

SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

by

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Democratic school governing bodies, school improvement, decentralised governance, neo-liberalism and participatory democracy

ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to analyse the role of democratic school governing bodies in promoting school improvement in four High Schools in Pimville and Klipspruit locations in Soweto. The study presents two arguments, one is theoretical and the other is methodological. Theoretically, there is no clear-cut relationship between democratic SGBs and school improvement. Methodologically, the relationship between SGBs and school improvement can best be understood based on a critical analysis that specifies the context within which democratic SGBs promote school improvement. Such an analysis reveals the complex nature of the school dynamics within which SGBs have to promote school improvement.

The role of SGBs is mediated by various local and global socio-economic and political factors. This study articulates these factors as inputs, context, complexity and mediation. Consequently, understanding the nature of the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement requires an elaboration of the specific articulation of these factors. Input factors important for school improvement include the school infrastructure, learning and teaching material, financial resources, quality of teachers and standards of teaching methodology as well as parental participation.

The context and complexity factors indicate that school improvement efforts must appreciate the conceptual and historical contexts that shape the conception and practice of school improvement. SGBs emerge out of a particular historical moment. SGBs have features of both apartheid school boards and committees and the people's education's PTSA's. These features render the role of SGBs precarious because it is framed within contradictory ideological discourses. Other context factors are relationships within the school, leadership and socio-economic factors.

Finally, the role of SGBs is mediated by how school improvement is understood in these schools, by legislation and the complex nature of school dynamics. The study concludes that schools do not operate outside of a history of unequal provision of resources and SGBs do not exist independently of the incessant conflict among social forces. Schools operate within a social context. When narrowly focused

within the school and in isolation from the historical legacy, school improvement initiatives reproduce and perfect the features that define their context.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination to any other university.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

School governance has been at the core of the struggle against apartheid education in South Africa. Disputes over the governance and quality of education have been a central feature of South African political life. Complaints about the quantity and quality of education available to black South Africans, the unequal allocation of state funding, and the poor salaries of teachers have been raised as far back as 1910 (Pampallis, 2007:23). The provision of unequal education was a key strategy for apartheid policy and a major source of discontent within black communities.

In the implementation of apartheid policies, education for Africans was controlled by the apartheid regime itself. African communities had no influence on what was to be taught or how (Nzimande and Thusi, 1991:4). Education governance was criticized for not facilitating the participation of parents, students and teachers in decision-making structures (NEPI, 1992:11). Control and power are central to governing structures because they make decisions on the quality and quantity of education.

School governing structures were systematically designed to reproduce inequalities. These governing structures were not only unequal but also designed to maintain a socio-economic formation based on oppression, exploitation and poverty (Soobrayan, 1990: 31). Education is a critical institution in the social control function of the state as it helps to produce and to legitimise patterns of social inequality and mobility (Salter and Tapper, 1990: 148). Since education qualifications serve as bases of selection for occupations, usually implicitly, educational inequality is one of the main causes of economic inequality (Hussain, 1976:419).

The way schools were governed during apartheid constituted one form in which social relations of domination and exploitation were cemented. Throughout the development of the colonial and apartheid state, the education system played a role in the maintenance of white domination over South African society and in the oppression and subordination of blacks (Pampallis, 2007:18). School governing

structures in black communities were thus established through an illegitimate process in order to pursue the political purpose of widespread inequalities in society.

1.2 The problem statement

In view of the apartheid legacy, legitimising the process of establishing school governing structures through democratic elections was a logical outcome for establishing a democratic dispensation. The move to institutionalise participatory democracy through the legislation of school governing bodies (SGBs) is based on the assumption that people become committed to ensuring that the school functions effectively when they feel a sense of ownership of the school (Gauteng Department of Education, 1997:2). Participation in SGBs is seen as a form of community ownership of the schools which will in turn lead to effective functioning of schools.

This view assumes that democratic forms of governance, expressed through the participation of stakeholders in school governing structures, will lead to school improvement. Dieltens (2008:287) asserts that participation by stakeholders is important in sustaining improvements in schools since those closest to the school can more readily know the specific requirements that would enrich educational experience.

Despite this connection between participation in SGBs and school improvement, there is still a lack of clarity on what SGBs should do to promote school improvement. The role and effectiveness of school-based governing structures in promoting school improvement has been seriously questioned. In the United States of America (USA), school boards have been criticised as outdated and incapable of effectively leading educational reforms to improve students' academic achievement (Land, 2002:229). In South Africa, while the establishment of a democratic government in 1994 set the conditions for school change such as the establishment of democratic SGBs, it has taken some time for this to manifest in school improvement (Fleisch and Christie, 2004: 104).

Legislating for decentralised SGBs is one of the conditions initiated to promote school improvement. There is however, no single correct rationale for decentralised school governing structures. Different conditions in various countries shape the rationale for the shift towards decentralisation. Decisions about the centralisation or

decentralisation of the education system are generally dependent on the larger political dispensation and are not driven by educational purposes alone (Karlsson, McPherson and Pampallis, 1997:3).

There are different measures of success of decentralised school governing structures depending on the underlying rationale for decentralisation. According to Sayed (2002:36) for those approaching decentralisation from a public administration perspective, its success will be measured by the extent to which the provision of educational services and goods is more efficient. For those approaching it from a political perspective, the success of decentralisation is measured by the extent to which political involvement and participation are enhanced. A pedagogic perspective would seek to locate the advocacy of the policy in relation to improvements in teaching and learning. From the economic perspective, decentralisation is a viable strategy if it generates additional resources and results in an improvement of their allocation.

The success and efficacy of decentralisation is measured differently according to different perspectives. In post-apartheid South Africa, decentralisation of school governance has been driven mainly by the political rationale, namely the quest to democratise school governing structures, and the educational rationale which is concerned with improvement of the quality of education. Decentralisation is shaped by a combination of political, economic, administrative or educational reasons. Lauglo (1998:3) cites four alternative hypotheses for the present vogue of decentralisation policies, namely, a shift in ideological emphasis in favour of liberalism, the rise of post-modernist perspectives, political expediency related to a claimed 'crisis of legitimacy' of the state, and shortage of resources for education.

School governing structures are under pressure to respond to these multiple and often contradictory social, economic, political and educational demands. The role of democratically elected SGBs in promoting school improvement has been viewed uncritically. This role needs to be examined more closely. Consequently, the aim of this study is to explore the role of democratic SGBs in promoting school improvement in four high schools in Pimville and Klipspruit locations in Soweto. The study seeks to address the following questions:

- a) What is the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement?
- b) How do SGBs promote school improvement?
- c) What are the factors that enable or constrain SGBs from promoting school improvement?

1.3 Rationale

There are gaps in the literature about the role of democratic SGBs in promoting school improvement in the post-apartheid era. Whereas extensive literature exists on decentralised school governing structures and school improvement, there is limited research on the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement, particularly with a focus on local and global conditions that influence this role. 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).

Most debates on school governing structures and school improvement in South Africa tend to focus on the transition from apartheid to a democratic dispensation. In such debates there is a tendency to attribute the problems of inefficiency, ineffectiveness and inferior education to, among other things, illegitimate governing structures, and to subsequently assume that a shift to democratic school governing structures would resolve these problems at the school level.

The main critique of apartheid governing structures has been a crisis of legitimacy. The African National Congress (ANC) (1994:21) ascribes poor school administration to governance structures that lack effective community support, have limited parent participation, and exclude teachers and students. For Hartshorne (1999:39), South Africa inherited a state education system that was not only divisive and discriminatory, but also ineffective and inefficient, with a particularly low level of morale among the teachers and a poor standard of management.

Illegitimate school governing structures which lacked parental and community participation are one of the most significant factors which contributed to poor education for black people. The way schools were governed contributed to their debilitation. This necessitated calls for the establishment of legitimate structures of

governance that would contribute to efficiency, effectiveness and school improvement, since all stakeholders and the community would participate in the governance of the school.

