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Perceptions on the form of school decentralisation in South Africa and its implications on the decolonisation debate in education: a case study of SGBs in two township primary schools

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RESEARCH PROJECT

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TABLE OF CONTENT

ABSTRACT WITH KEY WORDS 3

DECLARATION 4

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 5

ABBREVIATIONS 6

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION 8

1.1. Introduction 8

1.2. Background of Study 9

1.3. Problem Statement 11

1.4. Purpose and Rationale 13

1.5. Research Questions and Sub-questions 16

CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW 17

2.1. SA political independence: neo-colonialization? 17

2.2. Post-1994 SA decentralised school powers and governance 20

2.3. Studies on uneven implementation of SGB/school governance 27

2.4. Neo-colonial decentralisation and SASA in the context of unequal socio-educational realities and capacities 31

CHAPTER THREE - THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK 34

3.1. Decoloniality and decolonisation in Education 34

3.2. School decentralisation through the lens of decolonizing the education system 36

3.3. Decentralisation and decolonisation in township schools 39

CHAPTER FOUR - RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY 40

4.1. Research design 40

4.2. Research methodology 40

4.3. Sampling 41

4.4. Participants 42

4.5. Data collection 42

4.6. Data Analysis 43

4.7. Issues of trustworthiness, validity, and reliability 44

4.8. Ethical considerations 45

4.9. Limitations 46

4.10. Delimitations 46

CHAPTER FIVE - DATA PRESENTATION 47

5.1. Understanding different perceptions and experiences of the school management team, teachers and parents towards the SGB, its functioning and operations. 48

5.2. SGB powers and major obstacles in fostering a better functioning and operating SGB 53

5.3. How to overcome the lack of effectiveness in these townships' SGBs to improve school governance and leadership? 61

CHAPTER SIX - DATA ANALYSIS 71

6.1. Understanding the different perceptions and experiences of the SMT, teachers and parents towards the SGB functioning and operations. 71

6.2. Major obstacles in the SGB fostering a better functioning SGB 73

6.3. SGB powers and power relations operating against better SGB functioning 74

6.4. What can improve the effectiveness of decentralised school governance in township schools? 76

CHAPTER SEVEN - CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS 88

7.1. Conclusion 88

7.2. Recommendations for further study 92

REFERENCES 95

ABSTRACT

The South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA) was intended to construct a new democratic school governance founded on a state, parents, learner, school staff and community participation and partnership (Naidoo, 2005). SASA gives parents the opportunity to enhance the quality of education in the school their child attends. It is within this context that we will be investigating the perceptions and experiences of township SGBs in relationship to the decolonisation and decoloniality debate in education. A form of SGBs became a norm in previously advantaged (white) schools by virtue of having parent and teacher associations (PTAs) that were comprised of capacitated and equipped individuals to show some leadership in the school as an organisation. The big question remains, are the current SGBs hoping to transform existing patterns of inequality or merely reproduce them (Taylor and Yu, 2009)? This research seeks to clarify whether the introduction of SGBs worked truly against the notion of delinking from the colonial matrix of power, which was the overarching agenda of school decentralisation (Christie and McKinney, 2017). We compare and contrast the perceptions and experiences of SGB members in two township schools through a qualitive case study approach and found new power dynamics in schools as well as serious challenges regarding the parental involvement. We then explore alternative governance methods that could be more in line with South African realities and capabilities of the majority of schools. Given the need for decoloniality and new forms of governance, the BOG is proposed as a potential alternative to the current SGBs in poor black communities (provincially-based circuits) to ensure that the colonial matrix system is broken, and will result in education having more of an Afro-centric objective for the majority of learners in our black communities.

KEY WORDS: *School Decentralisation, School Governing Body, Parent and Teacher Association, Board of Governors, Decolonisation, Colonial Matrix of Power.*

DECLARATION

I, Bafana Mohale (0513881Y) declare that "Perceptions and experiences on the form of school decentralisation in South Africa and its implications on the decolonisation debate in education. A case study of SGBs in two township primary schools." abides by the following rules:

1. The ideas in this project, unless otherwise indicated, are my own work.

2. This project does not contain other people's data, pictures, graphs or any other information, unless acknowledged as being sourced from those people.

3. This project does not contain other people's writing, unless acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Sources that are quoted, would have:

(i) Where their exact words have been used, their writing has been placed inside quotation marks and referenced.

(ii) Where their words have been unwritten, the general information attributed to them has been referenced.

4. This project does not contain text and tables that copied and pasted from the internet, unless specifically acknowledged and the source being detailed in the project and reference section.

I further declare that this research project has not been submitted for any degree at any other university.

Signe  **Date: 20 April 2022**

Statement of Supervisor

This project is submitted with my approval.

Signed:  **..... Date: 28 April 2022**

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANC – African National Congress

BOG – Board of Governors

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

DoE – Department of Education

GDE – Gauteng Department of Education

GEAR – Growth, Employment and Redistribution

GNU – Government of National Unity

HOD – Head of Department

IKC – Indigenous Knowledge and Culture

IMF – International Monetary Fund

LTSM – Learner and Teacher Support Material

MEd – Masters in Education

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

NP – National Party

NPO – Non-Profit Organisation

PTA – Parent and Teacher Association

PTSA – Parent, Teacher and Student Association

RDP – Reconstruction and Development Program

RKI – Recognised Knowledgeable Individuals

RSA – Republic of South Africa

SA – South Africa

SASA – South African Schools Act

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

SGB – School Governing Body

SMT – School Management Team

USA – United States of America

Chapter One - Introduction

1.1 Introduction

A shift in the global economic trends of the early 1980s led to the reform of the educational system internationally and that led many countries to adopt new school governance and management policies (Karlsson, 2002).

The South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA) was intended to construct a new landscape for school governance which was founded on participation and partnership between the state, parents, learners, school staff and communities (Naidoo, 2005). The main objective of parental involvement in schools is, amongst others, to give parents influence over school policies, such as: admission, language and code of conduct (Munn, 1998). Research experience and practice has also demonstrated how effective parents can be in supporting their children's learning and wellbeing (Wolfendale, 1993). Local governance ought to involve an increased participation and involvement of parents, teachers and community members in the governing of the school. This involvement includes providing the resources, facilities and enabling the school to become relevant to the local needs and conditions of its community (Mkwanazi, 1993). In addition, SASA is supposed to promote democracy in schools and give parents the opportunity to enhance the quality of education in the school their child attends. School decentralisation is about making communities more responsible for school governance, which in turn means that the SGBs have the responsibility, among other things, to take all measures within their means to supplement funding received from the state (Buys, du Plessis and Mestry, 2020). This was one way that communities were granted the opportunity to take ownership of their schools. However, this works better in affluent areas as previously advantaged schools are more prosperous and better resourced to contribute to the budget of the school, while the previously disadvantaged township schools continue to experience a lack of resources and adequate funding in their schools.

The question is whether the current structure of the SGBs in post-1994 South Africa is the best form of decentralisation of powers of governance in township schools to contribute to a democratic and quality education. Indeed, many scholars have argued that decentralisation has not always achieved its aims (Pampallis, 1998) because school governing structures are designed in such a way that they reproduce inequalities. These governing structures are not only unequal for different schools but also designed to maintain a socio-economic formation based on oppression, exploitation and poverty (Soobrayan, 1990: 31).

1.2. Background of Study

School Decentralisation in the world

School decentralisation is not a recent phenomenon within the education structure in the world, and countries such as the United Kingdom started implementing these reforms as far back as the end of the 1980s. The implementation of the UK school decentralisation accelerated the change of schools who adopted a new culture, crafting new values and imagining ideologies that would benefit their learners (Williams, Harold, Robert and Southworth, 1997). Schools could engage in creative marketing and image projection processes that will enable them to recruit more learners because the quality of education offered and thus they should be able to raise funds, which is one of the key functions of the SGB. The noticeable difference between SGBs in the United Kingdom and in South Africa is the included parents who dominate in numbers (Bullock and Thomas, 1997). The United States of America (USA) on the other hand places the responsibility to modify, supplement and deliver the curriculum (an extra role) to the school, with the emphasis on determining how, rather than what, to teach (Bullock & Thomas, 1997). The decision-making powers given to these stakeholders in the USA are to improve school performance because it is believed that they understand the needs of their learners.

School Decentralisation in Africa

Kenya saw the establishment of two bodies in the school decentralisation provisions: Board of Governors (BOG) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA). While the BOG was tasked to monitor the performance of the school amongst other responsibilities, the role of PTAs was merely to overlook the quality of education offered at the schools and to express their opinions regarding the standard of education provided (Bennell & Sayed, 2002). Zambia's PTAs oversee the financial and general school management, which is interpreted as the basic needs of the school (Bennell and Sayed, 2002). Botswana realised the need for educational competence in the formation of their School Board and later decided to change the function of the School Board to mere parental involvement (Moswela, 2007). Zimbabwe transitioned from parental involvement which was merely supportive to a more governance role that was authoritative because their parents had the knowledge to effectively carry out the required duties (Zvobgo, 1996). On the whole, many African countries see the role of PTAs to be more supportive, compared to their counterparts in the Western countries that see the PTAs as more authoritative. This brings the issue of colonial norms that are imposed onto African countries and how these countries realised that they should not duplicate these colonial norms as they are.

School decentralisation in South Africa

The South African landscape started off at the end of the apartheid days with the formation of parental participation or PTAs in the former Model C school's policies (Nzimande, 1993) while township schools and communities had no voice in school decision-making (Hyslop, 1989). The introduction of Bantu Education in 1953 had formally silenced even the slightest participation of stakeholders in township and rural schools, which was followed by a mediocre and discriminatory curriculum for all learners of African ethnicity (Seroto, 2004). People's

Education was then developed as a social movement pushing for a possible alternative to Bantu Education to promote a democratic approach to decision-making, problem-solving and communicating the local educational aims in the communities (Nzimande, 1993). It is against this background that we see the 1996 SASA being introduced to promote new forms of school governance, accountability, transparency and public involvement (DoE, 1997).

With all these developments and strides made by the ANC government, there is a deafening silence with regards to the realities and challenges that were experienced in countries like Botswana (i.e. lack of knowledge in parent entrusted with the governance of schools). Might it be that the democratic dispensation brought about a governance system that looks great in principle for township and rural schools but, in actual fact, is crafted to benefit and answer more the needs of the knowledgeable middle-class parents from former Model-C schools? It is within this context that we will be investigating the perceptions and experiences of two township SGBs through the lens and debates of decolonisation and decoloniality in education.

1.3. Problem Statement

We still see educational opportunities associated with economic opportunities and, as long the inequalities exist in the education sector, economic inequalities will persist, and vice versa (Hussain, 1976). The very inequalities in the educational sector are deeply rooted in the formation and formalization of the education sector as we know it today. This sector was formed based on Western and apartheid norms and standards, thus countries such as South Africa, continue to be one of the worst performing in terms of their Maths and Science compared to other countries in the world. Heleta (2016:2) writes, “Since the end of the oppressive and racist apartheid system in 1994, epistemologies and knowledge systems at most South African universities have not considerably changed; they remain rooted in colonial, apartheid and Western worldviews and epistemological traditions. The curriculum remains

largely Eurocentric and continues to reinforce white and Western dominance and privilege." It is based on this reality, that we need to assess the current policies that continue to be enforced in the governance of the schools, particularly the SGB, as a form of Western dominated form of school decentralisation and the need to explore alternative governance methods that may be more in line with the realities and capabilities of the majority of South African schools. The assumption that SGBs as constituted are an effective form of democratic governance, because they work well in the most affluent white schools, where parents are knowledgeable about matters of governance, has to be questioned.

When the 1996 SASA was adopted, policy makers failed to take into account the fact that this system worked amongst some African countries and their respective schools whereby the parents had the knowledge to effectively carry out the required duties (Zvobgo, 1996). South Africa had just been liberated from the claws of apartheid in 1994 and the very African parents who were deprived of a quality education and the ability to acquire knowledge, were now being entrusted with governing their children's local schools. Some scholars have argued that this form of school decentralisation was a form that suited the National Party and its followers that was part of the post-1994 transition government as they wanted to ensure that the affluent white schools with all their privileges were protected against potential state interference and loss of autonomy (Zvobgo, 1996).

If the intention was to decolonize educational governance practice, it should have contributed to bring about change to address the ongoing unequal realities of the system (Nxumalo, 2019). Nxumalo's research points to the need to avoid casting children's daily realities and understandings into a pre-existing Eurocentric way of seeing things. Instead, what was needed was a search for how to decolonize, among other things, educational governance in schools.

Thus, the objective of this study is of great importance because, if the 1996 SASA has quality of education for all as one of its intents and outcomes, how are ill-equipped and marginalized parents going to contribute to quality education of their children's schooling?

It is for this reason that the parental and teacher components serving on the SGBs are the focal point of the research project to understand their SGB perceptions and experiences. This study further seeks to investigate the effects of coloniality in the education sector and school governance in particular because, although we are not living under colonialism, coloniality is the order of the day because of the long-standing patterns of power and institutions which continue to exist and define culture, labour, intersubjective relations and knowledge in education (Christie and McKinney, 2017).

1.4. Purpose and Rationale

This study is motivated by seven years as a professional experience as a primary school teacher, one year as a head of department and two years as a deputy principal. During those 10 years, I got to see the reality of having inexperienced people serving as SGB members. Experiences from other colleagues confirmed that, in most of the township schools, the SGBs exist as a mere formality and even then, there is no clear understanding by many members of what their role is besides attending late night meetings, being present when interviews are conducted for new staff members, being called upon to come and sign school policy documents that the SMTs compile (instead of the SGBs compiling these alongside the SMT) and signing the school's requisition forms. One of the main concerns was that of more formal qualification because being a parent at the school was the only fundamental qualification or competences needed to serve on the SGBs. Would a formal organisation or business strive if the CEO just needed to be a parent in order to lead, I highly doubt it? Need I ask, why the majority of our township

schools are fundamentally governed by people without any experience in leadership, governance or who are in some profession?

This then leads to serious problems within the SGBs in many African countries with the knowledge deficits that parents often have (Zvobgo, 1996). There are sufficient studies on previously disadvantaged schools in terms of their SGB not being capacitated and equipped for such an imperative role they are expected to do. Schools are organisations which require leadership and expertise in order to be productive and effective. SGBs were a norm in previously advantaged (white) schools by virtue in the form of PTAs that were comprised of capacitated and equipped individuals that could show some leadership in the school. Seeing SGBs as agents of school improvement does not only refer to the SGBs helping the schools to function more effectively, but the ability of these structures to ensure that schools respond to noticeable socio-economic factors and challenges that affect schools.

We cannot deny that there is a steadily growing acknowledgement of the value of parents as a pivotal educational resource (Bastiani, 1989). With that said, very little is known about the direct implications that township SGBs with their parents have with regards to their contribution towards the quality of education offered at the school and promoting the best interest of the school (DoE, 1996). Should we not develop key performance indicators that would assess whether the quality of education is being improved or not, and what role did the SGBs have in that improvement (or the lack thereof)? “In spite of governance and democratisation being a major concern of South African education researchers, the connections of these processes with globalisation have not been subjected to rigorous academic debate” (Unterhalter, 2000:11). This is why this study is interested in investigating the perceptions and experiences of SGB members in terms of their roles and responsibilities at schools.

Furthermore, the study interrogates the decolonisation debate in relation to school decentralisation by linking it to the reality of coloniality currently experienced in the bimodal

education system we have in South Africa. With South African learners' illiteracy standing at 27% and innumeracy standing at 40% (Henning, 2013 cited in Mail & Guardian, 2013) and close to 80% of SGBs in South Africa believed to be dysfunctional (Henning, 2013 cited in Mail & Guardian, 2013), there is something wrong in the task of trying to improve the quality of education through the SGBs. The introduction of SGBs was prioritized because the new democratic dispensation wanted to be aligned to international standards when introducing educational reforms but it looks as this in turn created even more inequality locally and less democracy in schools.

