

*An Analysis of the Nature of Parental Involvement
in School Governance*

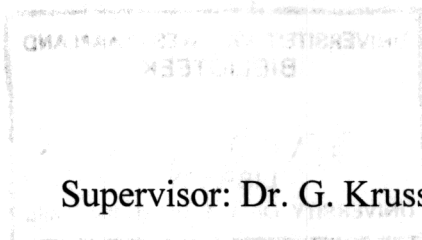
G.F. Qonde

Minithesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Master of Education Degree
Educational Management, Administration and Policy

Faculty of Education

Department of Comparative Education

University of the Western Cape



Supervisor: Dr. G. Kruss

May 2000

ABSTRACT

The study is in response to the recently enacted South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (SASA), which sees the legislated inclusion of parents in school governing bodies. The Act promotes four distinct representative participants or stakeholders. These include parents, who constitute the majority, educators, learners and non-teaching staff.

There is an indication that the SASA has tensions, ambiguities and contradictions which could allow either “consumer market” or “citizen equity” visions to prevail in practical terms. However, I argue that the SASA in practice is becoming dominated by the consumer vision that has a danger of creating unfair competition amongst schools and perpetuating the already existing inequalities in our society.

In this mini-thesis, I attempt to investigate the nature of parental involvement in school governance in practice. I focus on their responsibilities in relation to policy matters as enshrined in the SASA, their commitment to executing their functions. The aim is to determine their capacity to fulfil their responsibilities with respect to their powers and functions.

The study examines school governing bodies in two schools characterised by different social and economic backgrounds, situated in the Western Cape. Data from the two schools was gathered through a case study method using techniques of informal observation of the two schools and their communities, semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis.

The study reveals that there are vast discrepancies and inequalities which are found between previously advantaged and disadvantaged schools. There is a trend towards increased competition, in the process creating a hierarchy of unequally resourced schools which perpetuate class, gender and racial divisions in new forms.

Nevertheless, parent governors are positive towards parental involvement in close cooperation with other stakeholders. The possibility exists for all parent governors to have a greater impact on school governance. The study highlights the importance of providing support programmes in the form of both material and cultural resources in order to boost confidence and participation. The mini-thesis suggests some ways for participatory School-Based Management to become democratic and egalitarian so that individual empowerment can give way to social empowerment. As schools have different backgrounds, they need different kinds of intervention.

Dedication

dedicate this research to my wife, Vuyiswa, and my children, Luyiso and Sesethu, for their love, understanding, support and inconvenience they suffered during my period of study. To my mother, Noyinothi, who laid the initial foundation for my education, I say “enkosi kakhulu” (thank you).

Acknowledgements

My sincerest thanks and appreciation to Dr. Glenda Kruss for her guidance, support and encouragement I received during the course of this research. Your encouragement and belief in my ability has given me the strength to fulfill one of my life long desires. Thanks to Dr. Yusuf Sayed who assisted me in starting this journey. To Feizal Toefy and his wife, Fareeda, for their technical assistance and encouragement they gave me through hard times.

May you all grow from strength to strength

Declaration

I declare that “An Analysis of Parental Involvement in School Governance” is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

GWEBINKUNDLA FELIX QONDE

MAY 2000

Signed: _____

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'G' followed by a horizontal line and a vertical stroke, positioned above a solid horizontal line.

Acronyms

ANC	:	African National Congress
DET	:	Department of Education and Training
DNE	:	Department of National Education
DOE	:	Department of Education
ERS	:	Education Renewal Strategy
NECC:		National Education Coordinating Committee
NEPI	:	National Education Policy Investigation
PTSA	:	Parent-Teacher-Student-Association
SACP	:	South African Communist Party
SASA	:	South African Schools Act
SBM	:	School-Based Management
SGB	:	School Governing Body
SMC	:	School Management Council
SPCC	:	Soweto Parents Crisis Committee
SRC	:	Student Representative Council
WCED:		Western Cape Education Department

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Chapter 1

An Outline of the Study

1.1 Introduction

South Africa is currently undergoing a process of change from the apartheid system of education to a more democratic system of education. This process has been characterised by commissions, reports, new regulations, bills and acts. One such new act is the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (SASA), which deals with governing bodies, public schools, private schools, special schools, and the establishment and funding of public and independent schools.

Among other things the Act recognises parents as an important component of stakeholders as well as the need to include them in the decision-making processes in public schools. In terms of the Act, parents would constitute the majority stakeholder in the governing bodies of public schools (1996:18). The recognition and representation of parents take place against the background of the very different roles and functions they had in the apartheid system of education which was predominantly based on race, ethnicity and on class. Parents from black schools contested the monopoly of power in school governance of the previous State in the decision making process through the formation of Parent-Teacher-Student-Associations (PTSA). However, in predominantly white schools administered by the former House of Assembly, parents had considerable powers to make decisions at schools. For instance, the School Management Councils appointed teachers, decided on curriculum and medium of instruction, and raised funds.

Makhubu (1993:40) states that it would appear that there is a growing awareness on the part of many people that participation can be useful both as a means to more relevant and sustainable development and as an end in itself. In the spirit of sustainable development, Murphy (1991:64) notes that in other countries such as the USA, school councils have been actively involved in designing school improvement plans, helping to formulate or revive

school policies, participating in establishing programmes and budget priorities, and selecting new principals and teachers.

At this time, phrases such as “democratisation”, “participation”, “accountability” and “legitimacy” are prominent in education in South Africa and internationally. These developments are regarded as marking the end of the isolated and “parentless” schools which were characterised by little or no parental involvement. The vital importance of the parent to the school has now been recognised to be a prerequisite for education management, as enacted in the South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA).

A number of educators in South Africa have recognised this shift in the participation of parents in schools:

Parents felt they have no real say in how their schools were run and no real means of finding out how well their children or their schools were doing. Well, those days are over. The first day of the new school term is also a new year for education in this country... But as from now, you, the parents, have a new freedom... You could be in charge of the school's ultimate shape and destiny (Brown et al, 1994:46).

Parents are on governing bodies as the voice of those whose children are at the sharp end of the process, not as world experts on psychology of learning disabilities or the evaluation of the new curriculum (Partington et al, 1989:67).

These changes gave a new measure of power to the parent governors who took up office in 1997. However practical experience suggests that a proportion of these parents are bewildered by the new responsibilities and lack the stomach for the complex and sometimes conflictual roles they have to play as governors. This study seeks to explore this.

1.2 Rationale for the Study

Apartheid education resulted in a highly centralised state responsible for many of the key educational decisions such as funding. Furthermore, apartheid education had been marked by racial, ethnic and regional fragmentation of education provision (Sayed, 1997:26). This resulted in the existence of 19 segregated educational departments. Buckland et al (1992:5)

describe this as 'a system of systems', linked together not by any broad educational vision but rather by the ideology of apartheid.

Under the apartheid system, the governance structures at school level were school management councils (MSCs) and the prefect system. The participation of parents and students in the MSCs and prefect structures respectively was by appointment rather than democratic election. Furthermore, the role of parents was limited to narrow operational concerns such as fundraising (Nene, 1993:30).

The elections in April 1994 marked a significant shift in policy development. The installation and establishment of a legitimate, nonracial and democratic Ministry of Education opened the way for the enactment of official policy acts. The policy tempo has intensified. Commissions were appointed with fixed mandates to generate policy that was likely to be formally enacted. Masked tensions and contradictions surfaced as choices were made in policy bills and acts (Sayed, 1997:2). The liberal view argued for the devolution of more powers to school level whilst the progressive view argued for counter-balancing devolution of powers with a meaningful role for the State to play, taking into account the imbalances of the past. The latter view was reinforced by the fact that the unqualified espousal of parental participation requires more careful scrutiny, particularly in the light of international experiences for example, in England and Wales, where parental participation has simply privileged the middle class (Carspecken, 1991). The central argument of the progressive view is that the State is the one institution that is best able to guarantee and effect equality. In this context participation and community involvement have become focal points in the policy discourse surrounding educational governance.

The principle of democratic governance is increasingly reflected in policy. The SASA provides for the involvement in decision making of elected representatives in school governing bodies. Because of the legal and financial decisions for which governing bodies are responsible, elected representatives of parents are in the majority. The SASA (1996:18) states, "The number of parents must comprise one more than the combined total of the other members of a governing body who have voting rights". This key policy choice has relegated

to history an era that is best forgotten by all South Africans. However, the birth of this new democracy has not been without its fair share of problems.

Some governing bodies, especially in disadvantaged communities have experienced some difficulties in coming to terms with the quasi-market principles under which they are now expected to operate. While others mainly in advantaged communities are not willing to embrace democratic values which are based on principles of equity and redress. The need for governing bodies to ensure the continued financial viability of their schools has come into conflict with social justice and with the notion of providing a universal education service. This can result in a failure to address social and economic deprivation in the schooling system, particularly in relation to the education of working class children. Giving parents powers is different from actually them using those powers. Parents at times have been subjected to external influences which have affected their reasoning and understanding of certain complex issues pertaining school governance.

Having given parents powers and responsibilities in terms of the Act, what they do with those powers is more crucial than an abstract notion of democratisation regarded as a good thing in itself. To adopt this view is not to disagree with the idea that parents should have involvement with the governance affairs of schools. Rather it places emphasis on the social and economic conditions which shape that involvement and the consequent effects of those conditions on what can or cannot be achieved.

In view of these challenges there is a need to investigate the nature of parental involvement in school governance with relation to policy matters enshrined in the SASA. The need is to examine the parents commitment to executing these functions and to determine their capacity to fulfill their responsibilities with respect to their powers and functions.

1.3 Focal Problem and Research Questions

The focus of this study is thus on the implementation of the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 in secondary school governance with respect to the nature of parental involvement.

The critical questions that will be explored are:

- (i) What are the roles and contributions of parents in the implementation of the SASA in schools?
- (ii) What are the difficulties or problems parents have or experience in their capacity as school governors in schools?
- (iii) To what extent does parents' background affect the levels of participation in the schools?
- (iv) Does the level of education of parents affect the contribution parents make in school governing bodies in relation to their input, duties and responsibilities?

1.4 A Brief Outline of the Methodology

An in-depth investigation concerning parental involvement in school governance will be undertaken. The rationale is based on the notion that schools should fall under the control of parents and that the management of schools be vested in school governing bodies. This study focusses on two Western Cape schools characterised by different social and economic backgrounds.

The methodological strategies adopted to address each research question are discussed in Chapter 3. These include:

- Observation of governing body meetings and subcommittees together with the informal observation of each school and its community.
- Semi-structured interviews with all governing body members in the two schools with the aim of sharing their practical experiences in the implementation of the SASA.
- Documentary analyses of the SASA, school constitution, minutes, school policy, vision as well as mission statement. Underpinning this closer look at the primary documents is an attempt to find an understanding of the values of the schools.

1.5 An Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is organised in five interconnected chapters. This chapter looks at the rationale behind this research, questioning whether there is one set of values at work in the process of democratising school governance in South Africa taking into account different social

backgrounds. Unlike the neutral concept of parental involvement which is a feature of the SASA, I do not see parental involvement as a neutral or homogeneous phenomenon. It is differentiated by class, race and ethnicity as well.

In Chapter 2 a study is made up of the available literature. There is an abundance of literature on parental involvement in education both locally and internationally, and that has made the task of identifying specific forms of parental involvement relatively easy. The wide range of literature I have come across poses some critical concerns, such as, if the citizen as a school governor is actually only a thinly disguised state volunteer, what consequences does this have for the values governors adopt and cultures they espouse? It is obvious that governors do not all come from the same social class. Their cultural capital varies and is dependent upon the class to which they belong. This being so, individual governors may react in different ways when it comes to debates about, say, teachers salaries and working conditions. Governors from the middle and upper classes may be more conscious of teachers' roles and responsibilities and, as a result, their salaries and working conditions. On the other hand, governors from the working class may be guided by other considerations, such as racism they perceive to be practised in schools. Deem et al (1995:163) suggests three different models of governing bodies, each with their own value orientation. The political model sees the governing body as an arena for solving value conflicts over schooling. The participatory model stresses individual and personal development. The latest model, the new managerial one, concerns itself with the pursuit of efficiency. This includes a strong preference for business and enterprise cultures to be introduced in schools in place of more education centred cultures. Whatever kind of governing model is adopted, the kinds of values held by governors are absolutely crucial to the ways in which governing bodies themselves operate.

It is in this context that we see the proponents of School-Based Management (SBM) argue that there should be significant and consistent decentralisation to the school level of authority to make decisions related to the allocation of resources, thereby improving efficiency and quality of education at school level. However, the New Right critics argue that the notion of SBM has devolved only responsibility and not power to schools, resulting in the creation of a hierarchy of unequally funded schools which perpetuate class, gender and ethnic

divisions. These developments in some parts of the world had a bearing on the democratic transformation processes in South Africa from an apartheid state to a democratic state. This ushered in changes that saw the transformation of education into a single education system with parental involvement being a cornerstone of school governance. This provided the much needed impetus to obtain data from two schools of different social backgrounds.

As highlighted above, the methodological strategies adopted to address each of the research questions are discussed in Chapter 3. These include the observation, interviews and documentary analysis. This study was not without problems. The magnitude and intensity of research that has to be undertaken in two different schools, each with its unique features, and securing timeslots with individual governors proved to be time consuming and physically demanding. The governing body meetings were too sensitive to be observed.

Chapter 4 analyses the participation, willingness, commitment and capacity of parents serving on the governing bodies in the selected schools. Here the data reveals vast discrepancies of inequality which are found between previously advantaged and disadvantaged schools of the apartheid era. This situation indicates that the SASA has tensions, ambiguities and contradictions which could allow either “consumer market” or “citizen equity” to prevail in practical terms. However, I argue that the SASA is dominated by the consumer vision which is helping to further marginalise the disadvantaged communities. Therefore, vigorous programmes are required to empower the parent governors of disadvantaged schools with both material and cultural resources.

Chapter 5 concludes the study by drawing our attention to the implications of the legacy of the past, for the imbalances of that period are still rife in schools as they mirror the community in which they exist. Suggestions and recommendations are also made for the functioning of school governing bodies based on the findings of the research.

Chapter 2

Parental Involvement and School Governance

2.1 Introduction

School governing bodies, as espoused in the South African Schools Act No.84 of 1996, are a new development in South Africa. Features of the model of school governance as advocated by the SASA have been prevalent in other countries for some time and, therefore, a theoretical exposition of school governance will necessarily have to consider these practices in other countries of the world and see what implications they have for the South African situation.

School governance for which all interested parties are included, is based on two primary concerns:

- how to efficiently integrate the school into the community and wider society;
- and
- how to make the school more accountable to the people it claims to serve.

South Africa is a country currently undergoing a major political transformation in an attempt to address the malpractices and inequities of the past. Education during the apartheid era was characterised by the fight for equal opportunity among different racial groups. The unequal funding of the various departments of education that catered for different racial groups finally saw parents at the forefront of the struggle for equal education. Parents had to become indirect custodians of the provision of education for their children through the Soweto Parents Crisis Committee (SPCC) after they received strong criticism from their children of being inactive. The inequalities in per capita spending resulted in “the skewed distribution of teacher qualifications, inappropriate linking of salary levels to qualifications and disparities in learner:teacher ratios” (Education White Paper 2, 1996:29).

“Dispute over governance of education has been a feature of South African political life throughout the century” (NEPI, 1992:1). The apartheid system is now being replaced by a more democratic method of school governance where participation on all levels is seen as essential. Through the years of struggle for democracy in education, civil society structures and community involvement have been mooted as essentials for real democratic participation by the people. It was against this background that the “People’s Education for People’s Power” movement was launched after the establishment of the National Education Coordinating Committee (NECC) in 1986 (Kruss, 1988). The formation of the NECC was a need to transform the education system.

In this respect the South African Schools Act No.84 of 1996 presents a valuable opportunity for the transformation of education. Schools, according to the SASA, have the right to democratically elect governing bodies that represent the school community as a whole. This is a deliberate attempt to reverse the authoritarian approach to policy formulation and school governance of the previous system and establish a more inclusive and community driven approach that gives people a major say in the running of their schools. Parental involvement in the education of their children is seen as part of the process of having more democratic control over the quality of life of the future citizens of our country. The deep faith that parents all over the world have placed in the ability of education to break the cycle of poverty and subjugation emphasises the need to determine the nature of their role in school governance.

A literature survey was conducted of sources dealing with parental involvement in governing bodies of public schools in various parts of the world. The situation in the world affords us an opportunity to see what implications it has for the South African situation.

These developments, of devolution of power at school level, saw a wave of reform during the 1980s sweeping over various nations, with virtually every aspect of schools and systems which direct and support schools under critical examination. The key word was ‘restructuring’, which was being applied to curriculum, pedagogy, administrative structures, governance, teacher training and retraining, and to the teaching profession itself. It looks as if there has been a wholesale dismantling of centralised educational bureaucracies and their

replacement by advanced forms of school-based management. The world began to be confronted with an array of terms like school-based management, devolution, site-based decision-making and school centred forms of education. The critical question, therefore, would be to determine whether the devolution of power at school level does automatically translate into increased parental participation in school governing bodies and eventually establish real democracy.

This chapter will then examine the international trends and experiences of school governance and thereafter see what implications they have for the South African situation.

2.2 School-Based Management

In the 1960s and 1970s in many school systems throughout North America, Europe and Australia, numerous innovations and efforts were made to promote new curricula and teaching approaches but the results often seemed unsatisfactory (Dimmock, 1993). It was not until the 1980s when there was successful development of modern management in industrial and commercial organisations that people began to believe that to improve education quality, it is necessary to jump from the classroom teaching level to the school organisational level, and reform the structural system and management style of schools. Various school reform movements followed (Cheong Cheng, 1996:43). Among them there were those emphasising the self-budgeting school (the autonomy of using school resources) and those focussing on decentralisation of authority from central education offices, whilst others introduced school-based activities such as school-based curriculum development, school-based staff development and school-based student counselling. Cheong Cheng (1996:43) claims that some people argued that decentralisation of central power to school level could not guarantee that schools would use power effectively to enhance education quality. Therefore, both school responsibility bearers and education service receivers should share the decision making power at school level. Thus followed the emergence of the shared decision making movement in school management reform (Caldwell & Spinks, 1988). Smyth (1993:6) contends that these developments emanate from the fact that sliding profits in the corporate sector in advanced capitalist countries can only be restored if there are massive cutbacks in public

sector spending. This is clearly seen in the UK under Thatcher with the so-called “rolling back” of the welfare state.

In many countries today there is growing political pressure for educational reform (Demaine, 1990). In the late 1980s, different forms of school-based management became the central topics and strategies of educational reform in different parts of the world (Angus, 1992; Brown, 1990; Caldwell & Spinks, 1988; Cheong Cheng, 1996; David 1989; Dimmock, 1993; Mohrman & Wohlsletter, 1994; Smyth, 1993). School based management is one form of restructuring that has gained widespread attention. It seeks to change the way schools conduct business. It is aimed squarely at improving the academic performance of schools by changing their organisational design.

Caldwell and Spinks (1988:4) define a self-managing school as one for which there has been a significant and consistent decentralisation to the school level of authority to make decisions related to the allocation of resources. They define these resources broadly to include matters related to curriculum, personnel, finance and facilities in a system of education having centrally determined goals, priorities and frameworks for accountability. The concept of self-management is thus more constrained than concepts like self-government or self-determination; the intention of self-management is not the privatisation of education.

Brown (1990:130) confirms that the essence of decentralisation is that there is a marked shift of decision-making from the central office to the individual school. Decentralisation is viewed as an important phenomenon of modern school management reform which is consistent with the principle of equality in the main. It brings about school-based management. Teaching activities have inevitable difficulties and problems, therefore schools should be given the power and responsibility to effectively solve problems, where the problems happen, and as soon as possible (Cheong Cheng, 1996:46). Based on this perspective, SBM aims at building up a suitable environment for school members to participate widely and develop their potential.

According to the above reasoning, teachers, principals and parents better understand the needs

of the students and the communities served by their schools. Ogawa and White (1994:58) contend that the vehicle for distributing power in most SBM programmes is the school level council, for example School Governing Bodies in the South African context. SBM enables the Governing Bodies to channel the available resources towards the school priorities and to plan for educational and school improvements with direct knowledge of how they will pay for them. It allows each school community to respond in a more timely and precise way to their own needs since they are in the best position to know about them.

Brown (1990:166) views the principal as a fulcrum for the entire structure of SBM. In decision making everything comes back to the principal. The common thread in all these developments is a shift in the power to make certain kinds of decisions from a central authority to a school. In each instance, however, the school continues to work within a framework of legislation, policies and priorities determined by the central authority (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992:31).

School Based Management is viewed as having some promise as indicated above, but there are dangers seen by other writers like Angus (1989), Brown (1990), Demaine (1989), Smyth (1993), Walford (1990) and many others. The main thrust of their argument is that the reorientation of the school system is better understood in terms of the State's desire to increase competition between schools and to create a hierarchy of unequally-funded schools which help perpetuate class, gender and ethnic divisions.

