

**ENHANCING LEARNER INVOLVEMENT IN SGBs: A CASE STUDY
OF ONE SCHOOL IN MANGAUNG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY.**

By

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MARCH 2019

DECLARATION

I, ITUMELENG ISHMAEL DUMAKO, declare that the Master's degree research thesis or interrelated, publishable manuscripts / published articles, or coursework Master's degree mini-thesis that I herewith submit for the Master's degree qualification (Masters in Education) at the Central University of Technology, Free State, is my independent work and that I have not previously submitted it for a qualification at another institution of higher education.

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DUMAKO I.I

MARCH 2019

DEDICATION.

To my father, Albert 'Super' Mokhehi, you are a hero. This journey started a long time ago because of your support. It would be an injustice not to include my mother in this dedication. She has done her best to build me into an academic I am today.

It is befitting to dedicate this study to my daughters Leungo and Tlhalefo. I did this study because I wanted to be an inspiration to you. It indeed is our achievement together. I cannot leave out my younger brother Tshepo Mokhehi. The support, words of encouragement and the inspirations you have given to me are invaluable. My sisters Bridgette Dumako and Pelo Senoamadi, you guys are the best. To Putsoane Mdebuka, my friend par brother, thank you for always believing in me and pushing me for the better. This one is for both of us. To Itumeleng Kraai and Monchusi John, thank you for being my pillars throughout the duration of this project. Thulani Churchill Klaas, thank you for accompanying me to all the data collection sessions. Your dedication to this project was truly overwhelming.

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the enhancement of learner participation in school governance. South African School's Act 84 of 1996 stipulates that learners should legally form part of School Governing Bodies (SGBs). However, members in the SGB have opted to ignore such stipulations. Learners are excluded from participating in school governance because of individual perceptions that other members in the SGB have about them. They are left behind when training for the entire SGB is conducted, thus making it difficult for them to take part in meetings that are filled with riddling jargon and engagements of policies. This study revealed that attitudes of elderly governors towards learners are the center of challenges faced by learners. Concomitantly, the insufficient participatory chances given to learners and lack of capacity building made the cut to prime challenges faced by learners. I took a stance, as a researcher that learners are excluded from SGBs and indeed the outcomes proved my notion right.

In an attempt to stick to its own objectives, the study addressed the research question: How do we enhance learner participation in the SGB? Critical Emancipatory Research (CER) was adopted as the theoretical framework and Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a methodology. To analyze the data gathered, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was utilized. During the initial stages of the research, a forum was developed to deal with challenges facing learners in the SGB and subsequently come up with strategies to remedy that. The forum engaged as equal partners in the research as they embarked into discourse in an attempt to eliminate a socially unjust situation that was facing them. As a community, co-researchers were able to cooperatively work towards a common goal. They were able to identify problems that were facing them and ultimately remedied them on their own. It is through the same forum that this study can promulgate its strategies that will aid in enhancing learner participation in SGBs.

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LIST OF ACCRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CDA:	Critical Discourse Analysis
DBE:	Department of Basic Education
CER:	Critical Emancipatory Research
DoE:	Department of Education
FIA:	Free Attitude Interviews
LTSM:	Learning Teaching and Support Material
PC:	Personal Computer
PAR:	Participatory Action Research
RCL:	Representative Council of Learners
RSA:	Republic of South Africa
SASA:	South African School's Act
SGB:	School Governing Body
SMT:	School Management Team
SWOT:	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TLO:	Teacher Learner Organizer
UN:	United Nations
USAID:	United States Agency for International Development

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

“Learners (children) are to be seen and not to be heard” (African idiom). This belief that was once popular with many parents who believed that learners were to be seen but not given the platform to express their views or their views regarded as unimportant. This, despite various examples in history which point to the value brought about by improved/ enhanced participation of younger people and or learners eg (1976 Soweto uprisings/ valedictory speech by O Tiro at the University of the North). The stubborn persistence of the old belief has led to this study’s aim of suggesting ways to enhance learner participation in school governing bodies. This in support of SASA 84 of 1996’s stipulation that learners are to form an integral part of school governance, which is still ignored by some school governing bodies.

Mbokodi (2011, 38) purports that SGBs are anticipated to play a foremost role in forming effective schools that guarantee learners’ equal and excellent educational opportunities. The actions of such governors do not give learners the chance to contribute towards how their learning should be structured. Learners are, on the other hand, put into leadership positions by their constituencies. The limited role that learners play and their deliberate exclusion from SGBs therefore implies that the entire learner population in the school is left on the periphery. School governance refers to the participation of appropriate stakeholders like parents, teachers, pupils and non-academic staff in deciding the way in which schools must be run terms of the requirements of SASA 84 of 1996 (Mavuso & Duku 2014, 1). In a global context, SGBs are a mechanism through which the stakeholders in education are brought into partnership (Mabusela 2016, 6).

This chapter outlines the background of the study in detail and subsequently explores the rationale behind the need for the enhancement of learner participation in the SGB. A brief outline of the problem is also provided in this chapter. Equally, the study discusses the rationale behind the chosen theoretical framework. The main research question, sub-questions and the aims and objective. The chapter also explores the

methodology and design that was taken by the study during data generation and analysis. Ethical considerations employed by the study are also explored. The last section will be the layout of the study.

1.2 BACKGROUND

This study concentrates on learner participation in decision-making within SGBs. Clause 23 (2) of SASA indicates that voted participants in the SGB shall include parents and guardians of learners who study at a particular school, teachers, non-teaching members and learners studying in grade eight or in advanced classes. This emphasises the learners' legal status in school governing bodies, thus granting them participatory rights in activities of the SGB. Hystek (2001, 207-210) in Mahlangu (2008, 1) contends that via the RCL, learners manage to partake more and often influence decisions. Serfontein (2010, 94) attributes low levels of participation and recognition of learner leaders to a lack of SGBs' comprehension concerning the scope of authorities, responsibilities together with liabilities. As the most represented stakeholder group in the school community, learners are not afforded the chance to participate in SGB activities by other members of the SGB.

Hartas and Lindsay (2011, 129-130) assert that pragmatism distinguishes the forms of participation within the habits and ways youngsters participate in schools. As anticipated, the higher the learner engagement levels, the higher the probabilities for the schools to operate efficiently, with their participation in assessing the preparation, distribution and efficiency of service provision having numerous goals. Firstly, it has the power to improve the answerability of services offered by refining service provision and guaranteeing that resources are positioned and distributed suitably. The second point is that this method of participation constructs capability for persons to keep aligned to the philosophies of such organisations and escalate their entitlement sense. The third point is that even though contributory in its worth, reasonableness and drive, their participation in service assessment has a likelihood to inspire young people to uphold policy creativities to pursue to advance service efficiency within their societies.

Traditionally, there are other stakeholders whose role in decision making has been ignored, such as parents and learners (Maphosa & Shumba 2008, 49). Smit (2013, 349) explains that old-style school and classroom practice epitomise strict power relationships and autocratic cultures. The stimulus for containing pupils as participants

in the making of decisions in school originates from a universal programme for amplified adolescence contribution in situations which youngsters get involved daily (Phaswana 2010, 1). Carrim (2011, 74) posits that educational legislature and policy play a foremost role in demarcating and regulating participatory spaces and in defining children as contributors in, and topics of, education.

(Phaswana 2010, 1) avers that swelling proof exists that directs to older members in the school governing body as impediments to participation of learners. There is a strong tendency towards centralised regulation of education policy for transformation purposes. This causes clashes between the government and SGBs (Smit & Oosthuizen 2011, 62). Xaba (2011, 1) opines that governing of schools is the most significant aspect in the educational sphere that seems to undergo seemingly insuperable tests. The nature and efficiency of capacity building which school governing bodies obtain are frequently doubtful.

As per the stipulation of SASA 84 of 1996, parents are the most represented stakeholder group in the SGB. A parent of a learner studying at a certain school can be a chairperson of the SGB (RSA, 1996). Mestry and Khumalo (2012, 102) state that parents staying in rural areas and have been elected into the SGB lack the essential familiarity, dexterity and experience of school matters and particularly awareness of legislation. This then justifies the ignorant response of the SGB towards learner participation.

Results from current investigations in South Africa report that diverse governors in the school governing bodies experience a certain kind of exclusion (Mafora 2013, 1). Carrim (2011, 74) further maintains that educational laws and policy makers fail to highlight the countless manners in which youngsters live or undergo schooling in actuality. An emphasis on clear-cut variances amongst older people and learners understates the dissimilarities within the children populace.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem that this study looked at was enhancing learner participation in decision-making within the SGB. This study looks into the problem of enhancing learner participation in school governance. The deliberate limitation of learner participation by adult governors in SGBs is reliant on various factors which include, inter alia, attitudes of adult governors, capacity building, insufficient participatory chances that are

accorded to learners and learner knowledge of their responsibilities. The main argument raised by this study is that learners are not fully included in activities of school governance, while other participants in the SGB are aware of the legislation that compels learners to be participants but have ignored such a law.

1.3.1 Research question

Based on the background of the study, the following *research* question is applicable:

How do we actively involve learners in decision making within SGBs?

1.3.2 Research aim

Responding to the research question above, this study aims to suggest ways to enhance learner participation within the school governing bodies. To grasp the aim this research, the below-stated research objectives had to be developed:

1.3.3 Objectives of the study

Stated hereunder were the objectives addressed by the study:

1. To highlight the challenges faced by learner governors pertaining to their involvement in School Governing Bodies.
2. To identify and discuss the components for enhancement of the solution.
3. To determine the conditions relevant for the enhancement of learner participation in the SGB.
4. To identify possible threats to enhancement of learner participation in the SGB.
5. To provide the evidence that the strategy is working.

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research used Critical Emancipatory Research (CER) as a theoretical framework. The framework was chosen because of its emphasis on the emancipation of members of a community from social injustice. Social justice is defined “as the way in which human rights are manifested in everyday lives of the people at every level of the society” (Edmund Rice Centre, 2000: 1). In the context of this study, social injustice refers to the unlawful limitation of participation of learners in the activities of the SGB. The deliberate actions of adult governors are an attack on the learner governors, their

constituencies and the general school society. The choice of this theoretical framework was consequential for the enhancement of learner participation in SGBs because it encourages members of a society to work collaboratively in an attempt to transform learner participation to the advantage of the whole community.

Mahlomaholo and Nkoane (2002, 2) in Shangase (2013, 4) see the duty of the researcher as to be able to understand the way other people comprehend issues and create logic out of that. The above authors argue that this kind of research inspires researcher investigators to be critical, and to seek for profounder sense in the directions of the question of the research. Lastly, CER educates, empowers, changes the people's livelihood and advances the program of equality in every way. CER promotes societal fairness, harmony, liberty and optimism.

1.5 METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The study used the ideologies of Participatory Action Research in enhancing learner participation in the SGB. Members of one secondary school in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality worked together in an attempt to engage, through discourse, the challenges faced by learner governors in the SGB and ultimately, to bring about solutions. To drive the study forward, a forum was established to work together towards the achievement of the research objectives. The forum was to act as a vehicle through which the challenges of the study were to be critically engaged. The forum consisted of the following people: one member of the parent component who happened to be the secretary of the school governing body; the school principal who holds the chairpersonship in the School Management Team (SMT); one member who emanates from the teacher component of the SGB and is also the Teacher Learner Organiser (TLO) of the Representative Council of Learners (RCL); and a pupil who is the RCL president at the school. Data were generated through collaboratively working together with members of the SGB from a secondary school in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality.

Mahlomaholo and Nkoane (2002, 4) posit that the Free Attitude Interview (FIA) is a method wherein a question is asked to initiate a conversation with the participants, then a follow-up by a thoughtful summary to avoid deviation from the posed subject and readdress participants to seriously reflect on what they have been talking about. Probing questions were asked where necessary.

As the organiser of the forum, I engaged in two phases of data gathering, working cooperatively with other members of the team. I as researcher, dealt with issues of consent and assent long before the commencement of the study. All proceedings during the engagement sessions were recorded for the later use of data analysis.

The two phases from which the study was developed were held prior to the collection of data. In the first phase a meeting was organised where members of the entire SGB had to elect members who were to formulate the forum. Some members volunteered while others seemed uninterested due to their own individual reasons. All meetings in both phases were held outside the normal educational programme. The meeting outlined the objectives of the study to all members and additionally, a mandate was given to members chosen to be part of the forum. Members of the SGB also embarked on a SWOT analysis before the commencement of the study. This was done to assist all members with determining the prospects of the study in as far as resources were concerned.

The second phase was held to finalise the operations that the study would follow. It was decided that interviews would be held with my directing the conversations from my research protocol. I would use my analysis techniques to analyze data and present the outcomes to the team for finalisation. This decision was taken because of the threat of control and power during the initial stages of the study.

For the analysis of data, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used. CDA refers a form of an investigative study that mainly investigates the fashion in which societal power misuse, supremacy, and inequity are passed, replicated, and battled by text and talk within communal and political settings (Van Dijk 2009, 352). Through PAR we were able to talk through the challenges learners face in SGBs.

1.6 VALUE OF THE RESEARCH

This research aims at being beneficial to the general school membership and beyond. Learners, parents, educators, principals and officials working for the Department of Basic Education (DBE) will benefit from the productive results of this study. At the end of the research process, members of the SGB will be able to value the voices of learners during discussions. The entire teaching and learning fraternity in the province will realise the advantageous outcomes of working collaboratively towards a common goal. The study will hopefully ensure that SASA 84 of 1996 is respected and upheld.

1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

When reporting the findings and analysing the data, I used pseudonyms. Data were stored in a secure PC protected by a security code. Before going through the process of gathering data, consent to undertake the study was requested from the DBE. A brief outline of the study and its benefits were also outlined with the request. Children cannot give their own permission to participate in the study because to their age and maturity; they will then have to assent to their participation. Docket and Perry (2010, 3) posit that children must also be given a chance to agree to their participation in research. As opposed to consent; they then have to assent. The purpose of this study was also outlined to the membership of the research team. All members were briefed of their participation as voluntary. They were told that they were permitted to withdraw their participation whenever they wished to.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The aim of the research could be extended to only one school within the municipality of Mangaung. For a broader outlook on the outcomes that should involve a greater part of the community, more schools could have been engaged. In addition, the number of willing participants to form part of the forum was too small. A bigger number could have possibly yielded a broader and more relevant outlook. The study had to be held outside school time, so it was always a challenge to get all members together during a time when they were possibly dealing with their personal business.

1.9 LAYOUT OF THE CHAPTERS

The following is an outline structure of this study:

Chapter 1: Provides an overview of the whole study.

Chapter 2: Provides a review of the literature on the strategies for the enhancement of learner participation in SGBs.

Chapter 3: Outlines the methodology used in the study. It also looks at the interventions employed during the course of the research. The chapter also highlights the basis for the choice of methodology. Population and sampling, together with data collection methods are addressed. Lastly, the chapter addresses ethical considerations undertaken by the study.

Chapter 4: The chapter discusses interpretation and discussion of findings of the study.

Chapter 5: This chapter outlines the findings and recommendations for the enhancement of learner participation in decision making within the SGB.

1.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the reasons for the need to enhance learner participation in the SGB. A brief outline of the problem was broken down. Thereafter, the study discussed the rationale behind the chosen theoretical framework. The chapter also navigated through the methodology and design that were employed by the study during data generation and analysis. The layout of the entire study was also provided in this section of the research. The following chapter will provide, a literature review on the enhancement of learner participation in school governance.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE STRATEGIES FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF LEARNER PARTICIPATION IN THE SGB

2.1 INTRODUCTION

To fulfil the requirements of this study, I as researcher will explore an array of writings that will give a complete review of the literature connected to learner participation in school governing bodies. A theoretical framework will be outlined in detail and therewith, I will attempt to analyse the characteristics of Critical Emancipatory Research; its historical background, objectives, formats and steps, as well as the role of the researcher and their relationship with the participants. In this section I will attempt a broader definition of learner participation as a central concept in the study.

One other section in this chapter will be on exploring the enhancement of democratic learner participation in school governance, together with interrogating the challenges faced by learner governors within School Governing Bodies. Subsequently, I will, through an exploration of sub-components of this segment, outline the components related to the study; these will help in discovering solutions to the challenges faced by learner governors. This segment will also provide strategies that will assist in finding proper remedial action to the problem. Concomitantly, potential threats to the study will be discussed in detail. The last sub-component will provide a complete literature review on the evidence of some of the successful studies that have been conducted previously. The latter will provide strong evidence that I am convinced that learners are undemocratically excluded from their legal appointments as legitimate school governors.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

At the outset, I am more concerned with the injustice encountered by elected learners within school governance. The limited inclusion of learners, despite legislative obligations, is to a large degree an undertaking that the leaders in school governance are refusing to execute. Their perceptions and attitudes toward learners leave them (learners) on the periphery. They are excluded during strategic meetings and are not included during the formation of the agenda of any other meetings. In a quest to

remedy these shortcomings, I opted to adopt Critical Emancipatory Theory as a framework for this study.

Grant and Onsanloo (2014, 12) highlight the fact that the theoretical framework is the foundation which supports and reinforces the creation of knowledge for a research investigation. The theoretical framework helps as the skeleton and sustenance for the basis of the research, the statement of the problem, the aims and objectives, the importance, and the questions of the research. The theoretical framework offers a foundation, for the review of literature, and more essentially, the approaches and analytical methods. I will apply this definition of Grant and Onsaloo (2014) as a navigation technique throughout the entire study. Critical Theory will be the anchor which will keep the study intact and grounded.

I chose Critical Emancipatory Theory for various reasons that I deem adequate to qualify for this study which is largely concerned with the provision of social justice for learners who are marginalised from performing their legislative rights; this is fundamentally the idea from which Critical Emancipatory Theory emanates – the healing of social injustices. Rex Gibson (1986, np) highlights, among other things, the ideas that reinforce the development of critical theory as follows: a process of engaging with genuine problems, as both a topic and justification for its theorising; the rejection of naturalness or given-ness in a society and a comprehension that all facts are socially created and thus humanly adjustable. Categories, notions and facts are socially created by people which attend to the interests of specific groups in society and thus, exposing contradictory interests is essential for the power relations that exist. Finally, the emancipatory aims of critical theory seek not just to label or clarify problems but to offer apparatuses for resolving them by allowing people to acquire more control over their lives. Relative on Rex Gibson's ideas, this study will afford co-researchers and the general stakeholder population with an opportunity to engage in the governance problems that affect them. It will provide the school society with an opportunity to adjust a problem of limitation of learner involvement in the SGB that they are facing. CER as a theoretical framework, will expose all the power relations that exist within the SGB and attempt, to the highest degree, to provide tools that will assist with emancipating those that are affected by a social injustice that exist within the school boundaries.

2.2.1 Historical Background

Kellner (1989, 2) explains that Critical Theory is frequently related to the supposed 'Frankfurt School'. The terminology relates to the efforts of associates of the Institute for Social Research. This organisation saw its creation in 1923 in Frankfurt, Germany. It was the initial centre for research that focused and relied on Marxism. The organisation's work was steered by a man called Carl Grunberg in the 1920s, and happened to be historical, experiential, and concerned with difficulties faced by the crusade of the working class in Europe.

Rush (2004, 6) in the Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory - First Edition, outlines in detail the abstract basics of the initial critical theory. Rush (2004) avers that it was initially created in the course of an epoch of extremely intricate intellectual activity in Germany in the 1930s. Developed by Hockheimer, it got one of its lively forms in the twentieth century in conjunction with the ideologies of Heidegger; the rational pragmatism of the Vienna Circle; and early Wittgenstein. Furthermore, Critical Theory has continuously been somewhat unsolidified, even by design, and it would be a fault to even deal with its history univocally.

Hockheimer (1972, np) contends that the new left was initially positive with the probabilities to alter society through the application of steady pressure on the organisations to live up to their varied claims. The crisis of delayed capitalism was perceived as the battle amongst the philosophy of bourgeois individualism and the authenticity of the density of upheld by limited large companies, military and the government which they led.

Kellner (1989) furthermore extrapolates that with the change in time of political, economic and social factors, Hockheimer was later elected into the directorship of the institute. Just after taking that position, Hockheimer provided an opening speech. The speech was titled "The State of Social Philosophy and the Tasks of an Institute for Social Research" (Bronner & Kellner 1989, 25-36). In that speech, Hockheimer outlines social ideology in an attempt to elucidate the destiny of humans as a portion of a society, and not just individual people. It relies beyond everything with the societal living of persons: government, law, economics and religious conviction; in a nutshell, with the whole material and divine culture of human race. Hockheimer's address

offered the first key formation of his observation relating to critical social theory as a mixture of communal sciences and philosophy, and thus delivered a valuable overview to the organisation's assignment.

According to Kellner (1979, 2), Critical Theory, by disparity, defines the compound combination of *mediations* which interrelate awareness and the social order, philosophy and economical situation and residents. Such relationships can be in the best way simplified and advanced in solid historic settings where a person may question the interrelations transpire within a fixed social group, in a fixed era of time and in a fixed republic, amongst the responsibilities of the associates in the financial processes, the conversion of the mental constructions of its distinct membership, and the entirety of the structure that affects which creates its opinions and mechanisms.

The Institute for Social Research as outlined by Kellner (1989, 2) offered to research about technically trained employees and workers within Germany. They collected pragmatic data on the mental, communal, and political insolences to create an understanding within a theoretic background which incorporates financial modelling, social studies and psychology. Hockheimer demonstrated the assignment of the Institution's social theory through a sign that an experiential investigation of the professional worker's group would be its initial assignment. Additionally, Hockheimer pointed out that his co-workers would mainly assume assignments in "theoretic economics, commercial history, and the history of the working-class association. Therefore, at least through the initial Hockheimer years, the Organisation required to commence with a lot of assignments by Grunberg pertaining to subjects at the core of traditional Marxism and socialism, this would however, be from a largely complete theoretic vantage viewpoint.

2.2.2 Critical Emancipatory Research Objectives

Shangase (2013, 10) corroborates Campanella (2009, 2) that CER is a type of a theoretical framework that helps with comprehending humans as talking beings. This study will gather members of the SGB to engage in discourse about the problem limited learner participation in decision making within the SGB. Various phases will see members talking about their experiences and views on problem of this study. CER

permits researchers to pay attention to individuals who remain oppressed and deprived since our expressions are entrenched in beliefs (Mahlomaholo: 1999, 9). CER will assist this study by providing all stakeholders with the opportunity to focus on learners as the oppressed and deprived group and equally exhumed through discourse the beliefs of other stakeholders about learner participation in decision making within the SGBs. Learners, due to their position in the hierarchical structure of the school remain more exposed to the supremacy and seniority in the SGBs. Their status as minors makes it more difficult for them to raise their voices and condemn any element that renders them less knowledgeable. Mahlomoholo (1999, 6) explains that in our scholastic organizations, humans as participants have remained silent owing to politics and supremacy, which, more often than not, are tyrannical, creating ideologies of power and lowliness, and thus they have to be challenged and overthrown.

CER is largely utilized to speak out, for members who for long remained marginalised, chances to accessibility of the standing school structures, and to comprehend schoolroom performs and the political, communal and commercial subjects original to their communal sphere (Kincheloe & McLaren 2011, 5). The choice of CER will thus aid learners who have for long been left on the periphery to participate in making sure that their legislative obligations, as stated by SASA 84 of 1996, are adhered to. CER signifies a pledge to alter to improved relations and fair and sensible societies. Societies are controlled through societal disparities and unfairness, therefore defying them will interrupt the way in which things are being done (Campanella 2009, 1).

Empowerment is at the core of Critical Emancipatory Research. Although it is primarily research led, the collaborative interpretation of outcomes and the implementation of results provide a certain level of empowerment. Empowerment is further enhanced by several guiding principles, such as the appreciation of diverse skills, the conscious effort to raise awareness, and the context sensitive framework. (Klara 2014, 25). as members of the research teamwork towards achieving the aims and objectives of this study, all stakeholders within the SGB will be empowered. Co-researchers will be well informed about the significance of learner participation in the SGB. Learners will be given the opportunity to participate in decision making activities. Other members of the team shall have also learnt of the pivotality of learner presence and participation on matters that affect their lives. All members shall have been empowered with research

and collective problem-solving skills which will help them to solve future organizational problems.

Critical theory is a social theory that anticipates transforming and emancipating societies from the injustices that are brought about by power and structural inequalities. Critical theory is, in its own nature, emancipatory. Hermingway (1999, 491) cites that critical theory aims to steer a course between the reification of human action in positivism and post-positivism, and the relativism inherent in constructivism; all the while seeking contact between theory and practice aimed at the emancipation of human capacities.

2.2.3 Formats of CER

Krammer-Roy (2015, 5) opines that critical methods possess emancipatory objectives and pursue to take enablement to the subjugated crowds by revealing disparities and allowing for voices to be heard, eventually directing to positive social transformation. Pertaining to this research, my goal as researcher was to enhance learner participation in school governance and thereby allow them to empower themselves. Learners have been marginalised by adult governors without taking into account the stipulations of SASA 84 of 1996. There have been visible inequalities in terms of representation, thereby causing the voice of the learners to be silenced. It was through an adoption of CER that learner participation in the SGBs was to be realised.

CER is designed and applied through cooperation between knowledgeable researchers and a collection of people who are a portion of a fragile and small marginalised society (Biggeri & Ciani 2017, 9). All the activities are jointly undertaken by the partakers who are specially educated. Through the research actions undertaken on persons who share the same living situations, the partakers are able to improve their self-awareness. This approach is then able to generate social changes in the current dominant dynamics of social change. This study gathered all stakeholders in a school community to collaborate in anticipation of demarginalising learners from exclusion in the activities of the SGB. All stakeholders engaged in a joint project to see learners empowered and be allowed sufficient participation in the daily operations of the SGB. All members were able to cooperatively dismantle the dominant and blatant elements of superiority and seniority.

Biggeri and Ciani (2017, 9) summarize the main elements of CER in a quest to explain the key features of this emancipatory path. Firstly, it is vital to make sure that all partakers take a lively and decision-making responsibility in the research. Many of the actions in this study have to be collaborative and the responsibility of the professional researcher has to become minimal: they only oversee the process which has to be steered by the partakers. Through the different phases of this research, members of the research team had ample opportunity to participate fully in all the activities and processes. This would help with creating a sense of ownership for the outcomes of the research. All members of the research team worked collaboratively to make sure that the end-product of this research study represents the views of all members and not those of the researcher or any other person within the team.