The big question remains: can the SGBs contribute towards the transformation of existing patterns of inequality or merely reproduce them (Taylor and Yu, 2009)? South Africa is known to be faced still today with a dual education system with only 20% of the schools producing quality results and 80% classified as poorly performing schools (De Clercq, 2020). One thing that we are certain about is the fact that we cannot have the colonizer as the agent of decolonisation without the intellectual guidance of the 'damnes' (Mignolo, 2007 cited by Christie and McKinney, 2017). No one knows the struggles of oppression more than the oppressed and, if relief was to be offered, the oppressor would not be the right person to consult with in the attempt to liberate the oppressed.

This is the argument that will be relied upon when investigating school decentralisation in poor schools. Are SGBs a form of a decentralised school governance that perpetuates coloniality and maintains the inequalities of the past? Centralisation cannot be the only source of power and in the same breath, decentralisation cannot be seen as an emancipatory solution, though the two are or can be imperative in bringing about a democratic and participatory education system. This research seeks to clarify whether the adoption of the specific SASA-formulated SGBs as a form of decentralisation works against the notion of delinking from the colonial

matrix of power, which was partly the agenda of school decentralisation (Christie and McKinney, 2017).

1.5. Research Question and sub-Questions

It is against this background that this MEd study is investigating what different SGB township stakeholders think and understand about the form of SA school governance decentralisation in their context. More specifically, it will address the following five research sub questions:

- what are the different perceptions and experiences of the school management team towards the school governing body, its functioning and operations?
- what are the different perceptions and experiences of the parents towards the school governing body, its functioning and operations?
- what do these stakeholders understand as the major obstacles in their context to a functioning and operating school governing body?
- what could be put in place to overcome the lack of effectiveness of aspects of townships SGBs to improve school governance decentralisation?
- Is the SGB form of governance within the South African education system perpetuating coloniality by ensuring that white privilege is maintained in white schools and inequalities are prevalent in township schools?

Chapter Two - Literature review

2.1. SA political independence: neo-colonialisation?

The political independence of South Africa in 1994 brought about the birth of a democratic society. State entities such as health and education were decentralised in order for them to have a level of autonomy and influence to function at a local level. This era resulted in the birth of the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) which was focused on redressing the social imbalances created by the apartheid system. A number of years were allocated for the implementation of the RDP but sadly, the document was revised because it was seen to be too socialistic in its approach, and it was replaced by the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR). With GEAR, market forces were now to determine the economy and education provisions. Weber (2002) notes that the GEAR is very different in his thinking from the one that informed the participatory, people-driven, and needs-based perspectives of the RDP Base Document. It is important to remember here that neo-colonialism and decolonisation in South Africa are based on capitalism, currently configured in the markets, consumerism, and the hyper-individualism of neoliberalism (Christie, 2020).

As the Government of National Unity (GNU) approached the end of its term of office, it made a sharp right turn away from its redistributionist Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) toward the liberal, growth-orientated Growth, Employment and Redistribution Programme (GEAR)" (Mattes and Thiel, 1999: 137 cited by Naidoo, 2005:24-25). The timing for this 'sharp right turn' was perfect for the neo-colonial powers because there would not be ample time to oppose the shift from RDP to GEAR because the agenda to a democratic society was the main focus and an emphasis on how we deal with the past injustices took a back seat and became less of a priority. The argument could have possibly been, the country is moving forward and hence the need to conveniently adopt this growth-orientated GEAR Programme.

The nation lost out on an opportunity to cut themselves loose from the neo-colonial matrix of power that continues to strangle the majority of township schools and their learners who have become victims of the neo-colonized education system. When looking at the dictionary meaning of neo-colonisation, it is described as the process by which a nation becomes independent with regard to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits (Wingfield, 2017). Wingfield presents the meaning of decolonised education as given by activist students in South Africa, that is, as a process of overthrowing the existing system of education so that the people it is supposed to serve can redefine it for themselves. Evans (2016:1) also presents what student activists have described as decolonised education. These include the following:

> We study all these dead white men who presided over our oppression and we are made to use their thinking as a standard and as a point of departure. Our own thinking as Africans has been undermined. We must have our own education from our own continent. Decolonisation advances the interest of Africans instead of advancing Eurocentric interest.

There are other multiple educational reforms after 1994 that address the legacy of the past and that seek to promote equity and redress, however this study will focus particularly on the reform of school decentralisation of governance. The 1994 Education White Paper stresses the principle of democratic governance which should increasingly be reflected in every level of the system (Weber, 2002). For this reason, we can deduce that first-order changes were prioritized because they focused on quality control, aiming to improve what exists while leaving the basic organisational form intact. These first-order changes may address any part of the schooling system, including the range of issues mentioned above, and may be valuable in ameliorating problems. By contrast, second-order changes are changes in system design, targeting the basic organisational form of schooling which speaks to the ethos of the school and how the policies

are implemented, which eventually speaks to the internal culture of the schools. Second-order changes are much less likely to be successful than first-order changes, because their success depends on social and political changes occurring also outside of schools (Christie, 2020). As Naidoo notes:

> Despite changes since 1994, the Apartheid legacy of inequality by race and geographic location, remains. Approximately sixty percent of school-aged children in some areas still attend extremely poor quality and under varying admission policies. (Naidoo 2005:19).

Decentralisation, in this case, could, when implemented, perpetuate the legacy of inequality entrenched by apartheid and colonial rule. The incoming government was given a broken system to govern, and instead of them placing an emphasis on redress and equity, they continue to privilege conversations about governance policies (of the broken system). As Naidoo further states,

> Disparities within and across provinces are evident in enrolment rates, physical conditions of schools, learner-teacher ratios, teacher qualifications and the degree of racial integration of schools. Such deep differences in school attributes (organizational capacity, human and social capital) and in student and community attributes (poverty, gender and race/ethnicity) must affect the nature of education transformation. It is fallacious to assume that one begins with a completely clean slate or that one can completely transform an existing system (Naidoo 2005:21).

There were different motives for the devolution of power; what the post-apartheid educational policy achieved was to associate local governance with democratic participation, equity and improving the quality of education. This democratic participation is a reality because all public schools have SGBs; however, is there a way to measure the equity rate, progress and how the

quality of education is linked to the local governance if the national department does not have a clear formula on how to improve the quality of education in schools nationally?

2.2. Post-1994 SA decentralised school powers and governance

The dawn of democracy in South Africa in 1994 prompted the democratisation of not only the political space but also that of the state-owned institutions, such as schools. Commitment to extending democracy and participation was a central feature of educational policy in South Africa (Sayed and Soudien, 2005). The idea of democracy within the schooling system is noble and accepted however, it does not really address the former injustice and inequalities caused by the previous autocratic system.

Our educational democracy is derived from the compromise made between the African National Congress (ANC), the foremost liberation organisation, and the National Party, the white supremacist party behind apartheid, which essentially revolved around shared power and the subsequent installation of the ANC-led Government of National Unity in 1994 (Sayed and Soudien, 2005). The school decentralisation of the education system was a common denominator to both the democratic movement and NP. With the opposition of Bantu Education, the People's Education Movement proposed an alternative system, with the notion of having a system which included local structures for community involvement, which in turn meant that the school decision-making process had to be decentralised (Chang, 2010). The democratic movement's alternative, which came out of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC), was the Parent Teacher Student Associations (PTSAs), because of their interest in coordinating and using the synergy between the communities, parent and student protests (Chang, 2010). So, one could argue that PTSAs were about resisting oppression and exclusion of parents and students, while SGBs were introduced with a less strong participation

from the community and that this was aimed at cementing white privilege. Indeed, the model that was agreed upon in the form of SGBs resembled more the one from the NP. PTAs were originally well functioning within white communities and these were well established and functional because they were established because of the cultural capital that already existed within these parent communities. Underprivileged communities were subjected to a substandard education system, which led to most parents within the townships being illiterate, and therefore any attempt to formulate a system that requires social capital, was going to be flawed in comparison to the same system and its implementation in privileged communities. It is for this reason that the former disadvantaged schools received the shorter end of the stick, their notion of decentralisation was from a place of oppression, the white NP's notion of decentralisation was from a place of privilege, control and maintaining the status quo while they continue to get aid from the state to this very day. The challenge is well articulated by Chang,

> The movement's rejection of Bantu Education spurred a demand for a decentralised system of education. But while the People's Education movement was forced to divide its focus between efforts aimed at constructing a post-apartheid education system and efforts to topple Bantu Education, the NP was busy constructing their own version of post-apartheid education policy (Chang 2010:26-27).

The restructuring of the decentralised system of school decision-making was strongly pursued by the NP, and they gained advantaged in the negotiations which led to the restructuring ultimately favouring whites and their privileged schools, especially by allowing the public schools to raise their fees to compensate from the lesser state subsidies. Pampallis concurs with this notion: "The National Party has been busy putting together new policies which it hopes it will be able to sell to the liberation movement, but which will effectively result in the maintenance of white privilege." (Pampallis 1994:86). He further notes that: "The irony is that

the very decentralisation that has led to greater democratisation of schooling by giving all the main stakeholders a powerful voice in the schools' affairs, is also contributing to the perpetuation of inequities among our schools. The new inequalities, however, are increasingly being drawn on class rather than racial lines." (Pampallis 1998:170).

The beast might have changed from racial inequality to class inequality, however the effects on the previously disadvantaged schools remained a reality. In essence, our democracy was inscribed in ambiguity, which was the result of the compromise reached between the ANC and NP, or was it the NP's ideas of a democracy compared to the ANC? O'Neill (2005, cited in Chang, 2010) believes that the reason why a ruling party would want to decentralize is because the prospects of maintaining power in the future is unfavourable and he further makes the argument that parties will give some powers today to receive other powers tomorrow. The question is, have the previously white schools, now known as the former Model C schools, have power and control of their schools? The short answer is yes, but for them to maintain this power, they had to give away and allow some centralized powers (such as curriculum) in order to receive these decentralised powers. Thus, one can deduce that there is no better illustration of coloniality than what we see here, the apartheid government is not in control of the state anymore, but some of their governance systems remain the backbone of the current structure of a democratic nation.

The establishment of SGBs represents some decentralisation of powers (i.e. admission policy, language of instruction, teacher appointments, adopting a code of conduct for learners and especially school fees) in the South African school system (Beckmann, 2009). There was a vigorous debate on the question of how much powers should be distributed and to which levels of the education system. However, the issue of decentralising powers of school governance in itself was never questioned. Neither was the notion of which powers of governance at school level ever seriously contested (Beckmann, 2003). Soobrayan explains:

> Under Nationalist control, education is used to further subservience and oppression. Whereas in the hands of the people, it becomes a weapon for liberation. Therefore, for education to serve the interests of the majority, the majority must not only control it, but the people must also participate in its conception, formulation and implementation. (Soobrayan 1994:33).

One of the most problematic powers was determining school fees and the financial powers of approving and monitoring the school budgets. Mncube (2009) asks the pivotal question of whether voting on budgets and school fees amounts to substantive participation? But the distribution of such financial powers amongst all stakeholders, as stipulated by SASA, can be seen as a way to set up previously disadvantaged schools for failure. In line with the Freedom Charter, which proclaims that 'The People Shall Govern', Walter Sisulu is cited as stating that they refuse to accept any alternative to Bantu Education that came from above, meaning that education policy must be decided from the ground up through local involvement (Chang, 2010). This maintenance of power became evident at the end of 1992, when 96% of white schools became Model C schools because they wanted to ensure that financial aid from the state kept coming their way while being able to raise their own fees. This meant that these schools would maintain control over the school, by deciding to increase the school fees and accepting children of African decent that they approved, or what Fernwood's SGB chair referred to as 'nice blacks' (Chang, 2010).

This market approach was also in line with maintaining the quality of these schools by ensuring that the necessary funds keep on coming through school fees. Failure to maintain these schools would have seen an exodus of middle-class learners into private schools, which would have led to further crumbling of the public schooling system. The NP's decentralisation process was about the government incorporating market-based approaches to the financing of public education (Chang 2010:28). This was a clear indication of financial gate keeping, which was

designed to keep out most learners who were not white or middle class and who could not afford the schools into these schools. However, at that point in time, the democratic movement was happy for the state to lose control of some aspects of the schools, without really conceptualising fully that this notion was to maintain the status into the future. One can ask, how else could the democratic movement handled this notion of a decentralised education system, without instituting a new form of apartheid/discrimination. Yet the radical education redress should have been on top of their agenda, but it was difficult to force the hand of the then NP to address historical underfunding of black schools to a point that ensured all black schools were well resourced and with a conducive environment for teaching and learning. The NP was not keen to redirect the financial aid that went into the Model C schools into the previously disadvantaged schools.

Local school governance includes coming together to conclude other making policy decisions such as admission and language, generating revenue, and influencing the delivery of that curriculum (Naidoo, 2005). Most South African SGBs are still battling with basic functionalities, such as convening a meeting a time and having a quorum or appointing a treasurer with the actual financial background, when (if ever) will they get to exercise their newly allocated powers to make some substantial changes that will benefit learners and ultimately benefit the state education system. One notable issue is the language policy in schools, where initially all schools in the RSA had to make use of English or Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. However, SGBs could decide on the language of instruction at the Foundation phase and now, after consultation with the district, most learners are instructed in their home language from Grade 1 up to Grade 3 and transition to English in Grade 4 as a medium of instruction. The approach is becoming more learner-centred and there are increasingly best practices which will enhance the development of our learners.

Another notable change, regarding the 1998 School Norms and Standards, was the introduction of no fee-paying schools because the socio-economic realities of many learners just hamper their access to education. This Act does not only exempt these learners from paying actual school fees but also exempts them from buying stationery, textbooks and in some instances travelling to and from school (provided they live a considerable distance away from the school). Thus, notable equity-driven changes are seen to appear in the public schooling system and the role of SGBs and their function is getting clearer, however there is still much work to be done in that respect.

One of the criticisms on the SASA policy itself put forward by Sayed is that the parental involvement is not a real community involvement, which represents a lesser version of community democratisation:

> It is deeply ironic that community representatives on South Africa's school governing bodies do not have any voting status. The notion of conveying power to the people as opposed to the state reflected a strong commitment to participatory democracy and the decentralisation of government control. Grassroots community control was the antithesis of state control, which was itself the primary apparatus of oppression. (Sayed, 1997:359).

Sayed (2005) continues his criticism by pointing out that school decentralisation can transform parents into consumers, as the parent-consumer is constituted based on the fees which he/she pays to provide additional finances for school provision beyond the state subsidy. Thus, the role of the market in education produces the “consumer citizen” who is a self-interested, utility-maximising and rational individual.

An additional issue is that of the teacher appointments, which speaks to the quality of education provided by those respective teachers. The United Nations and its Sustainable

Development Goals (SDG) in September 2015, has a fourth goal talking about an inclusive and equitable quality education which promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all. With that said, studies found that South African schools are not well enough equipped to attain SDG 4 levels of inclusive and equitable quality education (Mngomezulu, Mabusela and Lawrence, 2021). The reason why South African schools are considered not well equipped is because, among other things, of the questionable quality of SGB members tasked to interview and ultimately make a recommendation of who gets appointed as a teacher. One additional factor that is not taken into consideration is the meddling of the appointment process by teacher unions in this process because some believe that certain posts are cadre deployments rather than recruitment of quality teachers that will be beneficial to the school. This came partly because the liberation movement was intentional about placing its cadres in influential positions to dismantle the apartheid system. However, this has led to corruption and gatekeeping, which led to loss of vision of transforming education into a vehicle of maturity, justice, viability, and lifelong learning, thus, the powers of the SGB are now limited to the making the recommendations and not the appointment (Volmink et al., 1996).

There is consensus amongst many scholars that the SGB powers (as illustrated above) are not necessarily beneficial for schools with learners and parents of lower socioeconomic status, both in SA or in other countries (Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski and Apostoleris 1997, cited by Mncube, 2009).