Smyth (1993:1) claims that the devolution and self management notions entail responsibility rather than power. The case study of Susan Robertson of Western Australia shows how recent reforms, far from using devolution to promote genuine participation, amount to nothing more than a top-down way of severing educational means from the end, by focussing on the measurement of outputs and dramatically reorganising and tightening accountability structures over schools (Smyth, 1993:117). The argument is made that in contexts like these, school self management has come to mean no more than an opportunity for schools to manage dwindling financial resources within tightened centralist policies over curriculum, evaluation and standards. The entire exercise appears therefore to be primarily concerned

with dismantling centralised education systems (which have traditionally supported the work of teachers, students and parents), and replacing them with a free market ideology of competition and choice. It is about making a clear separation between those who conceptualise policy and those who implement policy (Smyth, 1993:3). Therefore, it appears to be about promising certain things such as parent participation and democracy through the use of a particular rhetoric (with democratic community involvement, more parental choice, better managed schools, etc.

The argument of these critics holds that the self-managing school as such, is not fundamentally about grassroots democracy or parent participation. What we have instead of genuine school-based forms of participation are increasing forms of managerialism, hierarchy, individual competitiveness and task orientation. The contradiction is a stark one, between an orchestrated rhetoric about democracy and the reality of the economic imperative that demands stronger mechanisms of central control. Smyth (1993:5) claims that these ideas are basically being pushed forward by the New Right largely as a way of enabling central educational authorities to increase rather than decrease their control over schools. The intent is for schools to become individual self-managing private institutions through the creation of a free market in which education is no different from any other commodity.

The overarching problem, according to Lawrence Angus (1989), is that such terms of tokenism fail to challenge entrenched power relationships and serve only to shape and channel participation in relatively safe directions while leaving untouched wider educational understandings, practices and arrangements. In particular, Angus highlights the political naivety behind notions of school self-management as espoused by writers like Caldwell and Spinks (1988, 1992), while making the claim that far from being a basis for genuine democratic reform, self management is being used as a conservative managerial device. Brown (1990:176) reveals that the extent of parental involvement in school planning and decision making appears to be quite limited and to remain usually at the principal's discretion. Stephen Ball (1993c) claims that it is all about deflecting blame away from the State in a context in which the vested interests of the private sector are demanding a shrinking public sector. By responding this way the State can still continue steering at a distance while

leaving the option open for blaming the parents when things do not work out - arguing that they made bad or ill-informed choices, or misused their autonomy. Smyth (1993:8) claims that school management in England and Wales has been used to reorient schools away from a common education for all towards increased competition, in the process creating a hierarchy of unequally funded schools which perpetuate class, gender and ethnic divisions. This view is reiterated by Angus (1992:383) when he highlights that schools are to operate within market conditions and that education is regarded as a commodity.

Current discourses on self managing schools incorporate particular understandings of notions such as democracy, participation, choice, community and society. The problem is that the meaning of these notions in context is quite variable and is influenced by the importance and perception of other powerful organising concepts including those of efficiency, accountability, responsibility and authority. Angus (1992) and Apple (1991) saw the incorporation of all the terms mentioned above into a rather simplistic slogan system of market efficiency and quality control of schools, in a period in which neo-conservative and New Right thinking in the UK characterised educational debates. There was further marginalisation of socially democratic themes which had become partially institutionalised in the work and thinking of many education workers during the 1970s and 1980s. The proponents of SBM do not mention at all the notions of social, economic or cultural influences on education. They accept without reservation that decentralisation is administrative rather than political with decisions at the local level being made within a framework of local, state or national policies and guidelines. The raising of these tensions, ambiguities and contradictions in SBM theory does not mean that we should be pessimistic about the ultimate possibilities of more democratic and participative modes of educational governance, but rather affords us an opportunity to investigate what the prevailing evidence says.

Mohrman et al (1994:54) claims that evidence on the efficacy of SBM programmes is not compelling. A comprehensive literature review (Malen, Ogawa & Kranz, 1991) concludes that there is little evidence that SBM has significantly enhanced conditions in schools and

districts, or improved students' academic performance. "Change is not necessarily improvement ...change may or may not be progress" (Cuban, 1990:72).

The argument of the New Right critics, that SBM has been used to reorientate schools away from a common education for all towards increased competition, in the process creating a hierarchy of unequal-funded schools which perpetuate class, gender and ethnic divisions, draws attention to areas that need to be investigated. The problem is that those who are already advantaged by wealth, class or ethnicity will use this to substantiate and extend their already disproportionate advantage in an already differentiated educational system, unless the principle of equity and redress is programmatically and assertively implemented with continuous evaluative measures to improve its effectiveness. As South Africans, will we be able to draw some lessons from these global trends and approach the notion of parental involvement in a manner that would advance our new democracy?

2.3 Parental Involvement: Some International Perspectives

In many countries today there is a growing political pressure for education reform (Demaine, 1990). Much of the argument for change involves the issue of developing self-managing schools. In South Africa the 1995 Hunter Report, which had been commissioned by the government, recommended major reforms to the structure of school management. In particular, Hunter (1995) recommended a formal structure for the election of parents, teachers and learners representatives to the governing bodies of schools. At the heart of the school based management theory is that the schools have to manage themselves. Therefore, the objective realities of the international developments, particularly in education, influenced some policy directions in the educational sphere of South Africa.

In an attempt to transform the South African education system, the South African government gave more powers to governing bodies where parents are the majority stakeholders. It is therefore important to examine the experiences of other countries with regard to the notion of parents involvement/participation in school governance so that we draw important lessons of relevance to our situation. The political situation in countries often determines the manner in which educational reform will take place.

The key challenge is how the existing practises and cultures in many schools can be transformed into realising the potential benefits offered by SBM, if there are any.

An education system's merits and demerits can neither be reasonably evaluated nor properly planned unless there is consideration of the major forces in the world that strongly impinge on education and shape its future. While some of these forces have only domestic roots, others are global in scope, and as such have far reaching educational implications. These forces are economic, demographic and political (Coombs, 1988:11).

2.3.1 Education Reform in the UK

In the context of the UK, parents had no right to representation on school governing bodies before 1980. Parental representation was developing on a sparse basis even in the 1960s, but was well established by the mid 1970s in county schools in some 90% of the LEAs (Sallis, 1988:347). The 1980 Education Act did not specify the total size of governing bodies, gave no encouragement of partnership, and spelled out no requirements to tell parents what the school does to involve them, welcome them or help them to support their children. Nevertheless, the Act gave parents a right to express a preference for a school, which should not be denied unless it was incompatible with efficiency and economy. Refusal should be subject to local appeal procedure.

The British government promulgated the 1986 Education Act as a further step towards transforming the education system. Sallis (1988:349) maintains that the Act, with all its limitations, brought parent governors into the decision making process and required them (parent governors) to communicate better with parents generally, and raised consciousness about educational issues and needs which can only work to the advantage of all children. Woods (1988:324) also claims that in the Education Act of 1986, the Conservative Government has reformed school government with the aim of increasing parental influence, though without ensuring that parent governors will be adequately prepared for their new role or that election procedures will encourage parents to involve themselves. In the view of Deem et al (1995:42) the 1986 Education Act may be seen to have extended significantly the opportunities for the practice of citizenship by creating a space for the participation of

citizens in the governance of schools. This view is contrary to what the critics of the New Right argue as outlined above, that the notion of SBM devolves responsibility with no power, and further entrenches the marginalisation of the working class in school governance.

Munn (1997) has conducted research about the influence of parents in school policy in secondary schools in England and Scotland. The aim of the research was to explore the changing roles and relationships prompted by the Developed School Management (DSM) policy and in particular to explore the role of parents on school boards and governing bodies. Munn (1997:3) discusses the impact of individual parents on school policy through parental choice. She claims that parental choice was one of the government's strategies to make schools more responsive to parental concerns and so to tilt the balance of power towards the consumer (parent) and the producer (schools). She further claims to have found that parental choice has had an impact on influencing school policy particularly in areas of the formal and hidden curriculum in almost all her case studies.

Munn (1997:5) has also looked at the influence of school boards and governing bodies which have statutory responsibilities on a range of matters including staffing, curriculum and discipline. A key feature of the data collected is that boards and governing bodies exhibit a strong trust in the head teacher's professional expertise and judgement. Head teachers typically present reports on various aspects of school life to their governing bodies and these are discussed to varying degrees but head teachers are never seriously challenged about the way in which they want the school to develop. In a sense, governors saw their role as to support the school and its teachers and accept policies put forward by the head teacher.

Parental participation in England and Wales since the mid 1980s has mostly been concerned with changing or redrawing the boundaries of those eligible to become governors, with a bias towards parents, business people and community members, and with giving governing bodies increased surveillance powers over head teachers as well as giving them shared responsibilities for delegated budgets and staffing. The 1986 and 1988 Reform Acts share common aspects with the South African Schools Act, in that more powers are given to the stakeholders (parents, education department) who are not working in schools. Their

fundamental stated objective is to improve the quality of education by devolving more powers (such as formulation of school policy at school level) to school governing bodies.

2.3.2 Changes to School Governance in New Zealand

The reform process in education was also a characteristic feature of New Zealand. After the 1987 elections, the Minister of Education (Mr. Lange) had a view which was widely supported by the Labour Party, that bureaucratic constraints needed to be overcome by giving more power to parents to control their children's education. Gordon (1992:193) argues that the Picot Report recommended that the management of all schools be given to locally elected boards of trustees, made up of parents elected by parents, the principal, a teacher's representative and a student representative (in secondary schools only). The boards of trustees would be responsible for the broad policy objectives and the efficient and effective running of schools. These recommendations were ultimately accepted and legislated by the government. Deem et al (1995:15) claims that in some countries notably New Zealand, the combination of developments has resulted in boards of trustees (the New Zealand equivalent of school governors) being given almost sole responsibility for schools at local level, with no intermediate tier between schools and central government. The states in Australia have also developed site-based management (Deem et al, 1995:15). In a feedback house meeting in JP Duminy Court, it was stated by the Australian government officials that a certain school in Australia valued parent and community participation in its decision making and planning activities. The three broad value positions underpinning governance and involvement within schools are:

- School based governance build's trust within the school community.
- Decision making reflects a commitment to educational well being. Personal view points and interests are set aside.
- Parents involvement affirms that the processes of teaching and learning are the purpose of the school (CTSDE, 1998)

2.3.3 Chicago Schools Reform Act

An example of School Based Management in the USA is the Chicago movement where the American Federation of Teachers advocated a version of school-based management which

focuses on among other things involving parents in decision making about the programmes and practices of local schools. Hess (1992:160) contends that parents have been quite capable of organising caucuses to contest for school board seats when they have felt that board members have not been responsive to their concerns.

One of the noticeable features in the poverty bill of the 1960s in the USA which aimed at the empowering of the poor was a contradiction between those who sought participation of the poor in planning how federal funds would be spent and those seeking to retain control of spending on the poor. The outgrowth of this effort was the mandatory establishment of parent advisory councils receiving federal compensatory education funding. These parent advisory councils grew in numbers, although they became rubber stamps for programme decisions made by principals or other administrators. However, school-based management (SBM) was seen as a form of district (and state) organisation and management in which the school community system is the key unit for educational change and improvement.

Marburger advocated the establishment of school management councils on a voluntary basis which were equally balanced between parents and school professionals (Hess, 1992:16). School reformers in Chicago met with Marburger several times to discuss possibilities for Chicago, but ultimately rejected the voluntary approach and eventually designed councils in which parents hold a substantial majority.

An attempt was made by the state of Illinois to improve the levels of participation of parents in governance structures in Chicago in order to address the situation of high drop out rates, low achieving students and a non responsive bureaucracy. In 1988 the Illinois legislature in the United States passed the Chicago School Reform Act, Public Act 85-1418. This 123-page act has three major components: a set of goals, a mandate to reallocate the city school system's resources and the establishment of local school councils as the vehicle for school-based management. Hess (1994:210) argues that the best known component of the Chicago School Reform Act is the establishment of local school councils (LSCs) to manage each of the system's 550 schools. This was intended to transform the education system by electing

into the LSCs: six parents, two community representatives, two teachers, a student (in high schools) and the principal.

The effort to devolve authority from the district and state levels to the school level draws from both teacher professionalisation and parent empowerment antecedents. From advisory councils and shared decision making, the movement for school management has emphasised giving school actors more power to determine the programme of their local school. Thus, the Chicago school reform effort emphasised freeing schools from local school district legislation. In a nutshell, the Chicago Act was based on the premise that schools should be under the firm direction of parents and that authority should be invested in the school community (Bacchus et al, 1991:3).

However, according to Lewis (1991:4), the imbalance in voting powers of parents and community residents failed a requisite test of strict scrutiny resulting in the Illinois Supreme Court finding that the reform mechanism was in violation of the principle of one person one vote. This verdict was passed even though Easton and Storey (1994:220) argue that according to the Chicago School Reform Act, the local school is “the essential unit for educational governance and improvement” that places “the primary responsibility for school governance ...in the hands of parents, community residents, teachers, and the school principal at the school level”.

However, Elmore (1993:39) is sceptical that governance reform will lead to school improvement. He argues that the stakes of structural reform are largely reckoned in terms of who gains and who loses influence within the governance structures, not in terms of whether structural change leads to changes in the conditions of teaching and learning. The study of Easton and Storey (1994:228) reveals that the Chicago School Reform Act highlights four different governance types: balanced governance councils (active, involved and democratic), limited councils (rubber stamps for their principals), excessive governance councils (overwhelmed with conflict) and moderate governance councils (waver between balanced and limited governance styles). The most comprehensive evaluation of the Chicago reform to date by Bryk et al (1993:21), however provides convincing evidence that a democratic political

climate within a school often leads to restructuring of teaching and learning activities. They also found that although the balanced councils are encouraging in the thoughtfulness of their deliberations and activity, the low number of them is troubling.

It is important to investigate whether the United States scenario described above is likely to unfold in the South African situation as the new governing bodies begin to take control of schools. Both the Chicago Act and the South African Schools Act are similar in intent. They both rely on greater empowerment of parents as the major strategy for inducing school professionals to improve the quality of education available to enrolled learners. The heart of their reform effort focuses on local school change. However, as not all governing councils in the United States could operate equally effectively, this raises questions about the capacity of governors in discharging their duties in terms of the law.

2.4 Parental Involvement and Empowerment

The term “empowerment” has been used so often in recent times that it has become a well-worn catch phrase to be used to motivate any move at reform. In the educational establishment, the term has become synonymous with “parent power” and even “student power”. Giddens (1991:141) suggest that “... there are often problems about how ... empowerment becomes translated into convictions”. Gore (1993) argues that a notion of empowerment only makes sense in connection with those theories of power which sees it as repressive or as the property of some rather than all. Empowerment, Gore maintains, implies both an agent of empowerment and a vision of what it is to be empowered.

Some argue that empowerment can be achieved by increasing the number of parents (and students) on governing bodies. This increased representation can present a challenge to the beliefs and practice of the professionals who have had control over the system for so long and who may want all children to be equal rather than have some excelling over others. It is very likely that the professional educators, although accepting the principle of increased parent participation will be resistant to the idea of empowering lay people with ideas and skills so that they have access to power over the management of teaching and learning.

Empowerment cannot develop on its own in school governing bodies. Even if one argues that government should be the empowering agent, policy texts and statutes in themselves cannot give power to parents. As Deem et al (1995:153) explain:

... power on governing bodies is not a thing, nor is it fixed; it varies, it is fluid, it is fragile and it is closely linked to relationships, rules and resources. It is not available to be given as one may award a prize.

Porter (1996) brought to our attention that the major emphasis in the 1990 Education Reform Act in the USA is the cultivation of local stakeholders who have capacity to engage in public discourse and action relating to the purposes and policies of their schools. The issue of capacity is key to parents being trained to be able to deal with such a highly complex subject as school governance. Parental involvement in terms of governing schools may elicit governing backlogs and implementation delays due to ongoing training in order to address the uneven development of parents in the past. These include governance matters such as the handling of finances, teacher selection, policy formulation and maintenance of schools. Against this background and in the search for greater accountability of parent governors lies the problem of parents capacity to participate.

According to Deem et al (1995:53) participation requires the ownership of, or at least access to material and cultural resources. Their view is that time is a very prominent resource and this in certain cases becomes translated into money when earnings have to be foregone in order to have time off from paid work to participate. Governors (mainly from the working class areas) whose employers are less tolerant may not be allowed time-off, resulting in a major barrier to parent participation.

They also regard cultural capital as another important resource for citizens. Cultural capital is referred to as the habits of thought and legitimate knowledge and forms of communication that are transmitted by education and other socialisation practices.

Cultural capital informs the self-confidence or subjective political competence and is strongly related to participation.

Resources such as time, money and cultural capital are not distributed randomly throughout the population. Instead they are distributed broadly along the lines of social class and other forms of social relations. Prestage (1994:8) claims that in predominantly working class areas, it is very difficult for school governing bodies to recruit and retain governors or to get them to attend meetings. It still has to be established as to whether the societal impediments highlighted above will impact negatively or not in the South African situation which is characterised by gross imbalances between the rich and poor.

The parents' role in the governance of schools will also be underpinned by their commitment to executing their functions. Serebnick (1992:312) views commitment as willingness to devote extra effort so that the organisation will be successful and a desire to maintain membership as an indication of considerable loyalty to the organisation.

In my experience in working with parents, especially in rural communities and townships, I found that parents with the necessary skills often lack the enthusiasm to participate.

Schuftan (1996:261) characterises capacity building as the approach to community development that raises peoples' knowledge, awareness and skills to use their own capacity and that from available support systems, to resolve the more underlying causes of under development. It would help parents to better understand the decision making processes, to communicate more effectively at different levels and eventually instil in them a sense of confidence to manage their own destinies.

Charkin and Williams (1987) note that objections to parental involvement in terms of managing the running of schools can also create problems. These include administrative matters such as teacher selection, equipment purchases and job performance appraisals of staff. The need to consult with parents on each decision taken is thus seen as time wasting and inefficient. Against this background and in search of greater accountability in the partnership between teachers lies the problem associated with parents' capacity to participate (Meyer, 1996:54). Parents who lack relevant skills (Sithole 1994) were often influenced and manipulated by school authorities (which included teachers and especially principals).

The international literature explains SBM as a way to structure school site relationships that place much more power, authority and accountability in the school. The goals in SBM should result in the following:

- higher student performance;
- more efficient use of resources;
- increased skills and satisfaction in school administrators and educators; and
- greater community and business in and support for schools.

However, not everyone agrees that SBM will improve school performance. Malen, Ogawa and Kranz (1990), and Wohlstetter and Odden (1992) have shown that such programmes applied to schools prior to 1990 rarely decentralised significant portions of the budget, provided substantive personnel authority, were comprehensive or improved student achievements. They argued that SBM has devolved only responsibility, not power to schools. What they claim to have learnt over the years of studying schools, is that educational systems are about acquiring more power, not giving it away.

The UK experience shows that school self-management has been used to reorient schools away from a common education for all towards increased competition, in the process creating a hierarchy of unequally funded schools which perpetuate class, gender and ethnic divisions (Walford, 1990). SBM acted as a mechanism of promoting the survival of the fittest through notions of choice. The fundamental problem is that those who are already advantaged by wealth, class or ethnicity will use SBM to substantiate and extend their already disproportionate advantage in an already differentiated educational system.

The reality in New Zealand according to John Codd (1990) where the “new educational world” of SBM is under way is that:

- schools are pitted against one another for resources and students;
- teachers are rewarded according to what they produce; and
- students are assessed against nationally determined yardsticks.

The self-managing school, therefore, is not fundamentally about “choice”, “grassroots democracy” or “parent participation”. It is about the reverse

In Chicago the movement towards SBM has been frustrating for a lot of people in schools because there is no one recipe. The literature on Chicago claims that there was a very clear direction for SBM, but a vague understanding of what the parameters are for new roles and responsibilities that accompany change. While time constraints and limited budgets are critical, there were more important hurdles to overcome, such as:

- the high degree of change required to implement SBM, and having so many things to change at once;
- the high level of ambiguity in the change process;
- finding ways to have constructive arguments and discussions with all the new players; and
- principals’ uncertainty that the district and the board of education will be supportive when things do not go well.

In a nutshell, I have noted from my literature review that the identifiable drawbacks of the shift to self-management are:

- it is a way of the State shirking its social responsibility for providing an equitable quality education for all;
- it promotes greater inequality, as those who have the financial and cultural capital are able to flee by buying a better education, and the rest remain trapped in some kind of educational ghetto;
- treating schools as convenience stores, managing their own affairs, deflects attention away from the educational issues by making people in schools into managers and entrepreneurs;
- turning principals into mini-Chief Executive Officers may have limited rhetorical appeal, but it takes them a long way from being the kind of educational leaders our schools desperately require;

- giving schools budgetary control may not produce staffing profiles of the best trained qualified and experienced teachers, as principals and their councils cut corners in order to balance dwindling budgets;
- schools need to be properly resourced in order to do their crucial work; and
- SBM is about cutting resources to schools and getting school communities to own and manage the decline.