The main limitation of such arguments is the failure to explore how exactly democratic participation of stakeholders in the SGBs will promote school improvement. This necessitates a critical analysis of the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement and how this role unfolds because it is mediated by different factors. This study aims to explore the role of democratic SGBs in promoting school improvement by analysing the challenges faced by SGBs. The study will contribute to an improved understanding of the nuanced dynamics faced by SGBs at the school level. The study will also be helpful for schools with more or less similar conditions to share experiences, challenges and interventions initiated by SGBs in order to promote school improvement.

1.4 Central argument

The study argues that the strategy of decentralisation as a democratic response to the crisis of illegitimacy lacks logical coherence. To connect centralisation of power to lack of democracy and to connect democracy to decentralisation is highly problematic since decentralisation may imply the shifting of sites of power to preserve colonial and historical privilege. These connections create binaries, which are theoretically untenable and undermine the role played by the socio-political context in shaping democratic practice.

The determinants of the process towards decentralisation cannot be reduced to the crisis of legitimacy of structures. Decentralisation may be due to the organic malfunction and structural mismatch, rendering the social system incapable of reproducing itself based on centralised mechanisms. These structural mismatches and institutional malfunctioning account for the decentralisation processes that occurred since the 1970s in capitalist democratic countries, where the legitimacy issue was not as significant as in the apartheid colonial setting.

A more thorough analysis of the momentum towards decentralisation of responsibilities to SGBs is thus required. In this regard, the study presents two

arguments, one theoretical and another methodological. The theoretical argument asserts that there is no clear-cut relationship between democratic SGBs and school improvement, since the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement is mediated by local and global socio-economic and political factors. Consequently, understanding the nature of the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement requires an elaboration of the specific articulation of these factors.

Methodologically, the relationship between SGBs and school improvement requires a critical analysis that specifies the context within which democratic SGBs could promote school improvement. Such an analysis reveals the complex nature of school dynamics within which SGBs have to promote school improvement. Linking SGBs to school improvement does not only refer to the SGBs helping the school to function properly, but also to the ability of these structures to enable schools to respond to various socio-economic and political factors that affect schools.

1.5 Structure of the report

The report comprises seven chapters. Chapter one – *Introduction* - aims to provide the background, rationale, problem statement and central argument of the study. The chapter presents two arguments, one theoretical and another methodological. Theoretically, the relationship between democratic SGBs and school improvement is not straight forward because it is mediated by various factors locally and globally. Methodologically, the study argues that the relationship between SGBs and school improvement has not been subject to a critical analysis. There is a need to critically analyse the context in which SGBs promote school improvement or not.

Chapter two – *National and International Perspectives on School Governance* - presents a review of literature on decentralised school governing structures and school improvement. The aim of this chapter is to provide the historical context and evolution of school improvement initiatives. The chapter argues that the conception and practice of school improvement is mainly influenced by neo-liberalism in the 1980s. This approach focused on producing learners that would meet the economic needs of countries and tended to overlook country-specific dynamics such as redress. This chapter further shows how neo-liberalism, which is dominant globally, influenced the conception of school improvement in South Africa. The chapter concludes with a theoretical perspective.

Chapter three - *Research Methodology* - explains the research design and methods, including the reliability, validity, scope and limitations of the research. The aim of the chapter is to outline the research approach and its appropriateness. The chapter argues that the case-study method is appropriate to explore the role of democratic SGBs in promoting school improvement. The chapter also discusses ethical considerations and concludes by presenting the profile of participants in the study.

Chapter four - *SGBs in South Africa: Contextual Issues* - outlines the historical context and evolution of decentralised school governing structures. The chapter argues that the contradiction between apartheid and alternative school governing structures centres on both the process and purpose of establishing school governing structures. The chapter then outlines post-apartheid reforms and finally presents the school context.

Chapter five - *The Policy Context* - aims to outline policies that frame the role of democratic SGBs in promoting school improvement. The chapter argues that School African School Act's (SASA) (1996) definition of the only responsibility of SGBs as complementing the resources provided by the state in order to improve the quality of education provided by schools exposes the dominance of economic rationale in the state's conception of the role of SGBs. Policy views participation in SGBs as an opportunity for the state to mobilise additional resources. The chapter concludes that the educational role of SGBs is secondary to the economic rationale.

Chapter six – *Implementing SGBs: Context, Change and Perceptions* – presents experiences on the role of democratic SGBs in promoting school improvement. These experiences show how SGBs promote school improvement in reality. The chapter reveals that SGBs are not able to mobilise sufficient resources on a scale to redress past inequalities. Particularly, SGBs cannot promote school improvement by only performing functions allocated by SASA. In order to remain relevant, SGBs need to be responsive to socio-economic challenges that undermine teaching and learning at schools.

Chapter seven presents the *Conclusion and Recommendations of the Study*. This chapter outlines theoretical insights drawn from arguments presented in different

chapters. Specifically, the chapter argues that the input, context, complexity and mediation are key factors shaping the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement. The chapter concludes with key recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature on school improvement and decentralised school governing structures. The aim of the chapter is to provide an overview of the relationship between decentralised governing structures and school improvement. The review outlines the definition and purpose of school improvement, provides an overview of school improvement initiatives, and outlines how the notion of school improvement was introduced in South Africa. A conceptual link between school improvement and decentralised school governing structures is then presented. The chapter then presents a theoretical framework outlining the perspective from which the study was approached. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the main argument and key issues addressed in this chapter.

School improvement literature outlines various phases of school improvement initiatives which started in the 1960s, culminating in the major shift in orientation in the 1980s. This shift coheres with the change in the focus of education away from social and cultural concerns towards the economic concerns and participation in the competitive global economy propelled by the economic crisis of the late 1980s.

The approach to school improvement in the 1980s was predicated on a neo-liberal conception. Parental participation in school governing structures was individualised and assumed a market-based definition where parents are viewed as consumers. This study argues that neo-liberalism influenced discussions on and the conception of school improvement in South Africa. This conception of school improvement was coupled with the reconfiguration of school governance through the introduction of decentralised school-based management. In the main, the nature and form of decentralised school governing structures was predicated on market principles.

The chapter will show that the introduction of school improvement initiatives in South Africa coincided with and was underpinned by the notion of school improvement whose orientation had radically changed. Contrary to initial school improvement

initiatives, the school improvement of the late 1980s ignores the historical and cultural context of the countries in which they are introduced.

2.2 Definition and purpose of school improvement

The notion of school improvement can be traced from the International School Improvement Project (ISIP) which was initiated to conduct large-scale school improvement studies. There are two ways in which school improvement is used. The first is the common sense meaning which relates to general efforts to make schools better places for pupils to learn and the second way is more technical and specific (Hopkins, 1998:1036).

Several authors use the technical and specific definition developed by Van Velzen's (1985) definition of school improvement as 'a systemic, sustained effort aimed at change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions in one or more schools, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively' (Hopkins *et al*, 1994; Hopkins, 1998; Myers, 1996; Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1998; Teddlie and Reynolds, 2000).

Specific educational goals depend on the focus of the school improvement effort and what it intends to achieve. The ultimate aim of school improvement is to achieve a range of goals that will enhance learning, achievement and development amongst pupils (Myers, 1996:11). For Hopkins (2001:12), school improvement is 'an approach to educational change that aims to enhance student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change'. It is concerned with raising student achievement through focusing on the teaching and learning process and the conditions that support it.

One view is that by concentrating on learner achievement, there is an increasing danger of defining achievement solely as improved examination results. Although examination results are important, they are not the only purpose of the school (Myers, 1996:12). Hargreaves *et al* (1984) propose that schools should be concerned with four kinds of achievements, namely, dealing with the capacity to remember and use facts; practical and spoken skills; personal and social skills, and motivation and self-confidence. Academic achievement is not the sole goal of school improvement.

Although these authors expand the focus beyond learner achievement, they still adopt a narrow approach that focuses on the learner's achievement in isolation from the broader purpose of education in society. Myers' (1996) argument for school improvement to consider the *quality* of the school experience as well as quantifiable outcomes and how to evaluate this experience whilst valid, remains limited. The argument overlooks how school improvement efforts can equip learners to address broader socio-economic challenges as its focus is limited on learners.