The idea of a SGB sounded good when considering the past authoritarian system but is it the most important need that most schools require to improve their functionality and performance? The establishment of SGBs represents some decentralisation of powers in the South African school system. While it may mean an increase in democratic participation in some schools, this is not necessarily the case. As Beckman states, “Governors may well view what has happened

since 1994 as a promise fulfilled and then disappointed and frustrated." (Beckmann, 2009:183). Unfortunately, it can be argued that this so-called positive development of school decentralisation policy could lead to an institutionalized school level exclusion which intends to protect the legacy and standing of the white middle class m schools which had access to better resources to make the best of school decentralisation. Lastly, it is worth mentioning that the SGB powers are not substantial in the main scheme of things, as they do not include curricula development and implementation; SGBs cannot deal with this because that remains a function of the state but in some of the privileged schools, they can make the necessary adjustments to their curriculum according to how they see fit.

Naidoo (2005) argues that the post-1994 national government assumed a governance system that is top-down, appears rational, and technocratic in terms of how it viewed educational reform and change. The SA government initiated educational reforms based on a theory of change rooted in reductionism and a linear system perspective. The greatest problematic assumption in this form of change is that all school environments are orderly, predictable and are provided with the same resources.

> Given the situation, centrally initiated policies are likely to reflect multiple contradictions, as governments frame policies that are mainly symbolic and designed to show that the government is doing something in the face of expressed problems. (Deem et al., 1995 cited by Naidoo 2005:119).

2.3. Studies on uneven implementation of SGB/school governance

There are also contextual realities that were going to play and distort the intention of SASA during the implementation process, such as school resource disparities, lack of parental

participation and training, poor communication and skills, unequal power relations, lack of governor training and different socio-cultural expectations (Mncube, 2009).

As far as school resources are concerned, Buys, du Plessis and Mestry (2020) explain that "Principals were unanimous that they would not be able to deliver quality education without the income from school fees". Over and above the funds that the affluent schools bring in, another great asset that they have is the parent body, which act as main school sponsors. It is more than just the school fees contribution that parents make in these schools, they can also give their expertise and skills free of charge. These skills include pro-bono professional services, building material, labour, legal and technological support to mention a few skills (Buys, du Plessis and Mestry, 2020). The Department of Education in its 2003 paper on Quality Education acknowledged that the provisions of SASA appeared to have benefited public schools which were supported by the middle-class wealthy parents. A likely outcome is that, in the long run, there will be systemic inequality between a small number of rich schools for the whites and black middle- class but not for the majority of poorly resourced, mainly black, schools (Weber, 2002). These contextual realities continue to affect the uneven implementation of decentralisation of school governance.

School governance is primarily reliant on the parents' competency, skills, capacity and ability to participate and communicate effectively regarding matters of governance. The principle of having locals actively participate and get involved in the conversations that has to do with how the school is led and governed is good on paper and welcomed by those who were part of the decentralisation negotiations. But what we see on the ground though are simple problematic realities such as the ideal time to hold an SGB meeting as in most cases it can be problematic because teachers often do not want to stay at school until late in the evening to wait for parents who can only come after work. These teachers then pose a threat to the recruiting of the parental component of the SGB because of their unwillingness to stay after hours or come to school on

a weekend to hold these meetings. The school ends up having parents elected for the SGB positions who are easily available to attend afternoon meetings, but this means that the parents with the knowhow on some of the governance powers (such as financial background and situation) cannot become the treasurer. Schools in South Africa are obligated to have a functional SGB that manages the school with the School Management Team (SMT). However, schools in affluent areas had functional Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) who were tasked with doing everything that needs to be done outside of the teaching time and hours (Ginsburg, et al., 2017). In my experience, schools in townships opt for an available parent (who in most cases is unemployed) because readily available at any given time to sign cheques and attend meetings. This then leads to very little input coming from the parent body of the SGB regarding financial matters because the treasurer is not knowledgeable in the subject matter, and the discussion is dominated by the principal because decisions must be taken. With previously disadvantaged schools receiving seven times more that the previously advantaged schools (Buys, du Plessis and Mestry, 2020), thus to some of these treasurers and SGB members, they assume that the school has a lot of money, thus the urge to embezzle some of these funds.

Naidoo (2005) is critical of the current models of representative democracy in relation to local school governance and argues for the recognition of alternative views which see democracy in terms other than that of consensus and agreement: “more realistic models of school governance should be designed upon the prospect of consensus across difference and accommodating less optimistic views of the propensity for agreement” (Barnett, 2003 cited by Naidoo 2005:123). The SGBs have the potential ability to change this status quo but they are not capacitated nor are their communities that need such changes. Unequal educational opportunities continue to result in and mirror unequal economic opportunities and, if these inequalities exist in the education sector, economic inequalities will continue to persist (Hussain, 1976).

Studies blame poor and underperforming SGBs for the lack of skills and the limited knowledge of parents which adversely affect school governance (Mngomezulu et al, 2021). What remains shocking is that studies have over time revealed that the majority of SGBs members are illiterate and not adequately trained for the that purpose and yet, little to nothing is being proposed or suggested to change that status quo for township and rural schools. Governance and leadership work hand in hand and, with the failure to govern, we see failure to lead and then we expect greater functionality in these schools, that's a preposterous expectation from our department of education.

Township people could participate in the SGB and bring the know-how and be instrumental in the discussion but some of these people might not be parents at the school. Co-opting community members could be a possibility which could benefit the school significantly especially if local businesspeople could offer their knowledge on financial best practices or if local spiritual or community leaders could give guidance on the school values and code of conduct the school needs to adopt. Another initiative is bringing back the school's alumni as 'Old Boys and Old Girls', especially those who could participate in a certain sub-committee setup by SGB that will allow their voices to bring about change and contribute effectively in communicating about the school's effective functionality and good governance.

As mentioned before, there is a link between the quality of the SGBs and the quality of teachers being recruited and that many of the studies blame underperforming SGBs for the lack of necessary skills, roles and responsibilities in appointing the appropriate people (Mngomezulu, et al (2021). If those SGB members are not skilled and knowledgeable and failed in recruiting quality teachers, how will they contribute to quality of education amongst township learners? "Learners are the output of educational investment and are the major agents of change. Thus, the future of the society is directly proportional to the choice(s) of the SGBs in the teacher

recruitment process." (Mngomezulu, et al 2021:221). The role of SGBs is important, but not sufficient on its own, for the achievement of a sustainable and transformative education system.

What is a priority for SGBs though are intensive workshops, training, seminars to enable SGB members to carry out their duties effectively (Mngomezulu, et al 2021). It is one of the reasons for why the poor disadvantaged schools cannot catch up and narrow the inequality gap. These difficult issues are pointing to the need for a better theory or model of school decentralisation which takes into account the current state of affairs and perceptions and experiences that the current SGBs develop in township schools.

2.4. Neo-colonial decentralisation and SASA in the context of unequal socio-educational realities and capacities

Neo-Colonisation (or coloniality) still appears to dominate in South African schools and this reality calls for a re-thinking of the transformation of the education sector and school governance for our purpose. Some refer to this transformation as decolonisation which, in Mamdani's view, refers to political, economic, cultural and epistemological decolonisation, knowledge production and its institutional locus (Mamdani, 2016). Though we are not living under colonialism, coloniality is the order of the day because the long-standing patterns of power continue to exist and define culture, labour, intersubjective relations and knowledge production in education in particular (Christie and McKinney, 2017). It is for this reason that decentralisation of school decision making, as it is implemented, could be closely associated with a neoliberal approach because neo-liberalism also promotes decentralisation of decision making, and less direct influence of central government at local level settings (Heystek, 2011). Indeed, neo-liberalism which appears to give more powers to individuals can be associated with privatization of education, decentralisation in education governance, fiscal austerity in social spending, the advocacy of cost recovery (user fees, student loans) (Weber, 2002).

The preservation of the white school's culture and ethos was secured by the protected status that schools possessed during the transition into democracy and when schools were being restructured after 1994 (Christie and McKinney, 2017). There were unequal socio-educational realities but, as Christie and McKinney state, the National Party took steps and negotiated to protect white schools which happened to be the best resourced in the system. As Baker stresses, school finance and performance are tightly associated. He argues that, (1) student outcomes are determined by the amount of money available to the school, (2) additional money ensures that schools have additional staff, smaller class size and longer school days, (3) resources at the school are directly linked to how much money is available. Thus, students perform well when the school is well funded and resourced (Baker, 2020).

Furthermore, it is important to remember that the apartheid government had already developed a set of governance options for white former Model C schools that would pass greater powers to the parent bodies or PTAs (Christie and McKinney, 2017). The culture in these white schools was nothing but neo-colonial in its formation and sustenance and the law made provision through restricted, administrative citizenship, for the authority to be devolved mainly to parents, within white and middle-class schools (Weber, 2002). It is clear that many of these historically white schools wished to maintain their position of privilege and that such privilege in South Africa meant that schools in wealthy white communities could maintain their substantial funding (by raising their own school fees) and teaching advantages (as well as low learner/teacher ratios) over schools in poor, historically disadvantaged black communities (Jansen, 1998).

Decentralisation does not address the powerlessness, discrimination and exclusion experienced by black parents and black schools were pressurized to conform to the neo-colonial norms and culture that applied and suited white middle class schools. Decentralisation, as is promoted and implemented, assumes middle-class competences and as a result, working-class and poor

communities continue to see no to little tangible benefit from school decentralisation. Policies ought to privilege the disadvantaged for the benefit of society as a whole and not just the elite and the powerful in society. This reality is clearly seen by those in academia who argue that systematic discrimination of identifiable social groups must be rejected (Weber, 2002). The objective for township schools ought to be about delinking from the colonial matrix of power towards developing different forms of governance.

Notwithstanding the contemporary discourses of educational decentralisation in the South African context are likely to redefine the inequities resulting from a racially to a class-based system of societal organization, while not eliminating them fully. These discourses will lead to the creation of a deracialized, class-stratified, two-tier public school system in which neoliberal market ideology will hold sway. The benefits of such a system, however, are questionable for the majority of citizens in the new democracy in South Africa. The challenge is to consider ways in which extending democracy in schools through the devolution of educational decision making will not compromise the need to effect equity and redress. It is a balance that is necessary to achieve to bring to fruition the desires of those who have been marginalized and disadvantaged by the previous system of apartheid education (Sayed, 1997).

Chapter Three - Theoretical framework

3.1. Decoloniality and decolonisation in Education

School decentralisation is not a new phenomenon within the education system in the world. With a bimodal education system in South Africa, we see how a fraction of schools (less than 20%) are doing extremely well in terms of their academic performance and the remainder of schools are amongst the worst in the world. The South African education system is bimodal and must be understood as marred by issues of race, gender, class, locality, and access (Christie and McKinney, 2017). Neo-colonial dominance remains in South African schools in terms of the quality of education existing in previously white former Model C schools versus the majority of African schools. This reality calls for a transformation of these severe inequalities and involves in particular a challenge of the assumption that the former Model C schools are the standards to aim and progress towards. As Christie and McKinney (2017) note, the power relations within these former Model C schools have not fundamentally been challenged but on the contrary, they have been endorsed by the post-1994 legislation. These schools tried to ensure that the cultural and linguistic ethos of their historically white-only constituencies continue to prevail as normative, long after their learner bodies diversified. Aspects of the colonial matrix of power subsided, especially at the level of the hierarchies of language and culture. As Christie and McKinney (2017) explain, former Model C schools use rules to control, in the interests of the white (and black) middle class, matters such as language policies and practices, cultural practices such as dress, hair (for boys and girls), headscarves, as well as religious practices other than Christian. This has led in some instances to protests and disputes within these schools from black learners and their parents, especially over appointment of staff and language of instruction. Linguists (McKinney, 2017:80 cited in Christie and McKinney 2017) have also questioned the assumption that "the proficiency and literacy in particular forms

of "standard" English is defined as the main marker of being educated …. and the expectation that people will be and should be proficient in English and are deficient, even deviant, if they are not". Yet, it is recognised by linguists that "education in a foreign language or through a language in which a child is not proficient effectively removes the most valuable resource a child brings to formal schooling: their linguistic repertoire" (Christie and McKinney, 2017**:7**).

Some refer to real transformation as decolonisation which, in Mamdani (2016)'s view, refers to political, economic, cultural, and epistemological decolonisation, which refers to knowledge production and its institutional locus. According to Jansen (2017) when he analysed protests in higher education, he mentions that the call for a decolonised education system can be understood from six categories, namely: decentring of European knowledge, the Africanisation of knowledge, the critical engagement with settled knowledge, decolonisation as additive-inclusive knowledge, as encounters with entangled knowledge and decolonisation as the repatriation of occupied knowledge. Thus, the call for decolonisation, initially of higher education, cannot be simply defined by using a single definition but needs a multiplicity of definitions of which they will vary depending on each context. Decolonisation as decentring of European knowledge involves placing Africa at the centre (Jansen, 2017). Decolonisation should take into account capitalism, currently configured in the markets, consumerism, and hyper-individualism of neoliberalism (Christie, 2020). Thus, schools that are governed by parents who are professionals in their careers and who inherit the resources and privileges from the inequalities of the past are clearly striving with the form of school governance, such as the SGBs compared to parents of township and rural schools.

Bringing this debate to individual schools, culture and ethos have to do, among other things, where the governing body and the community at large should be coming together in order to formulate their own governance style that is in line with the local community needs. Duku and Salami (2017) point out the existence of local and traditional leaders in rural areas and how the

SGBs in rural schools have an opportunity to draw from the wealth of knowledge, wisdom and cultural values of these people. However, we witnessed the preservation of the white school's culture and ethos secured by the protected status that these schools had as a result of the compromises of the transition into democracy when the school system was being restructured and other educational policy reforms were developed (Christie and McKinney, 2017). The culture in these white middle class schools is neo-colonial and partly influenced by their previous governance system of the Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) that was already in place, and in this way the former Model C schools had a head-start with the governance model. For this reason, we may argue that decentralisation became a way in which the Nationalists could ensure these white middle class schools could raise their own fees and remained exempt from the burden of assisting and redistributing funds to the majority of SA schools.

3.2. School decentralisation through the lens of decolonizing the education system

Former Minister of Education, Bengu, believed that we must build an education and training system in which all people can identify because it serves their needs and interests. The schools must be owned and cared for by the communities and stakeholders they serve and must ensure that all resources are available for the school to operate effectively. Furthermore, the SGB model was said to be designed to give greater autonomy, enable the school to manage its own resources and democratise local control on decision making while it responds to the community needs (Naidoo, 2005). Culture and ethos of schools have to do with the governing body and the community coming together in order to formulate their own governance style that is in line with their local community needs. With that said, the big question is, can we duplicate governance styles from neo-colonial countries that are exposed to and enjoy many more human and financial resources. But are SGBs as they are formulated able to transform existing patterns of inequality or are these SGBs reproducing them (Taylor and Yu, 2009)?

Christie and McKinney (2017) state that the National Party developed a set of governance options for white schools that would pass substantial powers to the parent bodies and this did not substantially changed after 1994. As a result, Christie and McKinney (2017:3) explain, "Model C" schools illustrate the entangled power matrix that characterises coloniality because they exemplify, “how deep historical inequalities persist well past the formal end of colonialism” through their rules, policies and practices. What need to change are the historical power differentials that continue to produce the deep inequalities and the SGB could be one such leverage.

African countries see the role of PTAs to be more supportive, compared to their counterparts in the Western countries that see the PTAs as more authoritative. This brings the question of colonial norms that are imposed onto African countries and how these countries realised that they could not duplicate these colonial norms as they are.

As opposed to striving to duplicate the PTA model that was already functional in the Model C schools, South African local schools have an opportunity to utilise and harness local knowledge and expertise in the governance of the schools. SGBs could be seen as a viable source of indigenous knowledge, local culture and a management strategy that is capable of actively contributing to the decolonization of education in South Africa (Duku and Salami, 2017). Whether they are rural areas or in townships, these communities have systems in place that maintain order and governance in their social construct, and schooling and education is at the heart each community, hence greater autonomy could be assumed by the local leaders to influence and assist in the governing of our schools. With the SGB members, teachers and learners belonging to the same community in most cases, SGB members could find it easier to extend their level of influence because they could easily access the learner’s home if there were discipline issues at school (Duku and Salami, 2017). The African proverb clearly stipulates that, ‘It takes a village to raise a child’ and this concept is not too far fetched from the proposed

engagement that is being put forward by Duku and Salami that these children belong to the community (village) and attend the community schools, hence their entire community (including its leadership) is needed to contribute towards governance and leadership within the SGB. Thus, the ultimate call to include community members whom Duku and Salami (2017) refer to as recognised knowledgeable individuals (RKI) who could be instrumental in the composition and functioning of the SGB (Duku and Salami, 2017). The co-opting of additional members who may not be parents at the school is a great start to making this notion a reality, and once these RKIs are co-opted, they should have the voting rights and could hold crucial positions in the SGB structure.

