents in the affairs of the school, there is hope, at least from these findings, that generally parents are keen to participate in the matters affecting their children at school. Thus, winning this battle can only be delivered with the passage of time.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

**LETTER OF PREMISSION FROM
THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**



Enquiries : Sello FR
Reference no. : 16/4/1/35-2007

Tel : 051 404 8750
Fax : 051 447 7318

2007- 09-03

Mr IP Morolong
P O Box 23668
Kagisanong
BLOEMFONTEIN
9323

Dear Mr Morolong

REGISTRATION OF RESEARCH PROJECT

1. This letter is in reply to your application for the registration of your research project.
2. Research topic: **Impediment to parental involvement in the governance of selected schools in the Bloemfontein area.**
3. Your research project has been registered with the Free State Education Department.
4. Approval is granted under the following conditions:-
 - 4.1 Educators and officials participate voluntarily in the project.
 - 4.2 The names of all schools and educators involved remain confidential.
 - 4.3 The questionnaires are completed and the interviews are conducted outside normal tuition time.
 - 4.4 This letter is shown to all participating persons.
 - 4.5 A bound copy of the report and a summary on a computer disc on this study is donated to the Free State Department of Education.
 - 4.6 Findings and recommendations are presented to relevant officials in the Department.
5. The costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.
6. **You are requested to confirm acceptance of the above conditions in writing to:**

The Head: Education, for attention:
DIRECTOR : QUALITY ASSURANCE
Room 401, Syfrets Building
Private Bag X20565, BLOEMFONTEIN, 9301

We wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely


FRSENLO
DIRECTOR : QUALITY ASSURANCE

Department of Education ∇ Departement van Onderwys ∇ Lefapha la Thuto

APPENDIX B:
COVERING LETTER

Central University of
Technology
Private Bag X20539
BLOEMFONTEIN
9300

Dear Respondent

RE: REQUEST TO COMPLETE A QUESTIONNAIRE

I would very much appreciate it if you could participate in my research project – for my Masters in Education studies (M Tech: Education) – Central University of Technology.

The title of my dissertation is:

**IMPEDIMENTS TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE GOVERNANCE OF
SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE BLOEMFONTEIN AREA**

For the first time in the history of South Africa, the South African Schools Act (1996) gave parents wide-ranging powers. Among others, these powers include: making decisions with matters such as school development plans, language policy, education policy and the custodianship of school monies.

This study aims to investigate if parents play a role in the governance of school and also to identify those factors/reasons for parental non-involvement in school governance.

The questionnaire is **completely anonymous** and data gathered in this survey will be treated with the **strictest confidentiality** and presented only in summary form without the name or affiliation of the respondent. Please respond to all questions with your first reaction.

Should you have any questions, comments, etc regarding the questionnaire and my research, please do not hesitate to ask me, as I will be present during the whole exercise.

Thank you for your valuable support and input.

IP Morolong

Tel no: 051 434 3777
Cell no: 076 810 3891

APPENDIX C:
CLOSED-ENDED QUESTIONS

At each question, fill in the circle alongside your chosen answer. Incorrect (X) (•) (✓) Correct ●

Q1. Gender:

- Female
 Male

Q2. From which population group are you?

- African
 Asian
 Coloured
 White

Q3. How old are you now?

- 21-25
 26-30
 31-35
 36-40
 41-45
 46-50
 51-55
 56 or more

Q4. What is the one most spoken language in your home?

- Afrikaans
 isiZulu
 SiSwati
 English
 Sepedi
 Tshivenda
 IsiNdebele
 Sesotho
 Xitsonga
 IsiXhosa
 Setswana
 Other

Q5. What is your highest educational level?

- No formal education
 Some primary school
 Some secondary school
 Grade 12
 Diploma/certificate
 Bachelor's degree
 Honour's degree
 Master's degree
 Doctoral degree

Q6. Marital status Married Single

Q7. What is your occupational category?

- Senior officials and managers
 Professionals
 Technicians & Assoc. Prof.
 Clerks
 Service & Sales Workers
 Skilled Agri & Fishery Workers
 Craft & Related Trade Workers
 Plant & Machine Operators
 Elementary Occupations

Q8. What is your employment status?

- Permanent, full time
 Fixed-term contract, full time.
 Casual
 Unemployed

Select the answer closest to your own view and fill in the relevant circle

- | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Q9. I feel that the principal respects me given the way he/she treats me. _____ | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Q10. I feel that the principal has created an atmosphere which is welcoming to the parents. _____ | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Q11. I feel that the principal of my school is approachable. _____ | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Q12. I feel that the principal of my school is sympathetic to parents' needs or concerns. _____ | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Q13. It is my opinion that the principals' attitude impacts positively on the overall performance of the school. _____ | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Q14. Methods used by the school to communicate with me are effective e.g letters _____ | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Q15. There is smooth communication between the school and the parents _____ | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Q16. I understand the information provided by the school. _____ | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Q17. The school gives me a complete report of my child's progress. _____ | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Q18. The school offers parents the opportunity to communicate with class teachers e.g. at parents' meeting. _____ | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Q19. There is good working relationship between the parents and the school. _____ | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Q20. Parents do not hesitate to volunteer whenever the school request them to do so. _____ | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Q21. There is a prevailing spirit of collective responsibility towards the betterment of the school by both the school and the parents. _____ | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Q22. The School Governing Body encourages me to play a role in the education of my children. _____ | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Q23. When I see other parents actively involved in the school I want to do the same. _____ | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Q24. Are you a member of the school governing body? Yes No

Select the answer closest to your own view and fill in the relevant circle

- | | True | False |
|--|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Q25. Members of the school governing body must perform functions on behalf of and for the benefit of the school. _____ | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Q26. Members of the school governing body must elect office-bearers e.g. chairman, treasurer. _____ | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Q27. The term of office of the office-bearers in the school governing body is three years. _____ | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Q28. The school governing body has to adopt a constitution. _____ | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

APPENDIX D:
OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

1. **Please explain an occasion on which the principal's attitude contributed to your positive or negative attitude towards the school.**

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2. **What is your preferred method to communicate with the school?**

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3. **How does your familiarity with your roles in the school governing body affect your participation in school governance?**

.....

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.....

.....

.....

4. **How does co-operation between you and the principal affect school governance?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

YOUR TIME AND SUPPORT ARE HIGHLY APPRECIATED.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.