In explaining the link between school improvement and broader education reforms, Hopkins *et al* (1994:3) observe that school improvement is about strategies for improving the school's capacity to provide quality education in times of change, instead of blindly accepting central policies and striving to implement them uncritically. The school's school improvement interventions may be consistent with the national reform agenda or it may not. Both external and school-based factors influence school improvement initiatives and there is no one uniform approach.

In view of legislative changes and curriculum reforms taking place in South Africa, school improvement would refer to how schools, including SGBs, respond to education reforms provided by new legislation to create conditions that improve the schools' capacity to provide quality education. The SGB is an organisational element at the school level which can contribute towards changing the processes and practice within the school so as to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

There are three commonly-stated goals of the post-1994 reforms in educational governance. The first goal seeks to increase democratic participation in schools through SGBs and provide a framework for the development of more democratic values and behaviours within the school and the wider society (Karlsson, McPherson and Pampallis, 1997; Sayed and Carrim, 1997; Cross, Mungadi and Rouhani, 2000; Harber, 2002).

The second goal is to create an equitable system and social justice in education (Karlsson, McPherson and Pampallis, 1997; Chisholm, Soudien, Vally and Gilmour, 1999). The third goal intends to improve the quality of educational provision (Karlsson, McPherson and Pampallis, 1997; Johnson, 1997). The goal that links

SGBs with the improvement of the teaching and learning processes can be traced from the body of research on school improvement discussed in the next section.

2.3 Overview of school improvement initiatives

Different approaches to school improvement are informed by different contexts in which school improvement initiatives are undertaken and the specific challenges to which these initiatives respond. The disciplinary area of school improvement has gone through different phases which started in the US. The first phase of the school improvement research (SIR) was a singular study whose goal was to reform American high schools by allowing individual schools the freedom to reconstruct their curriculum on the basis of individual need, rather than college entrance requirements (Teddle and Stringfield, 2007:132-133).

The second phase occurred in the mid-1960s and focused on curriculum and instruction. The objective was to have a major impact on student achievement by using exemplary curriculum materials. Although the materials were of high quality, they failed to have an impact on teaching, because the teachers were not included in the production process, and the in-service training provided was perfunctory and rudimentary (Reynolds and Teddle, 2000).

Teachers took what they thought was of use from the materials and integrated it into their own teaching, because teacher involvement was conceived within a 'top-down' or 'centre periphery' model of educational change (Hopkins, 1998:1038). Lack of teacher commitment to 'top-down' government reforms shifted the paradigm to a 'bottom-up' approach, such as school-based reviews (Sackney, 2007:171). This era shows that the way in which teachers teach and learners learn don't necessarily change because of the new curriculum, no matter how good the curriculum may be.

The third phase occurred in the 1970s and was mainly one of documenting the failures of the curriculum reform movement to affect practice. This phase recognised that local implementation of any educational reform is extremely important, perhaps more important than the reform itself (Teddle and Stringfield, 2007:134). Implementation must be appreciated as an extremely complex and lengthy process

that required a sensitive combination of strategic planning, individual learning and commitment to succeed (Reynolds and Teddlie, 2000:208).

Not all school improvement strategies work well all the time and in every setting. Most attempts at school improvement are successful only to the extent that they satisfactorily address the complexities of school culture (Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1998: 238). It cannot be assumed that once a policy decision has been taken at the national level, it will be implemented at the school level as intended.

The fourth phase occurred from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s. The first studies on school effectiveness were released in Britain and consensus was reached in the USA as to the characteristics of effective schools. Some major large-scale projects on school improvement were conducted which produced valuable lessons about the dynamics of the change process (Reynolds and Teddlie, 2000; Teddlie and Stringfield, 2007).

It is during this period that school effectiveness and school improvement research emerged as a reaction to the quantitative expansion of the education systems in the immediate post-colonial era (Riddell, 1998). Fleisch (2007:341) traces the origins of school effectiveness and school improvement in Africa to the education crisis of the late 1970s and early 1980s. The focus on identification of cost-effective policy interventions constitutes one of the key criticisms levelled against the introduction of school improvement in developing countries.

The fifth phase (with its focus on *managing change*) is the phase in which researchers and practitioners struggled to relate their strategies and their research knowledge to the realities of schools in a pragmatic, systematic and sensitive way. During this phase, research knowledge and 'change theory' was being refined through action and researchers began to appreciate school improvement as a change management process (Reynolds and Teddlie, 2000:209).

Schools were introduced to development planning which is not just about implementing innovation and change, but about changing a school's culture in order to improve its capacity to manage (other) changes (Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1998:239). For Stoll and Sammons (2007:214), taking charge of externally driven

change, rather than being controlled by it, separates schools that are more effective and more rapidly improving from those that are not, and at any one time schools may be at different stage of development or 'growth state'. School improvement entails changing the school culture in response to its conditions rather than implementing a uniform approach imposed on school.

The late 1980s and the early 1990s marked the restructuring period characterised by a radical shift in orientation in school improvement efforts. Previous school improvement efforts were discredited for being limited in nature and the idea that true educational reform required the restructuring of the basic organisation of schools was emphasised. The emphasis of reformers was on creating schools that would generate a competent workforce for a competitive global economy (Teddle and Stringfield, 2007:149). According to Slee and Weiner (1998), this approach to school improvement was adopted by policy makers pursuant to the resolution of the alleged crises in state education in Britain and elsewhere.

Education and the purpose of schooling were increasingly focused towards economic and vocational goals by equipping learners with knowledge for the workplace (Henry *et al*, 1999; Mintrom, 2001). This tended to shift the focus of educational practices away from social and cultural concerns to those of individuals and economies in which they participate (Henry *et al*, 1999:91). Motala (1998:15) observes a tension between education for the purpose of serving the global economy and local economic growth, and education which services the broader goals of social justice, citizenship and democracy.

Underlying this approach is the reorganisation of institutional arrangements at the school level such that school governing structures assume greater responsibility and are held accountable for the quality of education provided by the school. The impact of this shift in orientation is crucial to an understanding of school improvement initiatives in South Africa. This is mainly because the entry point to the introduction of school improvement in Africa in general, was a reduction in the cost of the provision of social services (including education).

2.4 An overview of school improvement in South Africa

The introduction of school improvement efforts in South Africa coincided with the economic crisis of the 1980s and was thus underpinned by school improvement initiatives whose ideological orientation had already radically shifted from initial conceptions. In South Africa, most people – and in particular those who had long been oppressed and had struggled against apartheid – expected greater justice and equality, the elimination of racism and an improvement in the quality of education received by the black majority (Pampallis, 2007:15).

However, the shift in orientation of school improvement undermined the much-needed benefits of earlier school improvement research, including the focus on disadvantaged schools, equity and efficiency and gave way to the priority of cost reduction and the production of a competent workforce for the economy. The focus on ‘producing’ skilled learners to participate in the economy and cost-recovery ignored the need to redress historical inequalities generated by decades of apartheid rule.

Transformation of the education system in South Africa coincides with ongoing changes in the education systems of many countries, including Britain and the USA. Education policies for the new South Africa show remarkable congruence with global trends (Chisholm, 1996: 50). Christie (1997: 66) observes that globally-used concepts such as school improvement need to be specifically examined in local contexts if a thorough explanation is to be found in South Africa, for instance.

Similarly, the notion of school improvement which has featured prominently in international debates need to be examined in the local context. Debates about school effectiveness and school improvement are increasingly influential globally and have certainly arrived in South Africa (Harber, 2001:67). In keeping with international trends, there is a shift away from school effectiveness and quality control, toward school improvement and quality (Motala and Mungadi, 1999).

This is a rapid shift from school effectiveness approaches which attempted to measure inequality and correlate this with effectiveness, to school improvement approaches aimed at changing processes within schools through changing the

practice of teachers, principals and other organisational elements (Meyer and Motala, 1998:7). The emerging school improvement discourse in the post-apartheid period attempts to understand quality through reviewing the processes of teaching and learning in the micro context of the school (Motala and Mungadi, 1999:15).

This school improvement approach aims to understand the particular processes within the school which lead to improved student outcomes by reviewing the key elements of 'good' schools and 'best' practices. However, Meyer and Motala (1998:8) highlight the limitations of the school improvement 'classroom culturalist' narrow focus on social norms of classroom behaviour which dismiss looking at how school effects can be measured. Fleisch and Christie (2004) agree that models of school effectiveness and improvement tend to gloss over the significance of broader social and political structures accounting for school change.