This explains why this study seeks to research whether the SA decentralisation of school powers, in light of the decolonisation debate, was designed to give greater autonomy and powers to the black and under privileged schools or was it to protect white privilege and maintain the neo-colonial matrix of power through the SGB bodies or both. Ball (1998) states that policies are in general ramshackle compromises with hit and miss affairs that are reworked and enacted through complex processes of influence (Ball 1998, cited by Naidoo 2005). The perceptions and experiences that are realized by black schools have not changed for the better because of the form of decentralisation adopted in South Africa". The inequality levels have become the worst in the world with more than 50% of the population living under the poverty line (IMF, 2020) and these realities continue to be deeply entrenched in the education system. Governance is not just about who makes the decisions but it is about leadership, which has to translate to people's lives becoming better because everything rises and falls on leadership (Maxwell, 2007).

Christie and McKinney (2017) conclude that a starting point might be to take the perspective of the poorest schools in the system as a focal point for policy and to work towards changes that prioritise and value them. This study will attempt in chapter 6 and 7 to think about possible

alternative forms of governance that are more appropriate and suitable for poor disadvantaged black schools.

3.3. Decentralisation and decolonialisation in township schools

We cannot use a one-size-fits-all approach when speaking about decentralization of schools while we still have well-funded schools as well as under-resourced and poorly funded schools in developing countries such as South Africa. Success is a precursor of every school, and the school then needs to be clear in their leadership and journey towards attaining that success. One thing that we are certain about is the fact that we cannot have the former neo-colonizer as the proper agent of decolonisation without the intellectual guidance of the 'damnes' (Mignolo, 2007 cited by Christie and McKinney, 2017). No one knows the struggles of oppression more than the oppressed and, if relief was to be offered, the oppressor would not be the right person to consult with in the attempt to liberate the oppressed. Maldonado-Torres affirms this notion: "The decolonial turn is about making visible the invisible and about analysing the mechanisms that produce such invisibility or distorted visibility in light of a large stock of ideas that must necessarily include the critical reflections of the invisible people themselves" (Maldonado-Torres 2007:262 cited by Christie and McKinney, 2017). This then results in learners in township and rural schools in South Africa being denied the right to quality education from a more democratic governance of their schools as it is deeply entrenched in the colonial matrix of power and remains unchanged since the dawn of democracy.

Chapter Four - Research design and methodology

4.1. Research design

The research design of this study follows one of a qualitative case study. “Qualitative research has been used mainly to investigate the small-scale” (Scott & Morrison, 2005:184). The aim is to ensure that the "emphasis is upon giving the people of the case a 'Voice' - to the extent that the voice of the researcher as external interpreter may be subdued in favour of the insider to the case" (Scott & Morrison, 2006:17-18). The purpose of a qualitative case study is for the participant's perceptions and experiences to be the main focus instead of the researcher being biased to come across. This qualitative study is relevant to the topic of this research which focuses on understanding the perceptions and experiences of SGBs in township schools and on how SGB stakeholders understand their function and what they think needs to improve within their local setting.

4.2. Research methodology

Any research must be based on a research methodology that is understood as the process used by the researcher to address the research problem at hand (Phil, 1998). This process further requires a logical process of obtaining, organizing and analyzing the information collected by the researcher (Pilot and Hunger, 2004). Every researcher's world view contains certain assumptions and knowledge-based ideologies that are formed within a paradigm or two. The research approach for this study is qualitative in nature because the researcher believes that the world is socially constructed and forever changing. This approach has the strength to provide information about the participant’s view of the problem and the researcher is able to acquire information about the participant’s beliefs, opinions and social norms. It is for this reason that the researcher needs to be actively interacting with the participants and ensures they personally do the data collection (Delport and Fouche, 2002).

The study's epistemological position stands on the spectrum of interpretivism. It derives many of its fundamental tenets and therefore needs to deploy distinctive methods (Scott & Morrison, 2005) by using the interpretivist method which will allow a deeper understanding on the perceptions and experiences of SGB members.

4.3. Sampling

The study was conducted in a township called Eldorado Park at two primary schools which form part of the Johannesburg Central District 14. The one is considered as under-performing, as per Annual National Assessment results back in 2013 while the other is considered to be better performing. The interesting thing to note is that the better performing school was built across the road from the poor performing school. Thus, the decision to choose these two schools because they are now operating as if they were worlds apart, even though the one was birthed from the other. The school's leadership and the SGB must have played a role in how these schools are both managed and governed, and the objective is to draw from their realities and perceptions of the governance of the schools.

Thus, the two primary schools were selected using the location criteria in the Johannesburg Central District (D14). They were located within the researcher's community and selected according to their different academic performance and the different effectiveness in the operation of their SGB. I trust that the participants and schools selected are a source of meaningful reflections and data with regards to the functions and operations of the SGB.

The researcher's previous experience as a teacher and deputy principal in the same community did in no way hinder the researcher's objectivity because the researcher is no longer employed within that community. On the contrary, the researcher was in a better position to understand some of the contextual dynamics of this community and to some extent the selected schools.

Learners enrolled at these two schools come from a similar socio-economic status. The school community consists of a predominantly coloured community and a great influx of African learners being bused in daily from Soweto. The learners at these schools are therefore a mix from working class and middle-class homes. The better performing school is a Quintile 3 school, and the under-performing school is a Quintile 2 school.

4.4. Participants

Participants of the research are 10 in total and include stakeholders such as the Teachers, Principal/Deputy Principal, and School Governing Body Members (Parents). The reason why this group of people was selected is because they make up the active SGB stakeholders in the school's community.

	Primary School A	**Primary School B**	**TOTAL**
Questionnaire and Interviews	1 Principal/Deputy Principal (PA) 2 Teachers (HA & TA) 2 Parents (PA1 & PA2)	1 Principal/Deputy Principal (PB) 2 Teachers (HB & TB) 2 Parents (PB1 & PB2)	**10 Participants**

4.5. Data collection

Interviews and relevant documents (such as a few meeting minutes and internal policy documents related to school finance, admissions, language policies) were used as data collection methods. All the participants were required to answer the questions as part of the interview. “Interviewing involves asking questions and getting answers from the participants in the study” (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). The study used mainly the semi-structured

interview method to allow for an open, in-depth discussion of the research topic since semi-structured interviews have open-ended questions to explore perceptions and attitudes (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). The interviews also enabled the participants to freely express themselves in their own words about the perceptions and experiences. The minutes and policy documents gave us a picture of what the schools and their SGBs in particular were guided by in their day-to-day operation, how they have over the recent years dealt with their problems and issues as well as how their governance arrangements could be improved.

The study recorded data using audio tapes of the interviews as an instrument of data collection. Tape recording can be replayed and analysed over and over to verify, as this reduces the risk of misinterpretation of the participant's views. With regards to documents that are difficult to get from the school or sensitive in nature, the researcher requested the principal from the respective school to share what s/he can possibly share without compromising the confidentiality of the documents.

4.6. Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is described as the phase of systematically looking and organizing the interview transcripts accumulated by the researcher to enhance the understanding of the phenomenon (Thorne, 2000). This segmentation and inductive coding assisted in the development of themes, categories, and sub-categories (Suter, 2006; Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). To make meaning of the data collected from the interview and the document analysis the researcher transcribed the information collected and significant comments were identified and grouped into categories and units of meaning (Thomas, 2003). "Qualitative data analysis is a primary and inductive process of organising the data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among the categories" (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:461). The recorded interviews were transcribed, and the names of the

participants replaced with pseudo names. The information transcribed were structured within the sub-headings of the research project. Data collected during this study were organised into conceptual categories, particularly those to be used when analysing data

4.7. Issues of trustworthiness, validity, and reliability

When conducting research of any form, it is important for the researcher to look at issues of trustworthiness and ensure that the research is both reliable and valid. Validity is viewed as a strength of qualitative research because people communicate freely about their perceptions and experiences by presenting "a holistic interpretation to the researcher in an atmosphere of trust and comprehension of what is happening" (Merriam, 1998:203). It is for this reason the participants are all currently in service at the school as part of the SGB, because anyone can have an opinion about the governance of the school; however, being exposed in the actual governance process brings a different perspective altogether. Thus, the questions that have been asked are relevant to the research topic and applicable to the participants.

Internal validity is used as "an equivalent to credibility" (McMillan &Schumacher, 1993:39). Credibility was maintained by ensuring that the participants felt that they were represented accurately and the findings were represented as truthful as possible. The audiotaping of the interviews also ensured that the responses of the participants were not falsified in any way. Transferability and dependability speak to the usefulness of the research and its findings. Confirmability addresses the data analysis and ensures that the inferences based on the data are logical and of high quality.

The researcher was committed to remain neutral and objective throughout the data collection and interviews. The researcher collected, analysed and interpreted data and ensuree that the data collected was recorded exactly accurately as what was expressed when the researcher conducted the study and investigation. Reliability in qualitative research refers to the

uniformity of the researcher in facilitating a process of conducting research which requires a researcher to have a certain faithful style of recording, analysing and interpreting the data collected from the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993).

Patton writes that, “triangulation is a strategy that the qualitative researcher can use to improve the validity and reliability of a study or evaluation of findings” (Patton 2002:46). The researcher ensured that the participants answered the questions genuinely, without fear of discrimination or intimidation. The participants were re-assured of their anonymity in the research and the fact that their real names will not be reflected in the research process.

4.8. Ethical considerations

I obtained ethical clearance from the University of the Witwatersrand (2021ECE065M); permission from the Gauteng Department of Education as well as from the schools that took part in the research. Furthermore, all participants were provided with written consent forms to be interviewed and to participate in the research in order to comply with ethical considerations of confidentiality and anonymity in conducting the research. The participants were informed about the nature of the research, which involved negotiating and renegotiating access at different points throughout the life of the research project (Scott & Morrison, 2005). It was explained to participants that participation is voluntary and that they could withdraw from the participating in the research at any point without consequence. The interview was completely confidential and anonymous as I did not ask for their name or any identifying information, and the information given was held securely and not disclosed to anyone else to ensure that there is low risk. I used pseudonyms (false names) to represent each participant in my final research report. The information gathered during the research project is stored in a password protected laptop and none of that information will be shared within any besides my supervisor who will be offering academic guidance while the research is in progress.

4.9. Limitations

Limitations in the research came from the time available to investigate a research problem and to measure change or stability over time is pretty much constrained by the due date of the research, resources and finances. I am not funded by any organisation in order to conduct this research and therefore had limited resources to conduct the study to its full potential.

4.10. Delimitations

The research was conducted in two schools in the South of Johannesburg, which means that the sample used in this study is small, and therefore the findings from this research cannot be and are not generalizable to other contexts. I did hope to find rich data from the qualitative research method that illustrated realities that will be relatable to and researched in other schools. I also hope to provide some guidance for other schools with similar demographics.

Chapter Five - Data presentation

A qualitative design was used to uncover perceptions and experiences of the main school governors, as advanced by various qualitative research authors (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003:38; Gay & Airasian, 2003:13). Participants were interviewed on the basis of availability and membership of a specific school's SGB. This is because the aim was not to compare SGBs or to analyse them by quantifying or generalising the data, but rather to understand school governors' views and frustrations. This also ensured that accounts preferred were not necessarily viewed from one or another as represented by a number of participants.

This study is interested in understanding: (1) the different perceptions and experiences of the school management team and some teachers towards the functioning and operations of the school governing body, (2) the different perceptions and experiences of some parents towards the school governing body, its functioning and operations; (3) the major obstacles identified in the SGBs and how can they be minimized to foster better functioning and operating SGBs and (4) what could be put in place to overcome the lack of relevance/effectiveness of townships SGBs in order to improve the school governance and leadership. Each sub-heading starts with views of the participants from School A and ends with a summary of their views; and the views of participants of School B followed with a summary of their views. Direct quotes are used to capture what the participants themselves articulated. This, combined with the narrative form of the report, allows the participants, as it were, to have a voice and "speak" for themselves.

The South African Schools Act (SASA), No 84 of 1996, describes an ideal policy for stakeholder participation in school governance, to replace the pre-1994 school governance which was characterised by authoritarian and exclusive practices especially in black schools, in that black parents had no consultative and advisory role in school governance structures. The 1996 policy stipulates broader democratic participation by parents, principal, teachers and learners in the life of the school through the medium of School Governing Bodies (SGBs).

These are composed of the principal, teachers, non-teaching staff and parents, and also learners in the case of secondary schools (Mabasa & Themane, 2002).

5.1. Understanding different perceptions and experiences of the school management team, teachers and parents towards the SGB, its functioning and operations.

School Management Team's (SMT) and teacher's perceptions and experiences of the SGB functions

School A

PA (principal of school A) notes that, "The SGB is supposed to represent the interests of the school and the parents are a key component in that responsibility. TA (teacher of school A) on the SGB must represent the teachers and the parents must represent other parents, but I don't think that this is realistic. In all my years of serving on the SGB, I can't remember a meeting being held by any of the reps (whether parent or teacher reps) to seek a mandate. I don't know how you can represent without a clear mandate, so it seems like they are representing themselves."

The HA (head teacher of school A) mentions, "For most part it seems like they are quite complimentary towards one another, they seem to play quite fairly. They don't often disagree but their biggest problem when disagreeing is over finances; the moment finances are in involved, then people are fighting, people fight but, for most parts, they seem to be willing to work as a team, towards what is sometimes questionable." TA notes that, "In the olden days, education was centralized and the control of the governance was in the hands of the state. With the democratic government, the Schools Act says that the school should be governed by a majority of parents. The parents must represent other parents and participate in the democratic process. Even if the elective structure of the SGB is democratic, they must be active because they are the voice of the different stakeholders, and especially the parent component."

From the above views, school A seems to have a good grasp of the SGB's role and the importance of having a democratic process in the governance of the school. Even though PA expresses his concerns about the parents and teachers not having a mandate from the other parents and teachers, HA and TA seem to be happy to see democracy and autonomy in action in the SGB because parents are able to make decisions that they believe are best for the school. Perhaps it would be a good idea to have another forum in which parents can meet outside of the SGB structure and give their views and concerns that will be taken by the parent reps into the SGB. This would indeed give a greater representative voice to the parent component and introduce fresh and robust ideas to governance in this school.

School B

PB (principal of school B) states that, "They are a good group of governors and some of them served in the previous term. They are okay and they don't seem to have issues with each other." HB (head teacher of school B) believes that, "The primary role of the SGB is to work as a support structure for the school and the parents appointed are representing the parent body of the school. The members must make sure that everybody is treated fairly and that no learner is being deprived. Some work towards the betterment of the school and others seem to work towards the detriment of the school. Are they trying to uplift the principal or are they trying to put down the principal. On the whole, they seem to be working together with one another more than they are opposing one another." TB (teacher of school B) adds, "The SGB must meet to discuss important issues of the school. That's why it is important for the SGB to meet every three months. The parents are not always available to meet and they are only available in the evening."

The views about the SGB in school B seem to be somewhat vaguer and gives us a hint of some strife within the SGB, especially with the parent component. Principals often find it necessary to protect the image of the school and HB did not hold back because he stipulated that not all parents want to see the school succeed and prosper. The parents in school B seem to assume the power of contributing positively (and negatively) towards the school and they seem to know that their actions could be blamed on the principal. However, there also seems to be opposing forces within the parent's themselves as HB shares, but TB was happy to see the structure intact and meetings held at the allocated times of every three months. This is a common acceptance for some of the schools that are not performing very well within the townships, where they become content with the good appearance of the SGB but never address the underlying strife and scheming that sometimes exist against the principals or teachers.