The literature also reveals that central to participation in school governing bodies is the capacity of local stakeholders, parents in particular, to engage in public discourse and action, relating to the purposes and policies of their schools. Empowerment can not be developed on its own in school governing bodies, but requires deliberate programs of training to empower or capacitate school governors.

What then would be the experiences of South Africa is yet to be seen as the implementation of the SASA unfolds.

2.5 Parental Involvement in the South African Policy Context

2.5.1 The Situation under Apartheid Education

Makhubu (1993:2) claims that the demand for community involvement in school governance in education can be traced back as far as the time prior to the Union of South Africa in 1910, when African education was administered and controlled by missionaries. This was the time when the church, through its mission stations, played a central role in the education of South Africans.

Apartheid education resulted in a highly centralised state responsible for all key educational decisions such as funding. Further, apartheid education was marked by racial, ethnic and regional fragmentation of education provision (Sayed, 1997:26). This resulted in the existence of 19 segregated educational departments. Buckland et al (1993:25) describes this as a system of systems, linked together not by any broad educational vision, but rather by the ideology of apartheid.

The introduction of Bantu Education in 1953 was met with opposition by the African communities. There was an attempt to obtain legitimacy by establishing School Committees and School Boards “to allow involvement of parents” (Kulati, 1992:5). Kulati attributes this opposition to the fact that African people were aware that Bantu education was part and parcel of the broader strategy of political subjugation to deny them representation in key institutions.

Under the apartheid system, the State governance structures were School Management Councils (SMC) and the prefect system, in a racially, ethnically and regionally based system of governance which was characterised by a varied system of representation in the governance of schools.

In predominantly white schools administered by the former House of Assembly, parents had considerable powers to make decisions at schools. The SMCs appointed teachers, decided on the curriculum and the raising of school funds. They decided the medium of instruction in their schools.

In State schools administered by the House of Representatives and House of Delegates for Coloureds and Indians respectively, parents elected school committees (SMCs) which had little say over substantive educational matters and functioned as advisory bodies.

In State schools under the Department of Education and Training for Africans, there was provision for SMCs comprising of elected and nominated parents. The participation of parents in the SMCs and students in the prefect structures was by appointment rather than democratic election. The role of parents was limited to narrow operational concerns such as fundraising (Nene, 1993:30). Students were completely excluded from school governance. As prefects, they only played a role of monitoring and policing students.

The Minister of Education and Development Aid introduced amendments in 1987 aimed at promoting the image and increasing the authority and responsibility of the school management councils (Katz, 1988:5). These changes were viewed as cosmetic by the black

(African, Coloured and Indian) communities. As a result, they (blacks) were not swayed from their community's quest to transform education. In a study carried out in the 1980s, Molteno (1986:80) found that parents and communities complained about the lack of students' control over their schooling. The education struggle of the 1980s involved all the primary stakeholders in education, namely parents, teachers and students, as attempts were made to turn schools into sites of struggle for the transformation of the educational system.

The dramatic developments of the mid 1980s which were characterised by a call for People's Education and the beginning of real social and political transformation in South Africa, led to an increase in calls for community control of education (Makhubu, 1993:3). In African education in particular, the developments of the 1980s which also saw the formation of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) and the rise to prominence of the People's Education movement, ushered in a reinforcement of the notion of community involvement in education. This took the form of Parent-Teacher-Student-Associations (PTSA) whose central features were to foster participation in decision making in schools in order to democratise school governance by ensuring equal representation of all stakeholders (parents, educators and learners).

The PTSAs functioned more as pressure groups that challenged the way decisions were made at schools and how the schools were administered. Thus, they worked in close collaboration with political organisations without a specific focus on education matters. They were more crisis orientated in their approach and they became involved in the broader political struggle rather than focussing on school governance.

2.5.2 Democratising Educational Governance in South Africa (1990 - 1994)

With the changes in the South African political terrain in the 1990s the role and focus of the PTSAs and SMCs became subjected to intense political debate. In this transition period, a vigorous policy debate on school governance ensued. Key policy documents were produced, namely the Educational Renewal Strategy (ERS) by the DNE (1992), the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) by the NECC (1992) and the African National Congress Education and Training Framework document (1994).

Sayed (1997:2) is of the view that academic intervention in policy debates in South Africa during the period 1990 until 1994 was marked by a degree of tentativeness and hesitancy and this can be partly explained by the uncertain nature of the political conjuncture that existed at the time, where the future outcome of the electoral process was unclear. The policy process at that point was thus essentially about policy imaging or signalling (Sayed, 1995 and 1996). In other words, policy was mainly an attempt to project a future vision by glancing backwards at the inequalities of the apartheid education. Policy development was more concerned with staking claims to the future and ensuring broad-based agreement about the educational life in South Africa after the elections than making decisive policy choices. This is evident in all the texts that were produced during that period.

These texts (ERS, NEPI & ANC documents) reflected some aspects of policy borrowing which is becoming more significant as the world becomes increasingly characterised and influenced by globalising processes. The discourse evident from the above texts (ERS, NEPI & ANC documents) on decentralisation combines the idea of individual rights with that of involvement. The policy of decentralisation could therefore be interpreted as a strategy of legitimation rather than a genuine transfer of power as the critics of SBM argue. Deem et al (1995:27) claims that for governors in general, dilemmas about the incompatibility of social ideals and market principles form one version of the tension between individual and social needs, and may have been sharpened by recent education reforms. These texts (ERS, NEPI & ANC documents) have elements of both the Right and Left versions of an active citizen, where the Left tends to stress the rights of citizenship, right wing commentators emphasise instead responsibilities and duties.

Deem et al (1995:68) claims:

... according to a participatory democracy perspective, research in the USA on citizen participation on advisory councils and citizen committees in an education context has reported that participants experienced an increase in feelings of self-worth and personal growth and development ... whereas according to new managerialist perspective, governors do manage schools although they may influence how they are managed. What they do instead is to exercise upon the staff, and potentially all other aspects of the school ... as with the act of governance in general, school governance is resource-dependent and one of the main resources required is knowledge.

The policy of decentralisation in relation to these texts could be interpreted as a strategy of legitimisation rather than a genuine transfer of power. It focusses on the historically-conditioned changing of the education system while meeting some of the demands of participation.

The proposals contained in the ERS document omit reference to the development and implementation of educational policy. For instance, it is not apparent from the document who is responsible for determining educational policies and at what level will such policies be decided upon. Sayed (1995) states that the ERS document argued that educational decentralisation ultimately involves the devolution of power to the lower levels of the educational system. It states that a new educational system should provide for the existence of a central education authority and regionally based departments of education. Other functions relating to education can fall under the jurisdiction of the regional departments, provided that the principle of maximum functionally justifiable devolution of decision making to the community or individual institution is upheld throughout. Such an approach will also provide for the accommodation of natural educationally relevant diversity where such a need exists. Furthermore, it is conceivable that schools wishing to cooperate in the provision of education by for example, sharing of resources could organise themselves in some kind of regional departmental or value-centred organisational grouping (DNE, 1992a:23-24). The ERS document suggests a voluntary association of schools that are organised jointly either to promote common values or to share resources.

Sayed (1995) views the absence of a local tier of educational governance as consistent with policies which advocate the reduction of intermediary structures of control between the local school and the State. In the United Kingdom, the government argued that grant maintained schools bring the people or the school into a direct relationship with the state, unencumbered by the intermediary structures of control such as LEA's. The absence of this level in the ERS proposal can be interpreted as consistent with New Right educational initiatives which reduced the intermediary structures of control between the local school and the state. This depicts a classical free market idea which is directly linked to a notion of SBM, which is a

way of the State arrogantly shirking its social responsibility for providing an equitable quality education for all.

In contrast, central to the NEPI school governance option was the argument that PTSAs have to have a meaningful role in the management of schools. The NEPI school governance option made a number of assumptions. Firstly, it presumed that school governance structures would enhance participation of legitimate organised constituencies such as parents, teachers and students. Secondly, it postulated that all sectors (components) should have equal representation on PTSAs or school governing bodies. Finally, this option underplayed the role of elected officials and bureaucrats in the education system.

In fact the problem of PTSAs was that they were often not able to articulate their role coherently or did not possess the necessary skills to manage. Thus, PTSAs were unable to separate the function of governance from administration and management, in that the implementation of policy generated would be left to a Management Executive which could consist of the principal and senior school staff. To this end, NEPI proposed that PTSA structures should function primarily as representative structures determining policy within a specified framework. The implementation of policy generated by PTSAs would be left to the management staff which would consist of the principal and heads of departments.

The proposals by the ANC of a local tier of governance are vague in general. However, it can be inferred that such a tier of governance would operate in a purely managerial capacity. As the document of the ANC (1994a:25) states, the responsibilities, if any, of elected local governments in the sphere of education and training are not clear. However, there is scope for a local tier of management under the supervision of the provincial Education and Training authorities. The ANC's (1994) recommendations on educational governance suggest that the form of decentralisation envisaged expands citizen involvement in the development of policy at higher levels of the education system, particularly on a provincial and national level. It further suggests that the powers that are to be devolved to the lower levels of the system be limited and that they are determined within a national framework. In essence NEPI (1992) and ANC (1994) championed a populist notion of democracy and participation on the one

hand, whilst the ERS (1991) on the other hand emphasised choice, freedom and parental management based on the notion of SBM with devolution of responsibility to school level and a free market option, on the other hand.

The glaring feature of ERS (1992) emphasises choice, freedom and parental management autonomy based on free market ideology on the one hand. On the other hand, notwithstanding the differences between the ANC and NEPI texts with respect to the degree of State control, they both assume that the provision of public goods (social services) cannot be left simply to the whims of either sectional interest groups or individual parents. Education has therefore to be controlled and financed by central government. They counter the New Right notions such as unregulated market provisions and total freedom of choice. They are therefore ideologically committed to the preservation of educational provision as a public domain activity and the notion that the State is responsible for the provision of public goods. Educational decentralisation is therefore effected within a context in which every citizen is socially, economically and politically empowered. The State plays a crucial role in ensuring that all citizens are equally empowered.

A key feature of policy development during this period was that none of the agencies or groups that authored or sponsored the policy texts were felt to be officially authorised to make clear and decisive policy choices. Thus the texts were discursive in nature, did not always make definitive policy choices and lacked guidelines for implementation. This was both a strength and a weakness. At one level, the policy texts were able to generate much debate and opened themselves up for contestation. On the other hand, they failed to make choices and lacked necessary detail in making informed policy decisions.

The policy debates in this period in South Africa continuously made reference to the democratisation of the educational system (NEPI, 1992; ANC National Education & Training Policy Framework, 1994). The ERS (1992a) on the other hand, although it acknowledges the inequalities caused by apartheid, does not show how it intends to redress these imbalances. Most of the ERS recommendations can be read as an attempt to keep most apartheid structures and relations intact by devolving power to institutions and individuals in a free

market situation that sees parents as consumers. The ERS document commits itself to 'rolling back' the State by arguing for the maximum devolution of power to the community or individual institution (1992:24). This is in tandem with the New Right argument in the UK that schools should be free from local and central government control to become private self-managing institutions.

In contrast to the ERS (1992), the NEPI (1992) principles of redressing the apartheid inequalities and unity are meant to confront the legacies of fragmentation of apartheid. In the Governance and Administration report (1992a) which dealt specifically with the policy of decentralisation, the report tended to favour strong, centralised State intervention. However, the NEPI Governance and Administration report (1992a) while committing itself to an interventionist State was conscious of the excesses that the State might commit. The NEPI (1992) report thus opted for a balance between centralised and decentralised modes of educational governance (thus tried to balance the principle of redress with other key principles such as democracy). Ta Ngoc Chau (1985) argues that decentralisation of education in the 'third world' has further marginalised the already marginalised sectors of society, particularly in the case of rural areas. This argument is valid in the case of South Africa that has been segregated along racial lines for so many years. The government in South Africa has to balance the extent to which it can extend participation and consequently deepen democracy while simultaneously providing opportunities for the historically disadvantaged.

The above arguments fit the critique of SBM by Smyth (1993:7) who argues that real decentralisation implies a loss of power at the centre, but what is happening in education is that central power is being retained and intensified at the centre, without the centre appearing to lose legitimacy (i.e. appearing to be committed to decentralisation, and sensitive and responsive to local needs). The real game, therefore, by the central government is about diffusing conflict by providing the additional layers necessary to diffuse criticism about cutbacks. According to Weiler (1989), we currently have a situation where the rhetoric is that of decentralisation (self-managing schools), but the behaviour is decidedly that of centralisation (central setting of goals, targets, the devising of instruments of surveillance and

the fixing of resources). Participation under these conditions is superficial and restricted to whatever the central authority chooses to allow

The policy imaging of the transition period forms the basis on which current educational processes are anchored. The tensions between the ERS and NEPI, between centralising and decentralising, between parental participation as a community or as consumers, continued to characterise government education policy texts.

2.5.3 The Governance of Education after the 1994 Elections

The elections in April 1994 marked a significant shift in education policy development. It was argued that the implementation of proposals for stakeholder involvement “will mark a major advance in the decentralisation of educational control and the fulfillment of a goal for tens of thousands of parents, teachers, students, former students and community workers who have campaigned to secure the achievement of democracy in schools” (White Paper, 1996:17).

The installation and establishment of a legitimate, nonracial and democratic National Ministry of Education opened the way for the enactment of official policy acts. “Masked tensions and contradictions surfaced as choices were made in policy bills and acts”, (Sayed, 1997:2). These policy texts were decisive in character and made explicit choices. After a period of policy hiatuses in the educational sphere, after the elections, the South African Schools Act (SASA) was eventually promulgated and came into effect on 1 January 1997. The SASA helped us to resolve the tensions that emanated from the illegitimacy of the previous government which had an education policy with multiple racially and ethnically fragmented systems.

Some key features of the SASA are the creation of a single national system of education in order to redress past injustices in education, and to provide education of high quality by installing truly representative governance (parents, learners, educators and non-teaching staff) at schools whereby parents would constitute the majority. To this effect, the notion of SBM in increasing the meaningful participation of parents in particular and democratising decision making at school level is a good move. However, the responsibility of governing bodies as

stipulated in the SASA to supplement State money through fundraising in order to improve school quality is a concern, taking into account the socio-economic inequalities fostered in black communities by the injustices of the past.

The promulgation of the SASA created a single system which is intended to ensure that all children have an equal opportunity to learn. The idea is to involve parents more actively in the governance of schools. The basic aim of the SASA is to make education better, more efficient and more just. Educational reforms in most countries are designed to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of schooling. In its preamble, the SASA (1996:5) states that South Africa needs a new national system to redress past injustices in education, to provide education of a high quality and to lay a foundation for:

- developing all the people's talents and capabilities;
- democratically transforming society;
- combatting racism, sexism and all other forms of discrimination and intolerance;
- eradicating poverty and improving the economic well being of society;
- protecting and advancing our diverse cultures and languages;
- upholding the rights of learners, parents and educators; and
- promoting the acceptance of responsibility for school in partnership with the State.

The SASA (1996:14) recognises that to participate in such a highly complex and professionalised subject as modern educational practice without any training is unrealistic, hence it asserts the need for the enhancement of capacity of governing bodies. The SASA (1996:14) emphasises the need for provision of the continuing training to governing bodies in order to promote the effective performance of their functions or to enable them to assume additional functions. That is, to promote the best interests of the school, adopt a constitution, develop the mission statement and adopt a code of conduct. This emphasis emanates from the realisation that the strength of the governing bodies lie in their ability to participate qualitatively in the governance of schools.

All schools are expected to elect governing bodies that represent parents which are the majority component on the governing body, together with educators, non-teaching staff, learners (from grade 8 upwards) and the school principal (SASA No.84, 1996:18). School governance, as regards the governing body function, means determining the policy and rules by which a school is to be organised and controlled. It includes ensuring that such rules and policies are carried out effectively in terms of the law and the budget of the school.

The SASA stipulates that the governing body is responsible for governing the school. This does not mean that the governing body must run the school on day to day basis, but that it must

- perform all the specific functions given to the governing body by the SASA and provincial legislation and regulation;
- set, improve and develop the rules, direction and policy by which the school must function within the framework of the SASA;
- oversee and keep overall control over the development and maintenance of the infrastructure and property of the school; and
- bring about and develop a partnership based on trust and respect between all stakeholders, namely parents, learners, educators, other staff at school, the local community and the education authorities.

The SASA is a contradictory policy text with tensions because it is a product of the government of National Unity. Hence it reflects a compromise between the values and principles contained in the ERS and NEPI documents. These developments were received and interpreted differently by the Right which interpreted the provisions of the SASA as synonymous with consumer rights and choice, whilst for the Left the provisions represent the possibility of extending and deepening democracy. It can be argued that it is strongly influenced by the New Right kind of ideas as per the UK example of radical rhetoric used in service of the private sector interests (Smyth, 1993). The ERS document advocated the rolling back of the State ignoring the disparities that existed between various racial groups and regions in South Africa and its strategy effectively relates the extent of participation to the amount that people are able to pay (thus the marketisation of education).

The SASA has not effectively dealt with this situation in a programmatic way. For example, admission to schools is entirely in the hands of governing bodies who may find grounds to exclude learners they do not want. Although according to the SASA, the school governing body may not discriminate on the basis of inability of a parent to pay for a child's education, there is no proper monitoring mechanism.

Writers like Vincent (1993) and Ball (1990) have argued that devolved school management has not necessarily broadened participation for all, nor has it produced greater equality of opportunities and outcomes. A lot of literature contends that international trends towards greater school autonomy have resulted in the displacement of education from the public to the private sector and has tended to further marginalise minority ethnic communities. Whereas in the past in South Africa, parents were marginalised in the affairs of the school, the new SASA is a bold move to vest control of schools in the hands of governing bodies where the power rests with parents because of the 50% plus 1 majority they hold. What is of concern is whether the parents, irrespective of their social background, will be able to shoulder the responsibilities placed on them by the SASA. The numerical advantage that parents have may not translate itself to quality input and influence in the governing bodies. It depends on the knowledge that parents have.

Therefore the space created for the representative democracy by the SASA may present a potential for building a truly participatory democracy and peoples power on the one hand, and marketisation which is driven by competition and choice based on parents ability to pay for the education of their children on the other hand.

When we turn to participation, which requires access to both material and cultural resources, the capacity of parents which will determine whether the process becomes democratic or marketised will be a decisive factor in the unfolding process with regard to the implementation of the SASA. Knowledge and skills informs the self-confidence and subjective political competence which is related to parents knowledge of the organisational arena in which they are participating.

2.6 Conclusion

This review of the literature has examined the emerging consensus that parental involvement in governance structures is a vital tool to improve the education of learners. However, the actual implementation of the SASA with regard to whether the parents have capacity to discharge their responsibilities has not yet been extensively researched. Several issues are important in this regard. Firstly, parent communities are not homogeneous. They belong to different racial groups and social backgrounds with different levels of education as well. In such a situation, the numerical advantage that parents have in governing bodies may not automatically translate itself to decisive influence of parents in the governing bodies. Secondly, the extent to which the parents may be committed to executing their duties is crucial if they are to make a meaningful impact. There are various foreseeable constraints, in the form of lack of time, enthusiasm and casual approach to matters of importance that may hamper their effectiveness. Central to these constraints is the question of cultural capital which entails the habits of thought and legitimate knowledge and forms of communication that are transmitted by education and other socialisation practices. Cultural capital informs the self-confidence or subjective political competence which is strongly related to participation. This self-confidence may be related to a citizens' knowledge of the organisational arena in which they are participating.

Thirdly there is the inability of government to bring a degree of comparability amongst schools from different communities. South Africa has been influenced by the international trends and internal political imperatives. The notion of "parental involvement" in terms of the SASA encompasses some elements of SBM theory in that the Act devolves some measure of powers at school level as highlighted above. This results in a tension between the concept of 'citizen community' on the one hand and the "consumer market" on the other hand. The former relates to the tradition of participatory democracy which is mainly educative because it permits the development of necessary individual attitudes, the physical qualities required by democracy and the development of active citizens, where the latter refers to the extension of the free market into public sector services, so that commercial enterprise becomes the paradigm to be emulated by public sector institutions.

The capacity of parents based on the availability of both the material and capital resources as a fundamental factor in the implementation of the SASA needs to be investigated. The commitment that parents display in rendering their services to governing bodies is also an important area of consideration. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the nature of parental involvement, taking into account the fundamental challenges raised above.

Chapter 3

The Practical Exercise of the Investigation

3.1 Introduction

This mini thesis is based on an in-depth study of the nature of parental involvement in school governance in South Africa post 1994, specifically, the capacity of parents to fulfill their responsibilities according to the SASA. It is an inquiry into the unknown, navigating uncharted waters.