Historical context is an important factor as school improvement research cannot be implemented without considering country-specific dynamics. Systemic school improvement, particularly for disadvantaged children, is inextricably linked to wider social, economic and political conditions, which in South Africa's case concerns the political transition from apartheid to democratic government (Fleisch and Christie, 2004:96).

The starting point for school improvement initiatives even before reviewing the processes of teaching and learning within the school is to review the conditions at the schools under which teaching and learning takes place. This approach is undermined, however, by a global tendency to introduce forms of decentralised governing structures and school improvement that do not consider and address the specific historical context.

2.5 Decentralised school governance and school improvement

There are different reasons for the shift towards decentralised school governance. The system of educational governance cannot be analysed in a vacuum; it is important to understand the historical and contemporary context in which the system has evolved (Smith *et al*, 1995). The historical context is discussed in detail in chapter three of this report. This section focuses on global trends and conceptual debates on decentralised school governing structures and school improvement.

The way schools are governed has been a major concern of many countries. Discussions on decentralisation have increased in complexity in recent years because of the realisation that the 'school' as an institutional unit is a core actor in ensuring educational quality (De Grauwe *et al*, 2005:2). The growing economic orientation of school improvement initiatives was underpinned by restructuring efforts which shaped the move towards decentralised school governance (Teddle and Stringfield, 2007:149).

In both developed and developing countries, education systems are being restructured in line with neo-liberal, market-oriented strategies for economic growth. State-centred models of development are being discredited as ineffective and counter to economic growth. These strategies are characterised by promoting education policies which shift financial responsibility from public to private sources, and emphasising decentralisation, cost-recovery and cost sharing (Chisholm, 1996: 50-51). The emergence of decentralisation as a reform theme and its links to school improvement paralleled similar developments in developed countries (Fleisch, 2007:345).

Restructuring efforts include, amongst other things, the introduction of site-based management (SBM) i.e. changes in the organisation of school systems and schools, such that control is decentralised to the local school, greater parental involvement in schools and transformational leadership (Teddle and Stringfield, 2007:149). Hamilton (1999:14) asserts that 'idols' of the market place argue that schools have become sick institutions that threaten the health of the economic order and that terminal cases merit organ transplant (viz. new heads or governing bodies).

Educational governance has been radically implicated in the restructuring of the state. Under new regimes of school-based management and global budgeting, state schooling has been converted from a bureaucratised to a market-based form of governance predicated on assumptions of consumer choice and public accountability (Henry *et al*, 1999:89). In the US, proponents of reform have argued that substituting market-driven service delivery for centrally co-ordinated government strategies would greatly improve school quality as well as the accountability of school leaders to parents and students (Mintrom, 2001:616).

Those committed to the market concept argue that freedom of educational choice results in greater diversity of schools and enhanced quality, both outcomes that result from the rigours of competition (Reid, 2005:80). Another proposal suggests the elimination of the school board as a 'middle man' between the state and individual schools, allowing parents an unrestricted choice of schools, and funneling money to the school they select. It is expected that in the process the competitive market would weed out weak performers (Land, 2002:246).

In this view, schooling is best pursued through market-based systems and the present forms of democratic control are viewed as problematic. Although the imperfections of the markets are recognised, these are preferable to those of local democracy. Thus, the institutional conditions for school improvement require the de-democratisation of institutional settings entailing decentralisation, competition, choice and autonomy (Ranson, 1999:334).

The creation of market settings in educational institutions can be seen as the commodification of knowledge wherein education is viewed as a transactional product. Those opposed to organising education within a market framework maintain that it commodifies education as a private and positional good, rather than as a collective public good (Reid, 2005:80). Consequently, school governing structures assume a market-related role of promoting consumption of '*one product*' over '*another product*' as schools compete amongst each other to 'provide quality education' and attract learners. School improvement itself aims to improve the quality of education, a product upon which the decision to consume is based.

The idea of a 'consumer' is crucial in that, for neo-liberals, the world is in essence a vast supermarket. However, 'consumer choice' as the guarantor for democracy is flawed. While all consumers are equal by virtue of having the right to choose, what is rather downplayed in this theory is the unequal ability of the consumers to purchase. Although all consumers are free to choose, this is within the limits of their income (Soucek, 1999:222). Choice imposes costs, which are likely to be prohibitive for many families such as those in rural areas (Ranson, 1999:337). Apple (1999:10) asserts that these families can only engage in 'post-modern' consumption where they stand outside the supermarket and consume the image.

Consumer choice as the basis of democracy conceals the fact that participation in the polity of the markets is predicated on the ability of the consumers to purchase. Therefore, some consumers are excluded from the educational markets on the basis of lack of resources and as such, there is no level playing field. Since choice implies costs, education is seen as simply one more product like bread, cars and television. However, unlike bread, cars and television, education performs a screening or filtering function, and is a determinant of social privilege (Ranson, 1999:338).

Allowing access to education to be determined by the logic of markets has the effect of exacerbating rather than reducing inequalities in society. This, in turn, undermines the role of education in entrenching democracy and results in greater rather than lesser educational apartheid (Apple, 1999). Since capitalism is seen overall as philosophically and empirically allied with 'democracy', there is typically little or no enquiry into contradictions arising from structurally unequal relations of market power (Schmitz, 1995:59). Strangely, the very concerns with inequality are themselves deferred to the markets for a solution.

Underlying neo-liberal policies in education and their social policies in general is faith in the essential fairness and justice of the markets where it is argued that markets ultimately will distribute resources efficiently and fairly according to effort (Apple, 1999:11). In spite of their appearance of neutrality, markets entrench existing social inequalities as they reproduce the inequalities which consumers bring to them and actively confirm and reinforce the pre-existing social order of wealth and privilege (Karlsson, McPherson and Pampallis, 1997:25). Therefore, shifting the responsibility for socially unjust outcomes of market relations back to the markets is a contradiction that defies common sense (Soucek, 1999).

What these proponents of market economies miss is the fact that the markets do not exist outside of history and hence, do not exist independently of the incessant conflict among social forces over the allocation of resources. Market forces thus operate within a social context. Markets are not separate from actual social relations, but have multiple and contradictory social effects (Henry *et al*, 1999:87).

The market is a political creation, designed for political purposes, in this case to redistribute power in order to redirect society away from social democracy and towards a neo-liberal order (Ranson, 1999:338). What emerges from the review is that markets reproduce and perfect the features that define their context. The demise of official apartheid governing structures has left the democratic dispensation with a terrible legacy. It is this legacy that is now being perfected by the operation of market forces.

2.6 Conclusion

The chapter shows that during and after the apartheid era, South Africa's model of school governance has been shaped by both local and global conditions. The expectation for school governing structures to promote school improvement is located within the school improvement tradition. In particular, the shift in orientation in the conception of school improvement led to the reconfiguration of school governance and the shift of emphasis on the purpose of education towards economic concerns.

The reconfiguration of schools included, amongst other things, the establishment of site-based management structured along market principles. Theoretical arguments that modelling school governing structure along market principles tends to exacerbate inequalities in society are also presented. The chapter also shows that current school improvement research tends to ignore the historical and cultural contexts in which they are implemented. This approach is not appropriate for South Africa as it undermines the need to redress historical inequalities.

The reliance on decentralised school governing bodies to achieve the various goals places SGBs in a precarious position as the pursuance of some goals may contradict, and in fact, obstruct the attainment of other goals. Although the focus of this study is on the educational dimension, it is observed that the post-apartheid model of decentralised school governance in South Africa is a product of various rationales which are often contradictory. The role of the democratic SGB in promoting school improvement is thus influenced by the specific conception of school improvement and democratic participation at a particular point in time.

2.7 Theoretical framework

Initially, this study intended to focus on the role of democratic school governance in promoting school improvement in post-apartheid South Africa. However, by framing the question in this fashion, a one-sided premise was implicitly adopted, implying a relationship that runs from governance to improvement. This relationship has, nevertheless, had to be investigated since school governance is not democratised for its own sake. Rather, such democratisation, amongst other things, has to be seen to be supporting and reinforcing the strategic purpose of the school, namely to provide quality education through effective teaching and learning.