Perceptions, experiences and roles of parents in the SGB

School A `

PA explains the parents' perceptions and experiences: "The parents must represent the parent population of the school. In my experience, I have never seen the parents hold a meeting to get a mandate about governing matters." PA adds, "the parents on the SGB seem to be representing themselves more instead of representing the entire parent population." HA agreed with PA's sentiments and said, "The SGB must act in the best interest of the school, adopt the mission and vision, as well as the constitution of the school in order to make sure that it is in line with what the community wants. The SGB must also ensure that sub-committees are established and a member of the SGB must be part of these sub-committees."

PA and HA seem to have given the ideals of what ought to be happening when parents serve on the SGB, but TA gave a more realistic view by saying that the parents have a lot to take into account regarding their roles because, in reality, they do not really know what they can or must

do. TA agreed in principle about the roles of parents in the SGB but felt that in reality, this was not taking place. TA's view is that the parents are often told what to do and when to do it by the School's Management Team and they are happy just to follow those instructions, without even opposing them. PA2 seemed to be happy just to serve the school in any way possible and enjoyed the fact that as a parent, she was allowed access into the school premises. TA adds, "The question goes back to how literate the parents are to be able to formulate policies as the parents do not always understand legislation."

PA1 believes that parents are there to make sure that everything is done in the best interest of the children and to bring forward suggestions and opinions that other parents have to maintain relations and create trust and transparency. PA1 seemed to be happy and honoured to be part of the SGB and understands the responsibility to create trust between the parents and teaching staff as a major part of their role. PA2 felt that, "We must offer voluntary services that the school needs and then help when teachers are being interviewed at the school and allowed access to the school premises."

From the above views, one can see that school A's teachers and parents have a good grasp of their roles and responsibility, because they are able to articulate their responsibilities as per SASA of 1996. The parent component seems to be taking a lead in terms of its roles in the SGB but this is not done with the blessings and consent of the other parents. This also brings in the question of the parent's educational level and how equipped they are for their role in the SGB. The parents are not well trained for their roles in the SGB and therefore find themselves often taking orders from the SMT or doing what they think is the best thing to do, in order to feel as if they instrumental as part of the SGB. These parents would go as far doing gate duty to ensure that no one enters the school premises without permission. This indicates that school A is better regulated and that parents cannot just show up at school without a valid reason or invitation to do so.

School B

PB believes that parents must be part of the SGB, whether they are office bearers or just members of the SGB team. He continues, “They [parents] must be part of the sub-committees, which deal with discipline, extra-mural, fundraising, LTSM (Learner and Teacher Support Material), buildings and the grounds. The parents are part of the functioning of the SGB, in terms of carrying out their functions; however, you find that one or two members of the SGB lack the knowledge or skill to be able to perform their duties as SGB member.” HB’s view is that, “Sometimes, in most cases, you find that members of the SGB are just there as a final signatory when documents need to be submitted.” TB concurs with HB because, even though the parents are placed or elected on the SGB, he believes that, “They are only called in when they are needed but the principal and the management team is running the school. The parents and the parent chairperson only come to the school to sign requisition forms but they don’t understand what it is for.” PB1 seems to have a good idea of the 1996 SASA and states that, “The parent’s role is basically the voice of the parent community in the school. They seek to work together for the wellbeing of the school. They manage finances, draw up the budgets and draw up policies such as language, religion, admission and school mission and vision.” PB1 went on to speak about their [parent] responsibility in making recommendations when hiring new teachers, HODs and Principals and they have a say when it comes to the LTSM and the creation of an environment conducive for effective teaching and learning. PB2 strongly believed that the SGB faced inner tensions. She went on to say without being very specific, “There are factions in the SGB, therefore there is a lot of conflict with stakeholders pursing the fulfilment of personal agendas.”

School B really could not hide the fact that their SGB was a formality and that there was an authoritarian atmosphere according to PB and HB’s views. The parents are seen as a necessity and those parents must do whatever they are required to do with no objection. PB seemed to

suggest that the school could not entrust their parents with any roles that requires expertise because she (PB) alluded to some parents not being able to carry out their roles. HB and TB both agreed on the fact that the primary role of their parents (especially, the chairperson) was reduced to signing requisition forms that were not even fully explained to them. Thus, the parents at school B seem to be just rubber stamping decisions that the SMT has already taken. This is clearly acknowledged by PB2 who felt that the SGB members were not on the same page. They were also clear factions within the SGB, as a result of the SMT thinking less of the parents and the parents being well aware of this. This created opposing relations within the SGB. An exception to this view was PB1 who was on a different wavelength altogether because she felt well versed about the role of the parent in the SGB, as per the 1996 SASA. She seemed to be a parent who really believed in the SGB structure and the pivotal role that parents had to play to make their schools governable.

5.2. SGB powers and major obstacles in fostering a better functioning and operating SGB

Extent of SGB power and power relations

School A

PA's views about the power relations in the SGB is more a 'middle of the road' situation because the department still has oversight on the process of governance happening at the school. PA adds, "I think where the SGB is now is safe, they don't have too much or too little power but more regular training would make them more efficient and effective in their role." PA believes that there are more personal clashes than power struggles. PA further states that, "In the former SGB, the chairperson and treasurer would often disagree because they had different personalities. The SMT and SGB are not subjected to power struggles but a bigger problem is that the members of these bodies do not know each other." HA's view is that the

struggles always happen when it comes to finances, because everybody wants to be the treasurer and they want to be in the financial committee, which is a sub-committee in the SGB. HA adds, “Everyone wants to know what is happening with the finances and some parents feel that being in the SGB should be a paying job. Some members feel that the treasurer and the principal are doing things that they should not be doing and nobody else knows about it.”

Apart from the finance issue, HA points out the problem with the SGB is recommending someone for a teacher post. The SGB’s (and its parent component) ability to interview and recommend teachers is to award too much power according to HA, “sometimes you don’t sit on the SGB but a random parent who happens to be on the SGB has the power to choose a teacher that must work with you but the only requirement to be on the SGB is to be a parent, whether literate or illiterate and they have the power to just decide who must be appointed. Yet, most parents don’t have an educational background but they choose and recommend the person who will be teaching. They should not be allowed to even recommend a candidate because this is like a person who is not medically trained providing a prescription and recommending that someone take some type of medication when you’re not qualified.” This is a somewhat valid point but we also need to acknowledge that the parents are not conducting those interviews on their own, as the principal and SMT are also part of the process. The appointment of a teacher is looking at two things: a professional candidate and a candidate who is able to care and understand the type of child in that particular school and community.

TA said, “when I started off in the SGB, the principal had more power because you would see that there was a prior meeting that was held before the SGB meeting because, when decisions were made, you could see that an agreement was already there to steer the meeting in a certain direction. TA notes that the SGB parent members do not always understand their role and the procedure in terms of what to do; they don’t always understand even the meeting protocols. But today, it seems to TA that more power lies with the SGB because they have the power to

decide which service provider to go with and the principal and SMT finds themselves at the shorter end of the rope." TA was honest enough to share his past experience of power struggles in the SGB, where the principal used to be the main authority in the SMT and in the SGB. However, he was encouraged to see how SGB members are now able to influence processes and the principal, with the SMT, respect and follow the recommendations of the SGB. PA1 agrees that the SGB has power and that the power is to bring about change granted to them by the South African Schools Act. PA1 mentions a somewhat problematic issue, "The principal still believes that he runs the SGB. Lack of training, like I've mentioned, means that they [parents in the SGB] do not know their roles and responsibilities hence they are unable to fulfill them. When I look at the obstacles, many times the principals feel that they (you know) want to be in charge (uhm) and run the school because the school belongs to them and this doesn't sit well with the parents." PA2 shares the sentiments of the struggles being mostly over finances and decision making. She continues, "There is a blurred line between management and governance. Critical decisions pertaining to governance are taken at that level. The finances of any organization ensure the proper running of the institution, therefore the SGB has been tasked with the function of eliminating the mismanagement of funds by school management."

Thus, overall, the issue of power and power struggles doesn't seem to be a major issue in school A because the general thinking from SGB members is that the power they have is more or less appropriate for them to perform their duties. This is exactly what PA1 highlighted, that the SGB has now become the watch-dog and holds the school accountable, all in the effort of mainly eliminating mismanagement of funds.

School B

PB's views are that principals are more influential in the SGB because some SGB members are more the 'yes sir, no sir' type of people. She adds, "I think governing bodies that are more

in tune probably have more powers, and (ehh) those who are not so in tune, then the principals have more powers." HB believed that SGB members should not have received the powers of making recommendations for appointments in posts because they are not qualified for that. HB further argues, "It just makes sense that, when a principal's post is being advertised, that some IDSOs or Circuit Managers would be interviewing these candidates for the principal's post to ensure that the school is being governed (ehh), and led by someone that is knowledgeable, with the experience that has got what it takes, you know. The Circuit Managers should be there and not the parents of the grade 1 child. This parent with his/her first child in grade 1 can be an unemployed parent, who did not probably complete (uhm) even their secondary education; those roles should not be allocated to parents, it should not. Those are things should be taken from the governing body and placed on the government's responsibility, it's just easier that way." This issue, judged problematic, of parents being given the platform to be part of the interview and recommendation process of teachers was also mentioned by HA. It seems like when HODs have their meetings this is perhaps one of the burning issues that they deliberate upon (outside of curricular issues).

HB mentions also the issue of school finances and says, "They [SGB parent members] should not be in a position to handle the finances of the school, especially funds allocated from the department; if it is fundraising that they do, yes they can work with that money, but, when it comes to money allocated to the section 21 schools, they should not be involved, as these are ring-fenced funds that should be handled by the school, and if not the school, then government should take on these powers." The strong suggestion from HB is that the SGB should not be permitted to make decisions about the funds from the department. This once again begs the question of whether funds are being mismanaged or embezzled at school B and the SGB might be enabling this process. Yet, PB1 strongly counter-argued about this financial power of the SGB when she notes, "The government is incapable of running any department successfully.

Various departments receive unqualified reports from the Auditor General annually. How do you trust them?" In contrast, TB thinks that the SGB and SMT are working together in a partnership that is now a joint and democratic effort.

Another view is expressed by PB1 who talks about the school's reality mentioning that there is a general feeling at the school that it is not performing well because of the authoritarian rule of the principal. The comment PB makes about SGBs being 'yes sir, no sir' type of places, is common for schools where parents and the SMT have not much say in the operation and governance of the school. PB1 seems to feel a victim of this reality as a parent serving on the SGB, because she feels that they don't have any form of power. PB1's sentiments are that school is yet another government organisation that, if audited like municipalities are, would fail the audit. It is also true, as PB1 said, that if the SGB is clued up, meaning well-trained or coming with some socio-cultural capital, then it can make contributions to the governing of the school. This possibility might then curb the feeling that parents have that they must agree with whatever the principal says because they don't know any better.

SGB Obstacles and Challenges in fostering a better functioning and operating SGB

School A

School A has a few main challenges of concern with its SGB that were picked up with some possible ways in which to overcome them. The issues were: Teamwork, Finances/Corruption and Expertise/Training.

PA2 brings out a SGB's challenge of the lack of teamwork because she believes that it's sometimes very difficult to get the members to work well together. PA2 adds, "A simple action, like having a fully constituted meeting, can become a nightmare. The availability of members just to attend a meeting is an issue and sometimes it can take weeks to address important issues because of meetings are being cancelled and rescheduled because there is no quorum." PA2

mentions another dimension of this challenge she picked up in the SGB and says, “Sometimes there are members who become part of the SGB but they are not knowledgeable in anything, anything at all; and they come onto the SGB with certain agendas, thinking that they would have access to contracts (uhm), getting funds from the SGB and that they would be able to advance themselves because of the positions that are on the SGB.”

PA was the first to admit that the SMT and SGB do not even know one another, and he mentioned that one of the things that he attempted to do was to organise a social gathering just for the SMT and SGB to mingle and get to know each other. PA2 adds to this issue of the lack of teamwork within the SGB by making reference to regular meetings that have to be postponed because members just choose not to show up, with no valid reason, which, in her eyes, shows that they are not working together towards one goal.

Finances are perhaps the touchiest subject in the SGB for public schools and PA1 mentions how the parent component of the SGB feels that they ought to be paid for their work, that they want to be in control of the finances, by occupying the position of treasurer of the SGB. Where there is money, corruption tends to loom close by because those two feed each other. HA alluded to claims that PA might be working with the SGB treasurer to embezzle funds, but there is no proof of this. PA2 shared a view that she was convinced about this as a parent because those are the type of conversations parents have prior to SGB elections, and she also hinted that this practice is a norm in other schools.

So, the lack of knowledge and experience in matters of governance and the expectation placed on the SGB, especially the parent component, was mentioned as an urgent matter of attention. Governing the school is not just a parental competency but it requires people to join that space with some socio-cultural capital and training that is in line with the SGB roles and responsibilities. Training and expertise are by far the most common challenges in SGBs within townships because the parents are keen to be part of the SGB structure, but once they are

elected, they don't really know what is expected from them. The biggest concern about this phenomenon is that these parents (who are often unemployed and uneducated) are tasked to interview teachers and to make recommendations and sometimes an HOD has to work with a teacher that was endorsed by that parent component's recommendation even though it didn't know what to look for in a teacher. This affects the working relationship between the HODs and teachers at times because some teachers do not have the qualities that the HOD and current team of teachers within the phase might require.

PA1 agrees that they have problems in the SGB linked to the fact that there has been no adequate training, resulting in stakeholders not understanding well their roles and responsibilities. PA brought about the issue of training as a necessary component for the SGB to be more effective and that, with more training, the power (ability) to execute their duties will follow. Proper training is therefore essential as it will help define roles and responsibilities."

School B

School B's challenges are slightly different from school A while sharing some similar obstacles, such as: Teamwork, Training and expertise, Availability and Interest.

PB stated on the issue of team work that, "Parents and SGB members are too far removed from each other and therefore need to get to know each other better in order to govern better." There is the issue of parents not knowing who is serving on the SGB and this might be a strange phenomenon because the larger part of the SGB is a parent component.

HB concurred with PB's comment and adds, "In some schools the SGB is not even introduced to the SMT and vice-versa, so the one always feels like they are superior to the other; the SMT feels that they are management of the school and the SGB feels like they are the governors of the school and without the governors, nothing is going to happen." This points to the need for team building initiatives to get these two bodies working together.

TB also takes up these issues of when decisions need to be made at school, there seems to be a SGB corner (mainly parents) and an SMT corner, and this delays and stifles progress. This results in the parent component either being overpowered by the SMT or the parent component resigning with immediate effect. TB explains that, many times, the SGB members encounter problems when other SGB members do not want to buy into their ideas, teachers are just not willing to buy into that. TB adds, “They normally deal with it in two ways, where some members just decide to resign and, at the end of the term, you find yourself with a very skeleton SGB because people didn’t get what they wanted, but, at other times, they just take the decision because they are the SGB and steam-roll with it.”

PB1 notes the part-time nature of the SGB members who are not based at the school as a challenge. PB1 and PB2 both bring forward the fact that the fact that the parent component of the SGB is not based at the school affects the roles and responsibility that parents play on the SGB. According to them, this encourages principals to make decisions with the backing of the SMT and teaching staff, and as a result the parent component feels undermined and end up resigning from the SGB. PB2 adds that another result is that meetings, that must be attended, are not being attended anymore because these parents say they are just not available.

She says, “I know that principals feel that some decisions must be made on the spot and, when your SGB is not available, they look at the accounting officer or the treasurer who needs to direct funds and they have to be at the school; they should have things in place as to how they are going to work about it”. PB2 echoed PB1’s comments but refers more to many parents losing interest in the duty of serving on the SGB. She concludes by saying, “Members volunteer for the SGB but then become subsequently unavailable to attend any meetings at all without giving any reasons for their absences or any reason why they are no longer interested or available to be part of the SGB.”