Biggeri and Ciani (2017, 9-10) continue to explain that second to all, it is imperative to use approaches that assist people to distribute knowledge and study from each other's know-hows and struggles and comprehending an array of methods of overcoming obstacles and hurdles. These approaches are favorable to distinct and communal reflections, in the case of human dignity and the right to confidentiality; through this method the partakers acquire fresh consciousness about structural reasons of their living surroundings. An open discussion about learner involvement in decision making within SGBs aided this study with providing individual views and experiences. It created an opportunity for co-researchers to dwell deeper into their subjective views about the problem of the study. Their reflections revealed, in a deeper sense, how they felt about learner participation in decision making within SGBs and thus making it a lot easier for the study to move smoothly towards its intended aim.

Another important subject is awareness raising on the national and international rights and privileges as inhabitants: the legislative framework is a valuable tool for deliberations and thoughts. People engaged in CER can then inspect their individual life experiences and equate them with their rights. SASA 84 of 1996 was used as a legislative base from which all the discussions in the research process would be guided. SASA 84 of 1996 entails all the necessary information about the running of SGBs. It was thus a relevant legislative tool from which all deliberations and discussions would be aligned. The last essential characteristic is the *dissemination strategy*. It is principally significant to encourage this sort of a method via

communication with organizations that can really progress the day-to-day lives of the partakers: individuals who have a comparable problems may be aided by being offered the results of a research assignment so as to help them overcome the set problem (Biggeri and Ciani: 2017, 9-10).

2.2.4 Steps in CER

Owing to the purpose of this research, I will highlight a few steps which I deem were applicable in the execution of this research. The initial step signifies the levelling of the research ground. Emancipatory research can embody a valued transformative procedure for the partakers, their communities and families (Ref NB: Check Garnett, Smith, Kervick, Ballysingh, Moore and Gonell, 2019...). I chose, in this study, a school where I teach; it was in this very same school that I was able to identify a research problem applicable to this study. The SGB as a group was chosen because they are the ones dealing with school governance. The SGB then chose a number of people whom they believed would best represent other stakeholders in the execution of the study. All members were informed of their right to participate but a smaller group was chosen to form part of the research team. The whole research team was able to determine the core objectives of the research and committed to its execution.

The second phase is the choice of the correct approach to execute the research. Participatory Action Research (PAR) was used in conducting this research. The nature of PAR allows communities to actively collaborate in effecting social change to a social problem that they are facing (Ref NB: check MacDonald, 2012, already on the reference list.....). The school community in question was holistically involved in the research processes. From the beginning to the end, I was there as a facilitator of the research process which was led by co-researchers. I presented the research problem to the co-researchers and allowed them to take the lead in making sure that its objectives were adhered to. This would make the co-researchers to take ownership of the outcomes of the research. They would know, following the research process that they had an obligation to effect the change that was needed.

Lastly, CER requires that the research results must be disseminated. Stakeholders with whom the results may be shared, may be the indigenous communities, local and national organisations, local and national authorities and specialised institutions

dealing with the same research topic (Ref.....). One of the decisions taken by the co-researchers was to share the outcomes of the research with all stakeholders who may be affected by a similar problem. Learner exclusion in the SGBs is not an isolated case in one school community; it is a problem that affects the greater part of communities; thus, by allowing them access to the study will assist with effecting change in their societies. The Department of Basic Education as an authoritative body and custodian of policy will also have a fair share of the study. This will assist in making sure that the stipulations of SASA 84 of 1996 are respected in as far as learner participation in the SGB is concerned.

2.2.5 The Role of the Researcher

As researcher, I understood that I had to put myself on an equal footing with the rest of the research team and become a contributor to the research process, like other members (Krauss & Turpin 2013, 8). My role was to ensure that the correct research techniques were adhered to and that the research study yielded the results that were anticipated. I equally had to, as the researcher, understand that I had predetermined views about the research problem and that they should not influence what other researchers believed about the problem at hand (Klein & Myers 1999, np).

I acknowledge that I was interpreting the co-researchers' interpretation as equals and needed to step outside myself and attempt to understand the world of school governance as informed by the co-researchers. As the coordinator in this process, I attempted to bring to the forefront meanings from the SGB members (Matlho 2017, 40-41).

2.2.6 The relationship between the researcher and participants

This research was conducted over a number of sessions. It was necessary for us as research participants' team to develop an element of trust amongst members. I had to have trust in the members that they would deliver the expected outcome of the research and that they had to trust me to be a part of the journey that would see them realising a changed school community. Action research is based on participants' involvement and influence and accepts that the transformation of social reality and knowledge development cannot be achieved without engaging an understanding of

participants about themselves and the researcher (Aasgaard, Borg & Karlsson 2012, 3).

I understood that my ideal position in the research was that of an interpreter. I entered the research situation without the intention of change. My intention was to understand the meanings of learner exclusion in the SGB through the judgment of validity claims. It was through these adopted mentalities that I valued the relationship between myself and the co-researchers. As the researcher, I had the knowledge base about how the research should unfold, but I did not allow that to intimidate the co-researchers. They understood that I had specialised knowledge in research and they equally had their specialised knowledge about school governance. Therefore, we both needed one another for the purpose of reaching the objectives of the research. (Aasgaard et al. 2012, 3-4).

2.3 DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS

This segment will attempt to bring closer to the study definitions that are associated with the concepts of the study. I will attempt to define concepts based on the context and understanding of what I wish to achieve as the outcome of this research. Operational concepts that will herein be defined are: learner participation and school governance.

2.3.1 Learner Participation

Morojele (2011, 50) points to the assertion of Rampal (2008, np) that child participation in decision-making has proved to be an intricate task and has held diverse connotations. Bradly (2007, np) in Morojele (2011, 50) further clarifies that child involvement means including children in decisions that touch their lives, their society and the broader community.

In the context of this study, learner participation will therefore be defined as the allowance of children who are in grade 8 or higher to fully take part in the processes of advancing their societal rights on issues of social power and prejudice.

2.3.2 School Governing Body

Ngcobo (2003, 9) explains that the School Governing Body refers to a constitutional organisation of persons that are democratically chosen to step up to the governance a school. The explanation implies that the SGB is created by an act of parliament, particularly the SASA 84 of 1996. The school governors, that is, the persons elected into the governing body, are representatives the school as an institution and the community at large. The governance of all public school is bestowed in the governing body (RSA, 1996:28).

2.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

I will, in this section, discuss democratic learner participation as the main literature for the study. Thus, I will offer a comprehensive discussion on decentralisation, participation and accountability as subheadings. Challenges, components, strategies, threats and evidence of the success of previous studies will equally be provided as ways of enhancing learner participation.

2.4.1 DEMOCRATIC LEARNER PARTICIPATION

Despite the legislative powers provided to learners by the South African School's Act 84 of 1996 (SASA), some stakeholders still eliminate learners from matters of school governance, and from decision-making in particular. SASA of 1996 was meant to decentralise power from the state and put it in the hands of communities, particularly parents. However, parents, teachers and principals are failing to provide learners with the opportunity to form an integral part of decision making in their communities.

Democratic Learner Participation refers to the inclusion of learners, who were elected onto the RCL, to deal with strategic and operational issues of the School Governing Body in their entirety. It implies that learners must form part of school committees. They must also be included when agendas for meetings are drawn up and their participation must not be limited only to deliberations in such meetings.

After the inception of democracy, SASA 84 of 1996 adopted all stakeholders in education into the governance of schools. This was one of the transformational undertakings that was to reinforce and concomitantly advance the values of democracy as a mode of bridging the racial injustices of the past. For this reason, the deliberate exclusion of learners in a structure, such as an SGB is fundamentally undemocratic.

Decentralisation, Participation and Accountability will be explored hereunder as subheadings of Democratic Learner Participation.

2.5 ASPECTS CENTRAL TO DEMOCRATIC LEARNER PARTICIPATION

2.5.1 DECENTRALISATION

Decentralisation is a vastly equivocal idea that has been differently defined and understood (Masuku 2010, 13). Caldwell (2005, np) in Osori et al. (2009, 2) defines decentralisation as the movement of power from central government to school level. USAID (2009, 1) explains that education decentralisation guidelines are widespread everywhere in the world and their aims include, inter alia, shifting political power. Whatever the motivation may be, such developments might direct to advances in the education quality. Masuku (2010, 9) contends that the decentralisation discussions creates a constant dispute on the (re) distribution of authority in education from the government (as the centre of power) to the margins. Brennen (2002, 1) holds that promoters of decentralisation trust that its outcome will be advanced student performance, more effective usage of resources, amplified expertise and gratification for school administrators and educators, and larger community and business participation and backing of schools.

In South Africa one of the utmost thrilling developments subsequent to the introduction of an independent state was the formation of constitutionally chosen members of SGB within community schools (Mahlangu 2008, 7). Parents, educators, pupils and non-academic members of staff were put at the forefront of such a decentralised system. The South African Schools Act aims at giving character to the values of access, impartiality, reparation, democratic governance and national advancement. Mncube

(2008, 1) purports that education reorganization is meant to foster national dialogue and shared decision making. It also remains a tool central to education reform in South Africa.

2.5.2 PARTICIPATION

Looyen (2000, 9) avers that participation means a chase of shared objectives and values, which mitigate for a shared, distinctive culture. Participatory management allows every stakeholder with an interest in education to be represented and have a say in any organisation (Mabena 2002, 2).

In a quest to achieve organisational goals, child participation in school governance, as an element of democratic principles, must never be overlooked. Morojele (2011, 50) highlights that child participation refers to involving children in dialogues that affect their lives, their society and their larger community. Phaswana (2010, 1), extrapolates that the impetus of including them as participants in the making of decisions in schools originates from the universal crusade for better contributions of the youth in surroundings where youngsters are found to be daily.

2.5.3 ACCOUNTABILITY

Ascher et al. (1991, 2) regard an accountability system to be a combination of obligations, rules and performs which intend to intensify the likelihood that learners will end up being exposed to decent educational performs in a helpful scholarship setting, decrease the probability that damaging performs shall be adopted and offer inner self-correction in the organization to classify, classify and alter the course of action which is destructive and unproductive. Bush et al. (1994, 54) as pointed out by Morolong (2007, 54) posit that at the least, accountability implies being obligated to provide an explanation of actions or conduct in an education setting to people in possession of a genuine privilege of knowing.

Learners are accountable to the holistic school population. However, their accountability to different stakeholders is distinguishable. Primarily, learners are accountable to their respective constituencies. Their existence is informed by the

amount of trust that is vested in them by their peers. They, therefore, have to advance the needs and interests of those who voted them into office. The National Policy for Representative Council of Learners (2013, 1) states that the RCL structure must provide a platform for learners' voices to be heard. RCL members must also assist in the organisation of extra-curricular activities and encourage other learners to participate in activities, such as sports, drama, dance, debate and other cultural activities.

It would be illogical to limit learner accountability to their constituency alone. Their constitutional right to participate in democratic processes must be backed with the acknowledgement of its responsibilities. It is therefore the learners' responsibility to account to teachers, the principal and parents as well. They owe it to both their peers and teachers and the principal to make sure that they perform well in their academic activities. They are obligated to act as an example of academic excellence. Their parents, as the central components of school governance, must also be accounted for in terms of making sure that the issues at ground level reach the highest office of school governance.

Democratic Learner Governance is a very extensive concept that may be defined in an array of ways by various researchers. This section attempts to provide a comprehensive conceptualisation as directed by the questions of the research and the research aim as indicated in chapter 1. The concept is therefore defined in a way that relates to me and what I anticipate to achieve as an end product. Democratic Learner Participation was defined as the only category and I equally extrapolated on decentralization, participation and accountability as indicators of the concept.

2.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF LEARNER PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE.

O'Connell (1991) contends that the role of learner governors in school management has always been at the centre of the struggle for educational transformation in South Africa. It is therefore important to understand where learner governorship had its origins, and the role it played in the creation of the new South Africa.

Before 1980, a culmination of a number of factors in Soweto led to the establishment of the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC), which spearheaded the dropping of Afrikaans as a medium of teaching and learning (Brooks and Brickhill, 1980). On 16 June 1976, learners marched through Soweto and the police opened fire at them, killing a thirteen-year-old boy, Hector Peterson (Sithole, 1995).

After 1980, the Reconstruction and Development Programme advocated that in the field of education and training, structures of institutional governance which reflect the interest of all stakeholders and the broader community served by the institution should be established. This led to the formation of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS). The formation of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) in 1986 was probably the most significant milestone in the democratisation of education. What it did, was to bring together a large number of actors within the educational sphere, and representing all stakeholders (NEPI, 1992).

The Educational Renewal Strategy (ERS) document and the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) both advocated increased learner participation in school governance through the policy of educational decentralization (NEPI, 1992). In order to establish the principle of greater responsibility among the community for school education, management councils were established in schools in which learners were given an observer status (NEPI, 1992). The ANC Policy Framework for Education and Training propagated a balance between the responsibilities of national and provincial government and popular participation in policy development and implementation through structures of governance and consultation.

The 1995 Hunter Report confirmed the participation of learners in school management as it stipulated that the composition of school governing bodies should comprise parents, teachers and learners (Hunter, 1995). In 1996, the South African Schools Act legalised learner participation in school management, as it stated that a Representative Council of Learners at school must be established at every public-school enrolling learners in grade eight and higher (South Africa, 1996).

2.7 ENHANCING LEARNER PARTICIPATION

In the previous parts of this research, I outlined that learner participation needs to be enhanced. The study has reiterated that I am completely conscious of the biased non-

inclusion of learners, and thus the inception of this study. Much of the literature provides that learners are denied their legislative right to form part of School governance. The focus in this segment is on enhancing learner participation. Such enhancement will profit not only learners but all stakeholders within the education fraternity. I will, in this segment, explore challenges, components, strategies, threats and the evidence of previous studies - all of which will provide a concrete stance that there is a dire need to enhance learner participation.

2.7.1 CHALLENGES IMPACTING ON LEARNER PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE.

In relation to the scope of this study, I chose to explore an array of issues which I believe form the heart of its literature. The choice of such headings was opted for in an attempt to cover the aims and the questions of the research. The topics that will be explored in the literature of this study are the attitudes of adult governors towards learner participation. Under the latter heading, I will explore the perceptions of parents, educators and principals respectively.

I will also focus on capacity building as a challenge faced by learner governors. In this segment, I will attempt to expose the lack of capacity building by School Governors, for learners in particular. Equally, I will explore the participatory chances that are accorded to learners in meetings and other aspects of school governance.

Finally, evidence of success from previously successful studies will be provided. That segment will offer proof from researches that are similar to the one at hand. This will be in an attempt to prove my stance that learners are not provided enough chances to participate in decision making within school governance.

2.7.1.1 ATTITUDES OF ADULT GOVERNORS ON LEARNER PARTICIPATION AND SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Lewis and Naidoo (2006, 415-427) aver that if researchers are to make a breakthrough in current designs of powers and privilege within school settings and wider public, they should strive to comprehend more intensely the methods by which local performers are taking and re-enacting policy. Learners, as minors, are the most represented

stakeholder group. Nevertheless, despite their being in the majority, adult members i.e. parents, educators and principals have various perceptions and attitudes about them and their roles.

(a) Educator Attitudes

The Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) preserves the privileges of all people in this country and approves the representative ideals of human pride, equivalence and liberty, which imply people's rights to partake in the making of decisions on issues that impacts their interests (Xaba: 2008, 16). Carim (2011, 74) contends that the idea of "learner", together with an age and phase model of children's capabilities in legislation and policy, confuses dissimilarities amongst children, such as race, class, sex, and household conditions and so treats them as a homogeneous group. An emphasis on the categorical variances amongst grownups and children understates dissimilarities inside the populace of children (Wayness: 2009, np).

Teachers that are chosen as participants in the governing body are the agents of other teachers in the school (DoE 1998, 13). In reporting back to other teachers, these teacher participants pose a threat to the learner members as they (learner members) might be prejudiced based on their engagements and interaction in the SGB meetings. As a result, learners might feel intimidated by their teachers as they must face them in their classrooms, and not as equal members serving in the same committee as teachers still hold an upperhand in terms of superiority. Consequently, Xaba (2011, 205) found from his participation in a field study that other stakeholders in the SGB believed that the teachers understood their roles and responsibilities more than anyone else. This included their attempts to even gain control over financial matters. The key characteristic of controlling relations is the apparent right of educators to chastise, regulate and uphold order in the traditional school situation. The hierarchical culture at the school forms the attitudes held by educators and school management to children (Morojele et al.: 2011, 51). Madingoe (1993, 19) purports that younger educators do not become hesitant about influencing learners to go on strike when things go unsatisfactorily for learners. Roberts (1984, 19) as quoted by Mabena (2002, 24) holds that principals realise that they are increasingly dealing with educators who: do not fear superiors; want to work on a first hand basis with the principal; ask why questions and expect answers; expect to be consulted and have influence; and reflect

lower loyalties to organisational goals and commitments. If principals (heads of schools) are prone to experience some challenges with educators, it is evident that the attitudes of educators to learner participation leaves more to be desired.

(b) Parents' Attitudes

As part of the decentralisation process, SASA of 1996 vested most of the decision-making powers on the SGBs. Equally, membership of such SGBs shall be dominated by the parent component. Parent governors act as a linkage between the school and the community (Ngcobo 2003, 22). Phaswana (2010, 3) maintains that parents staying in the rurals are unwilling to partake in discussions with minors during SGB meetings. Mpofana (2004, 17) holds that the involvement of parents looks very practicable and simple, but there are some practical problems that may stand in the implementation of this mandate. Behr (1987, 7) in Mpofana (2004, 18) alludes to the fact that many parents, particularly in the lower income group, and especially if they have experienced failure, view schools as hostile institutions. Therefore, for such reasons cooperation with other stakeholders becomes difficult. Badenhorst (1993, 110) asserts that, pertaining to school governance, parents do not recognise how to contribute and what is anticipated of them; do not have time to contribute; and find it challenging to get involved in both rural and urban areas. Heystek (1999, 111) found that black parents disregard their mission of being a portion of their children's education.

Mabovula (2010, 6) contends that parents monopolise the SGB structure as belonging to adults and saw it as no place for children. They felt that learners should be left out of the SGB meetings because they were not intellectually and emotionally ready to carry the burden of school governance. As a result, learners were excluded on the basis of age. Morojele (2011, 50) cites that there are various factors that have been cited as impacting the authentic participation of children, including parent's conceptions of childhood, for example, views about children's competence, concerns that children have to be protected from too much responsibility, institutional cultures and structures that are not child friendly, and a lack of skills on the part of adults for interacting with children (Moses, 2008; Wyness, 2005).

(c) Principals' Attitudes

Jones (1987, 64) maintains that the school principal has a responsibility to usher and help the SGB in their responsibilities. Brown and Duku (2008, 436) as pointed out by Kumalo (2009, 46) holds that in spite of clear stipulations in the schools Act concerning the way they should partake, in practicality partaking is organized and institutionalised via the activities of principals who explain who should partake, how they partake, and what conclusions are available to partaking. Van der Linde (1993, 5) asserts that failure to involve learners should be laid on the shoulders of the principal. According to Mpošana (2009, 9) parents and principals still do not accept each other as partners in education and that principals still view parents as an intrusion on their own work.

In his findings, Mafora (2013, 10) found that respondents see their schools as largely missing justice and not converting for the better due to limits in the management performs of principals. Mafora (2013) furthermore explains that according to some study results (Mafora, 2013; Hoy & Tarter, 2004), a greater number of participants observe principals as unable to produce a setting wherein social justice flourishes. Mafora (2013, 11) furthermore alludes to the fact that his findings vary with some studies which concluded that principals had individual qualities, such as confidence, care and bravery which improved social justice. Mafora (2013, 11) furthermore purports that a significant number of educators and pupils observe principals in their schools to have certain individual qualities and insouciances that count contrary to the transformational agenda and social justice program. They related that principals displayed unfamiliarity to social justice matters; bossy and controlling; random and temperamental; standoffish and indifferent around other person's problems; and egotistical and elusive.

According to Hoy and Miskel (cited by Hoy & Tarter 2004) in Mafora (2013, 11) principals have a tendency to camouflage behind their job as principals, be unnecessarily angry, or manipulate educators, as well as not commanding trustworthiness, faithfulness and reverence, especially in the nonexistence of binding laws. It is for such reasons that principals are made to be extra authoritarian and autocratic, thus corroding social justice deliberations further.

It is evident, from the literature reviewed above, that the perceptions of adult governors in SGBs is a hindrance to advancing constitutional democracy. Principals, parents and teachers are portrayed as having perceptions that will always leave learners on the periphery of democracy. This is what learners are subjected to on a daily basis, despite the legal obligations of the South African School's Act of 1996. The latter evidence has provided this study with more credence that learner participation in school governance requires enhancement.

2.7.1.2 INSUFFICIENT PARTICIPATORY CHANCES GIVEN TO LEARNERS

Participation means a chase of mutual aims and principles, which should promote a shared, distinctive culture (Looyen (2000, 9). Participatory management allows every stakeholder with interest in education to be to be represented and have a say in any organisation (Mabena 2002, 2).

In the quest to achieve organisational goals, child participation in school governance, as an element of democratic principles, must never be overlooked. Morojele (2011, 50) highlights that child participation implies involving children in discussions that affect their existence, their society and their broader community. Phaswana (2010, 1) quotes Wilson (2009) that learners who contribute profit by gaining personal self-discipline, improved self-assurance and enhanced relations with educators and schoolmates. Cockburn (2006, np) determined that schools as places of partaking do not inspire youngsters to contest organizations of power; therefore, pupils are found on the edge when decisions undertaken, even if they are members of such structures.

The evidence provided in this literature proved that stakeholders within school governance are not well capacitated to execute their day-to-day governance operation and for that reason training should be provided. The literature also emphasises that the participation of learners is insufficient; this is due to the deliberate acts of adult governors.

2.7.1.3. CAPACITY BUILDING AS A CHALLENGE FACED BY LEARNER GOVERNORS

Mafora (2013, 1) points out Adams and Waghid's contention that SGBs should obtain teaching on the contents of democratic processes since the effective implementation of their roles is dependent on their possession of a reasonable comprehension of democracy and its values. Mafora (2013, 1) furthermore contends that although they have inadequate resources, schools should still offer communal experiences, expertise and understanding that train learners with accountable citizenship and meaningful contribution in the economy. Notwithstanding numerous efforts intended at building capacity for members of school governance, plus the usage of monetary resources for this reason, researches thrive with information of plentiful difficulties in the sphere of school governance in South African schools.

Mabasa and Thamae (2002, 112) as cited by Xaba (2011, 201) reports that SGBs are not educated prior to starting assuming office and that creates glitches, which include strangeness of meeting processes, difficulties with jargon employed during meetings; problems in handling excessive quantities of paperwork; not having knowledge of how to participate; not knowing suitable laws; feeling frightened by other participants who appear to be broadly informed; and observing their responsibilities as just approving the decisions of others. The problem is credited to inappropriate and insufficient preparation of members in school governance, which fails to actually focus the fundamental roles SGBs.

Section 31 of the South African School's Act of 1996 provides that the period of office of a member who is not a pupil, can not exceed 3 years. This then logically implies that each SGB will be trained once upon the inception of their duties. With the learner component running the risk of not being in the SGB for more than one year because they might have lost elections, this then means that learners may still engage in school governance activities without being properly trained or inducted.

Xaba (2011, 208) found that the misinterpretation of school governance responsibilities against professional issues; the deficiency of capability to advance procedures and oversee the administration and utilization of resources, equally

physical and monetary; are displays of inadequate preparation of school governing bodies and also the essence of school roles. Oosthuizen et al. (2011, 69) purport that insufficient familiarity of democratic principles constrains democracy and concomitantly recommends that in order to dispel the constraints of ignorance and delusions, the extremely politicised schools, absolute majoritarianism, homogeneous domination and one language domination, it is suggested that education and training must be offered to education stakeholders in their entirety.

The set training should put emphasis on the requirements of the policy pertaining to the execution of duties and the pivotal nature of adhering to the stipulations of such a policy. The training provided should be recurring; issues that might arise as immediate to the governing body e.g. training on appointment of staff, must be attended to immediately, if such SGB deems it necessary. It may feel threatening to the stakeholders if they do not have sufficient knowledge of what is expected of them. Issues of policy may be very binding and carry rigid repercussions if not properly adhered to. The issues of finance are very sensitive and may carry charges of criminality if mishaps arise. To eliminate such threats, training should be provided repeatedly.

2.7.1.4 COMPONENTS OF THE STUDY

This segment of the study uncovers the components, as per the researcher, which may assist in enhancing learning participation and subsequently, finding solutions to the challenges faced in the study.

(a) Change in perceptions of adult governors.

Adult governors must alter their perceptions of learners based on their age and their prejudiced levels of maturity. Carrim (2011, 76) purports that age, together with the related conceptions of growth, seems to be the key measure for learners' inclusion as entitled members in school governance. Wynnes (2009, 453) in Carrim (2011, 76) states that "age is a leading distinguishing factor" inside schools and a major principle in the "regulation of pupils" and, therefore, minimal or no significance is devoted to the opinions of younger pupils.

Mokone (2014, 192) opines that in high schools in Lesotho, there seems to be a similar problem that requires a change in the perceptions of the elderly. Mokone (2014, 192) contends that in Lesotho, high school governance does not include learners on boards that take decisions in the school. Moreover, he condemns this, reasoning that school governance exists in a democratic era, which means that all stakeholders must be represented and by their own right, learners must be an integral part of such boards. Morojele (2011, 53) reveals that in Lesotho schools have a strict and hierarchical beliefs and ethos of control and regulation which, without hesitation, effects the daily practices of the school captains. Moreover, child contribution seems to be adult controlled with monitors playing a partial role in decision making.

(b) Provision of Participatory Chances

The National Policy for the Representative Council of Learners (2013, 1) provides the following as objectives and goals of the RCL: the Department's main objective for establishing RCLs is in line with upholding democracy in schools. The RCL structure and operation provide a platform for learners' voices to find expression in a school; learners are represented in the SGB structure; they get to partake in decision-making processes concerning the school; and RCL members assist in the organisation of extra-curricular activities and encourage other learners to participate in activities, such as sports, drama, dance, debate and other cultural activities. They act as catalysts for creating sound and healthy relationships among all stakeholders within the school community.

Learners must be given chance to participate in issues of democracy in their school. This should not only limit them to academic issues. It must allow them to explore other avenues of administration and extra-curricular activities. The National Policy for the Representative Council of Learners (2013, 2) provides that the RCL must inspire decent relations inside the school: amongst pupils and teachers; and amongst learners and non-teaching members of staff, as well as amongst teachers and parents of pupils where needed. Learners should be represented in the SGB and be informed of events at the school and in the community. The latter provisions may only be adhered to if learners are provided with opportunities to participate.