It therefore became imperative to conduct a critical analysis that specifies the context within which school improvement articulates, or disarticulates, with democratic SGBs. As argued by Fleisch and Christie (2004), any analysis of school improvement in South Africa would be incomplete without an accompanying analysis of the history of popular resistance around education, which was a significant legacy of apartheid. Such an analysis reveals the complex nature of the debates that frame the link between democratic SGBs and school improvement.

The study moves from the premise that there is little that SGBs can do to promote school improvement. There are historical and contextual factors beyond the control of SGBs, such as curriculum reforms, provision of resources, and teacher development and qualifications, which all contribute towards school improvement. This study nonetheless analyses the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement by focusing on the challenges experienced by the schools, the goals of the schools, and the role played by the SGBs to promote school improvement in this context.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is aimed at providing insight into the research methodology and design used in this study. The chapter presents a discussion of the research approach, research design, data collection, the research instruments used to collect data, and triangulation. A discussion of the method of data analysis, the scope and limitations of the study as well as ethical considerations is also presented. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the profile of participants in the research. Issues of validity and reliability of the study are also discussed in this chapter.

The chapter highlights the appropriateness of the philosophical approach adopted to understand the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement. Myers (1997:4) defines a research method as a strategy of inquiry which moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to research design and data collection. This chapter thus outlines how the study was conducted.

3.2 Research approach

The study mainly employs a qualitative method. A quantitative method is used to complement data collected through qualitative means. This approach is particularly relevant, as Macmillan and Schumacher (1993:373) argue that qualitative research is based on a naturalistic phenomenological philosophy that views reality as multi-layered, interactive, and a shared social experience interpreted by individuals. Most descriptions and interpretations are portrayed with words rather than numbers, although numerical data may be used to elaborate the findings identified in a particular analysis. Bogdan and Biklen (in Frankel and Wallen, 1990) provide the following five characteristics of qualitative research:

- The natural setting is the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument. Researchers go to a particular setting of interest because they are concerned with the context.
- Data is collected in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. Researchers do not usually attempt to reduce their data to numerical

symbols, but rather seek to portray what they have observed and recorded in all of its riches.

- Researchers are concerned with process as well as product.
- Data is analysed inductively. Researchers do not, as a rule, formulate a hypothesis beforehand and test it. Instead they are constructing a picture that takes shape as they collect and examine the parts.
- How people make sense out of their lives is a major concern. The researcher does his or her best to capture the thinking of the participants' perspective as accurately as possible (Biklen and Bogdan, 1982, in Frankel and Wallen, 1990:368-369).

Whereas qualitative methods are used to gather the views of different stakeholders, quantitative methods were used to compare the responses of members of SGBs who participated in the study so as to establish the dominant perception of the role of democratic SGBs in promoting school improvement. Research questions were framed to analyse the role of democratic SGBs in promoting school improvement at the school level, as well as to understand the school context within which the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement occurs.

3.3 Research design

In order to understand the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement, data was collected through the use of various methods of research which are discussed in detail below:

3.3.1 Extensive literature review

The review of literature was conducted in order to define and explain key concepts in this study such as school improvement, decentralised school governance, and school governing structures. Through the review, important definitions, the historical evolution of these concepts and the context within which they are used in the study is provided. The review also outlines key conceptual issues in the discussions on school governing structures and school improvement. These issues provided a theoretical framework that guides the analysis of the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement in the four schools.

3.3.2 Documentary analysis

In addition to the data gathered through a review of literature, documentation that provides secondary data such as the SGB constitution, school improvement plans, policies and reports was requested from the schools. This information was used to corroborate information obtained from interviews. This was important as the documents contain information about the vision of the school, what the SGBs are doing to implement that vision, and monitoring and reporting arrangements.

Documentary analysis provides a school-based understanding of what these schools intend to do to promote school improvement. Documents that were reviewed include the SGB constitutions and school policies. It was hoped that the documents obtained from schools would include school improvement plans. However, not one of the case study schools had a school improvement plan.

3.3.3 Case study

This study applies exploratory research to analyse the role of democratic SGBs in promoting school improvement. Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:42) argue that exploratory research is used to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community or person. They assert that the choice of research cannot be arbitrary. Surveys and case studies are two options for exploratory research. Surveys are used to collect information over a broad range of cases, with each case being studied only for the specific aspect under consideration. Case studies are used to make a detailed and thorough investigation of selected examples (Bless and Higson-Smith, 1995: 43).

This study uses the case study approach to gain insight into the role of democratic SGBs in promoting school improvement. The case study method is suitable for an individual or a particular group of items or individuals to understand better the issues affecting their behaviour (Cohen and Manion, 1994). Bell (1993:6) concurs with the view that a case study is particularly appropriate for researchers because it provides an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth within limited space.

Case studies have traditionally been associated with qualitative methods. However, there is a possibility of introducing a quantitative component to the approach (Christie, 1991:191). Although observation and interviews are used frequently in case studies, this does not preclude the use of other methods (Bell, 1993:6). This study consequently adopts multiple approaches that are both qualitative and quantitative in nature in order to achieve a holistic understanding of the schools and the context in which they operate.

The selection of these schools was informed by a need to focus on schools which draw their learners from similar socio-economic conditions to establish common factors that affect the schools, thus avoiding a comparison of schools that operate in completely different conditions. Field research to identify in some depth the ways in which districts and schools manage the process of decentralisation, the challenges they encounter and the strategies they introduce to overcome these could be very useful for further implementation of such policy (De Grauwe *et al*, 2005:3).

Case studies are important because they provide an analysis of schools and provide an opportunity to reflect on how well the policy is implemented at the level where it matters most. Good policies have not translated into effective implementation, and the school improvement approach provides enormous possibilities in this regard, particularly through its emphasis on improving the capacity of change agents at a local level (Elmore, 1993). This method could also provide a vital opportunity for backward mapping i.e. a way to understand and inform the process of policy-making by starting at the point of implementation (Motala and Mungadi, 1999:15).

Four neighbouring schools in Soweto were chosen for the case study which was conducted in October 2008. Three schools are situated in Pimville and one school is in Klipspruit. All the schools fall under district C2 of the Gauteng Department of Education. Two days were spent at each of the schools to administer questionnaires, conduct interviews and observation. The two days were spent distributing the survey questionnaires, conducting semi-structured interviews with members of SGBs and conducting non-participant observation. All interviewees were requested to fill in the rapid survey questionnaire.

3.4 Data collection and research instruments

The study used different instruments to collect data. These instruments included the interview schedule, the survey questionnaire and the observation schedule. Each of these research instruments is discussed in detail below:

3.4.1 Interview schedule

Data was collected in detailed semi-structured interviews over a two week period from the 20-28 October 2008 in four schools. The advantage of using semi-structured interviews is that although an interview schedule (Annexure A) was used as a framework to guide interviews, the participants were given the freedom to talk about the topic (Bell, 1993).

Interviews were used to gather relevant information from the chairpersons of SGBs, school principals, learners and teachers, specifically their understanding of the role of democratic SGBs in promoting school improvement, and what SGBs do to promote school improvement. All interviews were conducted during school hours, except for interviews with the chairpersons of the SGBs. two of which were conducted at their homes.

Interviews were conducted with participants in the school offices, libraries and in some cases in the classrooms. Participants were assured of confidentiality in that their names would not be used in the report and that the information they provided would only be used for the purposes of this research. In all, four chairpersons of governing bodies, four principals, eight teachers and eight learners were interviewed. In total, 24 interviews were conducted.

3.4.2 Survey questionnaire

Copies of the rapid survey questionnaire were circulated to all members of the SGBs identified as participants in each school, namely, two learners, two teachers, the chairperson of the SGB and the school principal. In total, 24 copies of the survey questionnaire were distributed to members of the SGBs in the four schools.

With the assistance of the school principals, rapid survey questionnaires were handed to members of SGBs and the aim of the research was explained to them. Respondents were allowed to take questionnaires home and respond in their own

time and at their own pace. This is helpful in that the researcher does not influence them. Mahlangu (1987) asserts that because of its impersonal nature, the questionnaire may elicit more candid and objective replies and allow for well-considered and more thoughtful answers.