The other challenge is the lack of training. TB says, “I’m assuming that many times the SGB members are not fully trained about what should be happening at the school level and many educators feel that SGB members are not on the level that they should be. They meet up with resistance when it comes to executing even the simplest of their task like fundraising, because there’s that lack of trust in each other and teachers do not really trust that parents know what they are doing and having children at the school they feel like teachers could be improved upon.” TB touches on the need for proper training as teachers tend to look down on the SGB members because, according to TB, they feel that those parents serving on the SGB are not clued up about what needs to be happening (for example, in a fundraising meeting). This then deepens the divide between the teaching component and the parent component of the SGB. None of the teachers and parents mentioned that they knew of a training or workshop session arranged for the current SGB and that is a major issue, especially for this school because there clearly is a lack of leadership and/or proper governance.

5.3. How to overcome the lack of effectiveness in these townships’ SGBs to improve school governance and leadership?

Improving governance with better equipped SGB members

School A

PA’s views are that the SGB’s functionality has not been optimum for a while at the school because the parents do not serve on SGB sub-committees. He adds, “They are an entity on their own: when we need to prepare a budget, they come, if we need a fundraiser, then they come. The school must identify key committees at the school and pair the SGB members to those committees in order for them to be more instrumental in serving the school, which will hopefully result in the quality of education at the school.” PA believes that, even if the structure

is well established, it is not operational in practice when the SGB members are not part of the sub-committees that actually get the job done in school. However, PA's concern is that, even though the parents would join the sub-committees, their skill set (or lack thereof) would be questionable because, like PA1 points out, not even the chairperson has the skill set to contribute because he is not even employed in his personal capacity.

HA also expressed her views on the SGB's expertise and said, "We have people who are not education specialists or experts or do not have the education background to appoint the people to teach and they have a direct bearing on the teaching and learning but they don't have the knowledge of what to look for in teachers." HA makes another point and says, "Another aspect to look at to ensure that we have quality education is to ensure that we have quality LTSM and many of the SGBs are involved in power struggles by which they feel that the service providers must be relooked at as they do not want to go with old service providers, and this puts a delay on schools receiving their support material on time. Automatically such a school starts on a back foot when the new year starts because the SGB failed to approve and acquire the learning material. So does that include the quality of education, absolutely not."

TA believes that most of the problems the SGB deals with are around finances, or the lack of the funds, "Having local businesses involved will be of great help but it must be committed and successful businesspeople. We can have other role players with expertise, but they must know why they are there and must not come with ulterior motives."

PA1 points out the quality of the elected SGB members as being very poor, "People with no formal education are in the SGB, the Chairperson is one of them. With no formal education I don't believe you can add vital contributions to matters of educational governance." The lack of people with skills in the SGB, then results in what PA2 refers to as 'ulterior motives' in the SGB, where parents become part of the SGB just to get rid of principals or teachers within the SGB. PA2's view is that many SGB members come with their own agendas, such as getting

rid of the principals or getting rid of some teachers. PA2 believes that such behaviour also hinders progress in the school because coming with agendas and finding out later that the agendas will not be fulfilled, or that they would not be able to further their agendas, results in the SGB members losing interest and becoming defunct members, which stifles the progress in the SGB. PA2 concluded by pleading for intervention and said, “Training Training Training! If people know their roles, they will be able to stay in their lanes!”

Thus, the SGB itself must be aware of these risks and threats to proactively ensure that no one who does not have anything to contribute actually makes it onto the SGB. Some might say, that’s when schools start tempering with the system of electing SGB members. However, I, as a parent, have on multiple occasions received a letter requesting me to join the SGB of my son’s school, after my son (and other learners in his class) was asked what profession your parents in. It became apparent to me that the school was actively (proactively) sourcing parents who had some skill set that would be of use to their SGB and were avoiding random parents being at the meeting and then being elected.

HA’s greatest concern has been the fact that SGB members are entrusted with duties and roles that they are not skilled for, such as interviewing teachers and even facilitating the process of acquiring LTSM for the school. She felt that parents are not equipped or in a position to perform these duties and this eventually hampers even the quality of education at the school. PA2 believes that the current format of the SGB can definitely be improved and says, “I feel like there should be a parent component on, and then look in terms of their roles, what it is that they are doing. When they make these decisions, as in the best interest of the parents, have they met with other parents, when do they ever meet to take these issues to the parents?” She continued to say, “The SGB that I am part of, never takes issues to the parents and yet they are acting in the best interest of the parents (you know). It is like, we have that one AGM and everybody is

sorted for the rest of the year and yet there are so many issues and many different challenges that we have."

Another way to improve SGBs and make sure they are better equipped is through the co-optation of alumni and community people who may not have their children attending the school but who have particular expertise such as a businessperson or the local priest (which is allowed by SASA SGB composition). PA went on to say that, "The affluent schools sometimes manipulate the election process of the SGB members by ensuring that they have all the skills required." HA concurs with PA and believes that we need to look at more diversified stakeholders, such as getting local businesses, community leaders and local ward councillors involved. "The current form of the SGB component is good in terms of the make-up, we do not have to throw the baby out with the bath water, however, we need to relook at the appointment or selection process of these people. We are having meetings to appoint SGB members and if we do not have a quorum today and only 20 people rock up tomorrow, ten people become your SGB. This is hectic because those ten people could have been standing on the corner and decided to come in. HA elaborates on this point and says, "what I am saying is that we really need to look at some set criteria because right now, the only criteria you need to meet to become a SGB member is to have a child at the school, you could be a lousy parent at that, and not even having the best interest of your child at heart, yet you are now coming to represent thousands of children and their needs. Maybe we must have an educational requirement, for example, people are appointed to work with finances at the school, are they able to work with finances, are they having debt reviews, or have they been declared insolvent, what is the story? We cannot just take any person and make them part of the SGB, that is why we are not going to have much success with the SGB, is the only criteria to be a parent because anybody can be a parent. We know what portfolios we have in the SGB, we have a few candidates that would

fit those portfolios and interview those people in order to get the strongest candidate and have a strong SGB that is knowledgeable in the sections (portfolios) that they need to run."

TA could not think of any other governance structure but believes that we need to enhance what we already have by finding ways to better them. Facing the lack of expertise is a key problem. TA adds, "The structure we have is not a problem, but the people elected to serve, are the people making this system defunct." TA also proposes the inclusion of local business people into the SGB in order to make a contribution of the SGB financial skill pool. Though the 1996 SASA makes provision for additional members (such as the local businessperson) to be added, TA's plea was for these people to have also voting rights and to be given a full mandate to be on the SGB.

Thus, there was agreement that community members who may not have their children attending this particular school would be of great assistance because they will have some socio-cultural capital to offer. For example, the local business owner would be of great help in terms of aligning the financials at the school. The local religious leader could also be of great help when the school is going through a time of bereavement or when the learners are in need of 'pastoral care'. Schools are meant to have a social worker to assist with psycho-social matters, but we know that, due to budgetary constraints, one social worker oversees up to eight schools in the townships, with each school having an average of 1000 learners. However, we have an abundance of churches and other religious institutions in that communities that could offer similar services to that of social workers.

PA1 believes that the structure of the SGB is fine when the South African Schools Act is followed the way it should be and adds, "There is a gap between what the act aims to achieve and what is happening in practice. Should that gap be bridged, the battle will be won."

One thing that came out as a common plea from the participants was the need for skilled members to make up the SGB. The SMT felt very much that getting additional skills from the parent component would be of great help in terms of making the SGB fully functional.

So, in School A, there is still a plea to remedy the lack of skills within the current SGB members. Even though the emphasis was placed on parents not being skilled, my observation is that the teachers (on the SMT) can also not be well equipped to govern. Governance and management are two separate areas and School A appears to be performing better, not because of the SGB component but because it is managed and run better. The management team at the school seems to be disciplined and runs the day-to-day activities at the school with very tight and strict measures put in place. Governance, which has to do with strategic planning, organizational goals and accountability frameworks, complements the school management. In short, school A didn't really portray any special qualities that one could ascribe to better governance than in the other school.

School A seems to be on the same page regarding a possible alternative to the SGB model. None of the participants could think of a different model to school decentralisation, and because all they know is the pre-democratic era with the state running schools and they can only think of the SGB model promoted by SASA.

School B

PB states that, "The reality is that members of the SGB don't really help much in terms of their skills and knowledge. So we need more local community members on the SGB team." PB1 shares PA's sentiments in this regard and said, "It is very difficult to manage the school and get the go-ahead if most SGB members are not at the school, because you need to minute everything and yet they should be in the meeting." PB1 also believes that the quality of education is impacted by this reality because, if the correct people are not part of the SGB, even the functions of the SGB are impacted. PB2 shared her willingness to learn about the

functioning of the SGB and how to ensure that parents are more instrumental in the governing of the school. She adds, “The government must come and show us what we must do because we are here because of our children but the teachers use big English words in meetings. They must help us to understand what we must do.”

PB1 believes that the SGB would better serve the school if they were physically situated at the school in order to attend to matters that came up daily. However, PB2 pleaded for training and development because she felt that the district office knows exactly what is expected from them and so does the SMT but no one is actively showing them what needs to be done.

HB is strongly against the SGB having significant powers while TB believes that those powers are exactly what is needed in the democratic dispensation and it’s the one way of holding people accountable in school. HB emphasises the interviews and appointments of teachers and handling of finances at the school as something that the SGB should not be doing because they are not capable of dealing with such, thus suggesting the removal of these roles from the SGB will improve the effectiveness of the SGB. TB, on the other hand, knows what it is to entrust key functions and roles to the state because the history of South Africa has taught him valuable lessons in that regard. Instead of removing certain roles that the SGB is currently not able to execute effectively, the call is rather for these SGB members to be trained and developed adequately.

HB believes that more is needed in terms of the SGB powers, noting that the state should intervene by taking on some powers of the SGB, especially finances. “If finances can just be moved from the power and scope of the SGB, it would really be something that will alleviate a lot of conflict. Also the appointment of teachers, leave that to the professionals, whoever they are, and let them do the appointments.” HB concludes by proposing that the SGB be permitted to appointed teachers, but it must only teachers that are SGB paid, as the state paid for teachers, and she believes that the district officials and SMT must take care of those appointments. TB

is mindful that education is a political right and that the past has left out the democratic part of doing things. He goes on to say, “Principals used to abuse their powers in the past and we have to keep the structure of the SGBs with parents being in charge of the governance, because the SGB must hold the principal accountable.”

PB explains that having a twinning system between two schools would be of benefit, as the better resourced school (former Model C school) could partner and support their lagging disadvantaged school in order to learn and grow with such a relationship. She says, “The local schools are often made up of housewives (not to say that there is anything wrong with it) who hasn’t worked in forever and have all the time in the world to volunteer at the school but do not really make any meaningful strategic contributions.

There was also a serious call in School B to expand and equip better the SGB members. PB admits that the parent component from the school is not always able to execute the roles and functions put before them and believes that supplementing the SGB with more community members with a particular skill set would be a catalyst in improving the functioning of their SGB.

PB advocates for a broader knowledge base and a diversified team of SGB members, such as a police member whom the school can call at any given time if the school has an emergency. It is important according to many School B participants to improve SGB members through the co-optation of people with certain expertise onto the SGB.” HB said, “The SGB team must not be a random selection of parents, it must be individuals who are fully committed and must be able to go out of their way to attend workshops and training. For example, if there is conflict that needs a legal brain, we must have a lawyer at our disposal that we refer to and the same is true for the finances, we need people who are in a financial environment. At the end of the day, the best interest of the school must be displayed.” HB pleads that the 1996 SASA should ensure that the people who are going govern the school and people that are going to make the decisions

are people that have the proper knowledge and know how to run those departments. She concludes, “Improvement is definitely needed, some form of basic criteria, some form of educational border line that needs to be put in place in order for SGB members to form part of the SGB. We are looking at taking schools from where they are to the next level, to a better level, and how are we going to do that if the person that is driving the bus does not have a proper license (hmmm), it’s not gonna work.”

TB is happy with the kind of governance model but asserts that the problem is with the personnel who must execute the model. He asks, “Why is this system working in white schools? Is it because those parents have skills, like financial management skills and computer literacy? So the model is okay, but the township schools need a model that will suit our context that will be suitable for township schools. So, models can be okay but is it okay for our black township schools; the answer is, maybe no, so we need to find a model that will suit us.” TB also mentions the need to look at acquiring new skills from the community at large, instead of just from the parents of the school. The idea of sourcing particular people with relevant skills for the SGB, according to TB, is by far the most favourable in terms of improving the current SGB structure and function. PB2 concurs and calls for other community-based people to join the SGB because there are parents in the school who know more than the current parent component but they are not joining the SGB. She concludes by calling on the state to assist and says, “The government must get the pastors and other people to join us and help us in the SGB. The principal can’t do this alone, she needs help as well.” PB1 seems to have lost faith in the district officials responsible for SGBs within schools. She says, “Well it all starts at the top. The current leaders in education are old and have no fresh ideas, they should retire. New fresh thinking will filter down and give way to innovative governance strategies, the rest will be history!”

The overall uproar at school B was, like in school A, and the acknowledgment for the desperate need for skilled people who could make strategic contributions to the SGB. The finger points

mainly at the parent component as the weakest link in the SGB team and the much too high expectation placed on parents who have not been properly equipped by the district or the principal. It is for this reason that PB1 makes the claim that the problem lies with the district officials, the national department of education or perhaps even with the principals. During the development of the 1996 SASA, which settled on the SGB as the preferred model of governance decentralisation in public schools, effective plans were needed to equip and empower parents of poor schools (including township schools), as these still suffer from years of mistreatment and authoritarianism from the Bantu Education schooling system. More on this will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Imagining another Afro-centric structure of decentralised school governance

None of the participants could think of or mentioned any other form of decentralised governance structure that could be used or promoted to govern more effectively their poor schools and, as a result, no data can be presented in this sub-section regarding this issue. Yet, there is an alternative form which our framework of decoloniality calls for, together with the breaking down of the matrix of power in these different schools. This is why, in the next chapter, we will look at the appropriate literature to suggest or develop a more Afro-centric notion of another form of decentralised school governance.

Chapter Six - Data analysis

Data were coded and arranged in categories according to the research themes of how SGBs execute their roles and functions in two historically disadvantaged schools, and this culminated into the analysis of data and the writing of this chapter. So, this chapter analyses the data collected and gives them meaning by relying on the literature review and the conceptual framework on decoloniality and how it assists in explaining the form of school governance as a (neo) colonial artifact as well as thinking of possible alternatives. It is not surprising that none of the participants thought of this form of decentralisation as colonial, this suggests that the preservation of colonialism was well crafted and though through. Thus, the very participants in this study could be under the spell of Western discourse because that is all they know and know nothing different. It would not have made sense for the colonisers to openly declare that this manner of decentralisation was meant to maintain and protect their interest, but funny enough, the interest and privilege has been subsequently maintained even post democracy in South Africa. The data does not directly ascribe the form of school governance adopted in South Africa directly as a colonial matrix of power, however, it confirms that schools and township SGBs are inadequately trained and not generally with much cultural capital to contribute in the good governance of their local schools.

6.1. Understanding the different perceptions and experiences of the SMT, teachers and parents towards the SGB functioning and operations.

Though the composition of the SGB members is comprehensive and inclusive, the concern for the schools in question is what kind of human and cultural capital is required to govern and lead the school (in particular black schools). The reality in former Model C schools was that there had PTAs, which ensured participatory decision-making in the school. The private schools usually have a school board, that has a more authoritative and strategic leadership role.

This governance model was designed to give schools greater autonomy to manage resources; determine the delivery of educational resources; democratise local control of education decision-making and to respond to community needs. Duku and Salami (2017) refer to the design of the governance model which may appear perfect on paper, but the realities over the past two decades have seen township schools struggling and trying to find out exactly how this governance model could work for them. From the data collected, resources and training were a scarcity (there was nothing much to manage), decision-making had fundamentally shifted from the state to the principal (or the SMT) and interestingly none of the interviewed participants even spoke to their community needs.