(c) Empowering and Capacitating Learners

Backman and Trafford (2007) designed an all-inclusive manual that encapsulates democratic governance of schools in 46 European states. Backman and Trafford (2007,11) maintain that self-governing school settings enhance discipline, improves education levels, decreases disagreements, makes the school to be largely competitive and safeguards the future being of prolonged and maintained democracies. Backman et al. (2007) cites that a primary school in Serbia has designed an approach for including all stakeholders in the expansion of the school. In Norway, children are given rights and responsibilities at very young ages. They participate in studies of self-governance and the results have proved to be fruitful. Backman and Trafford (2007, 82) posit that there are numerous additional chances for containing learners in policy and decision making, not just in the preparation of festivities and celebrations, but in issues fundamental to their education: in working groups that deal with food, with behavioural correction and educational choices.

2.7.1.5 STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES OF THE STUDY

This component seeks to address the strategies that may be employed to assist in finding solutions to the components stated above. The strategies that will be discussed are: capacitating governors on issues of legislation; provision of empowerment and capacity building; and allowance of learners to participate.

(a) Provision of proper training

School governors must all be trained thoroughly, based on the expectations of the school's various socio-economic properties; the school size; and the basic needs of the school. Such training must be aligned, fundamentally, to the contents and needs of the South African School's Act of 1996. Training should not only be done to fulfil the requirements of the provided legislation; it must be executed in a way that will give an account of sustainable engagement and adherence to school needs.

Xaba (2011, 210) recommends that training intended for capacity building must be grounded on circumstantial aspects applicable to the capability requirements of

schools themselves. Capability evaluation is essential in a case of this nature, to evade a blanket method to preparation and development. Furthermore, SGBs can profit from specially designed training packages. Consequently, a devoted district governance component must be created to render constant and steady backing to governing bodies in the district.

(b) Participative and inclusive settings

Mabena (2002, 25) through his strategies that he recommends to assist learners with effective participation in and contribution to school governance, identifies the 'Dalton Plan' as one strategy that can assist in this regard. The main points of the Dalton Plan are:

Clarifying the roles of learners in governance from the outset

- Leadership is of essential significance to learners in governance; and
- Students (learners) are able to ask for assistance when desired.

Bardenhorst et al. (1995, 53) as cited in Mabena (2002, 26) holds that the training of learner governors can take place in the following ways: seminars should be arranged where various people are invited to speak about different aspects of leadership and governance; the leadership programme must take place after hours and stimulation techniques, such as case studies and role playing can be used as part of the training programme. This offers learners with a chance to practise certain skills, such as communication and negotiation.

(c) Shared responsibilities

Learners must, amongst other things, be given, a chance to lead discussions in meetings. They should be given the opportunity to chair a meeting that has an agenda to suit their intellectual capacity. Their existence in the SGB should not be that of a follower of adult governors; it should be that of a leader who was elected to lead a constituency. Learners must, in their own right, be given an opportunity to hold a mass meeting of their followers without the presence of their elderly leaders; this will offer them with a chance to take charge of their own leadership.

Schools are composed of many different committees that deal with various aspects of the everyday running of a school. The committees include, inter alia, a Sports Committee, Cultural Committee, Learning Teaching and Support Material Committee and Bereavement Committee. Learners should be actively included in these committees and should be called to the meetings of such committees. This will not only provide learners with participatory opportunities, it will also accord them the chance to learn how things are done professionally, thus utilising the skills and knowledge acquired for the future.

Mabena (2002, 25) purports that the role of learners in bringing about school improvement cannot be overlooked. These learners have a special role and task to accomplish as leaders of the school. The goal of the Representative Council of Learners is to afford the pupils a chance to partake in School Governing Bodies, in appropriate decision making.

2.7.1.6 THREATS TO THE STUDY

This segment seeks to highlight and equally discuss the threats that face the study. These threats are aligned to the challenges, components and the strategies that have already been addressed in the previous segments.

(a) Commitment from adult governors

It is essential to emphasise that learner participation is not an undertaking that requires the prerogative of either the principal, teachers or the SGB. Learner participation is a policy issue that is firmly safe guarded by legislation. Such learners must therefore, without any prejudice, be afforded chances that are parallel to those of their counterparts in school governance. Learners must be included in the formation of agendas, discussions, decision making and participation in school committees. The reluctance of adult governors to juxtapose democracy and culture poses a major threat. Culture is a culmination of traditions, values and norms and thus forms a fundamental element of our daily activities. In school governance there should be an amalgam of both culture and democracy. Culture should, however, not dominate the

elements of democracy that seek to bridge the misconceptions of adult governors which leave our learners on the margin of school governance, and decision-making in particular. It is through the cultural perceptions of adult governors that I believe that they, adult governors, will not commit to the outcomes of the research. Their perceptions will keep on recurring due to the social construct that learners are minors and do not deserve a word in school governance. It is expected therefore through this study, adult governors should afford learners an opportunity to exercise their democratic rights within the SGB. Adult governors should therefore recognize and acknowledge the role learners must play as active participants of the SGB. As a result, learner participation will be enhanced.

(b) Infrequent and Insufficient Training

Mabena (2002, 26) suggests that recent research indicates that inadequate leadership skills is one of the major problems in floundering learner participation in school governance. These skills have not been properly inculcated in the learners and they prove to be a hindrance to the progress of learner participation. Mabena (2002, 26) quotes these skills that need to be improved as communication skill; conflict management skill; negotiation skill; and motivational skill. Therefore, learners should continuously be trained in these skills to adequately improve their participation in the SGBs.

Training provided to stakeholders does not place an emphasis on the requirements of the policy pertaining to the execution of duties and the importance of adhering to the stipulations of such a policy. The training provided should be recurring, with issues that might arise being seen as immediate to the governing body e.g. training on the appointment of staff must be attended to immediately if such an SGB deems it necessary. It may be threatening if the stakeholders do not have sufficient knowledge of what is expected of them. Issues of policy may be very binding and carry rigid repercussions if not properly adhered to. The issues of finance are very sensitive and may carry charges of criminality if mishaps arise. To eliminate such threats, training should be provided repeatedly.

Concomitantly, adult governors pose a threat to democratic school governance through the prejudiced perceptions that they possess against learners. The issues of mental capacity, age, maturity and knowledge of governance issues are at the peak of such prejudice and must, at the highest degree, be relinquished. Xaba (2011, 201) contends that basic amongst school governance tasks is the capability to govern. He purports that despite the engagement of provincial and district units in providing training, the actual enactment of the functions is still idealistic. Furthermore, the failure to execute these duties is highlighted by Xaba (2011, 201) as a result of the ineffectiveness of the very same training that is provided by the mentioned offices.

(c) Lack of trust and belief

Adult governors pose a threat through the prejudiced perceptions that they possess against learners. Parry and Moran (1994, 48) in Oosthuizen (2011, 65) uphold that in an ideal situation, the entire populace should obtain a combination of self-governing and instructive insouciances in so that they can minimise limitations to democracy in education. According to this belief, it is recommended that a transformation in self-governing insouciances is needed for certain school front-runners and school administrators.

Mabena (2011, 23) contends that parents regard learners as minors who still need parental guidance. They do not know how to involve their children in school governance. Mabena (2011, 23) furthermore explains that the latter notion is reinforced by Squelch and Bray (1996, 215) who maintain that parents want to help but do not know how. They feel intimidated and see learners as troublesome intruders. They also display a negative view of learner competence in governance.

2.7.1.7 EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

This part of the study presents evidence that will provide a concrete example that learners are not completely included in issues of school governance. The evidence is an amalgam of findings and recommendations of researchers who have previously written research papers. This segment will attempt to provide evidence under the

following headings: attitudes of adult governors; improved learner capacity; and provision of learner participatory chances.

(a) Attitudes of adult governors

Duma (2001) in a study, addressed silent leadership: Education perceptions of the role of student leadership in the governance of rural secondary schools, made strong conclusive findings. Duma (2011, 73) found that educators, as adult governors, do not want the RCL to be compulsory in schools. Furthermore, Duma (2011) discovered that educators assert that principals and educators must be permitted to propose certain members in the representative council of learners. These occur, despite the legislative obligations of SASA 84 of 1996. Duma (2001) also found that principals and teachers do not always consult the RCL when dealing with matters that affect students as per the requirements of SASA. With this study, learner participation in decision making within SGBs will be acted in a democratic manner. Members of the research team will understand that the inclusion of learners in the SGB is not guided by individual feelings of people but the contents of SASA 84 of 1996. The study will enlighten members about the contents of SASA and equally encourage them to align on their operations in the SGB to its stipulations.

Dick (2016, 19) contends that there are no working relationships between adult governors such as the principal and SGBs in South Africa. Furthermore, other members want to rule School Governing Bodies, but principals refuse to permit lively contribution in the governance of schools. Mbokodi and Sigh (2011, 43) found in their study that the relationship between adult governors such as educators and parents in the school governing body was not always perfect. Furthermore, teachers stated that the SGBs are a portion of the problem in school governance instead of being a portion of the solution since they have insufficient expert abilities to be associates with them. Mncube (2005, np) in Grootboom (2016, 22) explain that principals continue to carry out the roles which are intended to be the duty of other SGB members such as educators, parents and learners. The nature of study will incline members of the team of the pivotality of collective participation and decision making. The usage of PAR as will educate members that organizational problems can be best solved if there is a collaborative approach. Members of the research team will be in a position to engage

in subjective discussions with their counterparts and equally be in a position to understand their feelings and learn how to respect them.

(b) Improved learner capacity

Learner Councillors' Perceptions as studied by Phaswana (2010, np) reveals that learners, when included fully in the SGB, reported having acquired skills that consist of headship, negotiation, communication and conflict management expertise. At the end of this study, learners and all other members of the research team shall have learnt and acquired a lot of skills that will them engaging positively with all other members. Equally, Phaswana (2010, np) mentions that participants also referred to the point that the skill of making decisions is reliant on the capability to reflect on a multiple perspectives; that the will to receive the viewpoints of others is one key component of the communication dimension of social learning. Furthermore, Phaswana (2010) mentioned that learners were concerned about their exclusion from SGB meetings when certain matters are discussed. This is contrary to the stipulations of SASA. The study also found that the usage of English in discourse was also a problem in meetings and that learners felt that because they were compelled to speak in English, their native knowledge of the language restricted the levels on which they could articulate.

(c) Provision of participatory chances

Morojele et al. (2001) in a study: Child Participation in School Governance: The case of prefects at a primary school in Lesotho, found that the hierarchical ethos at the school forms the attitudes portrayed by educators and school management to children and that school captains are not rendered power in ultimate decision making. The study also found that prefects play an insignificant part in decision making. Morojele et al. (2011, 53) state that adults have regulative ideas about children. Therefore, children are not observed as social performers who possess the aptitude to make reasonable contributions to school governance. Furthermore, the study revealed that learners were unhappy about the quality of partaking they went through as school captains. They pointed out that they were an integral portion of school governance and yet were left out from decision making and their sentiments were not appreciated.

Through this study, adult governors in the SGB will understand that learners are equal partners of in the operations of the RCL and that their presence in the RCL is protected by SASA 84 of 1996.

It is evident, from studies herein outlined, that there genuinely exists a problem within structures of the SGB and how discourse is managed and undertaken. The learners' legislative status is ignored. The subjects of control and power are concomitantly evident in the conclusions of previous studies.

2.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter addressed a step-by-step journey through the literature pertaining to the study. The study adopted Critical Theory as the theoretical framework of the research. This theory created by Hockheimer will assist in dealing with the analysis of data in the coming chapters. I explored the ontology, historical background and the epistemology of the research. An exploration of the conceptual framework was also provided. Democratic Learner Participation was discussed as a conceptual category of the study. Decentralisation, Participation and Accountability were also analysed as indicators of the conceptual category.

The literature review also explored the literature on the enhancement of learner participation: What will help? How will help be provided? Potential threats to the study, as well as evidence of success of previous studies.

The evidence provided in this literature review provides me with a concrete stance that there is indeed a problem that requires urgent remedial action concerning learner participation in the SGB.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR ENHANCING LEARNER PARTICIPATION WITHIN A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN THE MANGAUNG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter of this study observed the literature related to the enhancement of learner participation in SGBs. This section of the research is largely concerned with the research methodology that I employed in the execution of this study. I made my stance clear from the inception of the study that I believe that learners are excluded from democratically participating in decision making within school governance in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality schools. For this reason, this study aims to enhance their levels of participation through the anticipated outcomes of the study. The sections covered in this chapter will include the research methodology; interventions employed by co-researchers; rationale of the choice of the methodology; population and sampling procedures; data gathering methods; ethical considerations; and a summary in the form of a conclusion.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Shangase (2013, 41) purports that the outcomes of any study are reliable and generally acknowledged, on condition that the research assignment is undertaken methodically. However, there are various approaches of research, the mutual objective being to adhere to its objectives. Approaches to research vary in the strategy and construction of the study utilized to gain responses to questions of the research which contain techniques for conducting the investigation, at what time, for which people, and in what circumstances the data collection will occur. It points out the manner in which the study is designed; occurrences to partakers and what data collection approaches are used.

The study seeks to discover responses to the below-listed questions of the research:

How do we actively involve learners in decision making within SGBs?

Subsequently, the objectives of the study were to highlight the challenges faced by learner governors pertaining to their involvement in School Governing Bodies; to identify and discuss the components for enhancement of the solution; to determine the conditions relevant for the enhancement of learner participation in the SGB; to identify possible threats to enhancement of learner participation in the SGB and to provide the evidence that the strategy is working.

3.2.1 Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Learner participation or lack thereof, in the SGB, is a problem that does not only affect learners, but affects the entire school community from which such learners emanate. Kindon, Pain and Kesby (2008, 90) purport that participatory action research is research by the people, with the people, and for the very same people affected by a specific problematic situation, which occurs in partnership with academic researchers. Furthermore, it strives for the democratization of knowledge creation and nurture opportunities for enablement by those involved. The study involved all stakeholders in the school community in a quest to remedy a problem that affects that school community itself. Co-researchers were fully included in the study execution and were able to find solutions to a social injustice that was facing them. Pain and Francis (2003, 47) outline that PAR is a method of action research which emphasises the involvement of research participants. It puts stresses on conclusions that the researcher desires to achieve. In line with Pain and Francis (2003), I as researcher, had a goal to accomplish, which was to verify that learners are indeed excluded from participation in the activities of the SGB. Moreover, I wanted to enhance such participation of learners in the activities of the SGB.

The need for co-researchers, as members of the research team, to emancipate themselves from the social injustice could not be ignored. Their maximum participation would therefore mean that their subjective and objective views were open for discussion. Kach and Kralik (2006, np) as quoted by Macdonald (2012, 34) contend that PAR is taken as democratic, unbiased, redeeming, and a life improving qualitative investigation that rests on being different from any existing qualitative approach. Through PAR, stakeholders were able to democratically participate in the study development. All the team members were afforded ample and adequate time to raise

their views without fear. Macdonald (2012, 34) extrapolates further that when using PAR, the contributor is active in making well-thought choices through all aspects of the research for the main purpose of making sure there is social change, as specific action (or actions) is the eventual objective. The co-researchers were constantly asked about the change that they would want to see at the finishing of the study. I had it in cognizance that according to PAR, co-researchers have the obligation to alter a social injustice that faces them.

I needed to use PAR in order to assist the co-researchers to assist themselves in remedying the situation. PAR has proved to be a commanding method for dealing with subordinated or alienated crowds to improve their situations in the community. In this case, it has developed into being an approach of the marginalised, advancing the welfares of the underprivileged and marginalized. Jordan (2003: 186) posits that different from conventional social science studies, Participatory Action Research has customarily been an approach for the marginalized societies. It is known to peripheral in approximately two manners. Firstly, it possesses the 'lore of objectivity' that has given character to conventional social science research. Heralding positivist criticisms, PAR admits that research is an integrally political practice entrenched within the 'relations of ruling'. It was obvious to me from the outset that learners are marginalised from participation in the activities of the SGB. It is for this reason that PAR is used in this study; to enhance the participation of learners in SGBs and to rectify the issues of power and control within SGBs. Kemmis and McTaggart (2007, 280-282) mention seven key features of PAR: It is a social process; Participatory Action Research is participatory; it has elements of practicality and collaboration; it is emancipatory; it is critical; it is reflective; and its aim is to transform both theory and practice. This study used all seven features of PAR as outlined by Kemmis et al. (2007). The school community, as a society, came together to participate in a process that would emancipate them from a social injustice. The team of co-researchers engaged in discourse collaboratively to critically discuss the social ill facing them and equally, reflect on their experiences. In the end, transformation was to be realised. Learners were to be actively participative in the activities of the SGB daily.

The view of Kemmis et al. (2007) is supported by Mcniff and Whitehead (2011, 12-13) when they dichotomise between action research and traditional research. They purport that in more conventional research the researcher observes a research process from outside the research field, defines and clarifies what is taking place out there. The objective is to examine the hypotheses and to generate knowledge and ideas about an existant condition with an opinion to generalise research outcomes, which can then be used and simulated in other comparable circumstances. On the other hand, action research is all for refining knowledge about prevailing circumstances, each of which is distinctive to the people in the circumstance, so the experiences cannot be made general or applied, even though it can be distributed to others. Furthermore, a major goal to action research is to distribute information and the knowledge that directed to the education of such knowledge. This study was not focused on the generation of numbers; it was concerned with listening to the opinions of those engaged in the SGB on a daily basis. Co-researchers brought about the type of knowledge that they have about the participation of learners in the SGB. They related their lived experiences and equally reflected on the social stance about the matter. The type of knowledge that they brought to the research was largely dichotomised due to the differences in education status, social position, age and cultural definition. Their knowledge did, however, bring about an interesting outcome that provided the research with its anticipated outcome.

This study had initially anticipated encapsulating a wide array of co-researchers from the school community. The co-researchers were able to direct the study from the beginning to the end. Whyte, Greenwood and Lazes (1991, np) purport that in Participatory Action Research, certain individuals in the institution or community under study partake keenly with the trained researchers through the course of the study, from the early planning to the concluding production of outcomes and dialogue of the action implications. Blair and Minkler (2009, 656) furthermore aver that PAR characteristically follows two objectives: how the investigation performs; and how the findings of the research are applied to bring about transformation. It involves a commitment outside the schedule controlled by sponsorship cycles or research time limits. From the initial stages of the study it was clear to the co-researchers that there was a problem facing the entire school community and that the problem needed to be

solved. Members understood that they had a very good chance of changing the situation themselves.

Change was indeed realised after finishing research study as memberships of the public had been empowered for the better. They were able to understand that learner participation in the SGB is not an element of governance that should be ignored. Learners were also able to engage in discourse with other members of the SGB to express their views on their involvement in the daily activities of the SGB. Interestingly, other SGB members were able to learn about the importance of collaboration through discourse. This is a skill that they would be able to use beyond the scope of this study. Datta, Khyang, Khyang, Kheyang, Khyang and Chapola (2014, 582) quote Hale (2006, np) that PAR has two characteristics: firstly, PAR is a practice of enabling partakers by regarding and offering significance to participants' opinions, knowledge and spirituality. Co-researchers knew that the only people to emancipate and empower them were no-one but themselves. Co-researchers had different viewpoints about diverse matters and that deserved consideration. Their thoughts related to how experienced they were of issues related to the SGB and how that would assist with achieving the objectives of the study. Secondly, PAR is a collective practice in which contributors and investigators equally profit. For instance, PAR as a research approach is accommodating in offering investigators with understanding into members' desires, ideals and customs; PAR furthermore advances communal capability; generates serious comprehension of self-awareness; and rises community-based contribution and societal action results.

Ozer, Ritterman and Wanis (2010, 152-153) also confirm that common to PAR methodologies is an emphasis on involving in a collaborative, constant procedure of investigation and action. Within a society devoid of professionals, participants are educated as change representatives and researchers, and hold authority beyond conclusions touching all stages of the investigation and action, which are distributed fairly amongst the associates in the partnership. This process anticipates to offer chances for (typically disenfranchised) community members, in this occasion disenfranchised learners in SGBs, to collaborate in solving problem areas of concern to them; cultivate significant expertise; escalate their comprehension of their sociopolitical setting; and generate joint support systems. In this study, a

representative from the Representative Council of Learners was present and learners were there to take part in the process. They were there to engage in discourse in a quest to work out a solution that would see them as an integral and active part of the SGB. Langhout and Thomas (2010, 52) maintain that PAR is largely used to rise the validity of the data and frequently to offer substantiation to upkeep structural variations inside particular situations. PAR shadows and spread out principles of validity and reliability by questioning, for example, where “expert validity” and “construct validity” live - in dialogues with those who are faced with subjugation; not just those who choose to study social matters (Cammorota & Fine 2008, 5).

3.2.2 Ontology of PAR

Unlike other methods of conducting research, PAR assumes that social inclusivity will involve assistance to co-researchers, to help them develop new capacities and be empowered. While social change can lead to short-term losses and gains, it is believed that real long-term gains accrue in co-researchers’ well-being while they strive to achieve the unrealisable goal of a more just society. The creation of discourses of PAR is, in one sense, strategic, simply reflecting the different social and linguistic contexts in which the struggle for rationality, justice, and coherent and satisfying forms of life is engaged (McTaggart, 1997: 8). Thus, we can say that the reality differs according to the social context. Learner participation in decision making within the SGB means that all stakeholders in the governance of the school will have equal opportunities in the execution of their duties. Thus, making it easy for all members to take part in the advancement of the interests of the school in general.

Society is a human construction that must be critiqued and changed in accordance with more inclusive interests (Murray & Ozanne, 2006: 2). “People cannot always see the same light on the hill nor seek to wander the same utopia” (McTaggart (1997: 9), but they can definitely see where there is a need for the improvement of practice. In this study, the reality was based on the collaborative effort of the co-researchers when they worked together to improve the situation of the marginalised. McTaggart (1997: 9) postulates that change is political and social, that life manifests and cannot be broken into bits and pieces that can be changed one piece at a time. The reality is that learners cannot forcefully or individually change the way SGBs operate all by themselves. Other members in the SGB must work collaboratively with them to effect

change that will see such learners working harmoniously with all the other members who exist within the SGB. The advantage of using PAR is that it enables co-researchers to own the study, giving it a more meaningful direction and yielding productive results in the process of transforming a social problem that affects such learners.

3.2.3 Epistemology of PAR

Epistemology refers to the approach to understanding the knowledge that one adopts and the philosophy underlying the knowledge and efforts of gathering knowledge (Kendall, Sunderland, Barnett, Nalder & Matthews, 2011: 4). PAR embraces the notion that knowledge claims are socially constructed, embedded within systems of values, is understood through mental processes and promotes human interaction (Kendall et al., 2011: 4). With this in mind, PAR reflects an investigation into the nature of knowledge and the extent to which knowledge can represent the interests of the powerful and serve to reinforce their positions in society (Thompson, 2000: 14). Power itself is an elusive concept about which there has been a considerable discussion (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003: 1) but, regarding knowledge, every individual conceptualises it a unique way. Thus, it cannot be generalised but can be shared by collaboration to improve an existing situation. PAR, therefore, affirms that experience can be a basis of knowing and that experiential learning can lead to a legitimate form of knowledge that influences practice (Herr & Anderson, 2005: 2).

In this study, knowledge is negotiated through a socially inclusive way of responding to the poor inclusion of learners in decision making within the SGB. Conventional researchers assume that social reality is constructed and see the end product of research as a formal article published in a scholarly journal (McNiff & Whitehead 2006: 78). PAR practitioners believe that knowledge is owned jointly with co-researchers and must thus be shared with the community by culturally appropriate modes of communication. This perspective is strongly supported by the work of Freire (1974: 96), who used PAR to encourage poor and deprived communities to examine and analyse the structural reasons for their oppression. Knowledge is therefore integral to the researcher's capacity to communicate respectfully and effectively in an attempt to avoid misunderstandings that can lead to failure.

In the context of this study, real situations – mainly attitudes of adult governors in the SGB, lack of capacity building for learners and insufficient participatory chances afforded to learners in the SGB were scrutinised to construct new knowledge through PAR. This approach is supported by McNiff and Whitehead (2006: 58), who assert that current knowledge represents our best efforts, as it is contextual, evolving and valueladen, but is likely to be revised because of its uncertainty. In contrast, PAR contributes to knowledge academically, and to social action in everyday life. The participation of learners was enhanced by inclusively engaging with other members of the research team in an attempt to solve a social problem that they were all facing.

3.2.4 Research Paradigm

In a quest to fulfil the aims and objectives of this study, an interpretative paradigm was adopted. Interpretivism is based upon general characteristics such as understanding and interpretation of daily occurrences and social structures as well as the meanings people give to the phenomena (Mabovula, 2010: 5). This paradigm would come in handy with exhuming the social understanding and interpretation of all members of the research group regarding learner participation in decision making within SGBs. It would afford the entire research team with an opportunity to see how other members feel about learner participation in decision making and subsequently provide a path towards a remedied social problem.

The interpretative paradigm focuses on the the understanding and interpretation of discourses as opposed to the interpretation of data through numbers. It seeks to interpret how members of a certain society relate to the different kinds of social phenomena. Denzin and Lincoln (2011, np) purport that understanding interpretivism is not as straightforward as understanding what it isn't. Interpretivism is often placed in dichotomy with positivist approaches such as hard sciences versus social sciences, numbers versus discourse and generalizability versus situatedness. This study focused on the subjective accounts of members of the research team pertaining to the participation of learners in decision making within school governance. The usage of interpretative paradigm would aid with interpreting the discussions which were dericted towards fulfilling the aims and objectives of this study.

3.2.5 Qualitative research approach

Denzin and Lincoln (2008, 1) write that qualitative research, amongst numerous or nearly all of its methods, helps as a symbol for colonial knowledge, for authority and for truth. Through discourse, research pursued to expose the truth about learner participation in SGBs. Issues of power were deeply explored to develop a thorough understanding on how they affect learner participation in SGBs. The aim of this study is to enhance learner participation in the making of decisions in the SGBs in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality. Mason (2012, 1) contends that because of qualitative research we can discover a wide collection of the scopes of the social world, as well as the feel and texture of day-to-day life; the comprehensions, experiences and thoughts of our co-researchers; the manner in which social practices, organizations, dialogue or relations work; and the importance of the connotations that they create. In this study, a group of co-researchers gathered together to discuss the issue of social injustice that affected them either as victims or as perpetrators. A variety of stakeholder groups involved in the discourse meant that many different views emerged. Such members were to discuss their relationship in as far as learners are concerned. The latter view is supported by Terreblanche, Durrheim and Painter (2016, 273-274) when they opined that qualitative research is an interpretative paradigm that contains absorbing persons' personal accounts earnestly as the core of what appears to be realistic to them (ontology); deducting logic from persons' understandings by networking with them and by paying attention cautiously to their communicate with us (epistemology); by also using its methods to put together and analyse data (methodology). In this study, I was very careful to make sure that the primary views of all co-researchers were heard. Qualitative research was used to direct the discourse of the interviews towards the realisation of social justice. Through conversations with co-researchers, all members were given attention that was required to fulfil the study aims of the research. The interpretations of the views of the co-researchers were solely based on my pre-determined view that indeed the voices of learners are suppressed in the daily operations of the school governing bodies.