Rapid survey questionnaires contained similar questions, and were used to capture the views of different stakeholders, their understanding of the role democratic SGBs play in promoting school improvement, and how such an understanding mediates their practice at school. By concentrating on the views of different stakeholder representatives in these schools, it was hoped that some meaningful general observations and conclusions could be made.

3.4.3 Non-participant observation

An observation schedule (Annexure C) was used to guide the process of observation during the research at the schools. Non-participant observation was another research strategy which proved to be a helpful part of triangulation. Non-participant observation either corroborates responses provided in the survey questionnaires and the interview, or disproves them. Since questionnaires about the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement were handed to members of SGBs, it was important to corroborate the information collected through interviews and questionnaires.

The element of subjectivity of respondents was counteracted through direct observation. The observation schedule was used to observe the following two key issues: overall conduct of learners and educators at the school and the school's physical appearance and facilities.

3.4.4 Sampling

Purposive sampling was used for selecting both the schools and the participants. As Frankel and Wallen (1990:76) indicate, in purposive sampling, researchers do not simply study whoever is available, but use their judgement to select the sample for a specific purpose. In this case, participants had to be members of SGBs representing all stakeholders at the school. It was assumed that these members are

familiar with the policies and the work done by the SGB to promote school improvement.

Interviews were conducted with school principals, chairpersons of SGBs, learners and teacher representatives of the SGBs. The school principals and chairpersons of SGBs were interviewed because of their leadership positions, as heads of the School Management Teams (SMTs) and SGBs respectively. Learners and teachers in the SGBs were interviewed as stakeholder representatives in the SGBs. The profile of interviewees and respondents is presented below:

3.4.4.1 Profile of school principals

Three principals were male and one was female. Three principals had extensive experience and were in the age group 50-65 years. The principal with the least experience is also the youngest (age group 30-35 years) of the four principals. The profile also suggests that a typical principal is a male with extensive teaching experience. In terms of qualifications, two principals have a post-graduate diploma, one a degree and another has a post-graduate degree.

Gender	Qualification	Years as Principal	Age Group
Female	Post-graduate diploma	11-15 yrs	50-65
Male	Post-graduate diploma	1 yr	30-35
Male	Post-graduate degree	16-25 yrs	50-65
Male	Degree	6-10 yrs	50-65

Table 1: Profile of School Principals

3.4.4.2 Profile of teachers

From the eight teachers who were interviewed, three were female and five were male. Four of the teachers are in the age group 40-50 years; one educator is in the age group 50-65 years, one is in the age group 36-40 years, one in the age group 30-35 years and the last educator is in the age group 20-30 years.

The comparison of educators shows that a typical educator in the four schools has extensive teaching experience and is above the age of 40 years. The profile also indicates a correlation between the age of teachers and the number of years as educator, in that the older the educator the higher the number of years of teaching.

The most qualified educator had a master's degree and the least qualified educators only have a teaching diploma.

Gender	Qualification	Teaching Experience	Age
Female	Diploma	16-25 yrs	41-50 yrs
Male	Masters degree	16-25 yrs	41-50 yrs
Male	Post-graduate diploma	16-25 yrs	50-65 yrs
Female	Post-graduate degree	16-25 yrs	41-50 yrs
Male	Diploma	11-15 yrs	41-50 yrs
Male	Post-graduate degree	1-5 yrs	20-30 yrs
Female	Bachelors degree	1-5 yrs	36-40 yrs
Male	Diploma	6-10 yrs	30-35 yrs

Table 2: Profile of Educators

3.4.4.3 Profile of learners

Of eight learners interviewed, five were female and three were male. Learner representatives in the SGB were aged between 16 and 18 years. The number of years as learners at these schools ranges from 1 to 4 years. An interesting dimension emerging from the learners is that unlike all other categories of SGB representatives (i.e. principals, educators and SGB chairpersons), the gender composition is tilted towards female learners. This may be an indication of a future trend where females are beginning to occupy key leadership positions.

Gender	Years as learner	Grade	Age
Female	4 yrs	11	17 yrs
Female	1 yr	9	16 yrs
Female	4 yrs	11	18 yrs
Male	1 yr	11	17 yrs
Male	4 yrs	11	17 yrs
Female	4 yrs	12	18 yrs
Female	2 yrs	11	17 yrs
Male	3 yrs	10	16 yrs

Table 3: Profile of Learners

3.4.4.4 Profile of chairpersons of SGBs

All four chairpersons of SGBs were male, which indicates that leadership positions at the school level are still dominated by men. The years of SGB chairpersons as parents of learners at the school range from three to five years. It can also be

observed that SGB chairpersons are parents of learners who are in grade 10 to 12. Parents of learners in grades 8 and 9 were thus not represented in the SGBs.

Gender	Years as Parent	Learner's Grade
Male	5 yrs	11
Male	4 yrs	10
Male	3 yrs	11
Male	4 yrs	12

Table 4: Profile of SGB Chairpersons

Another dimension at the school level is the extent to which democratic SGBs advance the principles of gender (and race equity) through their composition. In her study, Senosi (2003:61) observes that there have not been significant changes to the gender and racial composition of the SGBs. This study shows a similar trend where women are still under-represented in leadership positions, although a cursory glance at the representation of learners shows some changes with regard to gender composition.

3.5 Validity and reliability of the method of the study

Validity and reliability are two crucial aspects which have a direct impact on the credibility of the study and determine whether the study is worthy of being called research as opposed to an investigation or simply a report. According to Bell, (1993:7) validity is a descriptive term for the use of variables that accurately measure the concept that they are intended to measure. Most authors differentiate between internal and external validity.

Data in the case study was collected through interviews, rapid survey questionnaires (Annexure B), and observation at the schools. Triangulation as a data collection method was used as it integrates data collected from different sources which, Mouton (1996) indicates, makes it possible (to some extent) to compensate for the limitations of each. Cohen and Manion (1994) add that triangulation is an approach that allows the researcher to use two or more methods for data gathering. One of the advantages of triangulation is that it can reduce the researcher's bias and distortions, which are likely to occur when one method is used. It also overcomes method boundedness (Cohen and Manion, 1994:234).

Triangulation is also important in that it ascertains that the information gathered is not simply an artefact of one specific method of collection (Cohen and Manion, 1994). Neuman (1994) indicates that internal validity is about whether the instrument used allowed the researcher to measure what s/he says they measure. It is, therefore, concerned with the ability to eliminate alternative explanations of the dependent variable. Cohen and Manion (1994) view external validity as a measure of generalisability, that is, the extent to which explanations can be applied to other contexts.

Reliability in qualitative research refers to the consistency of the researcher's interactive style, data recording, data analysis and interpretation of participant meanings from the data (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993:385). Neuman (1994) defines reliability as the likelihood that a particular method will produce the same research findings if the study were to be repeated. Therefore, from these definitions, validity deals with the accuracy of the findings of the study and reliability is concerned with replicability of the study.

In this study, validity and reliability were ensured by using triangulation as a data analysis instrument. Data gathered from various sources was compared and cross-checked for the purposes of corroboration. However, because this was predominantly a qualitative study, it could not generate perfect validity and reliability. MacMillan and Schumacher (1993:385-386) acknowledge that reliability is difficult to achieve for researchers interested in a naturalistic event or unique phenomenon.

Apart from being used for the purposes of data collection, the strategy of triangulation is also used for data analysis. Kerlinger (1986:319) posits that to display data is certainly important but it is the interpretation of the data that is the *sine qua non* of the research. In this regard, data from the questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and non-participant observation is corroboratively used to analyse information provided on the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement.

This method is useful since it provides the opportunity to corroborate data from one source with data from other sources. In this case, it ensures that data analysed does not become an "artefact of one method of enquiry" (Cohen and Manion, 1994:34). Data analysis is presented using a descriptive method to elucidate the participants'

experiences of the role of the SGB in promoting school improvement. Data is also supported with examples and diagrammatical presentation of results obtained.