The investigation was conducted through the use of qualitative research methods, which Patton (1987:9) regards as producing a wealth of detailed data about a much smaller number of people and cases. Qualitative methods are viewed by a number of writers like Maanen (1983), Patton (1990), Crabtree et al (1992), Le Compte et al (1993), Ely et al (1991) as permitting the evaluator to study selected issues, cases or events in depth and detail. The fact that data collection is not constrained by predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth and detail of qualitative data. There are ways of finding out what people do, know and feel by observing, interviewing and analysing documents. This investigation intends to describe the unfolding school governance educational processes that have begun to be implemented in South African schools. Therefore, a qualitative approach becomes important for my study, to explore the capacity of parents who historically belong to different communities in fulfilling their obligations in the governance of schools as legislated in the South African Schools Act of 1996.

This study investigates the nature of parental involvement in school governance by looking at the roles and contributions of parents in the implementation of the SASA in schools, the difficulties or problems parents might have or experience in their capacity as school governors in schools, the extent to which parents' background affect the levels of participation in schools and whether the level of education of parents affects the contribution parents' make in school governing bodies in relation to their input, duties and responsibilities.

The case study method, then will be appropriate for this investigation because it affords me an opportunity to observe the characteristics of individual school in-depth.

3.2 Design of the Study

The case study methodology is particularly appropriate to this investigation because it gives an opportunity for a specific aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth within a limited time scale. Cohen and Manion (1994:106) suggest that the case study researcher typically observes the characteristics of an individual unit, i.e. a child, clique, class, school or community. This view concurs with Bogdan and Biklen's (1992:42) definition of a case study as a "detailed examination of one setting, or one single subject, or one single depository of documents or one particular event".

The single unit in question here is the governing body at schools of different social backgrounds with respect to the parent component. The target population is clearly described with reference to one unit only, which is the governing body. Selecting two schools will offer an intriguing site from which to explore the understanding of roles and contributions by parents in implementing the South African Schools Act, their capacity as school governors in fulfilling their obligations and their commitment in executing their functions. According to Patton (1990:99) the desire to evaluate individualised client outcomes is one major reason why case studies may be conducted, but this study seeks to investigate the process that relates to the establishment of governing bodies and parents' participation in the whole sphere of school governance.

Presently there is insufficient knowledge about the practical functioning of the governing bodies. This is due to the fact that governing bodies are a new phenomenon in our schooling system. The implementation of the Act may become increasingly complex and subject to a breakdown in social relations among the participants involved. Corbitt (1997:168) reveals that policy implementation of the Students at Risk Homeless Project was reinterpreted and recontextualised by the schools, and because the policy was at times vague, contradictory, legalistically bound, subject to tight administrative frameworks and demands, and at times permissive, the influence of the State throughout implementation was never homogenous.

Thus, it is important to undertake an in-depth study of the nature of parental involvement in school governance. In this instance the case study becomes more suitable - due to manageability and trustworthiness - than a large scale research study, because it allows a closer in-depth look at a single unit. This will allow me to have an insight into what is happening amongst parents in the governing bodies.

The parent communities in South Africa are not homogeneous. The inadequate infrastructure, and lack of education and organisational capacity may hamper the ability of poor communities to participate in school governance, thus rendering the notion of democratic school governance problematic, leading to the domination of marketisation. These communities belong to different racial groups (residing in segregated areas) and social backgrounds with different levels of education as well. As a matter of policy therefore, while discourse has no independent existence outside material reality, it shapes the way in which that reality is defined and organised. It can determine priorities and orders of importance. This situation has motivated me to choose two schools. This entails doing research in two schools of different social backgrounds. The first is in the leafy and affluent suburb of Rondebosch which is mainly calm and free of criminal activity and other violent related incidents that usually emanate from socioeconomic problems. The second school is in a sandy working class Cape Flats area of Khayelitsha, which is predominantly inhabited by shack dwellers.

The governing bodies of schools with different social backgrounds are selected as small samples of a greater diversity from which a data collection and analysis will have to yield:

1. high quality, detailed descriptions of each case, which are useful in documenting uniqueness; and
2. important shared patterns that cut across cases and derive their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity.

3.3 Research Techniques

The research methods in essence that should benefit my research field are the ones that would be able to do justice to the humaneness of all those involved in the research endeavour.

According to Patton (1987:45), the technical design is a plan for data collection and analysis.

The qualitative methodological approach on which this study is based leads to the adoption of techniques of observations, interviews and documents. Cohen and Manion (1994:107) believe that, whatever the problem or approach, at the heart of every case study lies the method of observation. These techniques stand to enable me to access information on the background of informants, their position on the nature of activities they are involved in, their perceptions and understanding of concepts and their experienced problems and constraints. I hope that through these techniques, I will achieve a reliable understanding of parents' capacity to be involved in school governance.

It should also be noted that the strength of the case study allows the researcher to concentrate on a specific instance or situation and to identify or attempt to identify the various interactive processes at work. Each structure or body has its common and unique features. Therefore, this case study aims to identify such features and to show how they affect the implementation of systems and influence the way a governing body functions. Cohen and Manion (1994:123) believe that case studies are down-to-earth and attention holding in harmony with the reader's experiences, thus providing a basis for generalisation. The generalisation which is allowed in the case study is about an instance or from an instance to a class. For example, from one instance one can make generalisations which may not be far from the general trend about what is happening with governing bodies around the country.

Cohen and Manion (1994:233) define triangulation as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour. Following this approach means that I have to compare and cross check the consistency of information derived from the different qualitative techniques I have used. The information obtained through interviews and observation is validated by checking documents that can corroborate what interview respondents report

However, Patton (1990:467) believes that as with the triangulation of methods, triangulations of data sources within qualitative methods will seldom lead to a single, totally consistent picture. But the point is to study and understand when and why there are differences amongst school participants. In view of these facts, consistency in overall patterns of data from

different sources and reasonable explanation for differences in data from divergent sources contribute significantly to the overall credibility of the findings. The following sections describe in turn each technique used in the study.

3.3.1 Observations

The researcher has to make firsthand observations of activities and interactions, and sometimes engage personally in those activities as a participant observer. For example, I will have to participate in all or some of the governing body meetings and parents meetings. The qualitative researcher talks with people about their experiences and perceptions (Patton, 1990:10). Participant observation according to Le Compte et al. (1993:3) is used to acquire firsthand sensory accounts of phenomena as they occur in real world settings. Investigators take care to avoid purposive manipulation of variables in the study.

To understand fully the complexities of school governance, direct participation in and observation of governing bodies is one of the best methods. Participation, among other things, enables you to discern ongoing behaviour as it occurs and make notes about its salient features because you are engaged in the very activities you set out to observe. In this study, part of the design was to observe meetings of school governing bodies. By sitting in meetings, we can observe the decision making processes, the contributions parents are making, their consistency in attending meetings, their understanding of issues and how they relate to other stakeholders. To ensure that all the deliberations in the meetings are covered, the recording and taking of notes are crucial. In the process I also informally observed the schools as a whole and their surrounding communities - their manner of operation, values, routines, physical features and the social features of the surrounding community.

3.3.2 Interviews

In the interview, knowledge is created from the points of view of the interviewer and interviewee. Kvale (1996:125) believes that the interviewer must establish an atmosphere in which the subject feels safe enough to talk freely about his experiences and feelings.

I decided on interviews because they offer a very flexible and accessible means of investigation. Interviewing people can be informative and stimulating. It is a chance for a short period of time to peer into another person's world. Data is collected through direct oral interaction in which the interviewer elicits responses to a set of structured questions. According to Cohen and Manion (1994:276) a structured or semi-structured interview is one of the frequently used methods of eliciting information in social and educational research. Its contents and procedures are organised in advance. This arrangement allows the interviewer to determine in advance the scope of the investigation in a focussed format.

Interviews have a purpose and procedural organisation which offer the best way of establishing patterns in informants' actions and the meaning in their statements (Powney & Watts, 1987:35). In the design of this study, semi-structured interviews were held with governing body members: parents, learners, coopted members and principal.

The new governance structure requires that the school governing body should fall under the control of parents and that governance should be vested in school governing bodies. It is important, therefore, to critically examine the way in which parents understand the powers and responsibilities enshrined in the SASA. In addition we will need to assess the parents' inherent capabilities, the nature of those capacities and the effectiveness of their participation in school governing bodies. These interviews will enable me to understand the nature of the contributions of parents in governing bodies. Their effectiveness in fulfilling their obligations as parent governors and their level of commitment in executing their functions.

Educators are one of the most important stakeholders of the school governing bodies. They are required to play a role that differs from those that they were previously accustomed to in order to coordinate their involvement in effective participation and collaboration with parents. It becomes crucial therefore to find out how educators view the powers, responsibilities and roles parents play in the functioning of this structure. For the governing body to cohere as a statutory structure the educators have a role to play in working closely and harmoniously with parents. Interviews as set out in Appendix V, will thus focus on how educators see the

participation of parents in school governing bodies and the nature of parents' relationship with other stakeholders.

The new law acknowledges that learners are important stakeholders and should actively participate in governing bodies. Their perception of the powers and responsibilities assigned to parents by the SASA is crucial. It is also necessary to examine the learners' perceptions of the role parents' play in the functioning of this structure in order to have a balanced view of what is happening in governing bodies. The interviews will focus on finding out how the learners, as minors in the governing bodies, see the parents' performance, interaction and relationship with them as learners and other stakeholders.

The Act requires that the principal be an ex-officio member of the governing body. This is the only person who has a secure place and a continuous one in the Governing Body. The principal is a dynamic link between the school and the governance structure. The design also requires the principal's view on the functioning of the governing body in relation to parent participation. These interviews will try to investigate how the principal, as an ex-officio member in the governing body, sees the contributions parents are making in the governing body and how this influences the running of the school.

It would be of paramount importance for the researcher to share ideas and experiences with coopted members, as in the first instance, they are coopted because of their experience. They are likely to have an insight in what has to happen. The interviews will focus on their perspectives of parents on the governing body as outsiders to the school community.

These interviews are carried out to ensure that the data collected embodies an inclusive perspective of the school governance situation. The aim is to talk with people about their experiences in school governing bodies and about the perceptions they may have with regard to the functioning of these structures, eg. school governance, commitment, functioning of governing body, capacity building and background of each interviewee (refer to Appendix 2-5).

3.3.3 Categories of Questions

A number of interview schedules were developed, one for each group of stakeholders on the governing body. However, the underlying logic of this schedule is essentially the same. There are a number of different categories of questions.

3.3.3.1 Questions will be posed to primarily sketch the background of the interviewee so that their responses to questions can be contextualised against their experiences and personal information.

3.3.3.2 There are a number of questions that seek to find out their basic understanding and knowledge of the functioning of governing body structures and school governance. These questions will attempt to find out whether the parents and other stakeholders know exactly what are their responsibilities and obligations as per the Act. To what extent are they aware of their legal rights?

3.3.3.3 There are questions that attempt to gauge the commitment of parents as majority stakeholders, on the extent of their participation in the discharge of their allocated duties. There is a need to find out the extent to which parents are available for governing body meetings and the execution of tasks. How frequently do they attend meetings and who initiates these meetings?

3.3.3.4 There are questions that will examine parents influence and capacity in formulating and implementing policy taking the following into account: vision and mission statements of institution, school policy, minutes and resolutions adopted in governing body meetings, governing body constitution, South African Constitution, South African Schools Act, Educators Employment Act, Basic Conditions of Employment Act, Public Service Act, Employment Equity Act, Labour Relations Act, etc.

The SASA makes provision for capacity building development of parents who are serving on the governing body. This is a crucial aspect in the implementation of the Act.

The impact therefore, that parents will make in the school governing bodies will be influenced by the knowledge they have on school governance matters.

3.3.4 Documents

The most common kinds of documents are written as printed sources. Policy documents from the national and provincial education departments, school policy, minutes of governing body meetings and the school constitution are essential for analysis because they leave behind an impression of their intentions and the outcomes of their actions. Bell (1996:67) claims that documentary analysis of educational files and records can prove to be an extremely valuable source of data. Bell (1996:68) refers to these types of documents as primary ones, on the basis that they came into existence in the period under research. Further, there are inadvertent sources which are used by the researcher for some purpose other than that for which they were originally intended. They are produced by the processes of local and central government for the everyday working of the education system. Such inadvertent documents are the more common and valuable kinds of primary sources.

The analysis of documents is done in order to identify the relevant legislation that provides parental involvement and implementation thereof. The recently enacted South African Schools Act No.84 of 1996 is essential for analysis in order to clarify the status and responsibilities of parents within the established governing bodies of schools. This is a fundamental consideration since this Act makes parents central in the governance of schools. The understanding that parents need to have on the role and function of governing bodies will have an impact on the governance of schools.

3.4 Sample

Qualitative inquiry typically focusses in depth on relatively small samples, even singles cases (n=1), selected purposefully (Patton, 1990:169). Thus, qualitative sampling concerns itself with information richness.

The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich cases for in-depth study (Patton, 1990:169). Information rich cases are governing bodies from

which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research.

The individual members of the governing bodies are included so that the educator can be able to determine quite different experiences. Such a move makes it possible to describe more thoroughly the variations within the group and to understand variations of experience while also investigating core elements and shared outcomes (Patton, 1990:172).

3.5 Data Collection and Analysis

Data is any kind of information which researchers can identify and accumulate to facilitate answers to their queries (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993:158). The categories of data used in this study are collected by means of observations, interviews and documents. Direct personal contact with governing body members has to be made in order to understand what is happening in depth and detail. A meaningful context for what takes places in school governing bodies and what members actually say has been provided. What remains to be reported is largely a description of people, activities and interactions. I am now in a position to capture and report direct quotations from members, both what they say and what they write down. Data also has to be retrieved by reviewing documents. However, choosing methods for data collection means considering available alternatives and continuously reexamining and modifying decisions. Le Compte and Preissle (1993:159) claim that only after they have left the field are qualitative researchers able to specify all the strategies they actually used for a study.

There is typically not a precise point at which data collection ends and analysis begins (Patton, 1990:377). In the course of gathering data, ideas about possible analysis do occur. Data analysis is therefore used to confirm or develop explanations for how and why things happen as they do.

Familiarity with school governance issues may influence one to have certain theoretical predispositions on the research topic. Some data might be omitted and some included. But I will to try to produce analysed data that represent as faithfully as possible responses made

during the data gathering process. In the final interpretation of this data, I will strive to include and present observations as demonstrative of the views expressed in a wider context. Le Compte and Preissle (1993:234) nicely describe the dilemma of the researcher facing a mountain of brand new unanalysed data as a chronic problem of qualitative research is that it is done chiefly with words, not with numbers. Words are fatter than numbers and usually have multiple meanings. This makes them harder to move around and work with. Worse still, most words are meaningless unless you look backwards or forward to other words.

Because my focus is on substance, I have devoted my efforts to analysis. The starting point is to ensure that the information for each case is as complete as possible. The assumptions of the case should be holistic and comprehensive given the focus of evaluation, and will include a myriad of dimensions, factors, variables and categories woven together into an idiographic (relating to anything unique) framework (Patton, 1990:387). A highly readable narrative that could be used by decision makers and information users to better understand what is likely to be in the school governing body has to be produced.

3.6 Reliability and Validity of the Study

The validity and reliability of qualitative data depend to a great extent on the methodological skill, sensitivity and integrity of the researcher (Patton, 1990:11). Generating useful and creditable qualitative findings, observations, interviewing and document analysis requires discipline, knowledge, training, practice, creativity and hard work. Cohen and Manion (1994:241) claim that triangulation can be a useful technique where a researcher is engaged in a case study. Cohen and Manion (1994:241) write:

The advantages of a particular technique for collecting witnesses accounts of an event triangulation should be stressed. This is at the heart of the intention of the case study worker to the multiplicity of perspectives present in a social situation. All accounts are considered in part to be expressive of the social position of each informant. Case study needs to represent, and represent fairly, these differing and sometimes conflicting view points.

3.7 Ethical Issues

Ethical issues are involved in all aspects of the research design and formulation of the research problem right through to the point of publication. Burgess (1989:114) claims “in a

case study, which features social life in particularity, ethical issues are inescapable". It is important that language usage should be accessible and understandable to the researched in order to obtain the desired outcomes.

I am therefore of the view that, in order to fare well in my research endeavour, ethical issues like accuracy, confidentiality, a wide spectrum of consultation, rights of access and continuity of purpose should receive attention. Throughout the process the individual parents will have an opportunity to comment upon how they were represented, both separately and in the context of the report, and at different stages in the process of production and dissemination through a process of feedback. It will also be imperative to give equal treatment to individual parents, establish a flow of information that is independent of hierarchical interests, maintaining the principle that no-one has the right to exclude particular interests or perspectives. These attempts seek to ensure that information is fairly equitably exchanged and that participative deliberation is encouraged.

The challenge is for me to explain the purpose of my study in the first meeting with the various governing bodies to allay any concerns of the participants. It will be important to explain to them that the research findings will be assessed by the University of the Western Cape. The final report will be made available to all participants, so that the research findings may be used to improve the capacity of parents to discharge their obligations effectively in the governing body. Coding and pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of individuals and schools for ethical reasons. The anonymity and privacy of individual interviewees will be guaranteed.

3.8 Outline of the Practical Fieldwork

3.8.1 Introduction

In this section a description of the fieldwork process will be presented. I wrote letters to the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) to allow me access to conduct research in schools falling under its jurisdiction and to the two schools in an attempt to negotiate access to observe governing body meetings, interview school governors and get all necessary documents (vision, the mission, school policy, constitution, code of conduct, etc.) that would

be relevant to this study. I also had an opportunity to informally observe the communities surrounding these schools and extensively explore the schools.

I explained the purpose of my research to the principals of both schools and the ethics of confidentiality to which the research is bound. They both accepted my request in principle pending the approval of their respective governing bodies. The governing bodies approved my request and in the process a rapport developed between myself and the head of each school. Subsequently, the educators as well as school governors were included in this rapport.

The actual fieldwork which was preceded by an extensive exploration of the schools with effect from the beginning of February 1999, was conducted in school A from 7 July 1999 to 8 December 1999 and in School B from 13 July 1999 to 8 December 1999.

3.8.2 Observation

As the researcher, I attempted to make firsthand observations of activities and interactions, sometimes engaging personally in these activities as a participant observer.

To understand fully the complexities of school governance, direct participation in and the observation of school governing bodies was selected as one of the best methods. Basically what was to be observed were the decision making processes. Are they democratic, authoritative and/or manipulative? What contributions are parents making? What is their consistency of attendance and what is their understanding of issues? How do the parents relate to other components?

I intended to participate in all or some of the governing body meetings and parents meetings. The qualitative researcher talks with people about their experiences and perceptions (Patton, 1990:10). Observation, according to Le Compte et al. (1994:3), is used to acquire firsthand sensory accounts of phenomena as they occur in the real world settings and investigators should take care to avoid purposive manipulation of variables in the study. However for me, observation is appropriate because it takes place over an extended period of time which allows more intimate and informal relationships to be formed with those that are observed.

The extent of participation will also depend on the circumstances prevailing, eg. confidential disciplinary processes, interviews, etc.

But in practical terms participant observation was viewed by the participants as the most invasive method of collecting data in both schools. It was perceived as an invasion of privacy of the governing bodies. Their activities were viewed to be highly confidential. When I assured the governing bodies of confidentiality, they asked as to 'how confidential is confidential' because they would not like to be exposed in some other matters which relate to modes of operation and it is a difficult issue to be considered by the governing bodies.

Although I assured everybody that I would use pseudonyms in my report in order to protect the identity of individual schools, all was in vain. I was not given permission by the school governing body of either school to observe their meetings. This meant an important source of data was not available.

However, I did have the opportunity to informally observe the schools as a whole and their surrounding communities. That is, their manner of operation, values, routines and physical features in each school, and social features of the surrounding community.

Despite concerns for confidentiality, confidential documents were passed to me by School A. Some of these are not suitable for publication. While I will not use information that is clearly marked as not being suitable for publication, I will nevertheless use the material to assist in my analysis and understanding of the situation in school governance pertaining to the role and contribution parents make in governing bodies, and their capacity to discharge their obligations as legislated in the SASA and their commitment in executing their duties.

Another unfortunate development is that no documents were obtainable from School B, to their unavailability. There was a failure to properly record minutes in governing body meetings. This is an important indication of the level of functionality of the school governing body and the capacity of parents to participate.

3.9 Interviews

Talking with people helps one to understand and know their world and way of life. This qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their "lived" world prior to scientific explanations.

I had decided on semi-structured interviews because they offer a very flexible and accessible means of investigating. A semi-structured interview, which is one of the frequently used methods of eliciting information in social and educational research, was used in this study.

Semi-structured interviews with governing body members (parents, educators, learners, non-teaching staff members, coopted members and the principal) were held in order to get a balanced picture of what is happening. A total of 6 parents, 2 learners, 2 educators and a principal in School A were interviewed. In School B, 5 parents, 2 educators, 2 learners and a principal were also interviewed. All governing body members were interviewed except those who did not avail themselves (1 refused in School A and 2 were no longer active in School B). It has been a long struggle to secure interviews with parents in School B because of the reluctance they showed in sharing information with me. The school principal was very selective as to who should be interviewed from the parents and gave a cold shoulder to the interviewing of educators, as it was evident that there were differences of opinion on how certain matters are handled in the school.