What SGBs in poor communities really lack is the ability to leverage resources even if they have the potential to encourage and deepen a culture of democratic citizenship and participation (Chipkin, 2007). Township schools were either greatly under-resourced or without resources, which made this notion of managing resources foreign to them. With such scarcity and the devolution of financial budgetary powers to schools, it is not an accident that in some cases the SGB and/or SMT are accused of embezzling funds. If one has never managed funds before and is now entrusted with a couple of hundred thousand Rands and to add to that, they do not have any financial background, the reality will likely be mismanagement or embezzlement of those funds.

Another challenge is that our participants in these SGBs feel that some SGB members (an obvious reference to parent-governors) lack confidence and knowledge which means that they are not sure of their duties (Van Wyk 2004). In this regard, the illiteracy among SGB parent members may contribute to their inefficiency because it precludes parents from accessing and assessing relevant information (Maile, 2002). To this end and in relation to the problem of illiteracy, Van Wyk (2004) points out that many SGBs, particularly in less advantaged areas, do not have the required skills and experience to exercise effectively their powers. This was

the reality in both sampled school contexts, where the parents felt that they did not have the skill set or they do not come in with the necessary background to make any meaningful contribution to the functioning of the SGB. The SGB functions require an important skills-based and expertise-based understanding of financial management and accountability. Therefore, the requirements attendant on the execution of Section 21 functions seem to present an enormous challenge for many SGBs without such expertise (Xaba, 2011).

Thus, the research and literature review show that, in many cases, poor township schools do not contribute much to the better functioning of the SGBs, hinting that this form of school governance may not be suitable or appropriate to these schools.

6.2. Major obstacles in the SGB fostering a better functioning SGB

Mestry (2004) highlights an important challenge in SGBs, namely, the lack of the necessary knowledge and skills for financial management and, consequently, the inability to work out practical solutions to practical problems. Financial management was clearly, by admission from many participants, a real challenge. There were problems with budgeting, balancing expenditure, and budgeted income, using correct procedures regarding the use of finances and how to cope with deviations from the budget, as noted by Xaba (2011). Financial management is a formal competency, and it should be assumed that people put in charge of handling finances within the SGB are competent. Yet, when the SGB policies were put in place, little or no regard was made for the challenges they were to pose for the previously disadvantaged schools whose parents were not knowledgeable enough after years of colonisation and apartheid discrimination.

The school governance discourse in SA takes for granted assumptions that SGBs will promote better democratic decision making, participation and representation and their outcomes. But it ignores the reality of variables across the schooling system, such as diverse and particular

communities and institutional histories (Naidoo, 2005). Many participants blamed the difficulty in promoting the best interests of the school on parent governors' low education levels, which, according to them, result in parent-governors being unable to execute their roles and responsibilities, of them being easily manipulated, unable or unwilling to participate in decision making and continually absent from meetings and workshops (Xaba, 2011). However, despite concerns about their lack of capacity, SGBs enjoyed popular acceptance and participation across class and language divides in the two schools. The participants (both teachers and parents) seem happy about the autonomy they were given in making decisions that they think are best for their school and learners. One can however question the socio-cultural capital the parents possess to ensure that those decisions are meaningful and appropriate because many parents are unemployed and have time on their hands to be part of the SGB. For those who are employed as working class parents, they do not bring about an appropriate skill set to the SGB. This shows again that there are major obstacles in township schools to make the best of this form of SGB governance as the latter requires a certain level of socio-cultural capital which does not exist in these schools.

6.3. SGB powers and power relations operating against better SGB functioning

Decentralisation of governance implies some form of redistribution of power within the education system in ways which promote the importance of the individual school in relation to the wider system (Simkins, 2002 cited by Naidoo, 2005). Critical decisions pertaining to governance are taken at the school level. Naidoo (2005) believes that, by moving governance and management decisions to local stakeholders, those with the most at stake are empowered to do something about how the school is performing. An analysis of the difficult challenges mentioned by our participants strongly indicates that these are caused by the nature of the prescribed SGB functions, which require specialized skills and knowledge to execute, as Xaba (2011) notes. Mestry (2006) also points to the lack of collaboration and even conflicts at times

between the principal and other SGB members, with principals being unwilling to share responsibility for school governance for fear of losing power. Beckman contends that the powers granted to SGBs obscures the real intention of the government in creating such bodies (Beckman 2002, cited by Woolman and Fleisch, 2008). The education governance reforms worldwide have involved attempts to dismantle a centralized educational bureaucracy to create devolved systems entailing varying degrees of institutional autonomy (Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1998 cited by Naidoo, 2005). This reading of the law suggests a conspiracy according to which SASA's underlying motive could be seen as providing communities with the illusion (and not the reality) that they have real control over the governance of their schools (Mahlerbe 2006, cited by Woolman and Fleisch, 2008). With that said, we need to acknowledge that decentralisation is not necessarily a means to give power and control back to the people but include people who are previously excluded from decision-making by allowing them to participate. Yet, many participants said the SGB powers they possess made them happy to be part of the decision making in their schools and felt that their contributions were making a slight difference. This does not mean that all participants felt that the contribution of most parent members was effective, for that reason, Sayed (1999) argues that the new school governance dispensation can exacerbate inequality.

The preamble behind SGBs not only calls for the democratic transformation of society but also for learners, parents and educators to take responsibility for the governance and funding of schools in partnership with the state (Woolman and Fleisch, 2008). Yet, it is interesting to note that there is little contestation and accountability put on the principal's authority and leadership through the SGBs because principals often have the power to influence and frame how governance is practiced (Naidoo, 2005). Naidoo emphasises this, "In effect, most SGBs defend and legitimate the policy prescriptions and practices developed by leaders of the educational system and offer no real challenge to the existing structures of power." (Naidoo, 2005:112).

What is clear from the data is that the colonial matrix of power continues to entangle authoritarian structures in many SGBs. For richer middle schools, SGBs represent one strategic place to ensure that the status quo remains because these privileged schools were never going to allow their rich cultural and academic excellence established over time to be marred and include children from poor parents with low level of English literacy through this new democratic dispensation. As Naidoo asserts, "Legislating representivity will not guarantee greater representation of the diverse needs and interests of heterogeneous communities, nor does it guarantee that oppressive power relations will change." (Naidoo, 2005:118).

Thus, the form of SGB governance does not seem to challenge existing power relationships in township schools.

6.4. What can improve the effectiveness of decentralised school governance in township schools?

Improving governance with better equipped SGB members

As much as training might be seen as one big need for some SGB members, some do not agree fully with that call. General oversight is quite weak in SGBs because these bodies are meant to be constant mechanisms of oversight and monitoring of the implementation of their decisions by holding the parties involved responsible and accountable (Naidoo, 2005). "It requires going beyond the point of executive decision, to initiate and monitor practice, and disciplined review of its effects. Failure to do so results in the elected members often finding the reality of participation increasingly burdensome and less rewarding, which consequently leads to the members being exhausted and disillusioned" (Fung and Wright, 2001 cited by Naidoo 2005:121). Jansen (2000) adds that having policies in place does not guarantee that reform will take effect because these might be political symbolism, marking only the nominal shift from an Apartheid to a post-Apartheid society. The bigger question to ask is whether the policies

and their implementation are really intended to fundamentally change and democratise the structures or processes in education (Jansen, 2000).

It is obvious that democratic governance needs to be enhanced in many schools and that it needs external intervention because many schools are not capacitated to bring about the change on their own. On the needed training for SGB members, Mabasa and Themane are quite detailed:

> The very essence and effectiveness of the training that school governors receive are often questionable. Among other training constraints, reports that SGBs are not trained before they start their work and this manifests in problems such as unfamiliarity with meeting procedures, problems with the specialist language used in meetings, difficulties in managing large volumes of paper, not knowing how to make a contribution, not knowing appropriate legislation, feeling intimidated by the presence of other members who seem knowledgeable and perceiving their roles as simply endorsing what others have already decided upon. This can be attributed to irrelevant and inadequate training of SGB members, which does not really address the core functions of school governance (Mabasa and Themane 2002:112, cited by Xaba, 2011).

It is for this reason that we need to look at how this democratic governance discourse can be improved because, if not done right, the functions and operations of governing bodies will not be carried out effectively. Training is one aspect that came up in the interviews with the various SGB members. Parenting is a natural learning process that one goes through, but school governance is not part of the parenting journey, hence specialized training is required in this respect if governance is going to improve. Unless parents are already coming into the SGB space with socio-cultural capital, of which the school will most definitely benefit from,

especially if those parent's professions are within the scope of the SGBs' roles and responsibilities. The parents' role in the SGB is particular, depending on the sub-committee they are serving in, and thus each parent will have to be trained in accordance with their role and responsibility. This also brings the question of the term parents serve on the SGB, because it would be a tedious process to be training new parents every time new members are elected. Therefore, parents must be encouraged to serve for at least two terms in order for them to get a good grip on what the role entails and perhaps even looking at grooming the up-and-coming cohort of parents that will be taking over once their second term expires.

SGBs are not perfect but are rather far from it, especially in poor or township schools. However, SGBs hold out the promise that the kinds of face-to-face relationships can create trust, loyalty, friendship, kinship and commitment among school stakeholders. These are both constitutive of, and an ongoing by-product of, social capital which will ultimately create new social networks that will deepen democracy in a manner that crosses race, creed and class. And what more can one ask of any new South African institution? (Woolman and Fleisch, 2008).

However, as Karlsson (2002) contends, school governance legislation, and SASA in particular, was overly ambitious. As a result, SGB authority became largely symbolic and SGBs do not really deepen the Constitution's commitment to democracy. Karlsson illustrates this point by stating that more than often, 1) that SGB governance (or the lack thereof) tends to reinforce principal and teacher authority; (2) SGB authority tends to reproduce existing patterns of inequality (Karlsson, 2002). Indeed, most functions prescribed by SASA require highly skilled functionaries with specialised knowledge in areas such as, inter alia, financial accounting, facilities maintenance and school policy development and formulation. It is more for this reason that a dedicated governance unit at district level should be established to render continuous and consistent support to governing bodies in the district (Xaba, 2011).

SGBs do not merely intend to enhance forms of local democracy, they are there to maintain and create effective social networks that generate new forms of socio-cultural capital. This ability to provide new forms of democratic participation and create new stores of socio-cultural capital suggests that SGBs have the makings of a great, new and rather unique South African political institution (Woolman and Fleisch, 2008). School governance is a feature of school leadership in schools worldwide.

While there is considerable variation in the way school governance is defined, one could argue that, within the South African context, school governance relates to part of the processes and systems in which a school operates. It also relates to the use of structures of authority and collaboration to allocate resources and coordinate or control activities linked to the management of the school. In this kind of set up, parents, educators and learners are drawn into partnership for the common purpose of the education of the learners (Duku and Salami, 2017).

The lack of capacity to execute governance functions is clearly the main challenge and this is manifested in various defensive behaviours. For instance, principals and educators tend to apportion blame for the difficulty of executing these functions to the parents' low levels of education. In turn, most parents blame educators and principals for undermining them and looking down upon them because of their so-called illiteracy, while many educators blame principals for being undemocratic and influencing parent-members of SGBs (Xaba, 2011). Naidoo (2005) points out a couple of unaddressed issues that result from local school governance of school such as: the fact that it is not clear exactly who in the local context will make decisions or what those decisions ought to be at a local level; government-initiated plans for decentralizing school governance mainly focus on procedures and structural arrangements and often ignore issues of power, contestation and plurality. To have SGBs improving schools and building the community around schooling, the following conditions ought to be present: empowerment, knowledge that enables all stakeholders to understand and contribute to the

organization, information about the performance of the organization and rewards for high performance (Wohlstetter and Mohrman, 1994 cited by Naidoo, 2005). This is clearly not present in many SGBs of township schools, hence the call to relook at the current model of school decentralisation and what fruits is it actually bearing in comparison what fruits we want it to bear.

Matters such as linguistic diversity of the majority of learners and, most importantly, the historical inequalities and damaging effects of apartheid were somehow left to be the burden of individual schools. This proves once again how the colonial matrix of power was designed to continue in the post 1994 society, because schools were made responsible to improve and address the social inequalities through devolved school-based management, governance and funding models (Christie, 2020). Yet, it is known that effective schooling requires social capital and the cultural norms of the middle class, and this leaves the working class children (not to mention the vast unemployed population) who don't benefit from this socio-cultural capital disadvantaged from the start. In addition to that, the SGB model further perpetuates this disadvantage by entrusting the working class and unemployed parents to govern these schools. This is because SASA puts market-driven reform at the forefront, and this is done at the expense of equality and equity (Webber, 2002).

Imagining an Afro-centric structure of decentralised school governance

Christie (2020) points out that the western school's basic organisational structure has not changed in over one hundred years, and, to this very day, this structure remains a template for colonial or neo-colonial schooling. It takes a village to raise a child (from the African proverb), and that proverb has proven to be effective pre-colonial times and before the age of individualism that was brought about by Western culture. If a village, or a community in our setting, ought to raise a child as per African culture, the same community (through collective

leadership) could lead schools and make meaningful contributions to the governance of the schools within that community. It is imperative that, as previously colonised people, we do not embrace the positively projected way of life by the colonisers. It is important to find the Afrocentric ways of life that existed in the pre-colonisation era by enhancing or adapting those with modern ways that are suitable for the community (Fanon, 1961 cited by Christie 2020). Christie (2020) notes the failure of the reached compromise by pointing out that the patterns of performance have persisted in spite of the post-apartheid policies which were supposedly aimed at achieving greater equity and quality of education for all. Weber (2002) predicted that the likely outcome would be systemic inequality between a small number of rich schools for white and black middle-class children and the overwhelming majority of poorly resourced and underperforming black school children.

I concur with the views of Christie when she writes,

> The implicit assumption that all public schools will be able, with sufficient effort and 'quality control' improvement measures, to progress towards providing the same quality of education as that provided in the well-performing and well-resourced parts of the system is not realistic. It is a myth of progress which distracts from the important tasks of repair and rebuilding at the moment of decolonial change. (Christie 2020:203)

Sayed (2005) cautions against accepting western first-world models of school decentralisation because there are certain local realities that those models do not take into account, nor do they address them. Decentralisation on its own does not address the powerlessness, discrimination and exclusion of many parents of colour because, he argues, this is a middle-class competence and as a result, working-class and poor communities are not equipped or capacitated in this respect. In the same line of argument, Christie and McKinney (2017) argue that a starting point might be to take the perspective of the poorest schools in the system as a focal point for policy

and to work towards changes that prioritise and value them. This calls for the urgency of addressing these schools' repairing and rebuilding with a complete overhaul of the system adopted in 1996. This is because the current form of governance in schools has only maintained the *status quo* in and between the schools and has not brought about systemic change for the majority of schools in the townships or rural areas.

Although it is useful to acknowledge that there is no significant democratic governance structure that will be a 'one size fits all' model for all schools, we need to think of possible alternatives. The mode of operation of SGB should statutorily be rooted in African traditional ways (investigating and meeting the needs of the local community) and deliberately eliminate foreign practices, that are regarded as harmful or contradict African ways, such as globalisation and market-driven reforms (Duku and Salami, 2017). The foreign tradition of governance favours the middle-class context and takes for granted matters of social capital which parents brought to the table. However, the African manner of governance stretches far beyond the school setting into the community at large because leadership never happens in isolation but has to be collective in African communities. In that respect, as Naidoo states, "Instilling a more grassroots community spirit to school governing bodies could logically facilitate greater participation in school governance by combating patriarchy, elite capture, and the dominance of professionals, the more educated and economically advantaged." (Naidoo 2005:122-123).

Duku and Salami (2017) go further and argue that Africa should establish a community-based SGB, as this structure could enhance governance for the local context of African communities. They stress that such indigenous SGBs must be established and built on the basis of recognised knowledgeable individuals (RKI) in the community. These individuals could be more than one person of any gender, marital or socio-economic status but unanimously identified as being well aware of indigenous knowledge and culture (IKC), more than other person has. This should strengthen the SGBs with such a source of IKC, according to Duku and Salami (2017).