To this end, Ary *et al* (1985:257) argue that the identification of *random errors of measurement* and *systematic errors of measurement* help to distinguish between reliability and validity. Bruinsma and Zwanenburg (1992:79-80) agree that they do not seek the core meaning of reliability in accuracy, stability, consistency, or repeatability, but in the absence of random errors. Equally, they argue that validity is the absence of random and systematic errors. This study is informed by this understanding of reliability and validity.

3.6 Scope and limits of the study

There are several limitations to the case study approach. Firstly, its findings are not generalisable; they only apply to the schools where the case study was conducted, and may be a reflection of local educational practice or of the school context in the same area. Secondly, because of the rapidly changing school context and other school-related developments, conditions under which this study was conducted might have changed. Thirdly, the time spent at the school might not have been long enough to gather the finer details of the micro-level school dynamics.

The relationship of the schools to broader society and their role in attaining social and economic goals needs further detailed research. Fourthly, an analysis of the relationship was based on the events and activities outside the classroom, such that no attention was given to the classroom situation. Some important classroom-based aspects of school improvement such as teaching methods and strategies, the nature of assessment, and learner involvement in the lesson (as espoused by Outcome-Based Education) were missed. Therefore, the variables and approach used to analyse school improvement in this study were limited to factors outside the classroom and more specifically limited to the role of democratic SGBs in promoting school improvement.

3.7 Ethical considerations

In line with the research policy of the Gauteng Department of Education, an application to conduct research was submitted, duly signed by the research

supervisor. The research proposal was also submitted to the GDE. The letter granting permission to conduct research in the four schools and in departmental offices was granted.

Upon receipt of permission from the GDE, letters of request were given to principals of the four schools requesting their assistance with conducting the research in their schools. The researcher personally delivered the letters to the school principals and explained the purpose of the research. Dates for the research were agreed on with the principals, who either personally facilitated the necessary interaction with all other participants or delegated this responsibility to another official at the school.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research methodology that was used to conduct research on the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement. The chapter also explains why the qualitative method is appropriate for the study. The chapter further outlines the profile of interviewees in the study and makes observations related to the composition of the SGBs in the four schools where the case study was conducted. It is hoped these discussions justified the choice of methods used in this research.

CHAPTER 4: SGBs IN SOUTH AFRICA: CONTEXTUAL ISSUES

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the historical context of SGBs in South Africa. The chapter argues that historically in South Africa there have been moves towards decentralised school governance underpinned by different and contradictory rationales. These rationales have operated at both local and global levels. Firstly, the study locates the shift towards decentralised school governance within the official apartheid state which was later influenced in part by global neo-liberal moves against state-centered strategies.

Within the apartheid education system, decentralisation of school governance was a manifestation of moves against state-centred strategies, particularly in times of economic crisis as well as a cost recovery mechanism to shift financial responsibility to parents in both black and white schools whilst at the same time preserving historical privilege. The second dimension locates decentralised school governance within mass-based struggles against apartheid education.

In this movement, decentralised school governance was introduced in opposition to state school governing structures which were viewed as illegitimate and designed to perpetuate educational inequalities. The aims of alternative decentralised school governing structures was to entrench democracy at the school level through the participation of various stakeholders in the governance of the school and to improve the quality of education by changing the conditions under which teaching and learning takes place.

The chapter then discusses the post-apartheid reforms of school governing structures. It is shown that the new model of SGBs comprises elements from both the apartheid tradition (i.e. shifting financial responsibility to parents to complement state resources in the provision of education) and people's education traditions (i.e. participatory democracy and improving learning conditions at the school). Post-apartheid SGBs are thus framed within contradictory ideological discourses which place SGBs in a precarious position.

4.2 Historical context of school governing structures in South Africa

There are different approaches and interpretations of the rationale for apartheid structures of governance. Chisholm (1996:63) cites three main approaches. Firstly, educational governance under apartheid was highly centralised and the process of democratisation entailed a concomitant decentralisation of educational control. The second approach is that South African education has historically been a mixture of both centralised and decentralised tendencies. The third approach identifies decentralised models of governance with the entrenchment of inequality.

In elucidating the rationale for a highly-centralised system of educational governance, Fleisch (1998:57) cites Collin and Christie's interpretation that the shift of bureaucratic control from provinces to national government under apartheid was part of a coherent strategy to ensure that the school system met the human resource needs of mining and industrial capital. Hence, central control was to be a springboard for educational policies to contribute towards the production of black labour in a stable form. Centralised governance was thus a mechanism to ensure that schools produced the requisite workers to sustain the economy.

A highly centralised and authoritarian system of governance was the cornerstone of apartheid education and its provision of unequal education. In spite of serving the interests of apartheid and providing suitable labour, a highly-centralised system of governance was seen as hostile to democracy and the free play of market forces (Chisholm, 1996:63). Although Chisholm (1996) does not indicate who takes such a view, this study contends that this view is consistent with the neo-liberal conception that links democracy with decentralisation of service provision to market forces.

The shift towards decentralised forms of school governance was influenced by, amongst other things, the global trend to decentralise school governance as a cost-sharing mechanism. For instance, the involvement of parents in education in Britain was a political strategy of the New Right during the 1960s and 1970s to shift financial responsibility to parents. Britain had economic problems and schools were blamed for not producing pupils with the necessary skills and qualifications to drive the economy. Education thus became both a scapegoat and a remedy for economic problems (Beresford, 1992:46-52).

The shift towards decentralisation was also premised on attempts to discredit state-centred strategies in favour of market forces rather than on a genuine concern with democracy. There have been international moves against state-centred strategies, characterised by the tendency of the state to relinquish the task of resource allocation and economic regulation to market forces in times of economic crisis. The political flipside of this tendency is general state decentralisation of powers and functions. Decentralisation to other levels of government needs to be seen in the context of decentralisation to intermediary organisations and to markets (Helmsing, 1995:19).

In South Africa as well, within the apartheid education system, decentralisation of school governance was a manifestation of moves against state-centred strategies, particularly in times of economic crisis. Fleisch (1998:60) notes that school boards and committees were established as a response to the feelings of insecurity generated by global fears of new conflicts and economic crises and that some attributes of the British and American models of school governance may have had an influence on the nature of School Boards and Committees created by the National Party government for urban African people.

Apart from being a form of legitimating apartheid education policies, the establishment of school boards and committees in black schools was also a strategy to shift financial responsibility to parents in times of economic crisis. The type of local body that developed under Bantu Education, the school committees and school boards, functioned as a means by which the new government could shift the financial burden directly onto black communities (Fleisch, 1998:58). Mkhwanazi (1992:5) affirms that the Department of Education and Training (DET) annual reports of 1967, 1968 and 1976 indicate the state's satisfaction with the school committees' good work of collecting funds.

The primary aim of establishing school committees in Black townships during the apartheid era was to share the costs of education with the state. School boards and committees in black schools were intended to carry the burden of administering and also financing segregated and unequal schools for black children, providing "an illusion of self-government" (Enslin, 1998:227). The establishment of local school

governance was essentially about organisationally and ideologically reincorporating Black communities into the education system (Fleisch, 1998: 58).

Black parents were expected to participate in school governing structures, albeit illegitimate, that were designed to provide inferior education to their children. As a result, Bantu Education came to be seen as a form of coercing students and their parents to co-operate in their own political and educational oppression (Khoapa and Mzamane, 1998:49).

In white schools as well, parents were able to exercise some influence on their children's schools through parent-teacher association and governing bodies. The role of these structures was predominantly to raise funds by holding fetes, fun runs and so on (Enslin, 1998:227). The Education Renewal Strategy (ERS) of 1992 sustains this thinking where individual schools that secure greater institutional control have to bear more financial costs for educational provision (Sayed, 1997:26).

There were a number of reasons for this shift. Firstly, the state was increasingly unable to provide the same level of financial support to white schools as before, due to both the slow economic growth of the 1980s and early 1990s, and to the changing political climate that obliged the government to move to greater equality in spending on black and white education. Secondly, the change to the Model C system was an attempt to ensure that white communities could continue to control their schools rather than allowing them to fall into the hands of a democratically-elected government which was foreseen in the near future (Karlsson, McPherson and Pampallis, 1997:7).