The interviews mainly took place in their homes and work environment whichever was convenient. This section of data collection has been the most informative and eye-opening experience of this research project. I developed a cordial relationship with all the interviewees to such an extent that the scepticism that some had was eliminated and thereafter they cooperated with all the proceedings of the interview and informal interactions. It has to be noted that in both schools there was a conspicuous absence of coopted members on the school governing bodies.

3.10 Limitations and Strengths of the Study

The case study has a number of weaknesses. A single researcher is gathering all the information, after which selection has to be made. The researcher selects the area for study and decides which material to present in the final report. It is difficult to cross-check information, thus there is always the danger of distortion and issues under discussion may not be universal. However, in this study no selection of interviewees was made and all responses recorded were treated with equal merit.

Van Maanen (1983:118) says that collecting and analysing the qualitative data is a highly labour intensive operation, often generating much stress even for top quality research staff. But the most serious and central difficulty in the use of qualitative data is that the methods of analysis are not well formulated. The securing of interview slots with individual school governors proved to be costly and time consuming. Some members appeared reluctant in the initial stages and I had to work hard to get their cooperation. Others appeared to be reluctant to speak out on controversial issues they were experiencing in the governing bodies. These situations highlighted above could cause difficulties in the interpretation and analysis of data.

The strengths outweigh the weaknesses in that, the personal interaction with individual school governors allowed a rapport to be established between myself, as the researcher, and the interviewees. The atmosphere under which interviews were conducted allowed a free flow of information and many experiences were recorded. These case studies will help to provide rich detail about the process of change and transformation from the parents' perspectives, and will reveal the challenges for school governance.

The refusal of permission to observe meetings by the governing bodies of the two schools denied me an opportunity to gain further insight to procedures and processes that lead to the taking of decisions and the influence parents may have had in these processes. It shows that we have not gone far in practical terms in deepening the democratic practices in our schools. Although transparency is a phrase bandied about by many, in practice this was difficult to realise. There was a great deal of suspicion and fear that had to be overcome.

Despite the problems encountered during the fieldwork, sufficiently rich data was gathered and this will be presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 4

The Nature of Parental Involvement in School Governance

4.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the case studies of the nature of parental involvement in school governance, based on the implementation of the South African Schools Act No.84 of 1996. The key question under investigation concerns the capacity and commitment of parent governors to discharge their responsibilities in terms of the Act. The exercise is carried out in response to the critical questions of the study, "What is the role and contribution of parents in relation to policy matters enshrined in the South African Schools Act, and do they have the capacity to fulfill their responsibilities with respect to their powers and functions?".

4.2 A Description of the Two Schools

The case study was conducted with two schools that are characterised by different social and economic backgrounds, both situated in the Western Cape Province. School A is situated in a leafy and affluent white suburb of Rondebosch with enormous resources at its disposal such as:

- fully equipped laboratories;
- computer facilities; and
- developed sports grounds.

The school is well resourced in terms of physical and human resources allowing it to offer an extensive extra-curricular program. Current physical structure improvements to a value in excess of R 2 million have recently been undertaken. Out of its own coffers it has managed to build additional classrooms, two fully equipped secretaries' offices with modern technology, a well furnished and equipped principal's office, a caretaker's house, music room and other specialised rooms. This has been made possible through the collection of school fees in the amount of R 6 240,00 per annum per learner. School fees collected total in excess of R 5,5

million rand per annum, excluding other fundraising initiatives like tuckshop, parents' days, donations and other fundraising events.

This school has an enrolment of 910 learners and a staff complement of 46 educators, which includes 7 music educators. 18 Educators are employed by the school governing body and the balance of 28 educators are employed by the Western Cape Education Department. There are 22 non-teaching staff of which only 4 are employed by the WCED and the remaining 18 are Governing Body salaried members.

The school was founded in 1953 and serves the greater Rondebosch area. Thus far there have been only 3 serving principals (1 passed away, 1 retired and the current principal serving since 1994) over a period of 47 years. This indicates a maximum level of stability within the school from a leadership point of view. Looking at the 1996 Census figures the average parent could be described as:

English First Language: 86%

Employed: 66% (balance is mainly housewives and elderly retired living off alternate incomes)

Matric & Above Qualification: 78%

Income Above R1500 per month: 72%

Prior to the enactment of the South African Schools Act of 1996, the governance structure was a School Management Council (SMC) which has since been replaced by a Governing Body. The parents, educators and learners of this institution are predominantly white.

The governing body of this school is mainly composed of middle class professionals with highly qualified parent governors holding a number of post matric qualifications, e.g. Bachelor of Science (Physiotherapist), Doctorate in Engineering (Professor), Master of Science (Actuary), Bachelor of Arts and Education (Deputy Director General and advisor to the Minister of Education), Bachelor of Commerce Honours (Chartered Accountant) and Bachelor of Arts in Music & Drama (Training Consultant). Gender representation appears to be skewed with only one woman on this governing body.

The conditions in School B are completely different from the picture we see above. It is situated in a sandy barren Cape Flats area of Khayelitsha, a poor black township which is characterised by shack dwellings. Its school fees' structure is only R 120,00 per annum per learner which allows them to generate an amount of less than R 190 000 per annum. This paltry figure is poorly supplemented by meagre fundraising activities that do not generate more than R 2000,00 profit per event. The school is poorly resourced in terms of physical and human resources allowing it to offer a limited extra-curricular program. No additional buildings and facilities have been added since its construction under the former Department of Education and Training.

The school has an enrolment of 1573 learners and a staff complement of 48 WCED salaried educators and 5 non-teaching WCED salaried members. This school was founded in 1987 and serves the greater Khayelitsha area. Thus far there has been 5 serving principals over a period of 13 years (2 left the school unceremoniously, 1 promotion, 1 appointed as principal at another school and currently serving principal since 1997). Looking at the 1996 Census figures the average parent could be described as:

Xhosa First Language: 97%

Employed: 66% (balance is unemployed and living below the poverty line)

Matric & Above Qualifications: 12%

Income Above R1500 per month: 14%

Prior to the enactment of the SASA, Parent Teacher Student Associations (PTSAs) were the dominant governing structures in defiance to SMCs and have since been replaced by a Governing Body. Parents and learners are all black, while the composition of educators reflects the "rainbow nation" with the majority of educators being black.

The parent governors of this school are poorly educated in terms of academic qualifications, e.g. Standard 5 (Cleaner), Standard 6 (Pensioner), Standard 8 (Educare Assistant), Standard 9 (Unemployed) and Standard 4 (Domestic Worker). Gender representation is skewed in the opposite direction with only one male member.

This picture depicts that the governing bodies of these two schools are subjected to different experiences, each with its own unique features. The interesting question would then be, how do these SGBs operate in these different contexts?

4.3 Parental Involvement in School Governing Bodies

4.3.1 School Governance

The school governors of School A showed an in-depth understanding of the notion of school governance. There is a convergence of views as to the understanding of the main functions of school governing bodies and their responsibilities as parents in such a body according to the SASA. For instance, PA1 outlines the functions and responsibilities of a school governing body to be the formulation of school policies, setting up of structures, determine future planning, the responsibility of representing the parents' aspirations and ensuring the achievement of the school's mission and vision. All parent governors converge in identifying the responsibility for policy formulation in giving strategic direction, in developing the school and bringing coherence to the governance of the school. PA2 confirms the typical view that everybody sitting on the governing body is a governor and not a representative.

School A had all the necessary prescribed documentation in relation to:

- Vision;
- Mission Statement;
- Constitution;
- Academic Programme;
- Admission Policy;
- Code of Conduct; and
- Language Policy

The purpose of these documents is to inform and remind the school community of its responsibilities and how the school should relate to its constituency, whilst the constitution and code of conduct command the school community about the legitimate school structures and its functions, and how people should conduct themselves in the context of the school. The Strategic Planning Framework document claims that the development of School A's vision

and mission statement are founded on assumptions about the transforming future of South African education, and the following critical factors and projections inform the framework:

- National and Provincial education policy and its associated legislated framework will maintain an environment which will allow public schools sufficient governance and funding independence;
- for the foreseeable future it will be necessary to supplement public funds allocated to schools; and
- it is unlikely that the State will be able to meet all the challenges of redressing education, therefore it is incumbent upon School A to commit itself to playing an agreed upon role in supporting this process.

The code of conduct states that School A's community commits itself to learning and responsible citizenship which is characterised by discovering and developing personal potential, being honest and having personal integrity, and encourages individuality (Appendix XI).

When scrutinising these documents closely, I find that they support the devolution of power to school level. These ideas are central to liberal ideology. Ashley (1989:29) defines liberalism as the belief in and commitment to a set of methods and policies that have as their common aim, greater freedom for individual man. Modern liberalism stands educationally for the development of the individual to his full potential, and no great emphasis is placed on the role of groups or communities in public affairs or education. The notion of citizenship in these documents is seen on the basis of personal autonomy (i.e. choice between a variety of activities and ways of life), moral autonomy and democratic participation. The predominant values and ideas are those of individual worth, integrity, open-mindedness, participation, high academic standards, holism and adaptability.

Deem et al (1995:163) suggest three different models of governing bodies, each with their own value orientations. The political model sees the governing body as an arena for solving value conflicts over schooling. The participatory model stresses individual and collective personal development. The latest model, the new managerial, concerns itself in the pursuit of

efficiency. This includes a strong preference for business and enterprise cultures to be introduced in school in the place of more education-centred cultures.

Whatever kind of governing body model is adopted, the kinds of values held by governors are absolutely crucial to the ways in which governing bodies themselves operate. The central feature of School A's practices as reflected in the documents involves the notion of citizen community and strong decentralisation based on market principles. Although the school realises that the State will not be able to meet the challenges of redress, it appreciates the fact that the school will be allowed to fundraise for itself. Their values espoused individual rights and interests rather than collective and public rights and interests. The strength of this consumer ideology is confirmed by the assertion that for the foreseeable future it will be necessary to supplement public funds allocated to schools. The appeal is not so much to a collectivity of caring citizens concerned with public goods in education as to individual consumers of schooling, whether parents, business people or politicians. These consumers, it is believed, are then able to ensure the preservation and fostering of market rights of users of School A, competition between schools for pupils, high educational standards and the efficient use of resources.

All governing body members see the school's vision and mission statement as the embodiment of excellence, equity, quality education and development of the country. It was interesting to find that parents (PA1, PA2, PA4 and PA6) concur with the above assertion as they define equality as the representation of all population groups. However, this representation is not perceived in class terms but only in racial terms. The practice and documents of School A depict a school characterised by new managerial practices, in that it concerns itself with the pursuit of efficiency. This includes a strong preference for business and enterprise cultures that have been introduced in the school in the place of more education-centred cultures. The kinds of values the governors have are absolutely crucial to the ways in which the governing body itself is operating. School governors of School A are professionals who are mainly consumer interest governors because they believe that they know more about running a school and that they are superior to educators, hence they employ some educators from their school funds. These governors mainly come from the same social class (middle

and upper classes) and they are more conscious of teachers' roles and responsibilities, and as a result their salaries and working conditions. Some teachers in the school are in the employment of the governing body to complement those employed by the WCED. There is a general understanding that the school governing body is a legal entity that has a responsibility for all decisions it takes as enacted in the SASA.

In School B there is no substantial understanding of the functions and responsibilities of the governing body. There is no commonality in the way in which these issues are articulated. For instance, PB1 sees the governing body as a structure that must not fear anybody, "One of the main functions of the school governing body is not to fear anybody including the principal because we are all equal", whereas PB4 sees the governing body as a structure that has to see to the well functioning of the school but is unable to explain how. Parents are unable to clearly describe their roles and responsibilities as governors in terms of the SASA, a serious stumbling block to participation. Their self-confidence is impaired due to the lack of cultural resources which entails knowledge among other things.

The only documentation which is known to everybody and claimed to be available is the minutes of governing body meetings. There are no other forms of documentation such as vision, mission statement, code of conduct or any other form of school policy documents available in the school except verbal notification that there are efforts to develop these. This school is indicative of the extent to which the community was affected by the legacy of the apartheid system that left it incapacitated to fulfill its functions.

The above situation places some constraints in assessing the ideology of the school due to the absence of a vision and mission statement, but what came through strongly is that the school gained its orientation to school governance through Parent-Teacher-Student-Association (PTSA) practices. The students were politically advanced and influential in the activities of the school. The PTSA was seen as an alternative governance structure in comparison to the undemocratic DET school management councils. The school management councils were composed of elected and nominated parents whose function was to implement and enforce policies that were decided by parliament where they had no say or input. Their powers were

limited to signing employment forms of teachers and cheques for purchases, as highlighted by Sipamla (1995:17). School governors of School B see themselves as playing citizenship roles, in that, they see the governing bodies as an arena for solving value conflicts over schooling, where individual and collective personal development are high on their agenda, hence they rely on the WCED to provide training for them so that they are equipped with the skills of running and developing their school.

The governors in this school are also from one social class, the working class. They claim to be looking forward to the government doing something to improve their situation. The governors call on the WCED to conduct training sessions for them so that they are able to run the affairs of the school and request that all written material which is relevant to their work be provided in their mother tongue which they could understand easily. Schools such as illustrated above, may find themselves further marginalised.

There is not a single parent who is aware of the legal implications of the governing body's actions. The response from the parent governors of School B clearly indicates that they are not aware of the legal implications of decision-making within governing bodies. For example parent B1 said that she was not clear about the legal nature of her position in a governing body.

Therefore, these parents may find themselves being similar to voters casting a vote without being actively involved in the decision making processes, unless they are empowered to impact on the processes of governing. Just being a member of a school governing body does not mean that an individual will have an equal opportunity to participate in its work. Deem et al. (1995:122) claims that a minority of governors, including women, members of ethnic minorities and those working in unskilled jobs or unemployed, never spoke at all in a formal meeting. This is largely due to a lack of confidence and a fear of seeming ignorant.

4.3.2 Commitment

By and large both school governing bodies hold meetings regularly. The attendance by parents allow the meetings to quorate when they convene. In School B, the activities of the

governing body only takes place on an ad hoc basis whereby meetings are convened mainly around issues or crises that need to be addressed. They confirm that if notices are sent on time they attend these meetings, but in the case of School B a claim is made that these meetings are normally boring due to their crisis nature. PB4 claims that meetings are often called at short notice and sometimes a transport comes to fetch you at home without one having any prior knowledge of the meeting. The meetings are boring due to their crisis nature in the majority of cases. The frequency of holding meetings is monthly in School A and quarterly in School B. This is an indicative of the fact that School A is operating on the principles of “new managerialism” whose values are to be found in an attempt to introduce business and enterprise cultures into schools. These meetings all convene in the evenings at the respective schools to cater for those who are working.

The problem of convening meetings in different schools varies. In School A, PA1 highlights that most members hold senior positions in their field of employment, but all this is addressed by arranging dates for meetings at the start of the year. The times at which these meetings convene does not warrant time-off from work. In School B, the setting of meetings is not preplanned. As a result the meetings sit, irrespective of whether a quorum is there or not. In School B, these meetings are often convened at short notice which makes it difficult to have a quorum. There is no year plan or schedule for meetings.

The parents in School A are all involved in subcommittees and administrative duties that entail paper work (taking minutes, developing documents). The following subcommittees, their composition being governing body members together with coopted members from the parent community based on their skills and expertise per activity area and staff, are fully functional and chaired by parent governors:

- Capital Development: this committee looks at capital projects that have to be undertaken by the school;
- Buildings and Grounds: this committee is responsible for the maintenance of buildings and upkeep of the grounds;
- Staffing: this committee looks at the human resource requirements of the school including service conditions of its employees.

- Sport: this committee sees to the logistics of all sport related activities and facilities;
- Remissions: this committee provides financial assistance to needy learners in the form of bursaries and scholarships including fee exemption in exceptional circumstances based on the outcome of investigations undertaken by the bursor; and
 - Marketing: this committee is responsible for projecting and promoting the school at all levels.

There are no subcommittees in School B to the knowledge of parents. Parents are not involved in paper work or minutes taking. Only the secretary, an educator, records the minutes of meetings. According to Serebnick (1992:312), commitment is defined as a willingness to devote extra effort so that the organisation will be successful and a desire to maintain membership as an indication of considerable loyalty to the organisation. The parent governors in School B lack enthusiasm and commitment to effectively participate in the governance of schools. This may possibly be due to a lack of both material and cultural resources. Time, as a material resource, is very prominent in that in certain cases it can be translated into money when earnings have to be foregone in order to have time off from paid work to participate in school activities. Knowledge and skills, as cultural resources, instil self-confidence, and the lack thereof causes the opposite.

4.3.3 Functioning of the Governing Body

Significant changes have been implemented in School A to ensure a culture of teaching and learning, to increase the resources of the school and to alleviate problems experienced by the governing body members. These include a physical development plan that resulted in the building of more physical structures (caretaker's house, additional classrooms, sports grounds, offices, etc.), establishing parental support programmes that counsel parents in problems they encounter which affect their children and providing counselling to the staff in order to lessen the impact of rationalisation within education and guidance facilities to the learners. The culture of teaching and learning is enhanced by a high level of commitment by educators who is there already. The involvement of parents in subcommittees and activities

were varied in relation to School A. They were involved in finance, buildings and grounds, sport, staff, disciplinary, strategic planning, remissions and development. Each parent was involved in at least one subcommittee. Interestingly enough, the majority of parents were also serving on other structures and subcommittees within their profession or areas of interest outside the school. For example, parent A4 serves on a timetable subcommittee, a professional communication subcommittee, a university education subcommittee and committee setting Matric examinations. Parent A5 is a chairperson of the Community Association whereas Parent A6 is the chairperson of a library subcommittee, Faculty Budget committee and Faculty Staffing committee at his work.

In School B, the restoration of the culture of teaching and learning is seen as a teacher's job. Increasing the resources of the school involves installing gates to minimise burglary and plans for putting up an electric fence. Parents find it difficult to alleviate problems because they claim that these problems emanate from favouritism whereby the principal favours some parents at the expense of others. Parents views and traditional ways of doing things are ignored. There is no transparency and accountability to all parent governors. For example, PB4 claims that the principal is close to the chairperson of the school governing body and other parents are not apprized of all that is taking place with regard to the activities of the school governing body.

At School B no committees were established. Some parents are actively involved in community related structures outside the school. For example, Parent B1 is a member of a street committee. Parent B2 is a member of a funeral committee. Parent B3 is the secretary of a school governing body of a primary school, a secretary of a disciplinary committee of a Burial Fund and a secretary of a street committee.

All parents in School A saw themselves as effective in positions they hold, as well as being part of a collective. They contend that they are assisted in the provision of good education for their children at lower fees. They developed a clear strategic vision for the school, i.e. where they want their school to be, and they prepared the school for the new South Africa. Parents in School A are happy with the presence of educators in the governing body to such an extent

that they coopted both deputies to be part of the governing body, as well as learners because it is claimed they add value and perspective to issues under discussion. They all describe the principal as the CEO of the governing body because he sets the tone, brings issues of importance and is the link between the school and the governing body. The following issues are seen by parents in School A as stumbling blocks in their execution of their functions, i.e. the inability to employ teachers falling under the jurisdiction of the WCED (governing bodies merely nominate and recommend educators where the WCED employs them) and lack of continuity of parent governors serving their full term of office (if your children are no longer at school, you cannot serve on the governing body).

In School B, parents see themselves as effective (when called, they are always there to thrash out any problems at school), in boosting ones confidence (PB1 claims that as parents they close ranks with each other and the principal when teachers attempt to betray school governing body decisions). They give moral support to each other so that they are courageous in facing challenges (betrayal of governing body decisions by teachers) and they mediate when there are disruptions against governing body decisions (refusing to cooperate in the disciplining of fellow colleagues). PB2 sees himself as effective by talking a lot in meetings. This in actual fact indicates that narrow interests amongst school governors contribute in compromising the coherence in the governing body. This is evident in the manner parent governors view educators, who are seen to be problematic, dishonest, selfish, not committed, to have no interest in developing the school, to betray governing body decisions, etc. All the parents interviewed subscribed to this view. Learners' participation in the governing body is viewed in a positive light by parents. The parents see the principal as playing a valuable role in supplying them with information, advising them on how to handle certain issues, assisting in chairing meetings and by always supporting them.

School A impacts on education in that the school governors bring with them some relevant qualifications, knowledge and skills. As a result, they participate to a significant extent in determining school curriculum, increasing school resources, exercising a form of surveillance strategy over teachers and other workers in connection with working conditions and pay. School B on the other hand expects more assistance in terms of training programmes from the

WCED. As a result the chances of them using school governance as a means by which to orient the school towards helping their children are not as great as might be expected. School B is trapped in a passive and dependent form of orientation which has to be overcome to create an enabling environment for development.