Bricki (2007: 2) reinforces the ideas of Terreblanche et al. (2016), explaining that qualitative research is branded by its objectives, which associate to comprehending certain aspects of societal living together with its approaches which produce words,

instead of figures. The study was to be executed through intensive conversations with the co-researchers and through their discussions that the anticipated outcome of the research was to be achieved. The analysis of data was based solely on the conversations undertaken with co-researchers. Bricki (2007: 3-4) furthermore alludes to the fact that the researcher must pick a qualitative research method if the research aim is to comprehend the manner in which a society or individual people in it see a certain matter. Learner participation in SGBs has been an issue that I had identified as a problem; it was befitting for the community at the school to sit down in discussion about the issues in order to remedy the situation themselves. Engaging with the views of the co-researchers would assist with identifying their perspectives about learner participation in the SGB. To adhere to the notion of Bricki (2007). The researcher used the aims of the study to direct the protocol for discussions. The discussions were coherently superseded by what the co-researchers anticipated achieving at the end of the research. Co-researchers had to move from one point to another, depending on how the discussions were unfolding. The perceptions of the co-researchers about the participation of pupils in the SGBs were clearly recorded and analysed. The analysis of the recordings was through Critical Discourse Analysis of Van Dijk. Throughout the analysis of the data, I listened carefully to the elements of power in the discourse and reported accordingly on them. Macdonald (2012: 35) maintains that researchers using qualitative researcher methodology seek to expose the universe through other people's views in a detection and investigative practice that is intensely experienced. I had already taken a stance about the exclusion of learners from the activities of the SGB and it was through discussions that I acquired knowledge of how other members of the research team viewed learner participation. Their lived experiences were to be discussed and related to the view that I already had about learner participation in the SGB.

It was befitting for the study to investigate the reasons for the lack of participation of learners in the SGB through their own experiences. Learner participation in the SGB has been ignored by many school governors. The impact of such exclusion was also to be discovered and equally remedied through the adherence to the aims and objectives of the research. Learners had a chance to also be asked to share how the exclusion affected them. Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge (2009, 7) assert that qualitative research has its focal point on developing descriptions of social

phenomena. It assists researchers to comprehend the communal sphere wherein we exist and the reason for the world to be in the manner it is. It focuses on the societal characteristics of the universe and strives for responses to queries relating to reasons for people to conduct themselves in a manner they do; how sentiments and attitudes are designed; how the world is impacted by the happenings that transpire around them; and how and why beliefs and observes have advanced in the manner they have. Rithchie, Lewis, Nicholls and Ormston (2014, 3) contend that many other authors including Denzin and Lincoln (2011) have focused on important elements of research design that might recognize a study as 'qualitative', together with a concern with 'what', 'why', and 'how' questions instead of 'how many'; an emphasis on procedures; and the elastic being of qualitative research design.

The study had a very small group of researchers. Such researchers represented a view from stakeholder groups represented on the school governing bodies. Each co-researcher had a chance to share their deep experiences about the participation of learners in school governing bodies. They shared their knowledge as per their day-to-day experiences within such a body. Hennick, Hutter and Bailey (2011, 17) postulate that owing to the intense nature of qualitative research, limited study contributors are required, as the objective is to attain deepness of information (instead of breadth) by "mining" respective partaker intensely for their understandings on the research subject.

The co-researchers were to be empowered through discourse. Each one of them was to dig deep into their consciousness and reflect on learner participation in and its implication for the SGB. Creswell (2007, 49) writes that qualitative research is conducted in instances where researchers desire to empower persons to relate their stories, catch their opinions, and decrease the authoritative relationships that frequently occur amongst researchers and the partakers in the study. The study hopes to empower learners into becoming integral and active members of school governance. The elimination of issues related to power, control and subordination were to be discussed by all participants in the research team. The very same members of the team were to find solutions to how such elements could be dealt with, thus ensuring that learner voices are heard and that the issues of power and control within school governing bodies are eliminated.

Throughout the research process, the entire membership of the co-researcher squad was able to express their observations, views and concerns about the participation of learners in SGBs. The discussions were able to separate the co-researchers with power positions from those in lower ranking portfolios. The phases which led to the actual data collection process addressed issues related to the sort of data required, how it was going to be gathered, and how the analysis would be executed. Creswell (2007, 49) furthermore states that to further de-emphasise a power relationship, researchers may join forces straight with contributors by having them assess their (researchers) research questions, or by having them work in partnership with researchers during the analysis of data and interpretative stages of the study.

Qualitative research is mainly exploratory. Researchers may use qualitative research to get a comprehension of the fundamental explanations, views, and motivation for the purpose of data collection. It offers understandings within the problematic issues or assists to create notions or theories for possible quantitative research. Similarly, qualitative research is utilised to expose tendencies in thinking processes and viewpoints, and to engage the problematic issue deeply (Defranzo 2011, online). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) in Moore (2015, 90) propose that researchers using qualitative research emphasise the communally created essence of realism; the close association amongst researchers and the subject under study; and the circumstantial limitations that form inquiry. Interviews were used as a method of probing and recovering the perceptions of co-researchers in as far as the participation of learners in SGBs was concerned. With a rather small group of co-researchers, the subjective thoughts and opinions of members of the team were clearly monitored and recorded. Inconsistencies in the responses of individual researchers were also clearly marked. Such inconsistencies would later assist in the analysis of the data generated.

3.3 POPULATION AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES

The nature of Participatory Action Research prompted me to undertake convenience sampling and choose only one school in Botshabelo within the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality. The school enrolls 1100 learners from grade 8 to grade 12 with 36 educators, 3 administration personnel and 2 gardeners. The SGB of the school was

used as co-researchers for the purpose of this study. The SGB comprised the following members: 2 educators, a principal, support staff member, 5 parents and 2 learners.

Participants in the research were contacted through a letter that was sent to the governing body of the school asking for permission to conduct the research. The letter of request entailed clear reasons for the purpose of the research and its outcomes. The SGB then had to reach an agreement with the principal about the possibilities of conducting the research in that particular school.

3.3.1 Convenience Sampling

Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2015, 2) posit that convenience sampling is a kind of non-probability or non-haphazard sampling wherein participants of the identified populace who adhere to a prescribed criterion, like ease of access, geographic immediacy, being available at certain time, or readiness to partake, are encompassed for the purpose of the research. Etikan et al. (2015, 2) furthermore extrapolate that convenience samples are occasionally considered as “accidental samples” since subjects may be nominated in the sample merely, as they simply happen to be located, spatially or administratively, close to a place the researcher is gathering the data.

I am in full agreement with Etikan et al. (2015) and that is why I chose the secondary school where I work. For this reason, I possessed the highest level of convenience because I was familiar with the dynamics within the environment and with other research participants.

3.3.2 Advantages of convenience sampling

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012, online) outline four benefits of convenience sampling: comfort of sampling and the effortlessness of the study; supportive for trial researches and for the creation of a hypothesis; data gathering can be in a brief period; and it is inexpensive to implement than some sampling methodologies. It was very simple for me to access the members of the research team as I was a staff member at the school. I understood the dynamics of the school and the community that surrounded it. Before the main research process, I undertook a pilot study using convenience sampling. A school with similar characteristics as those of the school to

be used in the actual study was identified and used for the execution of such a study. Even though the process of generating data was very intense, it did not take the co-researchers long to finish the study.

3.3.3 Selection of co-researchers

The research team consisted of one educator, non-academic staff member, the principal, a parent together with a learner. All these persons are supposed to sit, as per the provisions of SASA 84 of 1996, in meetings of the SGB. There were two males and three females represented. Except for the learner representative, who was less than 20 years' old, three of the members were above the age of 30 and one member was above the age of 40 and three of the members had professional qualifications. One member had a matriculation certificate and one member was still at school.

Each co-researcher was a representative of a stakeholder group that existed within the SGB. The views which were presented by each stakeholder were therefore, taken as representative of the views of members from the stakeholder group they represented.

3.3.4 The research setting

Whiting (2008, 36) purports that semi-structured interviews should be held in a location that is normally outside everyday events. I was able to conduct the interviews with the co-researchers outside of school hours. There was, however, a limitation. The research team could not secure a venue outside the school premises. The office of one SMT member was therefore used to conduct the interviews. I, together with the data capturer, sat across the table from the research team members while they were being interviewed.

I explained at the beginning of each of the interviews that the nature of the research permitted for both the interviewer and the interviewee to have a full and engaging conversation, rather than simply an exchange of information. I outlined to each of the research team members that an audio-recording device would be used for the duration of the interview. They were equally assured that all the information acquired would be

confidential. Rapport was created through the instigation of an array of conversations that were derived from the experiences of the members in the SGB.

3.3.5 SWOT analysis

In addition, we had to make sure that we attain the goals that we had set. We decided as a team to do a SWOT analysis. This would assist us in assessing ourselves and checking if the goals were feasible. This was the analysis:

- Our strengths were such that members had the willpower to work on the project. We had the full support of the SGB to continue with the research.
- Our weakness was such that members were, for the first time, engaging in a research process, so the processes would take longer than normal.
- Opportunities for us were that resources and facilities for the project were all available to us at our convenience. It was also opportune for the team that they all came from the same residential and working area, so the availability of co-researchers would be very easy.
- The threats were that elements of culture, superiority and seniority would cloud the discussions.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

The following stages were adhered to for data gathering:

3.4.1 Interviews

Stringer (1999, 68) in Macdonald (2012, 42) explains that interviews are a method utilised in PAR which “allow contributors to describe their condition”. Interviewing provides researchers accessibility to persons’ judgments and recollections in their individual words, instead of relying on the words of the researcher.

Bergold and Thomas (2012, 11) maintain that interviews conducted in the context of PAR are semi-structured. Van Teijlingen (2014, 17) explains that semi-structured interviews contain prearranged questions, however the list of questions may be customised due to the interviewer’s view of technique that appears more suitable.

Van Teijlingen provides the following characteristics of semi-structured interviews:

- Every participant gets similar key questions asked;
- The researcher is flexible with the way questions are asked;
- Probing questions are used; and
- They are mainly beneficial for exploring the opinions of a person towards something.

I drew reference from the above characteristics of semi-structured interviews when conducting the interviews. A set of topics was used to find direction in response to the definite questions of the research. Each heading consisted of an array of topics that attempted to facilitate in detail, issues that would respond to the main research question or research sub-questions concerned.

Free Attitude Interviews (FIA) were used in conducting the interviews which, as highlighted in 1.5 of chapter 1 is a method wherein a question is asked to initiate a conversation with the participants, then a follow-up by a thoughtful summary to avoid deviation from the posed subject and readdress participants to seriously reflect on what they have been talking about. All key topics were followed sequentially. However, I had to frequently skip certain topics. Because of the nature of PAR, the discussions per question become too lengthy to an extent that co-researchers responded to certain topics before they could even be asked by the facilitator. Where necessary, probing questions were asked to obtain more detail about the topic discussed. I was, however, careful not to ask probing questions that would influence the response of the research member. Throughout the interviews, the researcher was cognisant that the outcomes of the interviews were not necessarily communication between two people. The data received from participants were part of bigger and more substantial views held by other members in the SGB.

3.4.2 Instrumentation

Blair and Minkler (2009, 652) allude to the fact that similar to the literature on PAR, community-based studies largely comprises both the desire to increase a community's faith and the struggle of doing that, especially in socially marginalised communities. It was essential for the research team to design a set of goals that they would use as a guideline towards the accomplishment of the research. To build up a strong element

of trust, such a set of goals was used by the researcher to make sure that all members bought into the research outcomes. The goals were used as an instrument to solicit trust amongst the research members. They were developed by the entire research team who acknowledged their importance.

A discussion guide was utilised to usher the flow of the discourse during the gathering of data processes. The questions asked were used as an initial statement to spark a discussion. Such a question would then be discussed thoroughly by the entire research team. Members of the research team were informed of their right to utilise a language a language they are comfortable with. A tape recorder was used throughout the process of data collection. The recorded discussions were later transcribed verbatim.

3.4.3 Timetable of activities.

A timetable of the activities undertaken during the study and the timeframes is outlined in Table 3.1 below:

Table 3.1: Timetable of tasks undertaken

TASK	DUE DATE
Soliciting permissions	Beginning of January 2019
School Visits (Intro)	Mid-March 2019
Phase 1	End-March 2019
Phase 2	Beginning April 2019
Phase 3	Mid-April 2019
INTERVIEWS	Beginning May 2019
Data analysis and Conclusion	Mid-May 2019

3.4.4 Cyclic process of PAR

With this study, I as researcher had anticipated, through critical discourse and participation, working together with co-researchers in the SGB in emancipating learners from the marginal lines of seclusion from participation within school governance. This was the idea put to other researchers in the team to digest and subsequently assimilate. We had to establish a mutual goal of making sure that learner participation in the SGB is enhanced. All co-researchers representing the community

had to sit down in discussion in an attempt to remedy an educational challenge that threatened to undermine the democratic principles of our country. As a community, it became inevitable that we engage in very intensive discourse, analyse such discourse, and ultimately come up with an answer to the issue of not having pupils actively participating in the activities of the SGB. An array of discourse situations attempted to make sure that SASA 84 of 1996 was wholly adhered to, particularly with regard to the holistic participation of learners who exist within the governing body of the school.

The team understood that in order for us to attain our goal, the interests of SASA 84 of 1996 as a guiding policy of SGBs had to be taken to heart. We had to develop clear goals that would navigate us smoothly towards our mission. The following phases were therefore, used as steps in a ladder to assist us with accomplishing our mission.

3.4.4.1 Phase 1

This initial phase proved to be the most daunting of them all. It came as an introductory phase with a variety of shortfalls. First of all, a team of co-researchers had to be established. Out of the holistic representation of members who exist within the SGB, one small group had to be established. During a meeting held in this phase, the group had to decide who would remain in the group and who would not. It became very clear however, that some of the members were not willing to participate due to personal reasons. It was outlined to all that participation was voluntary. I spent a lot of time explaining to the entire SGB the aims of the study and questions were allowed throughout the session. I had known that the process would take a long time to complete; thus, it was taken out of the school's working programme. After an intensive discussion, members agreed that each stakeholder group should be represented by one member each. Finally, the group that had to take the mandate forward included myself as the facilitator, a principal, an educator, a parent and a learner.

Before the other members were excused, we decided that a clear mandate had to be given about what exactly they expected as an outcome and how we should go about dealing with it. The latter decision was taken because the members were aware that the processes that would be undertaken were to be representative of the views of the members who would be absent from the meetings. The entire group agreed that everyone who represented a stakeholder group would not, in any way, be held liable

for misrepresenting such a group as they were chosen by all members in a meeting setting.

Common ground needed to be identified in as far as the setting of goals was concerned. Co-researchers requested me to lead the proceedings since I was more knowledgeable about how things should be done. I told the team that I had already drawn up my aims for the research and it would be an injustice to the research if I imposed those aims on them. They asked me to read the aims to them and explain why I had chosen them, which I did. It was very encouraging to hear the ideas coming from people who were willing to ensure that all that needed to be achieved would be achieved, irrespective of the odds. From the discussion, the following were the goals that were set:

- To make sure that after finishing the research study, learners would be fully involved in activities of school governance.
- To make sure that the outcomes of our research would be shared with other community members facing the same problem.
- To participate maximally in discussions.
- To align all our discussions with SASA 84 of 1996.

In addition, we had to make sure that we attain the goals that we had set. We decided as a team to do a SWOT analysis. This would assist us in assessing ourselves and checking if the goals were feasible. This was the analysis:

- Our strengths were such that members had the willpower to work on the project. We had the full support of the SGB to continue with the research.
- Our weakness was such that members were, for the first time, engaging in a research process, so the processes would take longer than normal.
- Opportunities for us were that resources and facilities for the project were all available to us at our convenience. It was also opportune for the team that they all came from the same residential and working area, so the availability of co-researchers would be very easy.
- The threats were that elements of culture, superiority and seniority would cloud the discussions.

3.4.4.2 Phase 2

Phase two was to evaluate the tools that we had at our disposal in order to start the research. Firstly, we looked at SASA 84 of 1996. We made sure that every member understood what the policy was and what its implications for school governance were. We discussed SASA as whole and equally deliberated on its legislative contents. It was pleasing to realise how much the co-researchers knew about the policy and its purpose. It was clear that discussions which were to follow during the main research process would be very informative. All members were given the opportunity to seek clarity where needed and any member willing to provide clarity on a posed question was given the opportunity to do so.

The team of co-researchers also interrogated the discussion guide that was provided by me, as chief researcher. This guide was developed by me in order to familiarise co-researchers with the types of topics that were to be discussed. Such topics were derived from the main question of the research and its sub-questions. Members of the team engaged with the document and made inputs. It was easy for them to make inputs as most of them had been on the SGB for a number of years. Certain information needed to be omitted as the team deemed it unnecessary for the purpose of the research. We all agreed on the inputs made which was a sound step forward, as it guaranteed ownership of the discussions which were to be undertaken in the main research process.

3.4.4.3 Phase 3

Matters became particularly interesting in the third phase. As researcher, I was excited that the processes of engaging with the team were finally taking shape. With all members present, I outlined to the team that I had conducted a pilot study before embarking on the actual research process. I mentioned that in the pilot study I conducted, threats of superiority and authority in discourse were detected. It was for this reason that I suggested that there be discussions between myself and the co-researchers. The group seemed to be confused about what I was talking about. They insisted that I stick to the plan and continue as I had initially planned. I had to explain again to them that it was not my prerogative to tell them how things should proceed. They asked me to explain the threats that I was referring to in relation to my pilot study and after I had done that, the whole team agreed that we should continue in that

fashion. We decided that I would record the results from the discussions and then finalise them, using my own analysis techniques. We would then take the responses as they were, find common ground, then move forward.

We had, as a team, exhausted the preparations for the data collection. It was clear to us that the purpose for which we had gathered was to be completely fulfilled. The reflections of the group would represent the holistic School Governing Body of the school. Moreover, they (reflections) would represent the entire school community. Hopefully, the result would prevent the marginalisation in the future of learners in the SGB, provide them with opportunities to wholly represent themselves, and consequentially, their constituencies.

3.5 Data analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis can potentially offer a significant understanding into the opaque methods in which imbalanced power relationships take us to the reduction of children's 'subject positions' and, by implication, to the breach of their human rights (Liasidou 2008, 487). CDA is pointed to the mannerisms that the deep 'discursive agonism' is reflected within some formal legislative papers together with the influence that it can bring to societal developments. Specifically, the specialist must have a focal point mainly on a societal difficulty that can be entrenched either within actions of a societal practice, in the social practice per se, or in the representation of social practice" (Fairclough 2001a, 236). In line with Fairclough (2001), the goal of the research was to realise the social justice related to the non-inclusion of learners due to their social status of being minors. SASA 84 of 1996 was used as a legislative document that guided the inclusion of learners in school governing bodies.

Beugrande (2006, 43) postulates that CER is devoid of being 'objective' insofar as the analyst is or has been a participant irreversibly caught up in the creation of the discourse under analysis. In the analysis of the data, I focused on points that would satisfy my anticipated outcomes of the research. My aim was to certify that indeed learners are left on the periphery within the SGBs. There was however, a difference between me and the rest of the research group; this disparity was the margin which could empower a researcher's analysis - not to be 'correct', but, as an objective, to be non-trivial, insightful, and socially relevant.

Van Dijk (2009, 352) defines Critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a kind of discourse analytical study that largely investigates the manner in which social power misuse, domination, and inequity are endorsed, replicated, and repelled by text and talk in the social and political situation. In this study, learner exclusion in the SGB was viewed to be a deliberate act by elderly members of the SGB. They used their power, social status and culture to marginalise learners and keep them on the periphery. Through CDA I was able to identify such abuse of power and status. With this study, critical discourse analysts assume a clear position, and therefore desires to comprehend, uncover, and eventually fight social inequity. Having used PAR, it was appropriate that I used CDA to analyse engagements with the co-researchers. Through the application of CDA, I was able to advance my anticipations of the outcomes of the study.

Matlho (2017, 118) contends that there are three stages of discourse analysis: textual, contextual, and sociological, and these were utilized to extrapolate the findings of this research. Van Dijk (2003, 85-86) states that each of these levels needs a different kind of analysis. The textual level, which is the descriptive phase, involves linguistic analysis, while the contextual level, which is the interpretive phase, is about the analysis of text creation and dissemination, particularly in terms of manner the audience is directed to a desired reading. The third level, social practice, which is the explanation phase, navigates through the degree to which the text supports or replicates dominating conversational or societal performs, and its relation to certain prevalent conditions, which entail the way materials are used within social environments (Van Dijk 2003, 250). The aim here was to establish connections and develop a systematic method for bringing text and social structure to discourse practice as a way of deriving meaning and information from them. The data being understood at this stage are then reconciled into discursive practices and social structural arrangements (Piper, Piper & Mahlomaholo 2009, 73).

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I, as researcher, was well aware that any non-compliance with standard ethical considerations of the research would have rendered my research project null and void. Before going through the process of collecting data, authorisation to undertake the study was requested from the Free State Provincial Department of Education. A brief

outline of the study and its intended benefits were submitted with the request. Cases of assent, consent, and permission were meticulously executed.

Johnson and Christensen (2000, 63) as cited by Morolong (2007, 59-60) posit that research ethics talk about a group of principles to direct and help the researcher in concluding about which objectives are the utmost significant. Furthermore, ethics operate with the execution of studies with human beings, which has the capacity to create extreme bodily and mental harm. Researchers have to be subtle to ethical principles concerning their study topic and in face-to-face collaborative data gathering.

Morolong (2007, 59-60) furthermore avers that according to Johnson and Christensen, (2000, 69) and Eita (2007, 50), the following guidelines are important in ensuring the ethical acceptability of a research assignment: the researcher should gain the informed permission of the partakers; no dishonesty is reasonable by the study's technical, scholastic or applied values; the members of the research team are permitted to withdraw from the research project as and when they desire; the members must be safe-guarded from bodily and mental uneasiness, danger and harm that may arise from the research events; and the participants should remain unidentified with their identity protected. It was stressed in this study that it was voluntary to participate because, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2001, 101) "people being studied must be willing participants in it".

3.7 CONCLUSION

Throughout the entire Participatory Action Research undertaking, I attempted, as far as possible, not to be derailed from achieving my intended goals of the study. It was through this process that I wanted to cut loose the shackles of injustice and marginalisation. Participatory Action Research has proved to me that communities are knowledgeable about issues that affect them than we people who are on the periphery. It is equally through possessing the same knowledge, that they can emancipate themselves from social injustice. Though it was a daunting task, the research process afforded me a fountain of knowledge that will be used to further emancipate communities through Participatory Action Research.

CHAPTER 4

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS ON THE ENHANCEMENT OF LEARNER PARTICIPATION WITHIN SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The main aim of the research was to enhance learner participation within SGBs in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality. In alignment with the study objectives, this chapter has its focal point on how data were analysed, understood, presented and deliberated. Data were collected through engagement sessions with co-researchers. As members of the team, co-researchers were allowed to explicitly engage on issues that affected them and concomitantly, suggest possible strategies to assist in remedying the existing problem of the non-inclusion of learners in decisions within school governing bodies. The protocol used in the engagement sessions outlined the challenges faced by learners in the SGB and possible solutions to remedy the evident social injustice were equally addressed.

This chapter presents the action and strategies that were created during engagement sessions. Such strategies were prioritised to attend to each of the research objectives that were set for the study. Risk factors that could render the study invalid were all anticipated and mitigated.

The following sections (4.2 to 4.6) present themes emanating from the findings in response to the five objectives of the study:

4.2 CHALLENGES TO LEARNER PARTICIPATION

The following section addresses the challenges that were faced by learner governors within the SGB. When interrogating the research objectives, I found it appropriate to probe these headings as they would address both the question of the research and the study aim. These headings were used to develop a discussion guide that directed the flow of discussions during the data generation processes. Each of the sub-headings was intensely discussed with the co-researchers to satisfy the aim of the research.

Van Dijk's (2009) Critical Discourse Analysis was utilised to analyse the responses of co-researchers. Taylor (2010, 1) argues that in the setting of the current time, CDA is of specific value in recording multiple and opposing dialogues in policy texts, in stressing marginalised and hybrid dialogues, and in recording discursive shifts in the policy enactment processes. Through CDA, I was able to critically analyse the discussions with co-researchers in order to remove learners from the margins of school governance. I looked for evidence of power, control and seniority in discourse and used it to analyse the data gathered.

4.2.1 Attitudes of adult governors towards learners

One major challenge to the participation of learners in SGBs is the attitude of adult governors towards learners. Many of the adult governors believe that learners are not knowledgeable on issues related to governance. Learners are excluded because of their social status as minors. In addition, cultural norms contribute significantly in the exclusion of such learners because in African culture, learners as children, cannot deliberate with elders and if they do, they are tagged as disrespectful. Elders, within the setting of this research, refer to parents, teachers, support staff and the principal of the school. Mbokodi (2011, 39) purports that parents have to be informed and empowered so that they are able to make substantial inputs to the education of their children. Each of these members possesses a certain social status and thus enacts such a status against learners in a setting where no member of the SGB is more privileged than the other. As members of one structure, each governor should be respected as a representative of each stakeholder group from which they originate. However, the legislative obligation of learners to represent their constituencies freely and fairly is, in most cases, ignored by elderly members in the SGBs.

The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 stipulates that individuals who exist within the parameters of the school must be well represented on the SGB (RSA, 1996). However, the seriousness of learner presence in SGBs is largely ignored. This, despite the fact that learner participation in SGBs is crucial and obligatory. Shumba, Maphosa and Shumba (2008, 58) purport that global trends require that children choose what is best for them. In a democratic society, it would be a great step forward if learners were

given a chance to take charge of their education; to make contributions about what content and how they would like to see their education shaped.

Mpho agrees with the view of the researcher:

Ba ka etsa difference e kgolo if ba ka involviwa. Bo teng ba bona bo a hlokahala sekolong le ha fela re sa ba kenye ka hare ho komiti ya finance. (They would play a huge role if they could be actively involved. Their presence is necessary to the school, although they are not part of the finance committee.)