The experiences from this study have demonstrated that the existing decentralisation of school governance has power and authority to make things happen in their communities. But there are a set of individuals in African societies/communities that are not been recognised and incorporated in the SGB membership, and that is, the most recognised knowledgeable individual (RKI) of the local community who might not be remembered by some leaders and might not be so wealthy, but are custodians of the indigenous knowledge. If RKIs in the community are incorporated into the SGB, the authority to knowledge, which can be used to decolonise education, is likely to be more promising, according to Duku and Salami (2017).

Another possible alternative organisational form is the PTA which was the norm in the previously advantaged Model C schools in South Africa. It worked because parents were capacitated and equipped individuals to act in a leadership manner for the school as an organisation. PTAs acted as agents of school improvement through two main focus areas: social organization and fundraising events. Parents usually focused on ways to engage the learners and plan events that allow other parents to be part of the school's events, with usually a fundraising element to each event. The PTA meetings were normally held once a month so that the parents were part of the committee and did not have to commit too much of their time (either as a house-mom or working parent). There is indeed a steadily growing acknowledgement of the value of parents as a pivotal educational resource (Bastiani, 1989). In the South African context, we need to ensure that we maintain the PTAs and their supportive role within the school setting, but above all, PTAs should act as a support system and with participatory leadership within the school setting. The PTAs need to focus on the social organization, fundraising events (including the controlling of those funds raised), maintenance of buildings, and reporting to parents and the school community communication. The role of PTAs must not be excluded from schools because we still need a local body that will be locally based in the respective schools and have that supportive role that the school requires.

South Africa could also learn from the Kenyan education system which has a different school governance body with a different composition and role in the form of a more authoritative (as opposed to supportive) Board of Governors (BOGs). This body is primarily made up by a provincial administrator, local leaders, sponsors, local education officer and the head of the school. Their roles and responsibilities include but are not limited to, overall vision for a school cluster, ethos and strategic direction of the schools. The BOGs' responsibility extends to strategic planning, organizational goals and accountability frameworks. The BOGs in Kenya focus on monitoring the overall management of schools, setting priorities for spending, authorising expenditure and monitoring school performance amongst other things (Bennel and Sayed, 2002). What the Kenyan education system prioritised was the decentralisation of education in the post-colonial era, but it acknowledged that, within the school communities, these bodies didn't have enough social capital from the parent component to successfully govern their schools. Hence an authoritative body such as a BOG (professionally informed, with binding recommendations and powers to enforce decisions) was developed because decisions that were made by this body had to be binding for the respective schools but, more importantly, those decisions would have their community's interest at heart, unlike decisions made nationally which are often found to be out of touch with the local community needs. This BOG had context-specific challenges and needs such as collective leadership, which is community-based, that can prove to be an effective turn-around strategy in the governance trajectory within local schools (Bennel and Sayed, 2002).

One could imagine the possibility of establishing BOGs for several South African schools that could provide a more effective vision for schools, pave a way for collective governance, establish an ethos that is conducive for teaching and learning in the community, and most importantly, formulate strategic plans by which each school will work towards achieving the greater progress within the cluster. In doing so, much more could be achieved for all the schools

in a community or cluster. Though the BOG model has not been attempted in poor communities and townships, I want to argue that the collective social capital that will be found and developed in that wider community, combined with the use of RKIs, will be much more than what we can find in a particular school setting. No township or poor community in South Africa is a complete slum, with absolutely no social capital. Though many parents might not be predominantly graduates, some of them are employed and run local businesses, not to mention those who lead community-led initiatives. Thus, the existence of BOGs as part of, and working for, the schools' larger community can bring about a systemic change to governance in poor schools that could uphold African vision, mission and values.

From the literature and the research findings cited above, I believe that there is a clear picture of how the SGBs were never designed to address the legacy of apartheid that brought about societal and educational inequalities and to institute equity and redress to ensure such policies and efforts were to level the plain fields. A change of this particular form of decentralised school governance is needed for the majority of poor schools.

An Afro-centric governance model should therefore take the failures of the past two decades into account (not forgetting the legacy of apartheid and colonialism) and build on those lessons to ensure that the trajectory of education and education governance in our townships changes to suit and promote the needs of school communities. Weber (2002) points out that democratic governance requires participation and decision making to be central indicators of development but that the starting point is not to work with the assumption that all social groups have equal power, knowledge, and resources.

In this respect, another slightly different model of decentralised governance than the BOG could be developed to ensure a comprehensive representation of leaders involved in education. It could be a cluster-based BOG, comprising of education scholars/practitioners, religious and

local leaders (multi-political party representatives) in the community, which will work closely with the district cluster (or circuit manager), as well as the principals and PTSAs of the schools' cluster (made up of parents, teachers and high school learners) as well as those RIKs that could be incorporated into and add value to the system. Leaving out the parents and teachers from this body, at least in its formative stages is deliberate and explains the difference between such BOGs and PTSAs.

Thinking of the cluster that the principals of Eldorado Park Cluster (District 14) have established, there is a principal's forum which seeks to work as a platform to enhance their operations in their respective school through shared knowledge and experience. The benefit comes in, for example, when they have to purchase LTSM in bulk because they get a substantial discount that is accounted for and those funds are diverted into local community engagements such as sports, recreation and community centres. The BOG could enable each cluster of schools to expand on the model of principal's forum that the principals of Eldorado Park started and could strengthen school governance across these schools because other stakeholders would be involved, such as law enforcement, religious leaders, and local political party leaders. This body would have to ensure that strategic planning, organizational goals and accountability frameworks are established for the schools' cluster, which will in turn benefit local schools because the SMTs and PTSAs will then be trained and tasked on how to implement the BOG directives and decisions. This might not be the most democratic form of decentralisation, but it will be better than the failing SGB model that poor township schools in particular are forced to implement with little to no appropriate success.

The key roles and responsibilities of BOGs (with the PTSAs) will include development, implementation and reviews of governance policies. They could hold the SMTs accountable for the academic and curricular performance of their respective schools and the performance

management of their staff**.** The BOGs must be empowered to interrogate school improvement plan as their measuring tool for holding their respective schools and PTSAs accountable.

One needs to admit that not all schools will be functioning at the same optimal level, but each school needs to know their contribution in the cluster, especially in terms of breaking the colonial matrix of power. The breaking of the colonial matrix of power may start in these poor schools and their collectively challenging issues (such as the lack of political will to develop African languages as medium of instruction) that hinder progress for the black children.

At the moment, progress in the underprivileged schools is stifled while the former Model C schools are favoured by the current governance reform dispensation. It is for this reason that I want to argue that, by establishing cluster-based BOGs, school leadership and governance matters may be dealt with better and the day-to-day execution of clearly stipulated roles and responsibilities with the necessary training done more effectively at school level. Democracy and non-racialism were great political aspirations, but school governance reforms needed to be more practical and located in the realities of the majority of African communities and in an Afro-centric approach which seeks to contribute to more equity and redress.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1. Conclusion

This study was a comparative study of school governance in two township schools of different levels of performance to understand their similarities and differences in the way SGBs operate. School A was performing better than school B in terms of academic results and walking through the two schools gave one the sense that something right or better was happening in school A compared to school B. When going into the schools to meet the participants for the scheduled interviews, I noted that, in school A, the school grounds were well taken care of and teaching, and learning was taking place with minimal noise coming from the classes.

However, upon the completion of the interviews from both schools, it became obvious that what I saw and perceived was not because of the SGB but rather because of the SMT and the principal of school A was prioritising the simple things that often set the tone for the important things that need to be done at the school. Thus, the administration and management were more dedicated to the extent that the SGB appeared more functional in school A, even if the SMT was making most of the SGB decisions and the parent component was there more as a formality. In contrast, school B's administration was not at its optimal because there were some classes left unattended with rowdy learners inside, the fields were marred with littering and the walls were filled with learners' writing and senseless drawings. Clearly in that school B, the administration and management were not hands-on and the SGB was just another area that was not coming together because of the inner quarrels and internal strife.

The study discovered that the SMT and teacher members of the SGBs from the two schools had more similar than different perceptions and experiences of what they thought the SGB roles and responsibilities were. Most of these participants were clearer about the management issues of the school but were not as sure about what governance required exactly. In a similar

way, the parent component in both schools were not that clued up on what their exact roles and responsibilities were. The study found that the parents of the two respective schools had their own understanding and seemed happy to be included in the decision-making process and follow the lead of the SMT or principal, even though some teachers felt that parents just came in to sign requisition forms. The role of parents in the SGBs was fundamentally reduced to the equivalence of a PTSA because of their participatory supportive role, as they did not have a real authoritative function in the governance of the school. Obstacles and challenges were similar in both schools regarding governance matters and the SGB was not immune to those realities even if each school is unique and has its own set of problems and challenges.

Another related objective of this study was to research whether the SA decentralisation of school powers was designed to broaden democracy and give more autonomy and powers to the black under-privileged schools or whether its outcome was to mainly protect white privilege and maintain the neo-colonial matrix of powers. These two township schools did not change for the better because of their SGBs. The study found that parents did not have many powers and often felt manipulated by the principal or SMT who called them into a meeting before the SGB meeting takes place. Some parents felt they were not listened to by the SMT in both schools because the SMT would use 'big words' that they did not understand and as a result did not know what the discussions were about. However, the SMT felt that parents could not contribute to discussions in meetings because they didn't understand meeting procedures and substances. As a result, parents were mainly called upon as a formality when requisition forms had to be completed and the policies (that the parents were not part of formulating) had to be signed.

Due to the lack of substantial training and development for parents, the latter felt that they were there to rubber stamp the principal's decisions. The SGB parent members are currently volunteers who are not necessarily trained on governance issues in relation to schools, hence

the training is such a crucial element but with it must come continuous development. One participant chanted, ‘Training Training Training’ when the question came about effectiveness and improved performance of SGBs. The call for training and development came out as an immediate need for the governance of the school to be at its optimal level. Over and above the training, the participants requested a get-together (orientation session) where they will get to know one another, especially the parent component. Formation of a SGB handbook that will enlist the positions to be occupied and a brief ‘job’ description on how to go about fulfilling their roles and responsibility would be a major step forward. Very importantly, the SGBs need to have an effective hand over the processes that enable the outgoing SGB members to share important strides made in addressing their challenges and the incoming SGB members should expedite these processes effectively, but this rarely happens. As much as this is true, training alone won’t bring about the desired change but needs to be complimented with greater social capital and expertise because then we are bound to have a recipe for efficient and effective SGB, particularly in township schools.

Thus, in brief, what the SGB model of decentralisation did was to give some powers to local people, but without the means to manage these governance powers, which amounts to not exercising these powers in the first place for township schools, compared to mainly white middle-class schools (Christie and McKinney, 2017). Duku and Salami (2017) believe that there used to be a set of individuals in the community that should be recognised and incorporated in the SGB membership, which they refer to as the most recognised knowledgeable individuals (RKIs) or those who are the custodian of the indigenous knowledge. These individuals are identified as being aware of indigenous knowledge and culture more than most people in the community, thus their involvement in the SGB will strengthen and enhance local governance in township and rural schools.

If SGBs are to be effective in their role as governors, they need to bring about social capital to the table as a pre-requisite in order to have a meaningful contribution to governance matters. This means that schools must embark on a pre-selection process whereby parents or community members are identified with particular skill sets and are pre-screened to see whether they would be a fit for their available roles in the SGB. This in turn will enhance the parents' confidence in decision-making because they would speak and argue their views from a standpoint of more intellectual facts. This will eradicate the feeling of being helpless and powerless because they often feel that the SMT overpowers them and, to some extent, bullies them. Parents could then have the power to engage in discussions and make meaningful contributions in meetings because they will feel empowered by the fact that they now have something to offer the SGB and they are not merely filling up the seats to have a quorum.

Regarding an *alternative form* of decentralisation, none of the participants could think of anything other form of governance besides what they already knew (SGB). Given our call for decoloniality and a new Afro-centric form of governance, the BOG is proposed as a potential alternative to the current SGBs, especially in poor black communities, but it has to be committed to ensure that the colonial matrix system is broken, with a more Afro-centric community objective for learners in poor black communities. The decolonisation of education is understood to mean the process of rethinking the structure of institutions of learning. It refers to the process of tackling and dismantling the epistemic violence and hegemony of Eurocentrism, completely rethink, reframe and reconstruct the curriculum and place South Africa, Southern Africa and Africa at the centre of teaching, learning and research in African universities (Heleta, 2016). In the context of this study, decolonisation of 'democratic' school governance is understood as a means of formalising and incorporating indigenous culture and knowledge into the school governance system. The call for decolonisation of education is

informed by an uptake and incorporation of African culture, language, values, beliefs, norms, traditions, and indigenous knowledge.

Since the call for decolonisation has recently become loud (especially in higher education), all hands should be on deck to make it a success at school level and at governance level.

7.2. Recommendations for further study

Since the evidence of this research is based on a case study of two township schools, it will be unwise to draw too many generalisations based on this study alone, but it is possible to recommend more qualitative research on the meaning and extent parental involvement at three different levels: the schools and parents (i.e. PTA), the community involvement in schools (through some body such as BOG) and the community's needs in relationship to education.

- Parental involvement in schools

The study has placed emphasis on the need for parents to be part of the school's community in order to make contributions in matters such as school policies and fundraising initiatives. The involvement and structure of parents in poor schools can certainly be further looked into because the structure of PTAs was founded within a middle-class education system and some of those norms are not realities for working class and unemployed parents in township schools. We want to argue that research should be carried out in schools which have a clear similar and centralised list of challenges around the same area so that one can assess the value of the drafting of these needs and sharing of good practice amongst different SGBs. Research is also needed into participative styles of leadership in PTAs or SGBs as it will assist in understanding how school leaders will remain aware that their constituency requires trust from them, and how to promote unity and synergy within stakeholders, which will in turn cause them to strive in more effective partnerships (Kolzow, 2009). Making schools open systems where leadership is open to everyone increases the opportunities for the exchange of ideas (Hands, 2010). The

opposite remains true when leadership is closed in the school, teachers can remain stagnant, and parents demotivated to do anything.

- Community involvement in school

This study has also established that effective schools require more than parental involvement and that of the greater community and its different leaders who have different expertise to bring to schools. Thus, there is a need to research how to build stronger and effective relationships for the governing bodies between community leaders (political, religious, etc.), NGOs and NPOs with the community, local businesses, and state organs such as the District, Police Services and Social Services. More research studies should also focus on how greater social capital and expertise among non-school personnel can assist in making SGBs more effective.

It is important to have studies to rethink and re-present, in the case of this study, SGBs as organs that can contribute to the reality of decolonisation. The idea of harnessing and utilising indigenous knowledge to fortify educational systems is not new (Duku and Salami, 2017). Attention must be given to the power relations among stakeholders and there must be a change to the theory or meaning of leadership among school leaders, which can result in better commitment to co-operative governance at school level (Naidoo, 2005). One of the under-researched issue in schooling from this perspective is the decentralised governing bodies and their leadership aspect beyond the involvement of the teaching staff and parents. Naidoo remains cautious and warns that, even though we have not walked this journey before, we need to keep trust in the process:

> Community participation in governance continues to be an act of faith based on tenets: (1) participation is intrinsically a good thing; (2) getting the techniques right is the principal way of ensuring the success of such approaches and (3)

considerations of power and politics should be avoided as divisive, obstructive and dysfunctional. (Naidoo, 2005:116).

The community and its leadership know what their needs are and having this collective bargaining of power and influence through SGBs or other bodies such as BOGs can result in greater effectiveness and productivity in the governance of poor schools.

- Community needs in relation to education

Regarding the community needs for education, this is where the important decolonisation debate is needed to go from the institutions of higher learning into the schools and their communities. We need to have open dialogue and research studies where those most impacted by the colonial matrix of power can freely express their views and realities, especially those with the intellectual ability to formulate action steps and practical ways to bring about redress and most importantly, restorative justice to that community. Further studies should explore case studies of new governance bodies such as the BOGs with their role and responsibilities which will be to extend and clearly stipulate the meaning of what the township learners need from their schools and how they can benefit from different Afro-centric governance structures.

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