4.3.4 Capacity Building

The majority of parents in School A feel that there is no need for training because of the experience that they have accumulated elsewhere in life. PA1 feels that she is privileged to join a committee with a large number of members who had served previously. The deputy provided each member with a file containing the existing school rules, policy, disciplinary code, management issues, etc. Here it is clear that if there is any training required, it is only on new areas of development in education.

Parents in School A feel that the strength of their governing body is in the diversity of skills represented, in the constructive approaches by all in reaching consensus and in the ability of members to analyse and respond to issues and developments. The weaknesses that are seen are the lack of representativity (racial and gender imbalances) and lack of continuity. They also believe that the SASA is good in general but they must be given the right to employ teachers.

The situation in School B presents itself differently. The parents agree that they got training through a workshop once but that they got confused instead of getting assistance. Therefore, they feel that training is very needed on financial matters, school affairs in general, disciplinary issues, legal matters and skill's acquisition. They all see the Western Cape Education Department as the responsible agent for their training.

They see the strengths of the governing body in attending to faults in the school, employing staff and offering support to the principal. PB4 claims that the strength of the school governing body is to be supportive to each other when they attend to faults in the school. Weaknesses are seen to be many, ranging from not having powers to discipline, no money and resources, inconsistency in attending meetings by some members, lack of clarity on what

to do, time constraints and improper convening of meetings (at short notice). For example, PB2 claims that their needs as governors are not fulfilled by the WCED because it says they cannot expel ill-disciplined teachers. PB3 claims that there is no money and resources; they have no rights to discipline learners; and there is a lack of clarity on what is expected from them. They all confirm that they are not familiar with the SASA and that they never read it. The feeling is that the government has left them in the dark.

In School A, the parents recommend that schools are different which necessitates the empowering of the governing body with disciplinary powers. A view is expressed that members must commit themselves to the development of the school. Parent governors of School A hold a strong view that continuity must be ensured, even if learners are no longer at school and that parents be accommodated meaningfully. PA2 recommends that the governing bodies must be grouped into associations so that they can share experiences and that members must be allowed to serve on governing bodies, even if they no longer have learners there, in order to ensure continuity, whilst PA5 recommends that governing bodies must be empowered by some form of disciplinary powers.

Parents of School A see school governing bodies in the context of citizenship. Their desire is that more powers should be devolved to school level. The identifiable feature of their belief is that wide spread privatised consumption enhances rather than diminishes citizenship. They believe that those who lack resources can still be helped by the State.

In School B, they recommend that the government must provide schools with money and security, and that the WCED should avail itself in times of need. They still expect a strong centralised thrust of the State in order to support and address the plight of the disadvantaged communities.

4.3.5 Representation in the Governing Bodies

One of the key policy issues in South Africa today is the affirmation of women into positions of responsibility at all levels of society. In the process of my research I have discovered that

86% of School A governing body members are males, contrary to 83% of School B governing body members who are females.

Deem et al. (1995:6) claims that, women and men have formal equality before the law in the UK, but as citizens the extent of their democratic participation is not necessarily what that formal equality might lead them to expect. This situation is indicative of the fact that the structural position of women, together with their different experiences from men, works against the women's attainment of the rights of citizenship. Deem et al. (1995:54) further claims that women's subordination in the private sphere constrains their participation in the public sphere. These constraints include: the experience of hierarchy in the home, which undermines women's development as citizens, the responsibility for children, the lack of available time, and women's different experience of power which does nothing to enhance their feelings of confidence and control.

With regard to School B, women are not under-represented on the governing body, and thus we have to reasonably expect that they are able to exercise their active citizenship in this field equally with men. But this issue should not be taken at face value, because in the context of patriarchal relations in traditional communities, schooling has been associated with women's roles. Thus, although female representation is 83%, it could still be associated to the broad notion of male chauvinism which seeks to undermine the potential of women.

The resilience of patriarchal institutions and practices has largely, though not exclusively, been reinforced by ideologically projecting women's oppression and gender inequalities as part of 'normal', 'acceptable' and 'long-standing' cultural traditions (SACP, 1998:5). It is crucial to note that, within the working class and the poor communities generally, patriarchal practices are prevalent and harsh.

4.4 The Notion of the SASA

From the interviews with parents, it appears that School A is a "citizen community" which has the capacity to realise the responsibilities that go with it. Parent governors are more motivated and more informed regarding the availability of educational options. There is an

abundance of both material and capital resources. Among these is time, a very prominent resource which is translated into money when earnings have to be foregone in order to have time-off from paid work. The parent governors at School A do not experience problems in arranging time-off as they are all in professional jobs and some own businesses. As a result there is flexibility in the usage of time so that they are available for governing body activities without losing any money.

For School A, cultural capital, which refers to the habits of thought and legitimate knowledge and forms of communication that are transmitted by education and other socialisation practices, is in abundance. The knowledge they have make them self-confident and politically competent which make their participation easier. Unfortunately, the resources of time, money and cultural capital are not distributed randomly throughout the population. Instead, they are distributed broadly along the lines of social class and other forms of social relations. School A parent governors are able to engage in public discourse and action relating to the purposes and policies of their school. They have shown a high level of commitment in carrying out governing body duties, in that they devote extra effort so that their governing body is successful. They have also shown enthusiasm to participate.

School B is in a precarious situation in that there are no specialised offerings with even fewer resources. As consumers, parents from School B, who are from a lower social class, feel that they are incapacitated by the lack of resources and privatised consumption erodes moral values and encourages selfishness amongst schools. Therefore, they need the help of the State. There is poverty of both material and cultural resources. As a result, parent governors do not have the capacity to realise their vision. This situation indicates that the SASA in practice is dominated by the consumer vision.

It is easier for some schools to take advantage of its provisions, in the process reinforcing and widening the gap between the privileged and the disadvantaged. Hence, it falls short of ensuring a fair distribution of material and cultural resources to schools, particularly those coming from the disadvantaged background like School B.

4.5 Observation of Parents by Other Stakeholders

4.5.1 Educators

At School A, educators argued that meaningful contributions by parents are constrained by the amount of time parents have available for discharging their allocated duties and responsibilities. The lifting of these time constraints could allow the governing body to further gain the depth of commitment, expertise and energy available from parents. Some educators claim that, parents are often not objective enough when dealing with issues and sometimes personal interests do surface. For example, EA1 claims that personal interests surface from some parents at times. On the whole, parents are respected for their wealth of experience and expertise they bring to the governing body meetings. This tells us that the relationship between parents and educators is cordial but critical at times.

At School B, the educators were concerned about the lack of insight parents have with regard to school related issues as a result of their lack of qualifications and literacy background. They claim that the government should take responsibility for training, educating and capacitating parents about the duties and responsibilities that have been entrusted to them. It is evident from my observations that should the parents be afforded these opportunities, they are willing to learn and this should place them in a favourable position when confronted on issues of a complex nature. Educators believe that parents are easily misled or accept issues on face value without critically analysing information placed before them. For example, EB1 claims that parent governors listen uncritically to the principal and as a result they are easily misled. This reinforces the view that parents and educators address issues in the governing body from different opposing paradigms. This leads to mistrust between the two parties.

4.5.2 Learners

At School A, learners only reinforced the positive aspects of parental involvement in their education by acknowledging the variety of skills, expertise, commitment, productivity, cooperation, and availability they offer for school activities. They share the same vision as their parent governors and display a fair amount of commitment to their duties. Their understanding of issues confirms that they have sufficient amounts of both material and cultural resources.

At School B, learners were happy with the role and commitment parents were showing on governing bodies but were concerned at the poor attendance and lack of interest shown by some parents. Learners often view parents as siding with and defending irresponsible educators and claim that at times parents only show an interest in issues when personal interests are at stake.

4.5.3 Principal

At School A, the principal welcomed the divergent views of parents as long as they were managed properly to benefit the school in general. He revealed that debates are at times heated, but at the end, consensus is reached. Parents in the main are supportive and understanding of the challenges facing the school. The relationship between the principal and school governing body is very cordial. Parents unanimously refer to the principal as the CEO and they appreciate that. The spin-off from this relationship is that parents have such confidence in the management of the school that they coopted both deputies to the governing body.

At School B, the principal highlighted the positive aspects of working with parents in that they are committed and could be counted on for support in dealing with school related issues. However, he claimed that in times of crisis, parents often back down on issues of principle when it reaches a boiling point. For example, on controversial issues such as disciplining an educator, parents will not attend the meeting thereby distancing themselves from any decision that might be taken. He also believes that at times parents side with educators when decisions are challenged by the educator component of the governing body. He proposed that the willingness, commitment and the preparedness of parents to sacrifice their time in facing the challenges of education are hindered by the lack of understanding of their duties, obligations and responsibilities as members of the governing bodies.

At times there appears to be a divergence of interests between the principal, educators, learners and parent governors on certain issues which manifests in the form of a power play between them. Many writers have expounded and theorised on the concept of power. Some have seen it as a property of structures (as evident in State or an organisation), some as

control over distribution of resources and some as being about relationships. The question of whether power is negative and repressive, facilitative rather than repressive, or a combination of both has sparked off a lot of research and debate. As yet there is little agreement on the matter. But social scientists have agreed on one point: power is not neutral.

Lukes (1986) refers to power as having three dimensions. In the one-dimensional notion of power, emphasis is placed not just on who adversely affects the interests of whom, but on interests explicitly revealed as preferences in decision-making. An example here would be a principal who desires to introduce a standardised uniform for his or her pupils and achieves this by simply overruling the governors who are opposed to it. In the two-dimensional concept, power is exercised not only by prevailing over the opposing interests of others, but also by manipulating agendas and determining which issues are debated and which are not, thus excluding any public discussion of issues which might threaten the interests of the powerful. An example of this might be when the chair of a governing body or principal decides not to place an item on the agenda for the next meeting because they do not think that it is in their interests to do so.

In the three-dimensional concept of power, interests that are both revealed and concealed are included, but in addition it “also allows that power may operate to shape and modify desires and beliefs in a manner contrary to people’s interests” (Lukes, 1986:10). It is extremely difficult to observe three-dimensional power in action. But one might suspect a three-dimensional concept of power to be operating in certain instances.

One such instance is where some governors (including the chair) and the principal believe strongly that the school should have a hall. Another group of governors feel that the procurement of computers is a more pressing need. The governors and principal (who are “pro hall”) always silence those governors who are in favour of computers by using every opportunity in public to express their preferences (one dimensional power). They also use covert means by refusing to place purchases of computers as an agenda item for meetings (two-dimensional power). However, these two strategies might lead to unintended consequences whereby the “pro-computer” group, frustrated at having their desire blocked

within the governing body, decide to air their views and motivations at other forums in the community. This in turn has the effect of rallying more members of the community behind them, thus forcing the issue of obtaining computers onto the agenda of governing body meetings, and also possibly increasing its public appeal - something which the “pro hall” group had always tried to prevent.

Because three-dimensional power is not directly observable, one can only speculate about its existence. These governing bodies are not immune from being contaminated by power relation struggles in order to secure personal interests. For instance, the principal of School A reported that discussions in governing body meetings become heated when opposing views are tabled on certain issues such as the prioritising of budgetary expenditure.

4.6 Influence of Socio-Economic Factors

It is evident that schools which already had governing bodies in place prior to the SASA, contrast sharply with schools who have only recently entered the arena of formal governance. School A, situated in an affluent suburb, bears testimony to this with parents playing an active role in the governance of the school. Parent A4 said that he had worked in an SMC and therefore does not need training. In SMCs which were predominantly in white schools administered by the former House of Assembly, parents had enormous powers in making decisions at schools. These councils appointed teachers, decided on the curriculum and raised school funds. This indicates that parents in white schools, even before the advent of the SASA, had a fair amount of exposure to school governance.

The legacy of apartheid is still being felt in ex-DET schools with parents battling with “bread and butter” issues. The poor attendance and lack of interest of some parents at governing body meetings are evidence of the apathy that is prevalent within the community. In the past parental involvement was restricted and parents have now been thrown in the deep end and expected to govern their schools as if the playing fields are all level. The experience they gained from participating in PTSAs is not of much help presently because PTSAs were often not able to coherently articulate their role or did not possess the necessary skills to manage. The implementation of policy generated by PTSAs would be left to the management staff,

consisting of the principal and heads of department. PTSAs played more of a political role than one of school governance.

The notion of community participation does not feature much in the vocabulary or articulation of parent governors of School B although, throughout the years of struggle for democracy in education, community involvement was mooted as essential for real democratic participation by the people. The notion of community participation is not taken up with the same vigour as it was before. Parents are more passive and dependent, looking to the government into doing something for them. The parents expect that school governing bodies would be empowered to discipline teachers and learners alike, that the WCED will provide them with training programmes so that they acquire skills, and that the State must supply their school with resources.

What is evident here is that School B is isolated and at a distance from School A. The idea of self-managed schools as embodied in the SASA has become intertwined with ideas of choice of school. There is competition between schools and funding is based upon the number of learners and the social background which competing schools attract. Changes designed to introduce the market principles in education are contained in the SASA. The responsibility for improving quality is therefore in the hands of self-managing schools. This would enable parents to choose good quality education for their children by enrolling them in schools of their choice.

Smyth (1993:240) claimed in the UK context

The British government has no interest in equity in educational provision. It is using the competitive market version of self-managing schools to return to a more inegalitarian past where children are schooled in ways deemed 'appropriate' to their social class and ethnic group.

Smyth's position suggests that contemporary school reform is substantially motivated by the concerns for productivity, international competitiveness and a changing job market. The post April 1994 period in South Africa is often characterised by consensus and nation building in which the framework of the present State provision of education was established. Others have argued that it is a period in which elite groups preserved and protected the stratified and

selective system that serve their interest well, while permitting some necessary but limited expansion of opportunity.

The case study reveals that the features of the above scenario are evident in the case of South Africa. The SASA has unintended outcomes that reinforce and perpetuate the inequalities of the past. Although this text espouses the notion of equity and redress, the effect on the ground is that there is a disparity of social classes amongst South African schools, and thus a marketised interpretation of the SASA tends to dominate.

The practical social problem is that there is a massive increase in inequality between these two schools, resulting from the fact that the productivity gains engendered by capitalism has been siphoned off by a new managerial elite. There is thus an increasing gap between those in advantaged areas and those in disadvantaged areas. Cole (1989:10) asserts “The government is creating a system which will combine the worst features of central control with the inequalities of a market system”. He (1989:9) further suggests that the project of the Right has blatantly and unashamedly been to strengthen international and (to a lesser extent) national capitalism at the expense of the working people. The data from the case study suggests that schools exist within socio-economic parameters. For example, in the final analysis, admission decisions are not controlled in any central manner; therefore selective admission criteria are easy to implement. Thus, in South Africa a system that combines the features of central control with the inequalities of a market system has been created which further reinforces the marginalisation of the disadvantaged communities.

The power relations that exist in the governing body of School B reflect that not everyone participates equally. Firstly, the gap between the level of education of the principal, teachers and learners, on the one hand, and the parent governors on the other hand means that parents do not have the knowledge to grapple with complicated school governance matters. The notion of involving ordinary citizens in the administration of schools was seen as part of the ideal of extending democracy to the citizenry. But there was also another idea underpinning this move. This was to encourage what is called ‘enterprise capital’, a form of business culture in which emphasis is placed on entrepreneurial drive, innovative financial planning

and consumer service. This means that financial responsibilities such as controlling budgets is handed down to individual school governing bodies rather than regional authorities. We see the beginning of this tendency in the SASA where individual governing bodies may apply to the Head of Department in the province to be granted, amongst others, the following functions:

- to maintain and improve the school's physical plant;
- to purchase textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school; and
- to pay for services to the school.

The above is evident at School A that has displayed capacity to fulfill the above whereas School B cannot make any move in that direction because of the legacy of the past and the working class background of parents.

I want to contend that, effective parent involvement means parents take part in policy making and governance, and work to hold the education department accountable for producing better schools. It means parents view themselves as committed 'owners' of public schools, willing and able to speak up and take action to defend and promote quality public education. But as witnessed in the case of School B, where there is a lack of both material and cultural resources in the parent governors, the situation is gloomy and static.

Corbitt (1997:168) suggests that, all policy evolves from beliefs of governments or institutions and develops specific aims which state expectations about how these beliefs can be implemented. The aim of the SASA is to make education better, more efficient and more just. But its implementation has become increasingly complex and increasingly subject to a breakdown in the social relations between the participants involved. Despite the governing body having been established in 1997, to date School B has not been able to develop any policy document or establish governing body subcommittees. This shows that there is a lack of capacity from the parent governors. Therefore, to address this situation the government will have to assist with vigorous training programmes.

It becomes important to find out what is needed in response to the neo-liberal agenda which has engulfed the education system, and how to assert the notion of equity and redress. This takes into account some weaknesses that are present in the SASA.

4.7 Conclusion

The data gathered during the case study process reveals vast discrepancies which are found between previously advantaged and disadvantaged schools in the apartheid era. The study shows that the SASA has tensions and contradictions which could allow either “consumer market” or “citizen equity” to prevail in practical terms. However, I argue that the SASA in practice, is dominated by a consumer vision. There is a gap between the Act as a policy text and practice. The study reveals that the consumer interest model and ideology tend to privilege private and individual interests over the wider public interest. This privileging certainly works against those schools that were previously disadvantaged and which mainly serve the working class.

Theoretically there exists one education department. The reality of the situation is that parents who belong to the previously disadvantaged communities are still grappling in vain with the role they have to play in school governance. The schools that meaningfully involve parents school governance are former Model C schools who had an opportunity of gaining experience through school management councils, and they have material resources and cultural capital. This has led to School A wanting more autonomy in order to protect the privileges of the past. Parents from School B genuinely need assistance so that they may overcome the handicap caused by the apartheid system.

Parents are willing to actively partake in governance, irrespective of their socio-economic background. The confidence emanating from School A in the carrying out of their duties and responsibilities entrusted to them by the SASA is the result of years of experience which has been built up prior to 1996. Parents in School B see the contribution of educators who serve in the governing body as destructive, in that teachers are more concerned with defending narrow interests of teachers even if a teacher’s behaviour is contravening education policy or incompatible with the culture of teaching and learning.

Changes in the education arena have yet to mirror corresponding changes in the political arena. Until an equitable balance is struck between the mutually supportive role that all role players can serve, parent empowerment towards parental involvement will not yield maximum results. There is a huge qualitative difference between these two schools in terms of material resources, cultural resources, and the capacity to fulfill responsibilities and functions of the governing bodies. In order to increase the participation of parents with limited exposure to the practices of the system, these constraints have to be overcome.

This situation needs special attention. One possibility is the model of the LEA parent involvement policy in the UK that saw the development of a parental involvement policy for building the capacity of parents and increasing access to participation despite limited English proficiency. The need therefore, is to provide assistance to parent governors in understanding the contents of the SASA, and to provide information on how parents can participate in decisions relating to school governance.

All parents in School B do not understand the South African Schools Act of 1996 and the implications of the Act for them as parent governors. Further, the Act is not clear on the specific role of parents in the governing body and what parents can and cannot do.

Parent governors are more positive towards parental involvement in close cooperation with other stakeholders. The possibility exists for a greater impact that parent governors might have in school governance having support programmes developed to boost their confidence.

I therefore believe that what is needed in response to this neo-liberal trend is an increased vigilance, and increased inventiveness and courage for there is a complex problem brought into play by these developments in our country. Education policy over the recent past in South Africa has reflected government concerns for redressing the disadvantaged in education, but of course, many problems are encountered.

The next chapter concludes the study, suggesting and recommending ways and means in which support programmes may be developed to enhance the capacity of parent governors thereby boosting their confidence so that they can meaningfully take part in school governance.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

Throughout the history of South African education during this century, there has been considerable centralised control over education which enabled the State to keep a tight grip on educational policy and practice. However, developments in the educational sphere took place throughout the world as shown in Chapter 2. The notion of SBM became a central feature of these world developments which in the main resulted in the concept of consumer markets which refer to the extension of the free market into public sector services. Commercial enterprise becomes the paradigm to be emulated by public sector institutions. But the proponents of SBM, view it in the context of a “citizen community” which relates to the tradition of participatory democracy which is mainly educative because it permits the development of necessary individual attitudes, and physical qualities required by democracy. Active citizens must be developed.

During the 1980s, civil society structures were to be created to allow meaningful participation in education by all citizens in contestation of the apartheid reign. When the new government came into power in April 1994, it stated that the principle of democratic governance should increasingly be reflected at every level of the system. There should be consultation and appropriate forms of decision-making by elected representatives of the main stakeholders, interest groups and role players, and a devolution of powers to school level.

These developments in the South African context gave birth to the SASA. The SASA thus draws on the legacy of the ERS document which argues for a ‘consumer market’ notion because it emphasises choice, freedom and parental management autonomy based on free market ideology. The SASA also draws on NEPI / ANC documents which argue for the notion of “participatory democracy”, in that, both assume that the form of decentralisation envisaged expands citizen involvement in the development of policy at high levels of the

education system particularly on a provincial and national level. Both the NEPI and ANC documents assume that the provision of public goods (social services) cannot be left simply to the whims of sectional interest groups or individual parents but should be controlled and financed by central government.