The response from Mpho is very clear and unequivocal. One point, however, is the fact that learners may not form part of the finance committee. The latter comment therefore says that learners may represent their stakeholders in other committees but not on those as crucial as the finance committee. I attempted to follow up on the response of a co-researcher and the response was “*ha ba no kgona ho ba part ya dikomiti kaofela, ba fuwa dikomiti tse ba tshwanetseng*” (They cannot be on all committees; they are given roles that suit them). The latter comment highlighted the fact that even though learner presence is necessary, it is limited to what other members perceive to be suitable for them. The statement undermines the capacity of learners to engage with issues that relate to finances, even though as members of SGB, they are equally entitled to discuss the financial matters of the school. Hartas and Lindsay (2011, 131) explain the motives for the inadequate impact of youngsters in the making of decisions and policy advancement as difficult, fluctuating from resource inadequacy and workforce training to leading opinions around youngsters’ deficiency of aptitude and faintness. The views highlighted by Hartas et al. (2011) speak directly to the fundamental elements that render learner participation null and void in the SGBs. Adult governors, because of their dominance and social status, believe that learners are incompetent to deal with issues that relate to the SGB. To them, learners are invisible and cannot make any meaningful contribution to the advancement of the interests of the school. This, despite their being democratically elected to office and supported by SASA 84 of 1996.

Mpho agrees that the need for learner presence in the SGB is necessary. The statement: *They would play a huge role if they could be actively involved*, says that adult governors are conscious of the impact that learners might have if they were actively involved. The usage of the word “huge” by a co-researcher sizes up precisely

and emphasises the influence that learners may have since they represent the biggest stakeholder group within the parameters of the school.

Other co-researchers agree that learner participation in the SGB is necessary as indicated by the following statements:

Junior: *Ea ba tlamehile, ho tlisa botsitso ka hare ho jarete ya sekolo. Ho kenyelletswa ha bona ho bohlokwa haholo. Ba ka thusa le ka ho fetisetsa di plan tsa sekolo ho barutwana ba bang.* (Yes, to bring about stability in the school, learner participation is critical. They can also assist in conveying the school's plans to other learners.)

Thato: *Baithuti ba tlameha ho ba karolo ya diqeto ka hara SGB. Sekolo sena se mona ka bona. Ke bona lebaka le etsang hore sekolo se be teng.* (Learners must form part of decision making. This school is here because of them. They are the reason why this school exists.)

The main issue is not involvement or a lack thereof, but whether adult governors are sincerely observant and open to children's viewpoints and are conscious of the variety and melody of their expressions (Hartas et al. 2011, 131). It is contradictory that SGB members agree that the participation of learners in the making of decisions within SGB can make a meaningful impact, and yet they continue to exclude them from the governing body. This says a lot about their perception about learners themselves. The statements of the adult governors say that they are conscious of the fact that they have been impeding the educational rights of learners but have continued to ignore the fact. When probing to find out why this practice has continued with no one daring to question it, revealed some interesting responses.

Mpho was very open about the issue:

Ke bana ha ba tsebe niks, ha re ba nkelle hloohong hobane ha bale ka meeting ha ba bue letho, so ho ba bitsa ka nako tse ding ke tshenyo ya nako fela. (They are kids; they know nothing. We do not consider them because when they are in meetings, they do not say anything, so calling them to meetings is sometimes a waste of time.)

From this comment, it was clear that the views of adult governors about learners in the SGB are very negative. The exclamation of the participant about learners not knowing anything is insulting to the intelligence of learners themselves. Equally, the comment undermines SASA 84 of 1996. The fact that learners do not say anything in meetings

does not disqualify them from their membership of the governing body. These learners may be silent due to the issues of power and control during the discourse. Not anything can inspire a kid further than when education is appreciated by schools and societies working collectively in collaboration (Mbokodi 2011, 40).

4.2.2 Insufficient participatory chances given to learners

As one of the transformational undertakings that was to reinforce and concomitantly advance the principles of democracy, thereby bridging the racial and institutional injustices of the past, SASA 84 of 1996 was developed. It therefore makes it criminal offence to deliberately exclude learners from a structure such as the SGB. Squelch (2001, 140) in Xaba (2011, 202-203) avers that the SGB, being in a condition of faith to the school, should perform from a position of trust must and not be involved in any illegitimate manner or in actions which might endanger the welfare of the school. The exclusion of learners from SGB is fundamentally undemocratic and tramples on their privilege to receive basic schooling. It denies the constituencies of such learners the right to be represented on the school governing body. Such exclusion challenges the very core of democracy which is participation.

Learner participation in the activities of the SGB, as a governing structure of the school, therefore, says that learners must always take into account the interests of their constituencies. Their accountability must make sure that amongst other things, education is accessible to all. Through their involvement in the SGB, they are able to learn the school culture and then impart it to other pupils. Thus, the learners in office harness the relations of all stakeholders in the school community.

It was essential that this study probes the levels at which learners are involved in decision making within the SGB.

Itumeleng: *Jwalo ka moithuti ke kile ka bitswa hanngwe meeting. Re ne re ilo kgetha dikomiti. Kantle ho moo ha ke so bitswe.* (As a learner, I have been called to a meeting only once. It was where we were to elect committees. Other than that, I have not been called to any.)

This revelation by the learner representative on the SGB confirms the conditions under which learners operate in the SGB. The learner governor is content that as a learner representative, who happens to be the president of the RCL at the school, she has not

been to any meeting that has discussed matters involving school governance. The comment confirms that during her tenure as president, she was not involved in any form of making decisions. This corroborates that pupils are uninvolved in decision making on either operational or strategic issues. It says that the constituency which such a learner governor represents in the school governing body does not have a say on what affects their curricula and extra-curricular lives at school.

Reference to learner governors being called only when they are to vote for committees is equally interesting to note. Learners are called to meetings only as and when they are needed to advance the interests of power-hungry leaders. They are called only when a quorum is needed to put certain individuals into positions of power. Adult governors use learners only as pawns in a bigger game of power. They do not call learners to meetings; they do not ask them to make inputs into the agenda; nevertheless, they are wont to call them when they need the learners to satisfy their need for power. Schools have an obligation to guarantee that learners' rights are sustained (Shumba, Maphosa & Shumba 2008, 49).

Mpho: Ha ba kenella ha kaalo diqetong tsa nkuwang, re lekile ho ba kenyelletsa empa ha wa etsahala. Re tshaba le ho ba kenya ka lebaka la mosebetsi o mongata wa sekolo oo ba nang le ona. (Learners are not necessarily included in the making of decisions; we tried to involve them, but it did not happen. We also are afraid of including them in many things because of the overload of schoolwork that they deal with.)

It is evident from the comment of the co-researcher that the participation of learners in SGBs remain just a policy and that it is not adhered to. Mavuso and Duku (2014, 454) posit that through SASA, there was an expectation that there was a possibility of having far-reaching, representative involvement of the groups that comprises of parents, educators and pupils, within the context of secondary schools. The comment "we tried involve them, but it did not happen" says that approval of learners to participate in SGB activities is reliant on the confirmation of other members, and not dependent on the stipulations of SASA 84 of 1996. This then shows the manipulation of learners in issues of power and control. If their participation is reliant on other members' approval, such members can easily control what such learners do or say, if and when they are called to meetings.

Mpho's further comment: *"We are afraid of including them in many things because of the overload of their schoolwork"* is clearly indicative that the perceptions of other governors surpass the importance of learner presence in the SGB. Their involvement and participation is not tested by putting them to task, but is decided by the way in which certain members in the SGB feel. The constant usage of the pronoun "we" by the co-researcher makes it clear that learners are not part of the group that take decisions, thus separating the learners from the rest of the team. It separates them from the group that takes decisions in the SGB. It is, in this instance, that the detection of elements of superiority and seniority emerge. The comments of the co-researcher suggest that in the SGB, there is a collection of individuals responsible for making decisions. That group is constantly referred to by the co-researcher as "we". This is evident in the comment that such a group is there to take decisions on whether learners should form part of the team or not. Brown and Duku (2007) in Mavuso and Duku (2014, 455) reflect on the matters of social identification, like sex, convention and micropolitics in school societies as favouring the previously advantaged crowds within the school's participatory settings.

Junior confirms, through comments that indeed learner participation in the SGB is compromised.

Junior: *Nkare ba kenyelleditswe diqetong. Empa seo ke se bua fela ka lebaka la hore ke kopanong ya mofuta ona le wena. Re santse re hloka ho etsa tse ngata hore re ba kenyelletse. Empa seo se ka etsahala fela ka batho ba tshwanang le wena.* (For the purpose of this meeting, I would say yes, they are involved. We still have much to do to involve them. It is through people like you that we can achieve that.)

The co-researcher says it blatantly that he can agree to the fact that learners are sufficiently involved only because he is being recorded in an engagement session with me, as researcher. The statement implies that the co-researcher is aware that learners are not sufficiently involved. Moreover, he is aware that it is wrong not to include them. His comments are those of an individual who is aware of the implication of not including learners in the making of decisions within SGBs. It's a concern that other governors have chosen to ignore addressing a policy issue of which they are clearly aware.

The comment "we still have much to do to involve them" equally says that SGB members realise that pupils are not sufficiently involved. It says that not enough has

been done to assist learners with their participation in the SGB. It once again reaffirms my sentiments about the comments of Mpho with regard to the usage of the pronoun “we” in the comments.

In an attempt to probe whether learners play a role in meetings of the SGB when they are present, I tried to dig deeper by asking members of the research team if learners really make meaningful contributions.

Thato: Ha se ha ngata. Ha batle dimeeting, ha ba le teng ha ba bue niks. Re tlamehile re avoide di meeting tsa hara beke ka nako ya sekolo. Meeting tshwanetse di tshwarwe ka weekend ho baithuti ba tsebe hotla. Sena se ka re thusa le ka matitjhere a tlohelang declass ba attenda dimeeting tsa SGB. (Not many times. They do not attend regularly and when they do attend, they do not participate. It must be avoided that meetings be held during school days. They must be on weekends so that learners can attend. It will also assist with teachers who leave class to attend SGB meetings.)

According to section 18 (2) (b) of SASA 84 of 1996, a school governing body meeting must be held approximately once within a school term (RSA, 1996). Owing to the frequency of the meetings, which does not seem to be too hectic, it is possible for meetings of the SGB to be held outside school hours. The co-researcher commented that it was not always that learners attended meetings and when they did, they did not say anything. It appears that issues of power and respect for elders make it a mammoth task for learners to raise their hands and speak in meetings. The presence of individuals in authority, like principals and educators, make it a daunting task for them to participate. Learners become intimidated by the social status of people who attend meetings with them. Learners take them as knowledgeable beings who possess prodigious amounts of knowledge in a multiple of disciplines.

Maharaj (2005, 53-54) contends that certain members possess appropriate qualifications, expertise and the know-how of their permanent profession to help the SGB while others do not. On the other hand, governors who are not in possession of recognized qualifications or nearer awareness of educational processes are able to, and frequently do, contribute valuably. In posing outwardly inexperienced queries around some performs within school, they are able to frequently encourage other members to review fresher, or innovative methods of dealing with those performs. The comprehensive proposals they bring about are frequently founded on ages of

knowledge instead of on some recognized qualifications. The worth of such members is reliant on the point that they bring about a submission of an 'external viewpoint' to the problematic issue at hand.

It is also fair to say that learner participation is controlled by the amount of knowledge they have amassed on the subject content in discussion. Learners are not called to formulate or make inputs into the items for discussion in meetings. They therefore come across such items for the first time as they are being discussed in such meetings. Therefore, they are not sufficiently confident about commenting on such issues.

Elements of culture also play a powerful part in any discourse. Diverse and modern as the society is, issues related to culture have a substantial responsibility in the daily activities of the school governing body. In a setting such as that of the SGB, elements of culture are regarded as non-negotiable, especially in black culture. Learners sit in such a setting with people regarded as superiors in their own right. Parents of other learners in the SGB are, in terms of culture, parents to the learner sitting in a meeting as a representative of other learners. The view of parenting from an African perspective is that a child may not object to the views of their parents; if they do, they are regarded as disrespectful and unruly. Traditional school and classroom practice embody strict power relationships and undemocratic cultural practices (Smit 2013, 349).

Principals and teachers are regarded as powerful people in authority. Their knowledge, accolades and educational qualifications give them power, as well as high societal status as respected individuals. Owing to their social status, it becomes difficult for learners to engage or deviate from their (the elders) views. The view of society is that because of their social status, they are knowledgeable in an array of fields. Their educational qualifications say that it cannot be that they are wrong on issues that are related to education and its governance. Cox and Robinson (2008, 461) assert that teachers believe that as experts with educational, legal and ethical obligations and duties of care, they are grateful to take ultimate accountability for decisions.

With the above in mind, I attempted to probe if the issues of power, culture, superiority and seniority have an impact on the participation of learners in the SGB.

Thato: *Bana ha ba nkuwe serious ka lebaka la ho se participate. Hape matichere ke bona ba kgethang RCL. Divote ha di counte.* (Kids are not taken seriously because of their lack of participation. Teachers often choose who should be on the RCL. Elections do not count.)

The comment of the participant about teachers choosing their own RCL relates directly to the issues of power and authority. Despite the democratic processes of voting for RCL taking place, teachers still use their power to choose their preferred candidates. This then implies that the whole issue of learner representation on the SGB is deeply flawed. It equally highlights largely, the reason for the silent participation of learners during SGB meetings. Based on my analysis, teachers choose students over whom they have control. They choose learners who are presumed to be quiet and obedient, thus there will be a 'no questions asked' situation. Learners therefore do not represent the views of the constituencies that brought them to office but represent and carry the mandate of the teachers who gave them positions. Consequently, learners do not object to anything that is being said during meetings because they do not want to lose their title of being obedient learners. It is due to the nature of their selection that other governors regard themselves as more powerful than they are because learners are knowledgeable of the manner in which they were selected.

Itumeleng was very direct and very brief in response:

Ba re nka jwalo ka bana. Ba nahana hore ha hona niks eo re e tsebang. Ba dumela hore ha hona niks eo re ka e buang ka dimeeting. (They treat us as kids; they believe that there is nothing that we know. They believe that there is nothing that we can say in meetings.)

The above co-researcher believes that they are not taken seriously because they are children. The latter comment of the co-researcher is affirmed by the earlier comment of Thato that "Kids are not taken seriously because of their lack of participation". The comments by both co-researchers say a lot about the perceptions of adult governors and of general authority. The fact that Thato referred to them as "kids" says that their status in the SGB is undermined and belittled. They are not taken as equals in a committee that serves to safeguard the interests of the school.

The status given to other learners by other governors undermines the legislation that governs school governing bodies. Policy developers believed that learners are

knowledgeable enough to take part in the proceedings of the SGB. The reference to learners as kids, plays a significant role in their not being taken seriously. In meetings, they are surrounded by teachers and principals who believe that learners are inferior because of their lack of knowledge of learning and teaching content. Furthermore, there are parents who believe that learners are inferior because they raise them in a township environment.

Mpho comments:

Ka mora di election tsa bona ha ba ba botse niks. Ba nkuwa ba sa tsebe letho ka ntho tse ngata. (After elections they do not follow anything up with us. They are assumed to be less knowledgeable about so many things.)

The above co-researcher is of the observation that learners are the ones who are supposed to come to them as elderly members and ask about the activities of the SGB. The comment is very worrying because, as members who are already part of the SGB, they should provide direction to learners about the day-to-day operations. Learners tend not to ask because they are clueless of such operations. The comment from the above researcher that learners are less knowledgeable in many things is very serious. These learners end up not knowing anything because they are not inducted or taught how to go about dealing with issues related to the running of the SGB. Adult governors do not invite learners to meetings; they expect them to come willingly to such meetings without being given the directive to do so.

4.2.3 Lack of capacity building for learner governors

Upon assumption of duties in the SGB, it is required that learner governors be taken to a training session that will assist them with the undertaking of their daily duties (cf 2.6.1.3). All the trainings are compulsory; however, some of the members do not go. This makes it difficult for them to catch up on issues of policy and its developments. Such members forfeit the policies, knowledge, operations and strategies used to govern a school. To exacerbate the problem, the Department of Education (DoE) does not follow up when such a member is absent from training. No follow up sessions are executed. For learners, it becomes a frustrating situation because unlike with the term of other SGB members which takes a period of three years, they are voted in and out

of office annually. Phaswana (2010, 106) states that having learners on the SGB for only 12 months proposes that they are not seriously taken as equivalent associates with other members. It's stated that an RCL member within the school governing body may not exceed a period of one year while serving in office (RSA, 1996). This hinders the continuity in as far as capacity building for learners is concerned. A member who exits office in a period of 12 months departs with all the knowledge and experience they have developed during the training that was provided (cf 2.6.1.3). Learners do not get a chance to practise what they have been taught, if they are taught at all, through training that is provided by the DoE.

Smit (2013, 349) contends that populaces in a self-governing state, particularly a newly emerging one, can not just reach political ripeness and appear prepared, eager and enabled to govern its institutes. People must be skilled and cultivated to obtain the attitude, ideology, know-how and expertise that are vital for an efficient and functional democracy.

In relation to capacity building in the SGB, Mpho had this to say:

Training re e fuwe ke lefapha. Re ithutile ka ho recruta matitjhere, tsamaiso ya tsa ditjhelete ra ba ra inductuwa ka di roles tsa SGB. (Training was provided by the department. It was all about recruitment of teachers, finances and induction concerning the roles of the SGB.)

From the comment of Mpho it is safe to say that the kind of training that is provided by the DoE addresses the very strategic and operational issues of the SGB. The content of the training focuses on the areas that have for a long time made the news. Most SGBs were, in the past, criticised for the embezzlement of funds and the inability to manage them. On the other hand, school governing bodies were blamed for their incapacity to source competitive teaching professionals. The content of the training therefore says that after training, members of the SGB are well equipped to deal with such issues.

Co- researcher 2 also agreed that training was provided. However, learners were not present.

Thato: *Training re e fumane. Ka morao ho di election SGB e iswa training. Empa be ntse ho sena baithuti moo.* (Training was provided. After elections the SGB is taken to training. But there are normally no learners.)

It is very imperative to note the content and the structure of the SGB training. Equally essential is the impact that it has on the day-to-day operations of each member after they have received such training. It is concomitantly crucial to note that learners are not afforded the chance to attend this training. From the comment of the co-researcher, it should be noted that it is not the first time that they were not at the training because they are normally not present.

Linking the comment of both Mpho and Thato, it is evident that learners lose a significant amount of knowledge when they do not attend the training. They miss out on information that relates to how their teachers are recruited. Moreover, they miss training on how they should execute their daily duties as part of the SGB. This new information refers back to why learners seem to be clueless during SGB meetings and is informative of from where perceptions of adult governors emanate. Even more interesting to note is the fact that other members of the SGB are conscious of it but choose to remain silent.

Thato was, upon collection of data, the secretary emeritus of the SGB. Minimally, I would infer that the co-researcher had been in office for a period of three years. This then says that for the past three years, there has not been any training for the learners. For three years, learners who have been in and out of the RCL office have left without being capacitated. Their silence in meetings may be attributed to the fact that they simply cannot follow the correct meeting procedures (cf 2.6.1.3).

Itumeleng reinforces the latter comments when she said:

Ha e sale ke fihla RCL ha ho sobe le training. Ke hloka ho tseba hore ke re eng ka nako e feng hore ke kgone ho contribute. (Since I came to be the RCL, there has not been any form of training provided. I need to know what to say and not to say so that I can make contributions.)

From the comments of Itumeleng on the SGB, it can be confirmed that learners are clueless about what they are supposed to do or say during SGB meetings. It is equally evident that learners are willing to contribute to the discussions that take place, but

they do not know where to begin. This gives credence to the reasons for their non-participation.

Phaswana (2010, 106) avers that learners, owing to their partial knowledge in the making of decisions, need to acquaint themselves with the processes within the school governing body prior to them being really able to undertake a lively part. School governance requires one to be well capacitated. In almost all instances, the SGB deals with issues of policy. This includes, *inter alia*, finance, recruitment and procurement policies. The fact that members of the SGB operate with policy issues, highlights the seriousness of how knowledgeable they should be about their daily activities. If they are not sufficiently capacitated, they might in certain instances contravene some clauses in the policy. The result of such contravention may be court cases that could end up costing them their careers. Despite the seriousness of the repercussions of contravening policies, learners are still not afforded opportunities to attend SGB training programmes. It therefore is a risk factor for them. What is more worrying is the silence of officials from the DoE that learners are not present at such trainings. As custodians of policy and its implementation, it is concerning that they are ignorant about upholding the democratic principles of SASA 84 of 1996.

4.3 COMPONENTS FOR ENHANCEMENT OF THE SOLUTION

Enhancing the participation of learners in the making of decisions in SGBs within the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality was the main aim of the study. The study aimed at maximising the involvement of such learners through interactive engagements with the community that is affected. Through participatory action research the study aimed at empowering members of such a community towards social justice.

Throughout the research, a team comprising individuals from an array of stakeholder groups had to work collaboratively in an attempt to create a working solution to the problem of the non-participation of learners in the making of decisions within SGBs. A team of co-researchers worked tirelessly towards the achievement of the solid end product of the study.

4.3.1 The forum

Datta et al. (2014, online) purport that participatory action research remains a collaborative procedure where members of a community and the researcher equally profit. For instance, participatory action research approach is useful in affording scholars an understanding into partakers' desires, values and traditions; it equally advances communal capability, generates the serious comprehension of self-awareness, and escalates community-based involvement and outcomes of societal action. My choice to use PAR as a method of gathering data for this study prompted the implementation of a forum that would work together to attain the research aim of the study. Co-researchers had to work together to make sure that learner participation in the SGB was enhanced.

Through an agreement by the SGB as a whole, a team of members who were to coordinate, monitor and ensure that the aims of the research were executed, were chosen. Participatory action research remains a distinctive method to research since command is collective among the group participants. Power distribution eradicates the inequity that usually transpire with the researcher and members within a conventional design of the research. All team participants partake in taking collective conclusions. Everybody has distinctive and similarly significant submissions that generate shared education (Watters, Comeau & Restall 2010, 5-6). The team was there to make sure that change towards social justice was realised. Research and mediation are not detached phases but somewhat, are the apparatuses of practice, or a personified philosophy, with the program of making circumstances that simplify separate and collective enablement, together with social change (Langhout et al. 2010, 61). The forum was constituted to ensure that the enhancement of learner participation in SGBs is possible and the goals clearly set out by the forum. It was the duty of such a forum to equally ensure that such goals were adhered to. The goals of the forum were to be attained though their alignment with the aims and objectives of the research. Meticulous planning had to be undertaken by the forum, with a careful structure designed and followed by the entire forum. In addition, the forum made sure that its activities did not clash with those of the school's daily programme.

The composition of the team comprised individuals from all stakeholder groups represented on the SGB. The initial stages of participatory action research comprise

of persons or teams gathering collectively about a mutual matter of concern (Watters et al. 2010, 11). As part of the team, I was there to co-ordinate all the activities of the study. With the foundational experience that I have, I was there to guide proceedings through every stage. Researchers have familiarity and know-how about the manner in which to undertake a study and functioning as a group permits the chance for casual education to happen by all participants (Watters et al. 2010, 6). The school principal was present as the head of teaching and learning, and equally acting as the representative of the SMT. As the school head, the principal has the capacity to influence policy. It was for this reason that he was there, to make sure that resolutions taken by the forum were carried out, even beyond the time frame of the study. As the head, he was also responsible for making sure that the plans of the forum did not clash with those of the school. The outgoing secretary of the SGB was also part of the selected members of the forum. As an executive member of the SGB, the secretary was there to give perspective and direction from a governance of point of view. The secretary was also tasked with recording the minutes and resolutions of the forum. As an experienced member of the SGB for more than two terms, her expertise contributed immensely to the realisation of the completion of the study. A teacher was present as a representative of other teachers at the school. Coincidentally, such a teacher was also the teacher liaising officer (TLO) of the RCL. Such a teacher could assist with sharing experiences from both his job as a teacher and that of being the custodian and guardian of the RCL. He was a relevant person to have on the team, as he was the immediate supervisor to the RCL. Ozer et al. (2010, 153) purport that the central procedures of youth PAR include the teaching of youngsters to classify main uncertainties within their schools and societies; undertake research to comprehend the essence of the problematic issues at hand; and assume control in persuading policies and conclusions to improve the circumstances within which they live their lives. A learner was also part of the forum and as the representative of the RCL. Such a learner was the president of the RCL and happened to be the one who was supposed to represent her team in the SGB. Her presence was essential, since she was aware of the problem that the study anticipated solving. Langhout et al. (2010, 61) explains that studies operating with youngsters and their existence can likewise be changed by approving the part of youngsters as social actors and coworkers.

4.3.2 Plan of action

Shangase (2013, 80) quotes Stinger (2004, 3) that action researchers “partake in cautious, thorough enquiries not for the reason of exhuming unknown data or reviewing acknowledged rules or philosophies, instead, they participate to obtain material with applied effort to the key to particular problematic issues connected to work”. Furthermore, Kemmis (2000, 2) argues that at a point where actions have been instigated, methodical observation is necessary, and equally, thinking on the procedures and the results of transformation are imperative. Cox and Robinson (2008, 467) posit that good action research stresses that researchers display a willingness to step outside their normal frames of reference; that they interrogate their usual ways of seeing; and that they continuously pursue fresh viewpoints on the familiar.

The challenges towards learner participation in decision making within school governance had already been discussed by the team. The planning phase of the engagement sessions was very useful, in the sense that it assisted us to put together a strong team that would advance the interests of the study. Each member had experience that would assist in coming up with tangible solutions to the problem of the study. The focal point of the study would be on addressing the challenges and coming up with a way forward towards how the participation of learners in decision making within school governance can be enhanced.

4.3.3 Audit of challenges, components, conditions, threats and evidence of successful studies.

The SWOT analysis (cf 3.3.5) revealed the resources that were available to the team and how best they could be utilised by the team. Our strengths were such that members had the willpower to work within the project. We also had the full support of the SGB to continue with the research. The SGB wanted to see the change that had to come with the research being realised. All members present in the team were also experienced in the affairs of the SGB. They had been there for a reasonable period of time. When designing the way forward for the study, these strengths were used to the advantage of the team.

Our weakness was such that members were for the first time engaging in a research process, so the processes would take a longer to finish. I was compelled to constantly

explain the proceedings to members of the team. Opportunities for us were that resources and facilities for the project were all available to us at our convenience. It was also opportune for the team that they all emanated from the same residential and working area, so the availability of co-researchers was very simple. The threats were that elements of culture, superiority and seniority would cloud the proceedings of the discussions.

The SWOT analysis was there to assist the team with providing direction towards the realisation of a just and fair educational setting free from prejudice. Balamuralishika and Dugger (2012, 1) in Shangase (2013, 81) contend that a wider, lasting objective of a SWOT analysis is to reduce poverty and assist in advancing the financial position of the country. This study would focus on how a community could assist in unshackling the social injustices caused to learners. Having had a comprehensive SWOT analysis, it would be easy for us to come up with strategies which would enhance learner participation in the making of decisions within SGBs. The strategies are outlined below in order of priority.

4.3.3.1 Change in perceptions of adult governors

Perceptions of adult governors have already been identified as a challenge towards the participation of learners in decision making within SGBs (cf 2.6.1.4 (a)). Their inability to accommodate learners has emerged as one of the major reasons why learners are left on the periphery without knowledge on how and when they can be involved (cf 2.6.1.4 (a)). School governing bodies see it a serious task to collaborate pleasantly to advance the welfare of their schools (Xaba 2011, 206). Grant-Lewis and Naidoo (2004) in Mafora (2013, 33) discovered that many members in school governing bodies have a tendency of refuting the actuality of rival constituent's wellbeing, ideals and demands. It is for this reason that the team investigated this section of the study in order to find ways and strategies on how such perceptions may be altered to the better.

While on a mission to exhume answers to the latter stated problem, the following comments surfaced:

Mpho: *Pele re ka qala ka anything, ke batla ho tseba hore molao ona oreng ka bo teng ba bana ka hare ho SGB. Re skatlo tswela pele re soka re utlwisisa.* (Before we can begin with anything, I want to know what the law says about learner presence in the SGB, so that we do not continue without understanding anything.)

The comment of the co-researcher prompted me to read through the contents of SASA 84 of 1996. After reading through it and reaffirming that it is the document that governs the SGB, the co-researcher continued:

Mpho: *Jwalo ka ha SASA e ba dumella, ha hona niks eo re ka e buang kapa eo re ka e etsang. Re tlameha re bone hore re ba accommodate jwang. SASA ke molao oo re sebetsang ka ona, ha hona hore re ka hana.* (There is nothing that we can say or do because SASA says they must be in. We must see how we accommodate them. SASA is the law that governs us; there is no way we can refuse.)

The comment of the co-researcher was a well directed step. The engagement now was how to be directly aligned with the contents of SASA 84 of 1996. The prospects of the research were now looking more positive.

Thato: *Molao wa dumela hore ba be teng ka komiting. Seo re lokelang ho se etsa ke ho qala re ba nka serious. Re tlameha ho dula ntse re hopola hore ba teng ka komiting ka lebaka la molao ona.* (The law allows them to be on the committee. What we have to do is to start taking them seriously. We must always remember that they are on this committee because of the very same law.)

It was interesting to note that the co-researchers had realised that they had been operating outside the stipulations of the law. This study would be a revelation to them that all operations of the SGB must be within the confines of the prescribed policy (cf 1.2). The co-researcher believed that policy should supersede anything else, including their perceptions about learners.

Mpho: *Bana ba tlameha ho qala ba nkuwa jwalo ka part ya SGB. Ke a utlwisisa hore ba hloka tsebo. Empa ke rona jwalo ka batswadi ba ka ba thusang. Re hloka hoba ruta nako e sale teng hore ba kgone ho etella pele le bona next time.* (Children must start being taken as part of the SGB. I understand that they do not have knowledge. But as their parents, we are the only people to help them. We must teach them whilst there is still time so that they can also lead in the future.)

The comment speaks directly to the challenge of negative, elderly adult perceptions faced by learners in the SGB. The co-researcher comments that a step must be taken to regard learners as valid members of the SGB reveals his new understanding of the problem. The co-researcher also agrees that learners do not have knowledge of the operations of the SGB and that the SGB members must be there to teach learners the rules (cf 2.6.1.4 (a)). In this instance, I realised that the co-researcher wanted the team to take charge in making sure that learner participation in the SGB was realised.

Junior was in agreement with the comment from Mpho:

Junior: *Re tlameha ho tlosa kelello ya hore ke bana. Hona le dintho tseo ba di tsebang tseo re sa di tsebeng. Ba shebella TV, ba bala di facebook le di whatsapp. Re ka ithuta something from bona watseba.* (We must move away from the idea that they are kids. There are things that they know, and we don't. They watch TV and are constantly on social media.)

The acknowledgement of the co-researcher about learners having knowledge that other members such as the principal, teachers and parents do not have, is a step forward in the study. The co-researcher furthermore commented that learners are exposed to different kinds of media, therefore adult governors can learn from them.

Itumeleng: *Batho ba baholo ba tlameha qala ba re nka jwalo ka batho ba nang le kelello tsa ho nahana. Hona le ntho tse ngata tseo re di tsebang tseo re ka di usang ho change sekolo. Hape re haufinyana le bana ba bang. Re ka kgona ho nka ditaba from ban ba sekolo ra di tlisa ka hara SGB.* (Elderly people must start taking us as human beings with brains. There are many things that we know that we can use to change the school. We are also very close to other learners so we can assist with linking the learners with the SGB.)

The learner governor made very valid points towards the realisation of a tangible solution to the challenge at hand. From the comment, it was clear that the SGB had been missing a lot by excluding pupils from decision making processes. The co-researcher is convinced that they are also very knowledgeable beings who are capable of changing the school for the better (cf 1.2). Furthermore, the co-researcher says that they can turn into a connection between school governance and the pupils. The comment of the learners speaks directly to the primary reason why they are part of the SGB: to harness the relations of the learners and school governors.

In this section of the study, the team decided that they should start taking decisions based on the stipulations of SASA 84 of 1996. Furthermore, as a start-up towards the elimination of negative perceptions towards learners, they must consistently invite learners to meetings and teach them how things are done. The team must start taking learners as equally knowledgeable beings and use them as a link between the SGB and the learners.

4.3.3.2 Provision of participatory chances.

Non-participation of learners in the SGB means that learners are not in a position to democratically partake within the interrogation of issues that impact their existence (cf 2.6.1.4 (b)). Mavuso and Duko (2014, 455) purport that partaking is defined by numerous authors as the method of enablement for excluded persons; people's participation in processes of making decisions and a procedure with which members effect the running of developmental enterprises, choices and resourceful items. Their exclusion from participation means that other members who represent their own constituencies in the SGB would always take decisions on behalf of the learners irrespective of how intensely it affects the learners. Inclusive and discursive democracy must preferably be stretched to schooling environments, schoolrooms and numerous additional collaboratives or societal relations, like management, committees, unions and parent gatherings (Smit, 2013, 350). Education encapsulates a vast array of issues that require maximum participation from all stakeholders involved. As part of education, the inculcation of a sense of responsibility, leadership and management must be enforced (cf 2.6.1.4 (b)).

Pule (2014, 97) explains that there are significant fundamentals to ponder on if you are preparing participatory involvement for people.

Hereunder is a list of distinguished classes of participation:

- Participatory needs: Classify the participatory events that please the fundamental desires, wants and needs of the people.
- Participatory habits and person's participation: Quality structures and procedures must be placed for individuals to participate in specific events to retain the relations healthy amongst people.
- The impact of partaking within communities: Recognising participatory methods to promote social cohesion.
- Participatory standards: Individuals are of the belief that their participation in roles might generate solid and confident views pertaining to their appearance.

In an attempt to find solutions towards how learners can be provided sufficient participatory chances in the SGB, these were the discussions:

Thato: Nakong ya principal e fetileng re la nna ra ba kenya bana ka hara SGB. Empa ba ne ba sa bue niks. Ba ne ba dula jwalo ba sa botse le ho botsa ha re bua. Nna ke ne ke bona ekare mohlomong ba tshaba kapa ba lahlehile hobane ha hona le ka mohla o ione ba kileng bua. (During the tenure of previous principal, we had learners in the SGB but they were always silent. They did not even ask a single question. I always thought that they were lost or scared because they never said anything.)

The co-researcher contended that learners were not active during meetings in the past. She was very adamant that they always came to meetings and that they always seemed out of place. I cannot, however, tell if such learners were given chance to participate or not.

Mpho: Se ke buile hore ha hona bothata ba hore re kenye ban aka hare ho komiti. But re tlameha ho beha di boundaries. Ba tlameha ba dule ba tseba hore re batho ba baholo. Ba seke ba tloha ba tloha ba nahana hore ha re sebedisana mmoho le bona se re lekana. Ntse re le batswadi ba bona le ha ba ka kena komiting e i one le rona. (I have said already that I do not have a problem with their being in the SGB. There must, however, be boundaries. Learners must know that we are their elders. They must not think that because we are

working with them that we are peers. We are still their parents even though we work on the same committee.)

Even though the comment of the co-researcher takes us back to priority 1, the comment itself agrees that pupils must be afforded the opportunity to contribute (cf 2.5.2). What was worrying however, was that adult governors still wanted to dictate how learners should participate. They were already setting boundaries of power and seniority and this could have further marginalised the learners who were already on the periphery. Learner participation therefore becomes an activity undertaken outside the scope of SASA 84 of 199. Mavuso and Duku (2014, 455-456) highlight three key observations: that partaking is fundamentally beneficial, particularly for the members; that attention on finding the methods correct is a key technique of guaranteeing the accomplishment of such methods; reflections of authority and politics must entirely be evaded as being troublesome; and in an African cultural setting, issues of respect cannot be ignored. However, if the deliberations and the scope of discussions are circumvented within the stipulations of policy, issues related to disrespect, power, seniority and superiority may be, to a large degree, eliminated. South African School Governance Framework (RSA, 2004) demands not only for discourse, but for space for harmless and unrestricted expression.

Itumeleng: Nna ke nahana hore re tlameha re fuwe opportunity ya hore re sebetse ho sena motho a re judgeang. Ha ba re refe menyetla yohle e teng batle ba bone hore re ka kgona ho sebetsa. Re santse re hloka ho ithuta empa ha ke nahane e ka ba mosebetsi o moholo haholo ho etsa jwalo. Re tla ithuta ntse reya pele. (I think we should be given the opportunity to be part of the SGB without anyone judging us. They must give us all the available opportunities so that we can work. Learning how things are done will not be a mountain to climb for us. We will learn as we go forward.)

The comment of the learner governor is very bold and straightforward. She says that she is willing to work but learners should not be judged. Furthermore, the co-researcher's comment that they must be given "all" the available opportunities to work resembles a very powerful will to work. The usage of the word "all" means that the learners are asking for no limitations to their participation in the activities of the SGB. The learner governor does not put a limit to how broad they can go in working towards the betterment of their educational institution. The co-researcher accepts that they are not knowledgeable enough with regard

to issues related to school governance, but they are willing to learn. In its entirety, the comment of the learner governor is that of an individual waiting to effect change, as soon as an opportunity presents itself (cf 2.5.3). Smit (2013, 350) contends more involvement directs to improved efficiency and that such involvement teaches populaces and participants to convert their wellbeing for the mutual benefits.

Junior: Hore ba kgone ho iphumana ba phuthulluhile ka hare ho SGB, re hloka hob a fa mesebetsi eo batla e etsa. Empa mesebetsi eo ya bona e seke ya sitisa nako ya bona ya sekolo. Ba tlile sekolong mona and jwale ha re ba sitisa ho ithuta le teng re tlo kena mathateng. (For them to feel free in the SGB we need to give them responsibilities. However, their responsibilities must not clash with their schoolwork. They are here to learn, so if we disturb their learning programme, we will be in trouble.)

Solutions to the challenge of non-participatory chances that learners experience in the SGB were falling into place. The co-researcher commented that learners should be given opportunities to perform responsibilities that may be given to them (cf 2.6.1.5 (b)). This was a step forward towards the realisation of the attainment of the aims of this research. The fact that the co-researcher agreed that pupils must be afforded the opportunity to contribute and to carry out responsibilities turns the tide against learner marginalisation in the SGB. Furthermore, it was encouraging to note that the co-researcher was worried about learning time that learners may have to forfeit during the execution of such responsibilities. It is important to remember that the primary reason for learners to be at school is to learn and that is a human right that they must not be denied. The concern that they must not be given responsibilities that derail their fundamental reason to be at school must be seriously noted.

Thato: Hore re bone ba sebetsa hape hape ba ithuta mosebetsi, re hloka ho ba kenya dikomiting tseo re nang le tsona ka mona. Le management wa sekolo le ona o ka leka hob a kenya komiting tsa bona. Mohlomong b aka kena komiting ya dibuka, ya sports kapa ya tse ding tse teng fela. (For us to see them working and equally learning, we must include them in our committees. The SMT may also include them in their committees. They can include them in the book, sport or any other committee.)

School committees are the building blocks of the institution. Each committee that is functioning at the school, be it on a management or governance level, plays a very

important part in the advancement of the school's policies and interests. The comment of the co-researcher therefore puts learners at the heart of the school's functionality. It says that learners will be exposed to a vast array of responsibilities that are carried out within such committees. Bearing in mind that learner participation is the crux of this study, their involvement in school committees will maximise their participation in as far as their participation is concerned (cf 2.5.2).

A comprehensive solution for the team was that learners should not be given limitations in terms of their participation in the activities of the SGB. All avenues available to them to explore should be afforded, so that they are able to learn about the responsibilities they should assume. Learners should also be given opportunities and responsibilities that they are able to execute outside their daily school programme. Such responsibilities should not clash with their school programme because their primary reason for being at school is to learn. Learners should also be given a chance to partake in school committees. The opportunity will give them exposure to a plethora of knowledge and skills related to how school governance and management operate (cf 2.6.1.5 (b)).

4.3.3.3 Empowering and capacitating learners

In most cases, learners assume positions in the RCL without being sure of what is anticipated of them. They assume office with the idea that their duty is solely to take the problems faced by their constituency to their principal. They are not sure of the correct line of reporting, rights and responsibilities related to their office. Thus, they do not become confident in representing other learners because they are incapacitated themselves. As a consequence, the vast majority of their constituencies are also left on the periphery. Learner leaders are not provided with any kind of training pertaining to their duties in the RCL and their membership in the SGB. Mabusela (2016, 21-22) confirms that the skills needed by governors are reliant on, among other things, the educational experience, and particularly the literacy level, of the governors. The skills insufficiency in this case is highly noticeable in school environments and in the destituted and the countryside.

In a quest to come up with answers to the problem of incapacitated learner governors in the SGB, the following comments were pertinent:

Thato: *Ha ba fuwe training ntate Dumako, ke itse nna ha ke soka ke bona ba bua ka hara di meeting, maybe he ke hobane ha ba tsebe melao ya rona ka mona. Ha ke tsebe ba tla e fuwa neng, kae, jwang, mare bona ba e hloka shame.* (They must be given training; I said that I have never seen them talk in meetings. It may be because they do not know how we operate. I am also not sure of who does the training and when and how it will take place, but they need it.)

The co-researcher above believes that a way of capacitating learners is to provide them with training. She reports that the reason for learners not speaking in meetings is that they do not know how things are done in the SGB. The comment of the co-researcher addresses the core of the problem faced by learner governors in the SGB: a lack of training and development. The contribution of the co-researcher is very helpful in this study; however, the problem is the logistics pertaining to such training.

Mpho: *Principal o tlameha ho etsa sure hore ha re bitswa training ya SGB re tsamaye le bana. Ntse re ba siya nako ena kaofela. Ba tlameha ba lo ikutlwela hore ho thweng moo. Net fela ha principal a fumana molaetsa ona o tlameha ho nahana ka bana hobane nou tjena ke bona ba e hlokanng ho re feta.* (The principal must make sure that when we are called for training we take learners along. We have been leaving them behind all along. They must come and hear for themselves what is being said. The principal must remember them because they need this training more than we do.)

The reason why the co-researcher gives the responsibility of making sure that learners attend the training is that the principal is the one who receives correspondence pertaining to such information. Equally, the principal is the one closest to the learners since other SGB members are not always within the school parameters. The co-researcher also agrees that learners need training more than anyone else in the SGB. One point that is outstanding however, is the issue of the frequency of the SGB training against the term of office of the RCL. Training an incumbent RCL each year on a cycle of a three-year term of SGB office bearing may be a daunting task (cf 2.6.1.3).

Itumeleng: *Rona ha re kena ka hara RCL ha re fuwe training niks. Ho thata ho rona ho etsa dintho hobane ha re tsebe hantle ho etsahalang. Ditaba tsa SGB tsona di ba thata le ho feta because ke komiti e ka hodimo ho rona. Ke sentse ke tlo tswa ka hara RCL because*

ke etsa matric. Ke tswa tjena ke soka ke ba sure le hore kgale ho etsahalang. (When we get onto the SGB we do not get training. Things become difficult for us because we do not know what is happening. I am about to leave the RCL because I am doing matric and I am not even sure what has been happening.)

The co-researcher claims that they are not given basic training that relates to their primary leadership responsibilities in the RCL. It then becomes difficult for them to comprehend the operations of the SGB because they do not know what their primary duties are in the office of the RCL (cf 2.6.1.4(c)). It then becomes important that learners first be given training in their duties in the office to which they were primarily elected. It will make it easy for them to understand who they are and what their mandate should be. Secondary to this, training should be provided to them on issues related to the operations of the SGB. This will be very fruitful as it will link the duties and responsibilities of both the RCL and the SGB. Before learners can assume a higher office in the SGB, they shall have understood clearly what is expected of them in as far as their constituency is concerned.

Itumeleng continued: *Ha se re qeta ho fumane training ke hona re ka sebetsang re otlolohile. Batho ba kgale ba le teng ka komiting batla re jwetsa hore na re ntse re etsa tsona mona le mane. Ha re sa etse tsona tshwanetse ba bue, le teng ha re etsa tsona ba hloka hore ba re jwetse. Ka morao ho nako e itseng re tlabe se re le hantle re sa hloke ho bolellwa hore re etseng. (We can only work with open hearts after we have received training. People who have been on the committee will say if we are doing things right. They have to tell us when we are doing wrong and when we are not. After a certain time, they will not have to do that anymore.)*

The co-researcher furthermore contends that they will need a form of monitoring from other members in the SGB. In this sense, they will be constantly monitored as to whether they are doing well after they have been trained or not. The process of monitoring should definitely be there to measure the progress of learners after the training. It will assist them with evaluating themselves against their mandate in both the SGB and the RCL. Equally, learner governors should be mentored towards the achievement of their goal, be involved and participate in the operations of the SGB (cf 2.5.2). Such mentorship should be constant. Certain members in the SGB who are sufficiently knowledgeable should make it their responsibility to monitor the progress of learner governors, based on the training that they

have been received. The TLO and the principal are the ones nearer to pupils and must be responsible for such a duty. Since the TLO is closest to the RCL in terms of their daily activities, they may be given such a duty with the full support of the school principal. Maharaj (2005, 54) cites that the matter of the need for SGB members must possess a prescribed requirement has appeared in England wherein untrained volunteers participated in SGBs are obligated to be assessed for their performance.

The stance of the team was that learners should be given proper training before they can continue with their day-to-day operations in both the RCL and the SGB. The RCL training should take precedence. It should then be followed by the SGB training which will address aspects related to governance. After training has been provided, there should be constant monitoring and mentorship provided by other members who have been on the SGB. Recommended mentors for this purpose are the principal and the TLO, since they are the closest to pupils daily. Since a period of the SGB is longer than that of the RCL, it was left unclear as to how, when and by whom learners will be given training on a yearly basis in relation to their SGB duties.

4.4 CONDITIONS RELEVANT FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF LEARNER PARTICIPATION IN THE SGB

The previous segment of the study looked at the components of the solution of the study. The section endeavoured to discover answers to the challenges that were selected for the execution of this research. This segment addresses the conditions under which the enhancement of learner participation in the SGB can be sustained. Shangase (2013, 104) opines that there should be allowance given to co-researchers for views to be shared that are not going to be utilized against them. Furthermore, she claims that circumstances be formed so to now allow co-researchers to realize agonise consequences when they voice out serious or challenging views. This section of the study looks at the following conditions suitable for the enhancement of learner participation in decision making within the SGB: prejudice-free environments and participative and inclusive settings.

4.4.1 Prejudice-free environment

Having gone through the challenges and the components of the solution in the study, it is clear that adult governors in the SGB were, without any evidential basis, prejudiced against learner governors. Their prejudice was reliant on a number of factors that included their negative or uninformed perceptions about learners; issues of power, superiority, seniority and control; social constructs about learners as children; and cultural norms (cf 2.6.1.1).

Comments with regard to this section of the study were as follows:

Thato: Ho ba nyatsa ke ho itshenyetsa nako fela. E bile ke ho ba sebedisa ha bohloko because batlo tshaba le ho sebetsa. Taba fela ke ho shebana le hore SASA e reng and then re shape pere le bona. (Belittling them is just a waste of time. It will make them work uncontrollably and fearfully. The main point is to look at what SASA is saying and move forward.)

The co-researcher here echoes that it is a waste of time to belittle learner governors. It is also clear from the comment that the co-researcher wants learners to work comfortably with the rest of the SGB. In so doing, other members of the SGB should make it a point to eliminate all elements of prejudice. Elderly members in the SGB should refrain from regarding themselves as seniors, in as far as mental capacity and discourse are concerned. It is pivotal to note that the perceptions of elderly members in the SGB are fundamental to the challenges that learner governors have to face. Issues related to culture, power and the control of discourse are central to learner governor problems in the SGB. (cf 2.6.1.1).

Parry and Moran (1994, 48) in Smit and Oosthuizen (2011, 65) sustain that normally, a whole populace should get a combination of self-governing and instructive methods so that they can reduce limitations to democracy in educational spheres. According to this belief, it is recommended that an alteration in democratic insouciances is essential for certain school frontrunners and education administrators. On the other hand, Maharaj (2005, 59) contends that there are very high probabilities that qualified teachers, even though tolerant to the idea of amplified parent and learner participation, will be resilient to the notion of enabling untrained individuals with philosophies and expertise in order for them to have increased accessibility to authority on the managing of lessons and scholarship.

In order to understand deeply the effect of prejudice against learners in the SGB, members should reflect on how negatively their perceptions have been on the development of learners. Equally, members must align themselves to the stipulation of the policy that guides them. They must constantly look at the contents of SASA 84 of 1996 (cf 1.2). SASA will be there to guide and teach them all that they need in terms of governance. Their attitudes must not supersede the legislative obligations of SASA 84 of 1996.

The tide must also be turned against the social injustices of the past; thus, participation as an element of democracy must be upheld. The SGB, teachers, principals and officials from the DoE must be custodians of policy. They must make sure that policies, such as SASA are closely adhered to. Ignoring policy stipulations will only exacerbate already existing prejudice, ignorance and flawed perceptions.

The co-researchers have already made their points about the prejudice faced by learner governors. The team had already engaged in the challenges and came up with the components needed toward the enhancement of learner participation in decision making within the SGB (cf 2.6.1.4). Prime to the solutions were that the stipulations of SASA must be adhered to. The team also resolved that instead of nurturing negative attitudes and prejudging learners, they should be trained on how the SGB is run.

Itumeleng expressed some useful comments on the point.

Itumeleng: *Ha ba ka re thusa fela ka ho re kennyelltsa di decisoning tsa ho run sekolo re ka tswela pela. Ba re tsotelle jwalo ka batho. Re a utlwisisa hore re bana e bile re hlomphantho eo. Ba tla dula e le batswadi ba rona bao re ba hlomphang le ha re se re sebetsa le bona.* (They can help us only if they can include us in the decisions of the running of the school and in that way we can move forward. They must recognise us. We understand that they are our parents and we respect that.)

Reflecting on the comments of the co-researcher, it is evident that learners need affirmation. They feel abandoned and the only way they can feel better is during their involvement in the making of decisions at the school. One point that must not escape our notice is that learners represent the largest stakeholder group in the entire school community. Their exclusion through prejudice, from participating in the decisions of the SGB has far more

dire implications than meets the eye (cf 1.2). Such prejudice bars learners from taking decisions about how their future should be shaped in as far as their curricula and extra-curricular lives at the school are concerned.

Mabovula (2008, 15) asserts that educational decisions must mirror public discussions. Furthermore, Mncube (2005, np) argues that schools which eagerly open up spaces for students to deliberate and discourse are more democratic than their dictatorial counterparts. He posits that learners have to be given an equal chance to partake in critical decisions impacting the livelihood of their school.

The co-researcher raised the seminal point of respect. She contended that because they would be working with adult governors; they would respect them and consider them as their parents. Learners are willing to take a leading role in ensuring that their inclusion in the SGB does not remove the title of their elders as parents. They are willing to allow them to keep that status even though they are to work together in the SGB. What then should be expected is that parents should also ensure that the rights of learners as inclusive components of the SGB are respected. The prejudice of adult governors against learner participation in decision making in the SGB in itself, is disrespectful. It is disrespectful to the learners who elected the RCL; on the elected leaders themselves; and most importantly, on SASA 84 of 1996 as a policy upholding and driving forward the principles of a hard-earned democratic South Africa (cf 1.2).

It is therefore vital to note that the prejudice and attitudes of adult governors is a stumbling block to the inclusion of learners in decision making with the SGB. Adult governors should allow learners to exercise their right to represent other learners in the SGB, as it is their right as per the stipulations of SASA 84 of 1996. Respect for learners and policy must take equal precedence.

4.4.2 Participative and inclusive settings

One of the major principles of democracy is participation. As part of the incumbent guidelines that were to close the crack in the middle of segregation, social injustice and prejudice, SASA 84 1996 was formulated. It was through a policy document such as this that stakeholders in the education fraternity would get a chance to actively partake in the

activities that affect their daily lives in educational institutions to which they belong. SASA 84 of 1996 puts all stakeholders in the education arena together in the quest to build an education system that is democratic. Through SASA, parents, teachers, principals, learners and support staff are able to engage in discourse with the common goal of building a just, participative and open schooling environment (cf 2.1.4).

Owing to many aspects, school governance has been a phenomenon that is available to SGB members who possess a certain societal status. South African Schools Act specifies that “a school governing body must include entirely the participating groups in lively and answerable positions, inspire broad-mindedness, coherent dialogue and cooperative decision-making” (DoE 1996, 16). There are however, still a lot of challenges to overcome in the part of school governance (DoE 2004, vii), such as a deficiency of communication; rational thinking; inclusive democratic involvement; freedom of communication; equality; and individual privileges. Learners have been led to view the SGB as a committee where elderly members of school governance take decisions about how the school should operate. For learners, participation in the SGB is a privilege that they seldom get to realise.