Therefore, both these schools of thought (ERS on the one hand and NEPI / ANC on the other hand) have influenced the policy text of the SASA, which means that tensions, ambiguities and contradictions in the SASA are inevitable. It was essential to South Africa's new democracy that people reached a high level of consensus on their public school system. Parent communities are now unlike in the past, being afforded the opportunity of becoming involved in school governance.

One factor on which the vision of the SASA depends is parental participation in school governance, but the reality in practical terms is that, it is entangled by a variety of contradictions. What has been learnt from the case study provides a particular understanding of the real life situation.

The case study indicates that the level of understanding of school governance related matters of parents of both schools is uneven, as a result of their different social and economic backgrounds. The parent governors of School A had an opportunity of gaining experience in school governance through SMCs and they have accumulated an abundance of both material and cultural resources, whilst parents from School B genuinely need assistance so that they can overcome the handicap caused by the apartheid system which is reflected in the lack of both cultural and material resources.

Smyth (1993:58) reaffirms this view in that middle class parents have access to the school environment which is denied to lower class social groups. Middle class parents are related to schools through language and experience while lower class parents are not, due to lack of 'cultural capital' which often leaves poor parents out of the participatory processes.

I therefore, argue that if we want the democratic vision of the SASA to prevail, then we need to design a system of schooling which can secure the broader educational benefit for all. This would be a common and comprehensive system attached to a common curriculum. That is, one for which the composition for positional advantage is postponed for as long as possible and one in which early jockeying for positional advantage by either learners or parents is actively discouraged. Otherwise a market vision will prevail, and offer a hierarchy of different schooling opportunities of just the kind the market requires. My case studies show how the gap between the rich and poor widens. Maybe schools like School A have to learn to have a political will for equity. In such a context the rules can be constructed so that parents' natural and proper desire to act in the interest of their own children become rationally directed to efforts which benefit the wider community. They are thus partners with the school and with other parents in a genuinely educational enterprise more than manipulators of the school system and in competition with other parents for the sake of the positional advantage of their own children. Of course no one should be so naive as to imagine that this second element of the parental educational enterprise will entirely disappear. But we do not need to deliberately construct market mechanisms in education perfectly designed to maximise the narrowly self-interested pursuit of positional advantage at the expense of the more broadly socially (including self) interested pursuit of a widely educative and educated community

Feintuck (1994:78) reminds us that the problem from the point of view of accountability lies not so much in any particular structure but rather in the essentially hidden nature of power relationships, and the difficulty in identifying the focus of power in order to render the power relationships susceptible to scrutiny and challenge. In most cases, it seemed that schools managed the transition to grant maintained status in the UK with relative ease and continuity of existing power relationships.

Schools with different backgrounds need different kinds of intervention. There is a need to train parents in School A type schools in a new set of democratic values, like a political will for equity. There is also a need to retrain parents in School B to become more proactive in their collaboration with other stakeholders. The need to strengthen assertiveness of parents in

School B is essential in implementing change as well as for the clarification of policies, practices and expectations of other stakeholders.

The South African Schools Act of 1996 which is presently implemented seeks to provide an education system that responds to broad social, economic and political goals, notwithstanding the tensions, ambiguities and contradictions that are eminent in it. The SASA encourages parental involvement by ensuring that school governance is vested in the hands of parents who must be in the majority. This may be interpreted in terms of a community or a consumer vision. Accompanied by a lack of material and capital resources (in previously disadvantaged schools) and in the absence of any sustained capacity building programmes for parents in particular, meaningful involvement of parents is an ideal to which parent governors of School A and School B in the study aspire. However, the commitment of parents in trying to get things done is tremendous in both schools.

5.2 The Legacy of the Past

The study of the nature of parental involvement in school governance of parents from different social backgrounds indicates that the effects of the apartheid era are still very much with us. The composition of both governing bodies still reflects the racial composition of the school community. The imbalances of the past in the form of physical resources in each school, learner:teacher ratios, parents' level of education and the general environment of each school are still very glaring.

It is evident that the socioeconomic context within which the schools are located greatly affects the dynamics within the schools. Schools mirror the community in which they exist. Parental involvement affords the other stakeholders, educators in particular, the opportunity of familiarising themselves with the socioeconomic conditions of the communities in which they teach.

In the case of School A, there are no poverty stricken areas in the community. Parents live mainly an affordable to luxurious life. However, you cannot say the same thing with School B. The high unemployment rate and rivalry over scarce resources in the surrounding

communities have contributed to social problems such as theft and vandalism of school property. The parents who are serving in the governing body are affected by this situation.

It would be expected that educators will use appropriate tools to tackle the emotional and economic plight of parent governors and learners in the entire school with the necessary understanding that is required.

5.3 Ideological Implications

The SASA of 1996 has involved certain decision-making functions combined with increased self-management at the school level which came as a result of the influence of ERS, NEPI and ANC documents. Whilst the SASA marks a democratic imperative in the history of education in the South African context, however this development represents a fundamental transformation of school governance and extension into the domain of educational policy of the same logic that informs market liberalism and economic rationalism.

The transformation of education in South Africa has embodied values of consensus and social justice, but intrinsic educational purposes have been cynically disregarded by the influence of the ERS document in particular. The enactment of the Act was the site for a struggle of contesting political, ideological and educational principles. The outcome was a complex one. It cannot be expected that, in the first instance, a school capable of generating income of R 5 million per annum will compete equally with the school with a lousy R 150 thousand per annum. Essentially this situation depicts a conflict between the instrumental values of economic management and the intrinsic values of educational democracy.

Whereas the transformation promised more community involvement, increased parental choice, better managed, more effective and equitable schools, the reality is very different. Within the new arrangement, individual schools receive annual 'operational grants' from the government based on a complex formula. These grants cover such areas as school maintenance and teaching resources. Although schools are able to supplement these grants with local fundraising, their capacities have varied widely with resultant inequalities of provision

Ball (1990:17) provides a powerful account of the influence of the New Right discourses on education policy in Britain. Central to his analysis is an understanding of discourse designating the conjunction of power and knowledge. He also claims that discourses embody meaning and social relationships where they constitute both subjectivity and power relations. That is, rather than seeing class ideology being determined by economic interests alone, such an approach starts from understanding how social classes along with social groups, organised around racial, cultural or gender identities, discursively construct their own world views and political projects out of a universe of possible ideological elements. Therefore with regard to the implementation of the SASA, my case study reveals that the emerging ideology is a new liberal one in that the richer, educative and universally beneficial purposes of schooling in terms of the Act have become subordinate to the narrower, self-interested function which benefits some at the expense of others.

5.4 Parents' Indifference & Communication Dynamics

The lack of interest displayed by parents of School B, in particular on matters pertaining to involvement in school governance raises, some concerns. There is no encouragement to make parent governors effectively participate in school governance. There are no constructive issues that feature in discussions, and meetings are convened to discuss mainly crises. Educators are often viewed by parent governors as contributing to the perpetuation of the crisis atmosphere in that they betray the decisions of the governing body.

At another level, the presence of stakeholders (learners, educators, parents and non-teaching staff) from different age groups and social classes is a problem that is overcome by parents interacting and sharing views with other stakeholders who are involved in governance structures. Sectoral interests are being managed such that the image of the schools is projected uniformly by reaching consensus on issues of importance to all stakeholders.

5.5 Lack of Support Programmes

The parent governors of School A have all indicated that they do not need any training because they had the benefit of getting exposure in executing many of their functions in the SASA through SMCs. However, the absence of capacity building programmes minimises the

productive involvement of teachers and parent governors in School B. The SASA (1996:14) has promised that it will see to the training of governing body members. To date, not much has happened and this matter has to be rectified. A school community cannot function democratically as envisaged by the SASA if its governors do not have the necessary training and skills. A detailed programme of training school governors has to be developed as a matter of priority.

5.6 Parents' Attitude Towards other Stakeholders

Although the principal is an ex-officio member of the governing body, he or she is regarded as a key person in the leadership of the school by parent governors of both schools. Parent governors in both schools see the principal as the CEO of the governing body. The principal is viewed as the person who carries out the decisions and policies of the governing body, draws up the agenda and convenes meetings. He is seen as a reservoir of information for the governing body and his leadership is key. Learners are also welcomed but issues like the appointment, dismissal and salaries of educators are regarded as too sensitive for discussion with learners. Parents of School A also see the value in the participation of teachers, but those of School B regard educators as being non-cooperative in school affairs.

5.7 Finance Committees

The only school that has a finance committee that deals with budgeting and more lucrative ways of investing school monies is School A. This is made possible by the expertise of some parent governors, like a chartered accountant. Parent governors in School B indicated that they need training on how to handle financial matters of the school

The involvement of parents results in parents taking ownership of the school. The responsibility of providing quality education is dependent on the fundraising abilities of the parent. With regard to School A, parents through community involvement have access to facilities that schools require. This liaison extends to both human and physical resources. The involvement of parents in school governance taps the reservoir of potential that the community has to offer. The fundraising drive for School A is more of a top-up exercise which is driven with much vigour. The bulk of their funds is raised from schools fees. The

entire school community is well connected to the corporate world which makes things easier for them. However, decreased spending by the State has placed an added burden on underprivileged schools like School B. The school community is still largely trapped in a cycle of poverty and under qualification

5.8 Implications for Policy Implementation

Ball's (1993b) differentiation between policy as text and policy as discourse can be used as a means of examining why implementation of the SASA is challenging. The former involves the agency side of policy work and allows for an understanding of why policy processes are messy, unpredictable and conflict provoking. The latter suggest that policy is a part of the big picture and constraints which frame what can be said and thought at any given time.

The implementation of the SASA has revealed complexity, messiness, inconsistencies, ambiguities and dilemmas within the multiple levels of policy work in the State, schools and individuals. This study has also revealed the power of schools. Hence School A is able to employ educators and non-teaching staff and develop the physical structures of the school

5.9 Recommendations

Taking into account the complexity of the area of education and the lessons learnt from the case study of both School A and School B, this research study makes a number of suggestions for the functioning of school governing bodies in terms of a democratic vision as opposed to a neo-liberal vision.

5.9.1 The School and its Community

A relationship of interdependency based on trust and respect should be encouraged between the community and the school so that the community may take ownership of, and help to resolve, the major school problems (Chisholm and Vally, 1996:37). Parent B3 emphasised that they need money to build an electric fence so that they can minimise burglary in the vicinity of the school. A sense of ownership, therefore, would make community members feel responsible in securing the school. This collaboration requires hard and sustained work from the department officials.

5.9.2 Training Programmes for Educators

There is a mistrust between educators and parents caused by power struggles that are noticeable in governing bodies, particularly in School B. Therefore, there is a dire need for the inclusion of parental involvement strategies as a required component of teacher education programmes. Schools and perhaps the education department need to provide the necessary strategies that will encourage and sustain parental involvement. Programmes should be devised to explain the importance of parental involvement to teacher trainees. They should also be provided with the necessary skills that will allow them to successfully implement parental involvement techniques. This could go a long way in making the educators understand that a well functioning school needs a stable governing body with strong parental involvement.

5.9.3 Towards Harmonious Relationships at School Level

According to the Act, the governing body is a statutory structure. Every decision that the governing body takes has legal implications. The act further allows the learners to serve in the governing body with no guidelines as to the minimum age. Legally any person who is under the age of eighteen is a minor and cannot make legal decisions. This is a contradiction that the Act has to clarify for the country.

The concept of democratic school governance that respects the rights of all stakeholders to articulate and defend their interests should be advanced through a process of consultation. In the absence of reliable parent input in the decision-making process, reform as envisaged by the SASA will have no positive or long lasting effects.

5.9.4 Building Capacity for Involvement

To its credit, the SASA and the preceding texts outlines several measures to address the issue of capacity building in education, especially in relation to school governance.

The Department of Education has promised that it would see to the training of the governing body members. To date, not much has happened and this matter has to be rectified. A school

community cannot function democratically as envisaged in the SASA if its governors do not have the necessary training and skills.

The need for capacity building programmes for parents in the disadvantaged communities must be pursued as a matter of priority. Much of the efforts in implementing the legislation around the SASA revolves around the input of parents. For too long these parents have been excluded from substantive decision-making processes at school level. According to Sipamla (1995:111), the UK experience supports the idea of training governing bodies to sustain them. Innovative and cooperative initiatives have to be developed in order to enhance parental involvement.

Support for building the capacity for strong parental involvement can be accomplished by:

- providing assistance to parents in understanding the context of the SASA and their responsibilities thereof;
- ensuring, to the extent possible, that information related to school governance and parent programmes, meetings and other activities are sent to them in the language they can understand.

To ensure effective involvement of parents and to support partnerships between the school and stakeholders to improve school governance, each school and education department may:

- provide the necessary literacy training programmes for parent governors, and may be for other parents as well;
- pay reasonable and necessary expenses associated with local parental involvement activities, including transportation and child care costs, to enable parents to participate in school meetings and training sessions; and
- train and support parents to encourage the involvement of others.

Parental participation is not limited to parents serving as governors. Parents must be encouraged to participate in subcommittees towards the development of the school. For participatory SBM to become democratic and egalitarian, individual empowerment must give

way to social empowerment. There must also be a training of parents for a new set of democratic values.

5.9.5 The Socio-Economic Situation as a Key Factor

Communities that are subject to abject poverty, where people are affected by hardships and a high level of illiteracy, need special attention. A multi-disciplinary approach is required. It is clear that some of the problems that affect some parents cannot be handled by the school community alone.

In the short term, the services of certain agencies like clinics, social service centres, counselling services, mediation and conflict management courses would be necessary. But, these would be temporary measures. In the medium term, unless the scourge of unemployment is addressed, the expansion of capacity among parents will be curtailed. The improvement of social conditions of the communities that are disadvantaged is a necessary condition for better school governance and good education generally.

5.9.6 Continuity in Governing Bodies

It has become evident that in both schools, parents hold the view that disqualifying parents to serve in the governing body because of not having a child currently in a particular school is affecting continuity in school governance. The expertise and the experience that have been accumulated over the past few years are lost in a minute, all to the detriment of the school.

In ensuring continuity, I suggest that having a child at a school should not be made a qualification for parents to serve in the governing body. Sipamla (1995:116) feels that interested parents would not underachieve in carrying out their duties in the governing body.

5.9.7 Areas of Further Research

One of the key policy issues in South Africa today is the affirmation of women into positions of responsibility at all levels of society. In the process of my research I have discovered that 86% of School A governing body members are males, while 83% of School B governing body members are females. It would be interesting therefore to find out, the motivating

factors for these skewed compositions. Are there attitudes that give rise to these scenarios? Is the school community of School A gender insensitive or is the school community of School B gender sensitive?

5.10 Conclusion

The specific historical conditions in South Africa, in particular, the constraints associated with the democratic breakthrough of April 1994 as a negotiated settlement combined with a tradition of segregation has fostered a remarkable degree of social exclusion and inequality. The wider processes of exclusion and their dependence on privatisation are laid bare by the diverse social backgrounds of these two schools. It is not only that parental income becomes the crucial determinant of future status, but the value system that justifies such inequality rejects ideas of citizenship, inclusion and universalism.

The overall findings of the case study indicate that the notion of school governance is viewed as central in the normalisation of schooling. Parents are eager to be involved in school governance, but are hindered by the lack of capacity to fulfill their obligation as school governors. Schools that come from the House of Assembly Education Departments who had the benefit of a history of parental involvement are more capable of enacting the goals of the SASA of 1996 but lack political will to promote equity as a new set of democratic values. There is a consensus on the need for parents to be actively involved. The concern is that there is no adequate training and active support given to parent governors.

The SASA of 1996 is the most important piece of legislation designed to transform school governance in South Africa. However it appears that the richer, educative and universally beneficial purposes of schooling may largely become subordinate to the narrower, self-interested function which can benefit some only at the expense of others. The system of schooling has to be designed to ensure that school governors are there to act in the collective, concerned both with the benefits that individual learners gain from schooling and the ways in which schooling benefits the wider society. Otherwise the ideological themes of economic rationalism and entrepreneurialism will entrench a subordinate role for many educationally impoverished and disadvantaged communities.

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Appendix I

**Letter for Permission to Conduct Research: Western Cape
Education Department**

P.O. Box 10099

Belhar

7507

17 April 2000

The Director: Curriculum Management
Research Section
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag 9114
Cape Town
8000

Dear Sir / Madam

Re: Permission to Conduct Research

I hereby wish to request permission to conduct research towards the completion of my Masters in Education degree at the University of the Western Cape. My research proposal involves the analysis of the role and contribution parents play with relation to school governance at a historically advantaged and disadvantaged school with respect to the powers and functions allocated to governing bodies as embodied in the South African Schools Act of 1996 and its amendments.

The research topic will involve the interviewing of all the stakeholders (parents, educators, learners, principal and non-teaching staff) who are currently serving on the governing bodies of School A (Rondebosch) and School B (Khayelitsha). I wish to reassure you that in the

research document no school, parent, educator, learner, principal or non-teaching staff member will be identifiable in any way from the research results. All interviews will take place after school hours at prearranged times at the convenience of the interviewee. In the case of learners, prior permission in writing will be obtained from their respective parents before any interview will be allowed to proceed.

Please find attached to this letter:

- a letter of recommendation and approval of the proposed questionnaire from my supervisor; and
- a copy of the questionnaire to be used.

A copy of my dissertation together with a synopsis of the findings and recommendations of my research work will be forwarded to the Research Section of the WCED on acceptance by the University of the Western Cape.

Awaiting your approval in anticipation.

Yours in education.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G.F. Qonde', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

G.F. Qonde

Appendix II

Letter for Permission to Conduct Research: School A

P.O. Box 10099

Belhar

7745

7 June 1999

The Governing Body Secretary

School A

Rondebosch

Dear Sir / Madam

Re: Permission To Conduct Research

I hereby wish to formally apply for permission to conduct research at your school

I am currently enrolled in the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape, studying towards a Masters degree in Education specialising in Educational Management, Administration and Policy. It is my intention to conduct research in school governance focussing on the nature of parental involvement. In essence I will be analysing the role and contribution parents are making in relation to school governance at a historically disadvantaged and advantaged school, with respect to the implementation of the powers and functions allocated to governing bodies by the South African Schools Act of 1996.

The research proposal revolves around a case study of two schools in the following areas:

- observing governing body meetings; and
- interviews with all stakeholders serving on the governing body, in particular parents.

Please find attached detailed copies of:

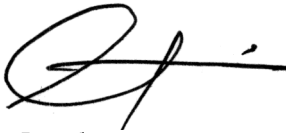
- the research proposal; and
- a letter of recommendation.

I wish to assure you that:

- participation will be voluntary;
- the confidentiality and anonymity and of all participants will be respected and ensured;
- no intrusion into school / working hours will be made;
- no institution will be identifiable by name in the research results;
- a copy of the completed dissertation; and
- a synopsis of the most important findings and recommendations will be forwarded to your school.

I trust that my request will be favourably considered.

Yours sincerely.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G.F. Qonde', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

G.F. Qonde

Letter for Permission to Conduct Research: School B

Box 10099
Belhar
7745
17 June 1999

The Governing Body Secretary
School B
Khayelitsha

Dear Sir / Madam

Re: Permission To Conduct Research

I hereby wish to formally apply for permission to conduct research at your school.

I am currently enrolled in the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape, studying towards a Masters degree in Education specialising in Educational Management, Administration and Policy. It is my intention to conduct research in school governance focussing on the nature of parental involvement. In essence I will be analysing the role and contribution parents are making in relation to school governance at a historically disadvantaged and advantaged school, with respect to the implementation of the powers and functions allocated to governing bodies by the South African Schools Act of 1996.

The research proposal revolves around a case study of two schools in the following areas:

- observing governing body meetings; and
- interviews with all stakeholders serving on the governing body, in particular parents.

Please find attached detailed copies of:

- the research proposal; and
- a letter of recommendation

I wish to assure you that

- participation will be voluntary;
- the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants will be respected and ensured;
- no intrusion into school / working hours will be made;
- no institution will be identifiable by name in the research results;
- a copy of the completed dissertation; and
a synopsis of the most important findings and recommendations will be forwarded to your school

trust that my request will be favourably considered

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G.F. Qonde', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

G.F. Qonde

Appendix IV

Parent Interview Questions

Name: _____

School: _____

Position Held: _____

Date: _____

School Governance

1. What do you think are the main functions of a school governing body?

2. What are the roles and responsibilities of parents in a governing body?

3. Does the governing body have a constitution, vision and mission statement?

Constitution

Yes	No
-----	----

Vision and Mission Statement

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, what is the heart of the vision and mission statement?

4. What are the legal implications of your duties as a parent member?

Commitment

1. How is the attendance of parents generally at governing body meetings?

Good	Average	Poor		
------	---------	------	--	--

2. How frequently do you hold meetings?

3. When are the meetings held?

3.2. Where are the meetings held?

3.3. Are problems experienced in the convening of meetings?

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, what are the problems experienced?