The study addressed how learner participation can be enhanced in the daily activities of the SGB. Enhanced learner participation in this situation speak of “grownups functioning with pupils to create methods of guaranteeing that their opinions are caught and respected” Phaswana (2010, 105). Members of the forum interrogated the non-participatory chances given to learners in the SGB as a challenge faced by them. Solutions to that effect were equally explored and outlined. The study now addresses participative and inclusive settings as a condition towards the enhancement of learner participation in decision making within school governance.

Fletcher (2003, 2) in Mbovula (2008, 13) contends that in numerous US schools, learners’ participation merely amounts to ‘tokenism’, ‘decorations’, or as simply a ‘stamp of approval’, where one will discover only one student representative, instead of two or three among the school boards of 15-20 adults; none of these learners is given a vote in any matters pertaining to them (learners). On the contrary, a lot of teachers view them as problematic, or as one principal said, “groaning lumps” (Fletcher 2002, 2).

Comments made by co-researchers as to how participative and inclusive settings can contribute positively to the participation of learners of learners in the SGB are as follows:

Mpho: *Hore ba bue ba tshwanetse hore ba tsebe hore na ba reng. Ba ka se tswele pele ba bua empa ba sa tsebe hore re sebetsa jwang ka moo. Hape ke bana, bana le letswalo la ho bua hobane ho tletse batho ba baholo ka moo. tlamehile fela re ba hlabe ka dipotso ha re bona ba thotse. Re ba lead hore ba kgone ho bua. Ha se ha ngata motho a ka buang a sa tsebe hore a reng kapa a tshohile. Ha re ka ba etsa ba relax then batla relax. Ha nako e ntse eya ba tla tlwaela and then batla qala ba bua ka bo bona.* (For them to talk, they must know what to say. They cannot continue talking when they do not know how we operate in there. They are kids; they become scared to talk because there're older people in there. We must ask them questions when we see them silent. In that way we will be leading them to talk. It is not always that a person talks when they are clueless or fearful. If we make them relax then they will relax. They will get used to it in time.)

I, as co-researcher, agree that learners cannot just talk without basic knowledge of the operations of the SGB. They are silent because they do not know what to say. It is true that the non-participation of learners is due to their lack of knowledge of the operations of the SGB. Discourse can be affected by a wide range of aspects, including the basic knowledge of jargon used in a specific setting. If learners are not informed of the basic language terminologies used in SGB meetings, they become reluctant to comment. It may be only after a series of meetings that such learners can grasp the essence and the direction of the discussion. It is therefore important that learners are equipped with the linguistic operations of the SGB. This will ease their understanding and subsequently lead to their active participation.

It is only through engaging in deliberations with other stakeholders that learners may feel an integral part of the SGB. Their voice should also be heard through discourse (cf 2.5.2). Elster (1998, np) in Mabovula (2008, 90) expand on the concept of deliberative democratic participation. Elster argues that the notion contains cooperative decision making with the involvement of all those who will be affected by the decision or their representatives. This is the democratic part. In addition, all should decide that it contains decision making by means of points of view presented by and to members who are dedicated to the values of reasonableness and neutrality: this is the deliberative part. These characteristics are slightly

rough, but I trust they capture the intersection of the extensions reasonably well (Elster 1998, 9).

In relation to deliberative democratic participation, Mabovula (2008, 91) contends that deliberate democracy rests on arguments, not only in the sense that it survives through argument, but also in the logic that it must be justified by argument. At the same time, the aforementioned author admits the point that it may not be noticeable that arguing is the finest technique of making collective decisions. In his argument he is reinforced by theorists, such as Gargarella (1998) and Fearon (1998) who offer arguments in favour of dialogue. They state that dialogue can be good because it discloses isolated information; decreases or overcomes the influence of restricted rationality; makes for healthier decisions in terms of distributive justice; makes for a greater agreement; and advances the moral or intellectual qualities of the members (Mabovula 2008, 91-92).

A co-researcher also commented that learners are afraid to talk because *“ho tletse batho ba baholo ka moo”* or “there are older people in there”. In an African cultural setting, it is a social construct that children are minors and the opinions of elders will always be uppermost. Age, levels of education, social status and achievements accomplished by other members of the SGB make it very difficult for learners to actively participate (cf 2.6.1.4 (a)). In her research of teacher perceptions of school governing bodies, Van Wyk (2004) in Maharaj (2005, 58) contends that parents in wealthy zones apply extra authority in school governing bodies than teachers, this due to their respective positions they hold in their communities. Nevertheless, a contrary view might be correct in low socio-economic settings wherein teachers and principals put their trust profoundly on their rank in the school. Within such settings, they are usually the most extremely trained individuals in the society and thus exercise superior influence in school governing bodies. The construct of the society about learners being minors makes it too complex for them to question the ideas of others. Moreover, learners tend to believe that their inputs may either be out of context or ill-informed. I believe that adult governors should include learners by asking them questions that will lead them to contribute to the discussion. That would be a sound step towards the creation of a participative and inclusive setting for learners (cf 2.6.1.4 (b)). As governors who have amassed a significant amount of knowledge and experience in school governance, learners will find them accommodating if governors voluntarily include them in

their discussion. Learners will feel that their inputs are valued and therefore find it easy to participate.

Junior: Ditaba tseo re buang ka tsona di tlameha e be tseo ba di utlwisisang. Ha ebe ba sa utlwisisi re tlameha re ba etse hore ba understand. Ke nnete hore bona ba sa hloka ho ithuta ntho tse pedi kapa tse tharo so ho tla nka nako hore ba understand. Mare jwale wa Utlwa ha ba sa itlwisise le teng ha hona ka mokgwa oo ba ka buang ka teng. (We must talk about what they understand. If they do not understand we must make them to. It is true that they still need to learn a thing or two and that will take them time. But you will have understood that they cannot comment if they do not understand anything.)

A co-researcher commented that learners sit in meetings of the SGB and cannot follow because they do not understand what is being discussed. Furthermore, they, as adult governors, must assist learners to understand such issues (cf 2.6.1.5 (b)). This comment of the co-researcher is that of a person willing to take charge of learner assistance towards the realisation of participative and actively inclusive settings in the SGB. It is the responsibility of elderly members to welcome learners and guide them in the SGB. Since participatory chances have been denied by such governors, it then becomes their responsibility to make sure that learners are accommodated in the future (cf 1.2). Involvement broadens learners' understanding, advances applied thinking abilities, and encourages a better comprehension of values of the school (Phaswana. 2010, 105).

It should now be noted that participatory and inclusive settings are essential for learners in the quest to enhance their participation in the making of decisions within SGBs. Learners must be given sufficient knowledge about the operations of the SGB to assist them in feeling confident to participate in SGB meetings. Equally, adult governors should lead learners to offer their opinions in meetings, warmly accommodating them and giving them space to question and talk about issues under discussion.

4.4.3 Shared responsibilities

Learners are the future leaders of South Africa. It is therefore essential that their current activities act as a preparatory investment in the future. To prepare them, learners should be given roles that will complement their future aspirations, as well as roles that will assist

them to assimilate knowledge on how things are handled in leadership positions. The SGB deals with a wide range of projects which are different in size and purpose. Such projects may provide learners with the opportunity to explore and acquire skills that they will use for themselves and their constituencies (cf 2.6.1.5 (b)). Some writers have suggested that there is a need for role clarification regarding SGBs (Mabusela 2016, 22); thus, it becomes very difficult to decide who is responsible for a certain project in the SGB. All school governors must recognise what their responsibilities are and how such duties fit in with the responsibilities of the principal (DoE, 1996(a): 14). Many of the members are also occupied either in their daily jobs or personal businesses. The principal and the teachers are employed at the school on a full-time basis. Their responsibilities related to the SGB should therefore not clash with their daily schedule of teaching and learning. Learners are equally engaged in activities related to learning and extra-curricular activities on an intensive scale. This applies to all other members of the SGB; therefore, it is pivotal to allocate responsibilities carefully when the need arises.

The study found it necessary to probe and explore intensively how sharing responsibilities may be a fitting condition in the enhancement of learner participation in decision making in the SGB. Comments to that effect were as follows:

Itumeleng: Re tlamehile re ke re tlohelwe re lead tse ding tsa dintho. E be rona re etsang dintho ho tloha ha di qala ho fihlella ha di fela. Kgale re bo fundraising and then bana batla ka private. Ene e bile success. Ke ntho tseo re kgonang ho di etsa ka bo rona tseo. (We must be left to do things on our own. We must be allowed to do things from the beginning to the end. We have had fundraising projects before, and they were successful. They are things that we can do on our own.)

The essence of the comment of the co-researcher is that learners are able to execute certain projects on their own. No matter how small the project is, it gives them a sense of fulfilment to know that they are able to instigate and successfully execute a project (cf 1.2). It is important however, to make sure that responsibilities given to anyone in the SGB are within the scope of their respective portfolios. Other members in the SGB should also assign certain responsibilities to learners. They should not always volunteer to take charge of certain projects (cf 2.6.1.5 (c)). If they are suggested by one of the members, they will feel trusted and therefore give the project their full and undivided attention.

It is also very important that learners be informed of the policies that govern the SGB, so that they will not contravene any clause of any policy when they execute the responsibilities given to them. For instance, learners should be informed of the school's finance policy before they engage on any fundraising activities. They can successfully complete their project only if they are within the confines of such a policy.

Thato: Hona le ntho tseo re ka ba fang hore ba di etse hore re ba hodise jwalo ka bana ba batho ba batsho. Baithute ba ntse ba ya pele. Ha nako le motsotso di fihla batla ba reg. (There are things that we can give them to do. We must grow them as black children. They will learn along the way and when the time comes they will be alright.)

The comment of Thato is directly aligned with the views of Itumeleng that learners should be given responsibilities so that they can grow. The comment responds to an African proverb which says: 'It takes child to raise a village'. As elders in the community, adult governors are willing to assist with giving learners certain responsibilities that will provide them with enough experience. As the saying goes, 'experience is the best teacher'. When given responsibilities, learners will be able to gather enough experience for themselves and the school community from which they come. Through sharing responsibilities with learners, learners will be in a better position to amass experience that will allow them to be actively participative in the activities of the SGB. Members should give learners responsibilities and also allow them to volunteer to carry out such activities, thus allowing them to grow personally and professionally.

4.5 THREATS TO ENHANCEMENT OF LEARNER PARTICIPATION IN THE SGB

The previous section of the study attempted to interrogate the conditions suitable for the enhancement of learner participation in the SGB. This section focuses on the elements that might threaten the participation of learners.

The nature of the study and its objectives require the active involvement of all stakeholders. It requires such stakeholders to act within the confines of their portfolios, policies and cultural practices of the societies from which they emanate. The fact that it involves personal opinions and observations renders it open to a variety of threats. Even though they are part

of the same school community, people may have a variety of views. Their engagement and decision-making patterns may vary depending on the frame of reference they use during engagements.

4.5.1 Lack of Commitment of adult governors to solutions

It is crucial to highlight that to adult governors; learners will always remain children (cf 2.6.1.1). The view is deeply embedded in the social construction of thought cultivated by our societies. Unfortunately, our black societies regard children as not sufficiently knowledgeable. This view is supported by Thato's statement:

Ke dumetse klaar nna hore re a ba kenya bana. Empa ntho tse ding batla di tlohella rona jwalo ka baetapele. Re ka tloha ra bua ka ntho tse sensitive mona be ba lo di jwetsa chomi tsa bona. (I have already agreed that learners should be part of the SGB. But certain things will have to be done by us as leaders. We might talk about sensitive things and they will tell their friends.)

The comment of the above co-researcher takes the study back to its fundamental problem: the negative attitudes of adult governors about learners. Even though the co-researcher agrees that she is in concurrence with the participation of learners, she remains adamant that certain aspects of governance should be left to the adult governors. The comment that "certain things must be done by us as leaders" threatens the elimination of the prejudiced views of adult governors. Mncube (2013, 5) upholds that according to SASA, learner members must be observed whole and valid memberships of school governing bodies; nonetheless, learners are repeatedly not given all opportunities to contribute during the creation of critical decisions by the grownup associates in school governance, either directly or otherwise.

It is imperative to note that as part of the resolutions, it was highlighted that the participation of learners should be guided by the stipulations of SASA 84 of 1996. SASA is observed as an instrument intended at, amongst other things, equalising historical exclusions and to facilitate the essential change to reinforce the representation principles and involvement in both the school environments and the republic (Karlsen, 1999) in Mncube (2013, 3). The comment of the co-researcher disregards such a resolution, by saying that learner

participation will remain a prerogative of adult governors (cf 2.6.1.6 (a)). In an African cultural setting, altering the thinking patterns of adult governors will require sustained re-education (cf 2.6.1.6 (a)).

The comment of the co-researcher that learners will tell their friends after discussions of sensitive matters also brings about an element of mistrust. It implies that learners cannot be trusted with information. If such a perception persists, learners will therefore always be side-lined even beyond the scope this study.

Van Dijk (1995, 353) purports that in most circumstances, power and supremacy are related with particular social spheres (politics, media, law, education, science, etc.); their professional elites and organisations; and the rules and practices that formulate the background of the daily discursive reproduction of power in such spheres and organisations. Based on the view of Van Dijk, it is therefore possible that the attitudes of adult governors may recur beyond the conclusion of this study. Such attitudes may persist through the need for power by professional elites who emanate from educational institutions, such as a school.

4.5.2 Infrequent and Inefficiency Training

There is a large gap that exists between the term of office of learners in the RCL and that of the SGB. In a normal situation, the SGB is trained only once after they have been elected into office (cf 2.6.1.3). Subsequent training is provided if the need arises. On the other hand, learners have a one-year term of office. The latter statement says that there is a strong possibility that a learner governor may finish a term of office in the SGB without being trained on any aspect. This is supported by the view of Itumeleng in below:

Ha e sale ke fihla RCL ha ho sobe le training. (Since I came to be on the RCL there has not been any form of training provided.)

This co-researcher was on the brink of exiting office when this study was conducted. The comment therefore says that the learner governor left office as she came. It will therefore be very difficult for learners to become fully capacitated on aspects that relate to school governance if no training is provided for them. Thus, a closer look needs to be taken

of how learners can be involved in training, so as to make sure that their participation in the activities of the SGB is maximised (cf 2.6.1.6 (b)). As a stepping-stone towards the realisation of participatory and inclusive school governance, learners need to be trained as they assume office. This then says that basic training should also be provided at the beginning of each RCL term. Aspects that are addressed in such training should closely relate to those that the SGB is trained for, during the advent of their term of office. The training will boost the confidence of learners in as far as participation is concerned. It will also eliminate the fear of learners from failing to follow the correct procedures and protocol.

Itumeleng furthermore comments:

Re itlhokela fela guidance hore na dintho di etswa neng jwang. Jwale wa utlwa re tla fetoha stupid ha batho ba ntse ba bua ka ntho tseo ba dirutuwe be re batla ho kena re bua le rona.
(We only need guidance on how things are done. We may present ourselves as stupid when we want to make inputs when people talk about things that they have been taught.)

The comment of the co-researcher that “We may present ourselves as stupid when we want to make inputs when people talk about things that they have been taught” confirms the already existing challenge that learners do not participate because they do not know what to say and when to say things. It becomes threatening that if learners do not get to be timeously and sufficiently trained, participation will remain elusive (cf 2.6.1.6 (b)).

4.5.3 Lack of trust and belief

Issues related to age, maturity, sexuality and educational levels make it very difficult for learners to be trusted as competent beings in the SGB. Adult governors still take learners as minors who are not in any way able to participate in issues related to governance (cf 2.6.1.6 (c)). They find school governance to be a responsibility that requires a certain level of maturity, age and educational level. All learners and associates at a school have the democratic privilege to due process and to contribute in decision making about substances affecting them at the school (cf 1.2). They also possess privilege to have their opinions listened to around these issues (Mbovula 2008, 15). The elements of power, control and superiority also make it very difficult for learners to be trusted. All members in the SGB are in one way or another, senior to learners. The principal and the teacher are educationally

senior, and the parents are seniors by virtue of their being parents to such learners. It therefore becomes a daunting task for learners to be trusted with taking decisions in an area as vast as the governance of the school.

Mpho expressed interesting sentiments in relation to this section of the study.

Mpho: Re ile ra tshepa bona hore ba sebetsane le issue ya wi-fi. E qadile e sebetsa hantle, empa ha nake e ntse eya ke ha everything e senyeha. Le bona ba le tjena ba thusa chomi tsa bona ka ho senya ntho tse ntle. Ke ka hoo re ileng ra e nka ra re teacher wa CAT a e monitor. (We trusted them with the wi-fi system. It started well but everything collapsed as time went by. They assist their friends with ruining good things here at the school. We ended up giving the wi-fi responsibility to the teacher responsible for CAT.)

It is interesting to note that there was a point where learners were given the opportunity to lead a project. It however, it is sad that such a project was taken away from learners because of their inability to correctly carry it through, although it must be said that the decision taken by the school was rather judgemental instead of being corrective. Because of a mistake of commitment, learners were not afforded an opportunity to correct their mistake. The school did not have trust in them that they would be able carry out the project and so they took it away. The action of the school may have killed the confidence of the learners in dealing with projects awarded to them by the SGB. It says to them that they are incompetent and therefore execute projects successfully. Mncube (2013, 4) explains that the SGB duties, which pupils are part of, are visibly specified in South African School's Act. Roles contain, amongst other things endorsing the employment of teachers and non-academic workforce; determining the policy for the language used at the school; regulating the usage of and preserving school belongings; and deciding school payments. As associates in the SGB, learner members are equally expected to partake keenly in the performance of the roles, which, in most circumstances, has not certainly been the situation.

4.6 EVIDENCE THAT THE STRATEGY IS WORKING

4.6.1 Cooperative SGB settings

The study has already highlighted the how the attitudes of adult governors have impacted negatively on the participation of pupils in the making of decisions in the SGB. According to Sithole (1998, 107) in Mabovula (2008, 12) democratic governance of schools stresses that conclusions should be founded on consultation, partnership, collaboration, corporation, shared trust and the involvement of all impacted people in the school's society. Encouraging evidence that shows that adult governors are willing to cooperate and make learner participation in decision-making within the SGB a success.

The engagement on the cooperative SGB setting unfolded as follows:

Junior: Ha re ka sebedisana mmoho le bona re ka bona phaphang watseba sir. Hape ke bona ba ka hara sekolo ka nako tsohle. E bile ba bangata le ho re feta. So ho sebedisana le bona ho ka re imolla mona le mane ka spane sa rona. (If we could work with them we would see a difference. They are always at school and they are more than we are. Working with them can off-load certain duties for us here and there.)

The comment of the co-researcher is evidence that adult governors have realised that learner participation in the SGB may be of significant contribution to the school. This says that they have realised that not having included learners in decision making in the SGB has had negative implications for the operations of the SGB. The co-researcher also contends that the participation of learners will lighten some of their duties. Learner participation will impart knowledge to them and give them experience on how things are done. Mabovula (2005, 15) states that involvement in education has been argued by researchers who trust that if many people are involved in school governing bodies, democracy would be enhanced and impartiality in schools would be guaranteed.

Itumeleng: Rona re open hore re ka sebetsa le bona ka hara SGB. Ke ntho eo re e hlokanjwalo ka bana ba sekolo. Ha ba re fe monyetla wa hore re ithute and then re kgone ho etsa difference eo sekolo se e hlokanjwalo. Re ready ho ka etsa difference eo. (We are open to

working with them in the SGB. It is what we need as the school learners. Let them give us the opportunity and then we will make the difference that the school needs. We are ready to make that difference.)

The constant usage of the pronoun “them” by the learner governor in reference to adult governors is an obvious example that there has been a big gap between learners and the adults on the SGB. Even though they are supposed to have been members of one team, there is a very blatant attitude of ‘us versus them’. The comment of the co-researcher, however, makes it clear that they are willing to co-operate fully if they are given a chance. The comment that “We are ready to make a difference” demonstrates that learners are eager to work with other members in the SGB to make a difference.

4.6.2 Improvement of learner capacity

Learner levels of capacity have been viewed very negatively by adult governors in the SGB and by the learners themselves. Their incapacity due to lack of training opportunities provided to them has been the chief argument throughout this study. Their lack of participation has been attributed to their not being given sufficient and relevant training pertaining to the how the SGB operates, its mission, vision and the purpose of its existence (cf 2.6.1.7 9 (c)).

Discussions with regard to the improvement of learner capacity were as follows:

Thato: Ha ba rutwe hore ho sebetswa jwang ntate Dumako. Ha e no ba ntho ya letsatsi le i one. E tla nka nako empa re tla fihlella toro ya rona. Ha fela ba ka fumana knowledge ya hore ho sebetswa jwang batla loka. (Let them be taught how things are done; it will not be done overnight but we will get there. Only if they can get knowledge of how things are done, will they be fine.)

The comment of the co-researcher confirms that learners require training and that as other members of the SGB, they are willing to make sure that learners get such training. The co-researcher states that it will not take a short period to complete but ultimately it will happen. The will of the co-researcher surpasses the challenge that is faced by learners. As the saying goes, “where there’s a will, there’s a way”.

4.6.3 Allowance of learners to participate

The agreement of elderly members to give learners enough training pertaining to how the SGB is run is a stepping-stone towards the realisation of the objectives of this study. What is more important is how learners will be allowed to participate? Learners are not afforded equivalent chances to partake with other members in decision making in school governance (Mabovula 2008, 12). Discussions pertaining to this section on the comment that was made by Thato, follow.

Ke a phetha hape kere ha ba nywe dikomiting tsa sekolo tse fapaneng. Ba bapale part ya bona ho ya ka the way ho sebetswang ka teng. (I repeat that they must be given a chance to participate in different school committees. They must play their part according to how things are done.)

Again:

Itumeleng: Ha ba ka re fa chance ya ho participate ka bolokolohi re tla kgona ho etsa ntho tse smart. Re itlhokela fela training le tokoloho hotswa ho bona and then re tla kgona ho participate ka tsela e hantle. (If they would give us a chance to participate freely, then we can work beautifully; we just need training and freedom from them so that we can participate in the correct way.)

Comments from both co-researchers are evidence that learner participation requires only that learners be allowed to work together with other members in the SGB. Other members will therefore have to eliminate their prejudiced views about learners (cf 2.6.1.7 (c)). Their openness and dedication to learner participation may bring about great changes to the school. Mncube (2013, 2) opines that there exists evidence that powerfully proposes that giving an ear to learners, promoting their contribution, and affording them additional authority and accountability, can improve school efficiency and enable school development, together with contributing to the expansion of added democratic ideals.

The comment of Itumeleng that they need training and freedom from adult governors is very interesting to note. It suggests that once learners are unshackled from beliefs and attitudes

that they cannot make meaningful contributions because they are minors, will they be able to participate positively towards the betterment of their school.

4.7 CONCLUSION

The current dealt with data analysis, interpretation and the presentation of results and findings on strategies for the enhancement of learner participation in decision-making within school governing bodies. Challenges impacting negatively on the enhancement of the participation of learners in decision-making were explored and engaged in with co-researchers. The SGB had developed a forum of representatives of stakeholders present in the SGB. The forum engaged further on the components of a solution towards the realisation of the objectives of the study. Such components were identified to find solutions to the problem of the study. Solutions to the study were inclusive and were to be overseen by all members in the SGB.

After the engagements on the components of the solution to the problem of the study, conditions conducive to the enhancement of learner participation in the SGB were engaged in and finalised. The study equally addressed threats against the enhancement of learner participation in decision making in the SGB. Evidence that the study would be successful was also provided by the forum. The last chapter of the study looks at the findings and recommendations for the enhancement of learner participation in decision making within the SGB.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This concluding chapter of the research gives an outline of the summary of all the previous chapters by exploring the challenges which led to the requirement of enhanced learner participation in the making of decisions within the SGB. The fundamental aim of this research was to enhance learner participation in the SGBs in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality. The main objectives of this research as addressed by this chapter shall inform the structure of the study.

This chapter will give the main objectives which informed the structure of the study; a summary of the conceptualisation and a review of literature; the design of the research and its methodology; and will present a data analysis and findings. Lastly, the chapter will make recommendations, present conclusions and make inferences for future research, as well as highlighting important points and addressing unanswered questions.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE BACKGROUND, PROBLEM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This segment covers a summary of the background, statement of the problem and the question and sub-questions of the research.

5.2.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Despite the stipulation of SASA 84 of 1996 about the involvement of pupils in the daily operations of school governing bodies, many school governors still ignore their involvement. Many school governors believe that learners are not experienced enough to be able to operate with the magnitude of issues of school governance. Issues of age, maturity, level of education and culture are central to such exclusion of learners. It becomes very difficult for students to represent their constituency in the SGB because of the attitudes of adult governors about learners and their participation. Learners in schools are barred from participating because they are perceived to be novices in issues of governance. Other members of the SGB view learner governors

as an entity that exists outside the confines of the team because of perceptions that they have about them.

5.2.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

This study set out to enhance learner participation in decision making within the SGB. The main argument of the study is that learners are not included in the making of decisions within school governing bodies, thus making it hard for them to actively exercise their democratic right of actively participating in the SGB. Adult governors purposefully exclude learners from contribution in decision-making within SGBs because of their sensitivities about learners and their own social status.

Challenges to the study are a blend of problems that block democratic learner participation in the SGB. The deficiency of training on issues related to the running of the SGB plays a pivotal part in the full participation of learners in the making of decisions within SGBs. Issues of power, control, seniority and superiority are also central to the problem.

5.2.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

Applicable to the study was this research question:

How do we actively involve learners in decision making within SGBs?

5.2.4 THE AIM OF THE STUDY

In response to the research question above, this research aimed at suggesting ways of enhancing learner participation within the school governing bodies. So as to realize the aim of the research, the following research objectives had to be developed.

5.2.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following were the objectives addressed by this study:

1. To highlight the challenges faced by learner governors pertaining to their involvement in School Governing Bodies.
2. To identify and discuss the components for enhancement of the solution.
3. To determine the conditions relevant for the enhancement of learner participation in the SGB.

4. To identify possible threats to enhancement of learner participation in the SGB.
5. To provide the evidence that the strategy is working.

5.3 FACTUAL FINDINGS ON THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This sub-section discourses the findings of each of the objectives of this research.

5.3.1 Challenges faced by learner governors

Learners have not been included in participation in the SGB because of the perceptions of adult governors about them. Reflecting on the findings of this research, a conclusion can be made that they are sidelined because adult governors believe that they are not knowledgeable about dealing with issues on the level of school governance (cf 4.3.3.1). They believe that learners are just children who should be told what to do, without having to engage in discourse. It is also very difficult for learners to participate because they are not trained on how the SGB operates. Fundamentally, they are not trained on their duties and responsibilities in the RCL office, so it becomes difficult for them to transition to a higher level of school governance. They also do not participate because they do not know when and how to say and do things. Issues of power and control deny learners the ability to make inputs towards the betterment of their educational institutions. Adult governors believe that they can control learners because they are socially identified as minors (cf 4.4.1). It can therefore be concluded that if learners are adequately trained, they can fully participate in the activities of the SGB without being doubtful of what and when to say or do certain things. Their training must include, inter alia, the content of SASA 84 of 1996, the roles and responsibilities of members of the school governing body, and the jurisdiction under which the SGB operates. Aspects, such as jargon and meeting procedures should also not be overlooked during such training sessions.

5.3.2 Components of the enhancement of learner participation in the SGB

In order to reach a stage where learner participation in the SGB is enhanced, adherence to the stipulations of SASA 84 of 1996 have to be taken into account. Adult governors must change their attitudes and start treating learners as required. Learners must be given opportunities to participate in the SGB by giving them responsibilities that they are supposed to execute (cf 4.4.3). This says that learners should have activities to carry out in the SGB. They should not be members who wait for activities

to be carried out by others, while they themselves are not doing anything. Responsibilities given to them should not clash with their daily school programme. The primary reason for learners to be at school is to learn; they therefore have to be afforded the opportunity to do this without interference. They should be assigned responsibilities that they can undertake outside their school time or on weekends. In addition, learners must be given a chance to partake in different committees of school governance and management. They should also be given the opportunity to lead such committees. For holistic learner development, committees, such as Bereavement, Learning, Teaching and Support Material (LTSM), and Sports amongst others, should give learners an opportunity to be an integral and active part of the SGB, thus ensuring that learner participation is not limited to just the governance of the school.

5.3.3 Conditions conducive to enhancement of learner participation in the SGB

The team was very open about the conditions under which the objectives of the study may be realised. School governing bodies have to be all-embracing and free from prejudice. Members of the SGB emanate from a dichotomy of spheres in as far as their individual lives are concerned. If prejudice is eliminated, particularly against learners, a participative and inclusive governance situation will result. Prejudice, in this context, means excluding learners on the basis that they are minors who lack knowledge about SGB issues. Participative and inclusive environments are essential for the maximum participation of learners. If they are given the attention they deserve, they become confident about engaging with issues. Their being sidelined, implies that they are not worthy of being on the SGB and this denigrates their morale and degrades their self-confidence. The SGB should also share its responsibilities among members, with learners being given tasks to perform and being monitored. They should be commended for doing well and be corrected fairly where necessary.

5.3.4 Threats to enhancement of learner participation in the SGB

Through engagements with members, it was worrying to realize there is a possibility that other members may not adhere to the solutions provided by the study (cf 4.5.1). The social construct on the view of learners as minors remains a prime threat. The content, its delivery and the frequency of training sessions for learners are equally threatening, as well as the fact that learners are not trained upon assuming their

positions as both RCL and SGB members. Moreover, members of the SGB are too reliant upon departmental officials to train learners; they do not take it upon themselves to make sure that learners are suitable to undertake their duties. Insufficient trust and belief may also hinder the realisation of the objectives of the study. Adult governors do not trust learners as mature individuals with the capacity to engage with them. This lack of trust may still see learners facing the same challenges beyond the scope of this research.

5.3.5 Indicators for success for the enhancement of learner participation in the SGB

Adult governors agreed that there is a necessity for the participation of learners in the SGB (cf 4.6.3). They confirm that learners are a big stakeholder group in the school and their active contribution will have fruitful results. They agree that learners should be involved so that they act as a link between school governance and other learners. Learner governors will then expedite the processes of communication between governors and the entire learner population. Learners will be informed on time about the plans of the SGB and relations will be harnessed. Learners should also be given training that will assist them to fully contribute in the activities of the SGB. The quest of their involvement will not be a task to be performed overnight, but it is highly possible to attain over time.

5.4 LESSONS FROM THE FINDINGS

From the findings of this study, there are a few lessons that were learnt and will be presented in this section. This presentation will follow the same course as the one on findings, which was founded on the five objectives of the research.

The initial lesson that we learn from the study is that the challenges applicable to the study are prime to the non-participation of learners in the SGB. Such challenges may be linked to a wide variety of aspects (cf 2.6.1). Even though there are many challenges to the study, it is essential to note the attitudes of adult governors as a major challenge. We learn that elderly governor's attitudes bar the participation of learners in the SGB. These attitudes make it difficult for learners to feel part of the

governing body, thereby making it difficult for learners to be given sufficient participatory chances in the SGB. From chapter 4, we learn that adult governors have the misconception of learners being ignorant and uninformed. Adult governors possess the notion that learners will remain learners and are not competent to deal with the activities of SGBs. Issues of power and control also are also central to the challenges faced by learner governors. There are teachers who choose pupils to be in the RCL, thus rendering the practice undemocratic. This then makes it easy for such teachers to control what such learners can say or do in the both the SGB and the RCL respectively. If adult SGB members could align all the operations of the school governing body with SASA 84 of 1996 then things could work out better for the learner governors.

The second lesson of the study emanates from the components of the solution to the study. We learnt from such components that it is crucial to acknowledge learners as equal associates in the process of enhancing their involvement in the SGB (cf 2.6.1.4). We learn from the study that learner participation in the SGB is not simply a policy on paper but should be adhered to in practice (cf 1.2). Learners are not taken as equal partners in their own education but rather as recipients of instructions from other members. It is essential not to exclude them from participatory processes because they are knowledgeable beings who require opportunities to participate so that their potential may be realised. Components of the study teach us that it is only through intensive and thorough training that learners can confidently participate. We learnt that learners do not always participate in meetings because they lack the basic knowledge of how the SGB operates. Furthermore, they are not familiar with the language used in meetings and they are not informed of proper meeting procedures. Their inclusion in various school committees on governance and management levels may also boost their confidence to participate. This will then mean that learners are wholly developed. They may, if given a chance, also be allowed to lead some of these committees.

The third lesson of the findings of the study emanates from the conditions that are suitable for the enhancement of learner participation in the making of decisions within the SGB. We learnt that prejudiced SGB settings are detrimental to learner participation and if these could be changed, significant transformation will be realised. We learnt that leaving learners on the periphery only exacerbates the already existing problem of non-inclusion in SGBs. The fourth lesson was that even the social construct

of learners being minors may be detrimental to the realisation of the objectives of the study. If learners are not adequately and frequently trained on aspects related to the SGB operations, it might not be possible for the implementation of the solutions of the study to take shape.

The last lesson, lesson number 5, was that members are willing to make a success of their SGB as a result of this study. They are willing to make sure that learners are keenly involved in the activities of the SGB. Learners themselves are eager to learn more and consequently contribute positively where necessary. The learner governor in the SGB makes it very clear that they are willing to take part only if such an opportunity is presented to them. If they are provided with chances to participate and training in how to participate, a very successful story will be told from this study.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY FOR ENHANCEMENT OF LEARNER PARTICIPATION

For the objectives of the study to be fulfilled, all stakeholders involved in the SGB have to make them happen. It is dependent on all members to make sure that the challenges faced by learner governors are fully addressed. Members in the SGB have a variety of experiences pertaining to the challenges faced by learners in the SGB. It is therefore essential that such experiences are brought to assist with the challenges faced by the study. It is essential that members who were not part of the forum, assist with the implementation of the solutions of the study. The entire school community is obligated to make sure that justice and fairness prevail in the quest to enhancing learner participation in decision making within the SGB. As a school, together with officials from the DoE and community leaders, it is essential that SASA 84 is upheld and respected.

It must be equally highlighted that learner participation in the SGB is a policy issue and should thus be respected. Learner participation must not be prevented by individual perceptions. Settings under which the SGB operates must be free from prejudice. Learners must also be taken as knowledgeable beings who can contribute meaningfully to discourse and ultimately their school environment.

- Altering perceptions of adult governors

This is very challenging as it deals with altering the mindset of adult governors. However, for the purpose of harmonious relationships, inclusivity, the advancement of the school's interests and respect for policy, it is essential that the perceptions of adult governors be altered. It has come to light in this study that the attitudes of adult governors are prime to learners' exclusion from SGBs. It is therefore important that adult governors relinquish such a mindset, if the enhancement of learner participation in the making of decisions is to be a reality.

- Provision of training

It is essential that the provision of training as a way of enhancing learner participation in decision making within the SGB be an undertaking that is sensitively treated. Learners fail to participate in the SGB because they are not informed of its operations. They are left to become silent because they do not understand the basics, such as jargon and meeting procedures. As with other members of the SGB, learners should be given intensive training that they can implement to advance the interests of their respective portfolios. The frequency and the content of such training should also be aligned with that received by other members.

- Provision of participatory chances

SGBs are entities where different stakeholder groups are expected to engage in discourse to find solutions and direction on how the school can best be run. Unfortunately for learners, it has become a very daunting task for them to participate. Their non-participation is solely attributed to their status as minors. If they are encouraged to participate, their confidence is boosted, morale rejuvenated and they acquire skills that may be useful to them in the future. Other members in the SGB should also lead learners to participate by asking them questions where necessary. Adult governors should also include learners in school committees so as to enable them to participate entirely in their education and if possible, be given opportunities to lead some of those committees.

5.6 SUMMARY OF STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING LEARNER PARTICIPATION IN THE SGB

The forum was very direct with regard to how the challenges related to the study were to be handled. The challenges were deeply rooted in the exercise of power and control

in the SGB. The co-researchers, as a community, engaged in discourse that was to deal with instances of social injustice. The community was to emancipate itself from the scenario of power, control and social injustice. Throughout the course of the study, the co-researchers took it upon themselves to unshackle the chains of oppression and segregation which were identified by the study.

The first step was to identify the problems facing learners in the SGB. This general problem was broken down into the following specific problems:

- Attitudes of adult governors towards learners;
- Insufficient participatory chances given to learners; and
- Lack of capacity building for learners.

From the challenges of the study, the forum came up with solutions to assist with remedying the problem at hand. Such solutions were presented in the study as components of the solution to the study. They are as follows:

- Change in perceptions of adult governors;
- Provision of participatory chances; and
- Empowering and capacitating learners.

The components of the solution to the challenges of the study prompted the identification of the conditions under which study objectives might be realised. The forum decided on the following conditions:

- Prejudice free environments;
- Participative and inclusive settings; and
- Shared responsibilities.

As with other studies of this nature, it was obvious that there would be aspects that would threaten the realisation of the objectives of this study. The forum came to a decision that the following elements might hinder the implementation of the results of the study:

- Commitment of adult governors to solutions;
- Frequency of training sessions; and

- Lack of trust and belief.

Based on how the engagements unfolded during discussions, we had to come to a conclusive decision of interrogating the successful prospects of the study. As a forum, we had to look at the possibilities, in terms of evidence, concerning the success of this study. The following evidence was presented:

- Co-operative SGB settings;
- Improvement of learner capacity; and
- Allowance of learners to participate.

The above is a summary of the study on enhancing learner participation in decision making in the SGB, which was based on the guidelines of PAR and CER.

5.7 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This segment deals with the implications of the study. It highlights the implications for future research and for practice respectively.

5.7.1 Implications for Future Research

The participation of learners in SGBs is an essential part of democracy and should be treated as such. Learners as human beings have the need to contribute towards their education. They have a basic human right of access to education institutions of their choice and thus a right to play a part in how their education is given to them. Their exclusion from SGBs therefore says that they are not able to raise their voice regarding how their education and subsequently their future should be shaped.

All members involved in education take part in making sure that learners are wholly involved in the structuring of their education. It should be highlighted that developing a learner to be a fully-grown knowledgeable citizen is not only reliant on the amount of work they are able to pass in the classroom. They should also be modelled into becoming leaders and active participants of democracy in our country. They should be taught the democratic principles that directly or indirectly affect them.

5.7.2 Implications for Practice

This study aimed at enhancing learner participation in the SGB. In doing so, the study aimed to actively engage members of a school community in discourse, in a quest to collaboratively remedy the existing problem in the very same community.

Analysing how the study unfolded, it is evident that through collaboration in discourse, a measure of success for the enhancement of learner participation in the SGB was reached. Members of a forum formed during the course of the research were able to participate in a collaborative quest for the realisation of a just and equitable society.

PAR as method used in the study was an excellent vehicle towards collaborating and engaging discourse situations. Through PAR, co-researchers had a chance to interrogate their actions and those of others. The duration of the study was discursive and engaging in nature. Members of the forum were in a position to relate their experiences and subsequently transform them into solutions in the study.

All members of the forum, including learners, were for once in a discourse situation that did not segregate, suppress and oppress others based on their social status. Members were able to express their raw, unadulterated information about their situation at the school. Irrespective of levels of education, age and maturity, members of the group were in a position to be candid about their interpretations without fear, favour or prejudice.

From the proceedings of this study, it was evident to all members of the team that collaborative and active engagements are able to work. This is exactly what is needed to adhere to the objectives of this study. Collaborative and cooperative settings of the research also gave members and idea of how they should go about involving learners in discourse situations in the SGB.

It was only through PAR that members of the school community could free themselves from the challenges highlighted in this study. The usage of PAR saw members of the team engaging with problems that affect them directly and equally giving them a chance to solve them by themselves. PAR made it clear to members that as communities, change can be effected only if members are willing to give one another space to engage in discourse about issues that affect them.

Unlike with other methods of research, PAR was able to give co-researchers an opportunity to interrogate their problems and solve them by themselves. The voices of all members of the research were loud enough to be heard by all stakeholders.

This study contributed immensely towards enhancing learner participation in the SGB. The collaborative and engaging nature of PAR assisted with making sure that the objectives of the study were realised and that social injustice in settings, such as the SGB was totally eliminated.

5.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research was only able to be extended to one school in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality. It could have been very interesting however, to extend it to a wide range of schools in terms of demography and geography.

This study dealt with culture, power and control. Its extension to an array of communities could have given the study a broader view of how other communities deal with such issues. It could have allowed for a deeper mining of thought into their perceptions and could probably have given the study a more intense perspective of school governance and learner participation.

Finally, even though the SGB takes decisions as a whole, this study was limited to only a few individuals. It may be difficult for other members who were not part of the forum to comprehend the solutions of the study as they were discussed. It will also be difficult for the collaborative nature of PAR to be sustained beyond the duration of the study, as other members may not be informed about what is expected of them.

5.9 CONCLUSION

This study was collaborative in a sense that it brought together individuals who belong in the same group, but had never talked about their experiences openly, to come together in a quest to deal with a social injustice that had affected them. Members of a community were able to sit down and engage in discourse in order to broaden the scope of accessibility of education to learners. It was possible through this study, that learners, as the fine building blocks of the community, were able to be emancipated from segregated, oppressive and unjust learning environments.

CER was helpful in the realisation of the objectives of this study. This theoretical framework, as discussed in chapter 2, was able to ensure that problems were turned into solutions. Learners, as a community, were emancipated through strategies that were decided upon and adopted in the study. CER also assisted the forum with critical planning and the execution of the study.

Lastly, through this study, it was evident that collaboration through discourse is a strong remedy for social injustice. PAR as a method monitored and assisted with the cooperation of all stakeholders. Through PAR, it was possible for members of the forum to open up about their feelings pertaining to learner participation in the SGB. PAR also made it possible for members of the SGB to realise the fruitful outcomes of engaging in collaborative and discursive settings. It therefore gave them direction about how they should go about collaboratively and cooperatively engaging with learners in the very same SGB.

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APPENDIX A

Enquiries: KK Motshumi
Ref: Notification of research: II Dumako
Tel, 051 404 9221 / 079 503 4943
Email: K. Motshumi@fseducation.gov.za



The Director
Motho district

Dear Mr Moloi

NOTIFICATION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH PROJECT IN YOUR DISTRICT BY II DUMAKO

The above mentioned candidate was granted permission to conduct research in your district as follows:

- 1. Research Topic:** Enhancing learner participation in SGB: A case study of one school in Mangaung Local Municipality.
Schools: Seemahale Secondary School, Motheo District.
Target Population: 1 Grade 12 learner, 1 parent of Grade 12 learner, 1 teacher and 1 principal.
- 2. Period:** From date of signature of this letter until the 30th September 2019. Please note the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth / academic quarter of the year nor during normal school hours.
- 3. Research benefits:** The study will assist with making sure that the legislative obligations of learner involvement of SGBs is realized. It will assist with bringing about social justice to learners. The voice of the learners will equally be heard through discourse that transpires in the SGB settings. Through this research, the stipulations of South African school's Act 84 of 1997 will be upheld. SGB will be entities where all stakeholders, irrespective of the age, gender, maturity and educational level, will be able to lay a helping hand in the advancement of the interests of the school they emanate from. Learners will be in a position to be participative in their education. They will be able to voice their concerns in open discourse with other members in the SGB.
- 4. Logistical procedures were met, in particular ethical considerations for conducting research in the Free State Department of Education.**
- 5. Strategic Planning, Policy and Research Directorate will make the necessary arrangements for the researchers to present the findings and recommendations to the relevant officials in the district.**

Yours sincerely


DR JEM SEKOLANYANE
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

DATE 09/04/2019

RESEARCH APPLICATION DUMAKO II NOTIFICATION DATED 8 APRIL 2019 MOTHED DISTRICT
Strategic Planning, Research & Policy Directorate
Private Bag 102565, Bloemfontein, 1000 - Old OMA Building, Room 108, 3rd Floor, Charlotte Maxeke Street, Bloemfontein
Tel: (051) 404 9221 / 9222 Fax: (051) 6678 678

APPENDIX B

53627 Moalahi Street

Rocklands

BLOEMFONTEIN

9301

28 June 2018

The Principal

School name omitted

Section K

BOTSHABELO

9781

Dear Sir/Madam

I, Itumeleng Ishamel Dumako, am a student at Central University of Technology, Free State with student number 205031323. I am currently studying towards my Master of Education Degree and my topic for research is: Enhancing learner involvement in school governance: A case study of one school in Mangaung Local Municipality.

This study aims at enhancing learner participation within SGBs. It aims at making sure that learner voices are heard and that they are fully recognized members of the SGB as per the stipulations of South African School's Act 84 of 1996.

The study will be conducted through interviews and a focus group. It will be conducted outside the normal schooling hours. Interviews will take approximately one hour to complete, and the focus groups will take an estimated seven hours in total.

I therefore wish to request for permission to use your school in my study. Confidentiality is totally guaranteed, and your school can access the study through relevant offices of the Free State Department of Basic Education.

Please sign the accompanying consent form to confirm permission for the researcher to undertake this research.

Yours faithfully

Dumako I.I

I, (Surname and initials)....., hereby give the researcher permission to undertake a research study titled; *Enhancing Learner participation in School Governing Bodies: A case study of one school in Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality*, at the school where I am a principal. I am fully aware of the scope of the research and have no objections about anything related to it.

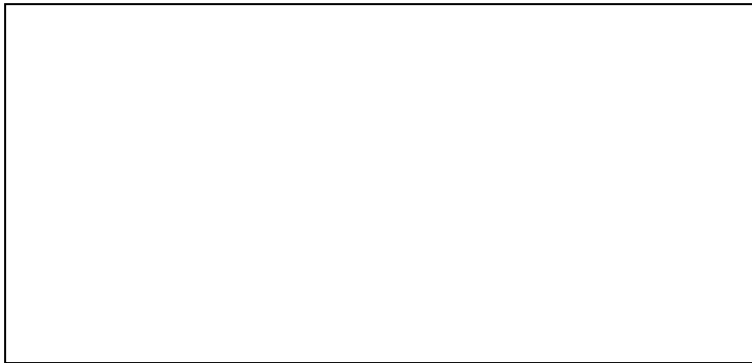
Signature

.....

Date

.....

School Stamp



APPENDIX C

53627 Moalahi Street

Rocklands

BLOEMFONTEIN

9301

28 June 2018

Parents of Learners

School name omitted

Section K

BOTSHABELO

9781

Dear Sir/Madam

I, Itumeleng Ishamel Dumako, am a student at Central University of Technology, Free State with student number 205031323. I am currently studying towards my Master of Education Degree and my topic for research is: Enhancing learner involvement in school governance: A case study of one school in Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality.

This study aims at enhancing learner participation within SGBs. It aims at making sure that learner voices are heard and that they are fully recognized members of the SGB as per the stipulations of South African School's Act 84 of 1996.

The study will be conducted through interviews and a focus group. It will be conducted outside the normal schooling hours. Interviews will take approximately one hour to complete and the focus groups will take an estimated seven hours in total.

Since the school where your child is attending fits a profile suitable for the execution of my research. I therefore wish to request for permission to work with him/her in my

study. His/her confidentiality is totally guaranteed and you can access the study through relevant offices of the Free State Department of Basic Education. Your child is allowed to choose not to participate in the study at any stage they feel the need to do so.

Please sign the accompanying consent form to confirm the participation of your child in this research.

Yours faithfully

Dumako I.I

I, (Surname and initials)....., hereby confirm that I am a parent/guardian of (Learner Surname and Initials)..... and I give him/her permission to take part in a research study titled; *Enhancing Learner participation in School Governing Bodies: A case study of one school in Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality*. I am fully aware of the scope of the research and have no objections about anything related to it.

Signature

.....

Date

.....

APPENDIX D

53627 Moalahi Street
Rocklands
BLOEMFONTEIN
9301
28 June 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

Dear Sir/Madam

I, Itumeleng Ishamel Dumako, am a student at Central University of Technology, Free State with student number 205031323. I am currently studying towards my Master of Education Degree and my topic for research is: Enhancing learner involvement in School governance: A case study of one school in Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality.

This study aims at enhancing learner participation within SGBs. It aims at making sure that learner voices are heard and that they are fully recognized members of the SGB as per the stipulations of South African School's Act (SASA) 84 of 1996.

The study will be conducted through interviews and a focus group. It will be conducted outside the normal schooling hours. Interviews will take approximately one hour to complete, and the focus groups will take an estimated seven hours in total.

I therefore wish to request for permission to work with you in my study. Confidentiality is totally guaranteed, and your school can access the study through relevant offices of the Free State Department of Basic Education. Everyone who takes part in the study, including learners, is allowed to choose not to participate in the study at any stage of the research.

Please sign the accompanying consent form to confirm participation in this research.

Yours faithfully

Dumako I.I

I, (Surname and initials)....., hereby confirm my participation in a research study titled; Enhancing Learner participation in School

Governing Bodies: A case study of one school in Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality.
I am fully aware of the scope of the research and have no objections about anything
related to it.

Signature

.....

Date

.....



APPENDIX E

FACULTY RESEARCH AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE – Faculty of Humanities RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER

Date: 6 September 2017

This is to confirm that:

Applicant's Name	Mr. I.I Dumako
Supervisor Name for Student Project (where applicable)	Dr. M. Lekhu; Mr. Matlho
Level of Qualification for Student Project (where applicable)	M.Ed
Title of research project	Enhancing learner participation within school governance: A case of one secondary school in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality

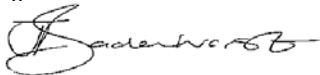
Ethical clearance has been provided by the Faculty Research and Innovation Committee [17/03/15] in view of the CUT Research Ethics and Integrity Framework, 2016 with reference number **D FRIC 14/17/03.**

The following special conditions were set:

Ethical measures as set out in the LS 252a have to observed

We wish you success with your research project.

Regards



rof JW Badenhorst
:thics committee representative: Humanities)

APPENDIX F

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to state that the Master's dissertation: 'Enhancing learner participation...' (text only), submitted to me by Mr I I Dumako of the Central University of Technology, South Africa, has been language edited by me, according to the tenets of academic discourse.

Carol Keep, MA (English); BEd (Hons.); SOD; Cert. of Proofreading

72 Devereux Ave.

Vincent 5201

East London

E Cape

South Africa

072 5080 936

caroljkeep@gmail.com

15 June 2019.

APPENDIX G

Questionnaire for a case study on how to enhance democratic learner participation in decision-making within School Governing Bodies in secondary schools around Mangaung Municipality.

The aim of this questionnaire is to investigate issues related to enhancing democratic learner participation in decision-making within secondary schools around Mangaung Municipality.

The questionnaire consists of five sections. Four of these sections are largely relative to the main research question and sub-questions of the study.

Section A- Biographical information

Please complete the following by placing a cross (X) in the appropriate space.

GENDER	AGE (in years)	EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION	EXPERIENCE (in years)
FEMALE <input type="checkbox"/>	15-25 <input type="checkbox"/>	NO MATRIC <input type="checkbox"/> DIPLOMA <input type="checkbox"/>	0-2 <input type="checkbox"/> 11-20 <input type="checkbox"/>
MALE <input type="checkbox"/>	26-35 <input type="checkbox"/>	MATRIC <input type="checkbox"/> DEGREE <input type="checkbox"/>	3-5 <input type="checkbox"/> 21+ <input type="checkbox"/>
	36-45 <input type="checkbox"/>	CERTIFICATE <input type="checkbox"/> THER <input type="checkbox"/>	6-10 <input type="checkbox"/>
	46-60 <input type="checkbox"/>		

Section B -General Questions from main Research Question

- 1.1 Do you believe that learner presence in SGB is necessary? Give a reason for your answer
- 1.2 What do you believe is the reason for learners to be involved in decision making processes in the SGB?
- 1.3 How can we involve learners in decision making processes in SGB?

- 1.4 Do learners make meaningful contributions in meetings of the SGB? Give a reason for your answer

Section C- Questions relate to sub-question 1

- 2.1 What might be the reason (s) for elderly governors to not take learner participation in SGB seriously?
- 2.2 Does the fact that learners are minors render them less knowledgeable of governance issues? Please explain your answer.
- 2.3 Do elderly governors believe that learners are inferior to them because of their age and status? Provide a reason for your answer

Section D- Questions from sub-question 2

- 3.1 Since the assumption of office, have all SGB members received any form of training? If yes, please list any forms of training. If not, why is it so?
- 3.2 What aspects were SGB members trained on?
- 3.3 Were all members present in such a training session?
- 3.4 Do you believe that the training was effective in assisting the SGB to perform its duties? Please explain

Section E- Questions from sub-question 3

- 4.1 Are learners given a chance to participate in the SGB?
- 4.2 What kind of chances or opportunities are they provided with?
- 4.3 Have they ever been given a chance to lead anything in the SGB?
- 4.4 What are the limitations towards their participation?

4.5 Are there any kinds of meetings that they are not allowed to attend? If yes, please provide the nature of such meetings

4.5 Are they consulted for inputs during formulation of the agenda?

Any other comment that you have or something that you feel strongly about, and we did not discuss?.....

Submission

by I.I. Dumako

Submission date: 12-Sep-2019 09:36AM (UTC+0200)

Submission ID: 1171317728

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Submission

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STUDENT PAPERS