4. Do you get time off from your employer to attend governing body meetings?

Yes	No
-----	----

5. Are you involved in any paperwork in the position you hold?

Yes	No
-----	----

6. Do you participate in governing body subcommittees?

Yes	No
-----	----

If no, why?

If yes, on which subcommittees?

7. Do you have contact with the circuit manager and/or other education officials?

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, in what capacity?

Functioning of Governing Body

In your term as member of the governing body, what significant changes have you implemented to:

- restore the culture of teaching and learning ethos;
- increase the resources of the school
 - finances,
 - equipment,
 - building; and
- alleviate problems experienced by
 - parents,
 - educators,
 - learners,
 - surrounding community?

2. Do you perceive yourself to be effective in the position you hold?

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, how do you perceive yourself to be effective in the position you hold?

If no, why?

3. Do you have any problems with educators being on the governing body?

If so, what are the problems?

Yes	No
-----	----

4. Do you have any problems with learners being on the governing body?

If so, what are the problems?

Yes	No
-----	----

What role does the principal play in meetings?

5. What do you find problematic in the functioning of governing bodies?

Capacity Building

1. Have you received any training in order to carry out your duties?

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, what training have you received?

If no, answer the following questions:

- Do you believe you need training?
- What aspects of your duties would you require training in?
- Who should take responsibility for this training?

2. What do you think are the weaknesses and strengths of the governing body?

3. Do you believe that the SASA accomodates parents in what they would like to see in school governance?

4. What recommendations could you make?

Background

1. Gender?

Male	Female
------	--------

2. Age?

3. Home Language/s?

4. Residing Area?

5. Highest Qualifications?

6. Occupation?

7. Term of Office?

8. Other structures and committes you are currently serving on?

Appendix V

Educator Interview Questions

Name: _____

School: _____

Position Held: _____

Date: _____

School Governance

What do you think are the main functions of a school governing body?

2. What are the roles and responsibilities of educators in a governing body?

3. Does the governing body have a constitution, vision and mission statement?

Constitution

Yes	No
-----	----

Vision & Mission Statement

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, what is the heart of the vision and mission statement?

4. What are the legal implications of your duties as an educator member?

Commitment

How is the attendance of parents generally at governing body meetings?

Good	Average	Poor
------	---------	------

2. How frequently do you hold meetings?

3. When are meetings held?

3.2. Where are meetings held?

3.3. Are problems experienced in the convening of meetings?

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, what are the problems experienced?

4. Do you attend meetings regularly?

Yes	No
-----	----

5. Are you involved in any paperwork in the position you hold?

Yes	No
-----	----

6. Do you participate in governing body subcommittees?

Yes	No
-----	----

If no, why?

If yes, on which subcommittees?

7. Do you have contact with the circuit manager and/or other education officials?

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, in what capacity?

Functions of the Governing Body

In your term as member of the governing body, what significant changes have you implemented to:

- restore the culture of teaching and learning ethos;
- increased the resources of the school
 - finances,
 - equipment,
 - building, and
- alleviate problems experienced by
 - parents,
 - educators,
 - learners, and
 - surrounding community?

2. Do you perceive yourself to be effective in the position you hold?

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, in what capacity?

3. Do you have any problems with parents being on the governing body?

If so what are the problems?

Yes	No
-----	----

4. Are parents infringing on the rights of the educator in the normal functioning of his/her classroom duties?

5. Could you briefly explain any negative and positive experiences fro your working with parents?

6. Do you see parents playing a meaningful role as governors?

7. Do you have any problems with learners being on the governing body?

Yes	No
-----	----

8. What role does the principal play in meetings?

9. What do you find problematic in the functioning of governing bodies?

Capacity Building

1. Have you received any training in order to carry out your duties?

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, what training have you received?

- If no, answer the following questions:
- Do you believe you need training?
 - What aspects of your duty would require training in?
 - Who should take responsibility for this training?

2. What do you think are the weaknesses and strengths of the governing body?

3. Do you believe that the SASA accommodates educators in what they would like to see in school governance?

4. What recommendations could you make?

Background

1. Gender

Male	Female
------	--------

2. Age

3. Home Language/s

4. Residing Area

5. Highest Qualification

6. Occupation

7. Term of Office

8. Other structures and committees you are currently serving on?

Appendix VI

Learner Interview Questions

Name _____

School: _____

Position Held

Date: _____

School Governance

What do you think are the main functions of a school governing body?

2. What are the roles and responsibilities of learners in a governing body?

3. Does the governing body have a constitution, vision and mission statement?

Constitution

Yes	No
-----	----

Vision & Mission Statement

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, what is the heart of the vision and mission statement?

4. What are the legal implications of your duties as a learner member?

Commitment

1. How is the attendance of parents generally at governing body meetings?

Good	Average	Poor
------	---------	------

2. How frequently do you hold meetings?

3.1. When are meetings held?

3.2. Where are meetings held?

3.3. Are problems experienced in the convening of meetings?

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, what are the problems experienced?

4. Do you attend meetings regularly?

Yes	No
-----	----

5. Are you involved in any paperwork in the position you hold?

Yes	No
-----	----

6. Do you participate in governing body subcommittees?

Yes	No
-----	----

If no, why?

If yes, on which subcommittees?

7. Do you have contact with the circuit manager and/or other education officials?

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, in what capacity?

Functions of the Governing Body

1. In your term as member of the governing body, what significant changes have you implemented to:

- restore the culture of teaching and learning ethos;
 - increased the resources of the school
 - finances,
 - equipment,
 - building, and
 - alleviate problems experienced by
 - parents,
 - educators,
 - learners, and
 - surrounding community?
-
-
-
-

2. Do you perceive yourself to be effective in the position you hold?

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, in what capacity?

3. Do you have any problems with parents being on the governing body?

If so what are the problems?

Yes	No
-----	----

4. Are parents infringing on the rights of the learner in the normal functioning of his/her classroom duties?

5. Could you briefly explain any negative and positive experiences from your working with parents?

6. Do you see parents playing a meaningful role as governors?

7. Do you have any problems with educators being on the governing body?

Yes	No
-----	----

8. What role does the principal play in meetings?

9. What do you find problematic in the functioning of governing bodies?

Capacity Building

1. Have you received any training in order to carry out your duties?

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, what training have you received?

If no, answer the following questions:

- Do you believe you need training?
- What aspects of your duty would require training in?
- Who should take responsibility for this training?

2. What do you think are the weaknesses and strengths of the governing body?

3. Do you believe that the SASA accommodates learners in what they would like to see in school governance?

4. What recommendations could you make?

Background

1. Gender

Male	Female
------	--------

2. Age

3. Home Language/s

4. Residing Area

5. Highest Qualification

6. Occupation

7. Term of Office

8. Other structures and committees you are currently serving on?

Appendix VII

Principal Interview Questions

Name: _____

School: _____

Position Held: _____

Date: _____

School Background

1. When was the school established?

2. How many principals preceded you?

What were their reasons for leaving?

4. What is your current enrolment for the 1999 academic year?

5. How many educators and non-teaching staff employed by:

a) WCED

b) Governing Body

6. What improvements have been made to the school since you have occupied the seat of principal?

School Governance

What do you think are the main functions of a school governing body?

2. What are the roles and responsibilities of parents in a governing body?

3. Does the governing body have a constitution, vision and mission statement?

Constitution

Yes	No
-----	----

Vision & Mission Statement

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, what is the heart of the vision and mission statement?

4. What are the legal implications of your duties as the principal member?

Commitment

1. How is the attendance of parents generally at governing body meetings?

Good	Average	Poor	
------	---------	------	--

2. How frequently do you hold meetings?

3. When are meetings held?

3.2. Where are meetings held?

3.3. Are problems experienced in the convening of meetings?

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, what are the problems experienced?

4. Do you attend meetings regularly?

Yes	No
-----	----

5. Are you involved in any paperwork in the position you hold?

Yes	No
-----	----

6. Who is responsible for taking minutes in the meetings?

7. Who controls/checks the minutes of the meeting?

8. Who has access to these minutes?

9. Where are the minutes stored?

10. How are the minutes filed?

1. Do you participate in governing body subcommittees?

Yes	No
-----	----

If no, why?

If yes, on which subcommittees?

Functions of the Governing Body

1. In your term as member of the governing body, what significant changes have you implemented to:

- restore the culture of teaching and learning ethos;
- increased the resources of the school
 - finances,
 - equipment,
 - building, and
- alleviate problems experienced by
 - parents,
 - educators,
 - learners, and
 - surrounding community?

2. Do you perceive yourself to be effective in the position you hold?

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, in what capacity?

3. Do you have any problems with parents being on the governing body?

If so what are the problems?

Yes	No
-----	----

4. Are parents infringing on the rights of the educator in the normal functioning of his/her classroom duties?

5. Could you briefly explain any negative and positive experiences from your working with parents?

6. Do you see parents playing a meaningful role as governors?

7. Do you have any problems with learners being on the governing body?

Yes	No
-----	----

8. What role does the principal play in meetings?

9. What do you find problematic in the functioning of governing bodies?

Capacity Building



1. Have you received any training in order to carry out your duties?

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, what training have you received?

If no, answer the following questions:

- Do you believe you need training?
- What aspects of your duty would require training in?
- Who should take responsibility for this training?

2. What do you think are the weaknesses and strengths of the governing body?

3. Do you believe that the SASA accommodates principals in what they would like to see in school governance?

4. What recommendations could you make?

Background

1. Gender

Male	Female
------	--------

2. Age

3. Home Language/s

4. Residing Area

5. Highest Qualification

6. Occupation

7. Term of Office

8. Other structures and committees you are currently serving on?

Appendix VIII

List of Interviews Conducted

Interviewee	School	Place	Date
Parent 1	A	Rondebosch, Cape Town	07 July 1999
Parent 2	A	Newlands, Cape Town	14 July 1999
Parent 3	A	Claremont, Cape Town	03 August 1999
Parent 4	A	Cape Town	05 August 1999
Parent 5	A	Rondebosch, Cape Town	10 August 1999
Parent 6	A	Rondebosch, Cape Town	10 August 1999
Educator 1	A	Rondebosch, Cape Town	24 November 1999
Educator 2	A	Rondebosch, Cape Town	30 November 1999
Learner 1	A	Bishops Court, Cape Town	02 December 1999
Learner 1	A	Rondebosch, Cape Town	03 December 1999
Principal	A	Newlands, Cape Town	08 December 1999
Parent	B	Khayelitsha, Cape Town	13 July 1999
Parent 2	B	Khayelitsha, Cape Town	13 July 1999
Parent 3	B	Gugulethu, Cape Town	03 December 1999
Parent 4	B	Khayelitsha, Cape Town	08 December 1999
Parent 5	B	Khayelitsha, Cape Town	09 December 1999
Educator 1	B	Khayelitsha, Cape Town	01 December 1999
Educator 2	B	Khayelitsha, Cape Town	02 December 1999
Learner 1	B	Khayelitsha, Cape Town	08 December 1999
Learner 2	B	Khayelitsha, Cape Town	14 December 1999
Principal	B	Khayelitsha, Cape Town	08 December 1999

Appendix IX

Vision

School A's vision is to be a South African , co-educational, public school of international standard contributing to the ongoing development of our country.

SOURCE: Policy File of School A

Appendix X

Mission

School A is committed to:

- building a caring, involved and creative community of pupils, staff and parents;
- recognising and developing fully the unique potential of each individual;
encouraging an open, analytical and questioning approach to life and oneself, based on sound values;
- creating and exploring a challenging and dynamic learning environment;
- engendering a balance between the rights and responsibilities of the individual, and the well-being of the School, the community and the natural environment;
- equipping pupils to participate effectively in a common future with all South Africans.

SOURCE: Prospectus of School A

Appendix XI

CONSTITUTION OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF SCHOOL A

Approved at the Board Meeting of 09 June 1999

DEFINITIONS

In this Constitution, unless the context indicates otherwise

“education” means instructions, teaching or training provided to learners in terms of the Act;

“governing body” means the governing body referred to in Section 16 (1) of the Act and for the purposes of this Constitution is the Governing Body of School A;

“Head of Department” means the head of education department in the Province of the Western Cape;

“measures” means the measures relating to governing bodies of ordinary public school (excluding public school for learners with special education needs) issued by the M.E.C.;

“Member of the Executive Council” means the Member of the Executive Council responsible for education in the Province of the Western Cape;

“Sponsoring body” means a body or group of persons approved by the governing body and which is prepared to assist the school financially;

“the Act” means the South African School Act (Act 84 of 1996); and

“this Constitution” means the Constitution of the Governing Body of School A.

NAME OF SCHOOL

School A
(hereinafter referred to as “the School”)

3. STREET ADDRESS

4. POSTAL ADDRESS OF SCHOOL

STATUS OF SCHOOL

The school is a juristic person with legal capacity to perform functions in terms of the Act.

6. GOVERNANCE AND PROFESSIONAL MANAGEMENT

6. Subject to the Act, the governance of the school is vested in the governing body provided that the governing body or a member thereof, in his or her capacity as a member, may not interfere with the professional functions of an educator in the performance of his or her duties.

6.2 The governing body stands in a position of trust towards the school.

6.3 Subject to the Act and this Constitution, the professional management of the school must be undertaken by the principal under the authority of the Head of Department.

OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHOOL

7.1 To provide education for learners.

7.2 To admit learners, subject to the provisions of Section 5 of the Act, and provide for their educational needs without discriminating unfairly in any way.

7.3 To allow no form of racial discrimination whatsoever in the execution of the language policy of the school, subject to the provisions of Section 6 of the Act.

7.4 To allow religious observances at the school to be conducted on an equitable basis and attendance at them by learners and members of staff to be free and voluntary, subject to the provisions of Section 7 of the Act.

7.5 To use the school fund, all proceeds thereof and any other assets of the school only in accordance with the provisions of Section 37 of the Act.

7.6 To function financially in such a way that the school will fulfill its commitments.

7.7 To serve the community by preparing learners in such a way that they will take their place in the community as well-educated people.

7.8 To provide the opportunity to the staff of the school to grow professionally, to obtain work fulfilment and to deliver education of the highest quality.

- 7.9 To make a contribution to the promotion of sport and culture in general, but specifically to use sport and culture activities as education opportunities to benefit the learners of the school.

8. FUNCTIONS AND ALLOCATED FUNCTIONS OF THE GOVERNING BODY

8. The governing body performs the functions which fall within its powers and which are necessary for the welfare of the school, subject to the provisions of Section 20 and 21 of the Act.
- 8.2 The governing body uses the school fund and assets of the school in accordance with the provisions of Section 37 of the Act.
- 8.3 The governing body uses funds in accordance with the provisions of the Act and this Constitution, for the purpose of realising the abovementioned objectives as well as other objectives approved by the governing body.
- 8.4 The governing body must provide services and facilities in the interest of the learners and education, in accordance with the provisions of the Act and this Constitution.
- 8.5 The Governing body must appoint auditors in accordance with the provisions of Section 43 of the Act, to audit the financial records and statements of the school.
- 8.6 The governing body must adopt a code of conduct for the learners, after consultation with the parents, educators and learners of the school, in accordance with the provisions of Section 8 of the Act.
- 8.7 The governing body must suspend and/or recommend the expulsion of the learners who transgress the code of conduct in accordance with the provisions of Section 9 of the Act.
- 8.8 The governing body may determine and charges school fees and may enforce the payment thereof in accordance with the provisions of Section 39,40 and 41 of the Act.
- 8.9 The governing body drafts the mission of the school

9. LIABILITY OF THE GOVERNING BODY

A member of the governing body is not liable for any debt, damages or loss incurred by the school unless he or she acted without authorization, with malicious intent and can therefore be held responsible for such debt, damage or loss.

10. COMPOSITION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

The governing body of the school is composed in accordance with provision 2 of the measures for the election of governing body.

TERM OF OFFICE OF MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNING BODY

The term of office of a member of the governing body who is not a learner shall be as determined by provisions 4 of the measures for the election of a governing body.

12. QUORUM

At least one more than half for the members of the governing body composed in accordance with provision 2(1) of the measures, shall constitute a quorum at any meeting.

13. ELECTION OF OFFICE-BEARERS OF THE GOVERNING BODY

Subject to the provisions of the members, the governing body elects from its ranks, at the first meeting of the governing body, office-bearers who will include at least a chairperson, a treasurer and a secretary.

14. TERM OF OFFICE OF OFFICE-BEARERS

14.1 Subject to the provisions of the measures, the term of the office-bearers shall be 12 months from the date of their election.

14.2 An office-bearers may be re-elected after the expiry of his or her term of office.

5. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE OF MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNING BODY

The governing body accepts leave of absence of a member or members for a period determined by the governing body.

16. CASUAL VACANCIES IN THE GOVERNING BODY

A casual vacancy occurs and is filled in accordance with provision 22 of the measures.

7. COMMITTEES

- 7.1 The governing body may, in accordance with the provisions of the Section 30 of the Act, appoint one or more standing or ad hoc committees to advise it, and subject to the instruction of the governing body, to perform such functions as the governing body may determine.
- 17.2 The governing body may alter or invalidate any decisions of a committee contemplated in paragraph 17.1.
- 17.3 Any committee appointed/contemplated in 17.1 shall be chaired by a member of the governing body.

18. MEETINGS

18. The governing body shall meet at least once every school term.
- 18.2 The governing body shall meet with learners, parents, educators and other staff at the school, respectively, at least once a year.
- 18.3 The governing body shall render a report on its activities to parents, educators, learners and other staff of the school at least once a year and circulate an annual financial report to parents.
- 18.4 Meetings of the governing body are held in accordance with the provisions of the measures.
- 18.5 An extraordinary meeting is convened by the chairperson when he or she deems it necessary or when at least 7 members submit a written request and reasons for such meeting.
- 8.6 Each member of the governing body has one vote. At the conclusion of voting, the chairperson shall, in addition to his or her deliberative vote, have a casting vote.
- 18.7 A member of the governing body must withdraw for a meeting of the governing body for the duration of the discussion and decision-making on any issue in which the member has a personal interest.

19. MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF MEETINGS

The minutes of the proceedings of meetings of the governing body shall be dealt with in accordance with provision 21 of the measures.

20. BANK ACCOUNT

- 20.1 The governing body must open and maintain a banking account.
- 20.2 Subject to paragraph 21.1, all money received by the school, including school fees and voluntary contributions, must be paid into the school fund.

21. CLOSING OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR

The financial year commences on the first day of January and ends on the last day of December. The records and statements of the school must be audited subsequently in accordance with the provisions of Section 43 of the Act.

22. SUBMISSION OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The governing body must submit to the Head of Department, within six months after the end of each financial year, a copy of the annual financial statements.

23. AMENDMENT OF CONSTITUTION

A decision to amend this Constitution requires a two-third majority of the total membership of the governing body after all members have been informed of the proposed amendment at least two months in advance.

If too few members are present at the meeting convened for this purpose, a second meeting must be called exclusively for this purpose at least two weeks after the first meeting.

SOURCE: Policy File of School A

Appendix XII

Code of Conduct

The School A community commits itself to learning and responsible citizenship. This is characterised by:

- being courteous and demonstrating mutual respect for the beliefs, customs, language, individuality and property of others;
- demonstrating social responsibility and compassion;
- using resources carefully and wisely;
- participating fully in a wide range of school activities;
- discovering and developing personal potential;
- supporting and encouraging others;
- embracing a lifestyle which promotes good health and happiness;
- adopting practices which will help to secure a safe and healthy environment for all;
- being honest and having personal integrity.

This code of conduct is amplified by a set of school rules and procedures framed in terms of existing national and provincial legislation.

SOURCE: Prospectus of School A

Appendix XIII

Admission Policy

No pupil will be refused admission to School A on grounds of race, religious belief or financial circumstances.

Every effort will be made to ensure that the ratio of boys and girls in each grade remains approximately equal.

Where selection becomes necessary because of the number of applicants exceeds the number of available places, selection shall be based on the following criteria:

- preference will be given to siblings, except where this is not in the best interests of the child;
- preference will be given to applicants to whom School A is the nearest high school, provided that the application is submitted on time;
- preference will be given to applicants who have a record of academic success in identified areas;
- preference will be given to applicants with a record of involvement or who demonstrate an interest in one or more of the cultural and sporting activities which form part of School A's co-curricular programme;
- special provision will be made for applicants from previously educationally-disadvantaged communities;
- the capacity of the school to provide an acceptable quality of education to the applicant (this provision applies particularly to applicants with special needs);
- the age of the pupil;
- whether or not the applicant is a child of a past pupil of School A.

SOURCE: Prospectus of School A

Appendix XIV

Language Policy

- The language of instruction of the school is English.
- Where possible, provision will be made to provide assistance to those learners for whom proficiency in English as the medium of instruction is a problem.
- Multi-lingualism should be encouraged, especially in the conversational use of the official languages of the province.
- The two official languages in the curriculum are currently English and Afrikaans.

SOURCE: Prospectus of School A