This shift coheres with international moves to decentralise governance to the school level in times of economic crises. Decentralisation was a response to the apartheid dynamic – an attempt to preserve white privilege without compromising the quality of education. The logic for decentralisation of school governance in both black and white schools under apartheid was ideologically and economically consistent, and primarily instituted to provide separate and unequal education while shifting financial responsibility to the school level (i.e. parents) in both instances.

As part of the general orientation of neo-liberalism, decentralisation provides a political environment within which state expenditure can be cut. Decentralisation has to be understood as a political process and consequently as a site of political struggle (Mkhwanazi, 1992). Thus, the calls for democracy were easily merged with and appropriated by the neo-liberal offensive. This created conditions for manufactured consent to neo-liberal dominance rather than conflict.

Decentralisation of government power and administrative functions is not the essence of democracy. In spite of moves to decentralise governance through the inclusion of parents who were appointed and not elected to school boards and committees in black schools, these structures remained illegitimate and undemocratic. As a result, there was a general outcry in the townships that members of school committees must resign *en masse* and be replaced by more progressive and democratic movements (Mkhize, 1989). This period marked the emergence of the people's education movement.

4.3 Alternative governing structures - the 'people's education' discourse

In response to the education crisis in black townships in the 1980s, mass-based organs of people's power were established as alternatives to the discredited apartheid school governing structures. The political vanguard discourse – the people's education discourse – emerged as an alternative to apartheid structures of governance. People's education developed out of an historical moment, in response to the acute crisis in education which was the product of a legacy of apartheid education and a history of resistance to apartheid education (Soobrayan, 1990:31).

Schools became sites of struggle against apartheid education, and school governing structures were identified, together with other factors, as contributing to the provision of such inferior education. In Soweto, for instance, the Soweto Parents Crisis Committee (SPCC) was formed in 1985. At the school level, Parent Teacher Student Associations (PTSAs) and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) were established as alternatives to the collapsed 'official' governing structures.

The rationale behind the establishment of PTSAs was a desire to shift the balance of power away from the highly despised school committees to parents, workers, teachers, students, and their organisations (Sithole, 1998:40). This period marked

the contestation for hegemony between 'official' and 'alternative' structures of governance. It is a period that also marks the takeover of schools by teachers, parents and learners with an explicit commitment to the improvement of quality and participatory democracy.

The establishment of these structures at the school level was part of the educational struggles that were dialectically linked to broader struggles for democracy. Education was viewed as a weapon for liberation (Soobrayan, 1990; Sisulu, 1996). The slogan, 'People's Education for People's Power' emphasised the dialectical relationship between the struggle to transform education and the wider struggle for political and economic freedom (Sithole, 1998:40). Hence the assertion that the crisis of apartheid has been reflected in, and has in part been a product of, the crisis in education (Macro-Economic Research Group, 1993:90).

Contrary to apartheid structures of governance, the democratic movement's understanding of democracy was rooted in conceptions of mass-participatory democracy with a strong commitment to equality in education (Chisholm and Fuller, 1996:9). The dominant view was that 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. From the perspective of people's education, this is true democracy (Soobrayan, 1990:33).

Consultation and participation were key features of the people's education, unlike the apartheid system where parents, learners and workers were coerced and co-opted to legitimise school-based governing structures. PTSA's generally were designed to achieve certain aims and objectives. These include furthering the educational aims of the school within the community; inculcating a democratic approach to decision-making and problem-solving; and fund-raising and monitoring the use of school funds. These aims and objectives were normally drafted to suit the specific conditions of a particular school and community (Sithole, 1998:42).

PTSA's were introduced in a context where economic and political alienation generated a particular consciousness among the people, who regarded the immense-economic resources in the country, particularly industry, as being owned by the apartheid bosses. This then led to the majority of the people placing these

resources in the line of fire in the struggle for national liberation. These resources were regarded as representations of oppression and exploitation and consequently had to be destroyed.

Educational institutions, no matter how under-resourced they were, were not exempt from such destruction. The political claim by the people of the ownership of these resources was thus sacrificed to a romantic anti-colonialism founded on a superficial (immediate) understanding. This was at variance with the political perspective guiding the national liberation movement, and led to what is commonly referred to as the “collapse in the culture of teaching and learning” in township schools (Christie, 1996). This so-called collapse was characterised by some degree of rejection of authority and discipline and the destruction of school property.

The quality of education in the apartheid era was poor, evidenced by poorly maintained buildings, a lack of libraries, laboratories, textbooks and other teaching materials, many under-qualified teachers and untrained managers, and an institutional culture damaged not only by the state of the infrastructure but by over a decade of resistance to Bantu Education (Pampallis, 2007:22). PTSA's were thus responsive to these immediate needs of the school and sought to be antithetical to official structures of governance by improving the learning conditions at the schools in order to provide quality education. PTSA's contested for the ideological terrain with state structures of governance. A strong constraint militating against the people's education discourse is that the territory where PTSA's had to operate was a sphere of state control and hegemony (Cross, 1992:157).

People's education was an attempt to create a legitimate context for education (Soobrayan, 1990:32). PTSA's were regarded as an important grassroots formation that gave concrete expression to popular participation in the formulation and implementation of education policies and ensured the institutionalisation of participatory democracy (Sithole, 1998:47). PTSA's were thus created with the aim of promoting a democratic and participatory culture at the school level.

Within the people's education discourse, the role of school-based governing structures was two-pronged. Firstly, these structures were important in creating conducive conditions for effective teaching and learning and thus promoting school

improvement by responding to school-based challenges. Secondly, PTSAs were important for their role in opening up access to quality education for the historically disadvantaged and thus responding to broader socio-economic and political conditions rather than narrowly focusing on school-based outcomes.

During this time, a distinction was made between democratic PTSAs, which are linked to broader struggles for democracy and which have the trust and confidence of the community, and conservative PTSAs that define their agenda in immediate terms (fund-raising) and are not linked to the broader education struggles (Dlamini and Nzimande, 1993:50). The distinction between a narrow and a broad analysis of the role of democratic SGBs in promoting school improvement is important.

In a narrow sense, PTSAs were concerned with school-based outcomes where school governing structures have the responsibility to promote school improvement and thus assist with the attainment of the strategic purpose of the school. This view is premised on the assumption that the participation of all stakeholders in the school governing structure will create an environment that is conducive for teaching and learning and thus lead to school improvement. This could include the establishment of enabling structures, systems, and processes to deal with issues such as discipline, school development planning, infrastructure repairs and development, conflict resolution and conflict management.

Within the school effectiveness and school improvement debates, this narrow focus is criticised as ideological commitment to right-wing policies (Jansen, 1992). There is an argument for a broader analysis which links the role of SGBs to both school-based objectives and national goals such as equity, redress, and democratic citizenship, rather than only focusing on economic concerns.

In its broader sense, the role of SGBs is concerned with a national commitment to democratic citizenship where democratic SGBs are linked to the eradication of social inequalities in society. In this sense, the role of SGBs is premised on the understanding that school-based democratic structures can consolidate national democracy by promoting access to education for the historically disadvantaged, thereby creating conditions for justice, equity and equality. A democratic norm can

be inculcated at the school level where democratic principles such as the right to dignity and the tolerance of diversity are practiced.

Proponents of the broader analysis such as Jansen (1992:3) argue that democratising relations within the school should both seek and reinforce democratisation of relations in broader society, such that the boundaries between the school and society should be increasingly blurred if schools are to be socially effective and not merely effective in instructional or management domains. Dlamini and Nzimande (1993) argue for SGBs that “are linked to the *broader* struggles for democracy”, while Jansen (1992) talks about processes within the school that “seek and *reinforce* democratisation of relations in *broader* society”. This conception of the role of school governing structures transcends the boundaries of the school.

Notwithstanding these views, PTSAs had their own limitations such as lack of uniformity across the country; they tended to operate in a crisis mode and in some areas they had not been established at all. Since these were alternative structures contesting the political terrain with ‘official’ structures, they were also not legislated. As a result, there was a need for the post-apartheid government to establish legislation regulating the governance of schools and defining the role of these school-based structures.

4.4 The post apartheid reforms: SGBs

Having consolidated the fractured education system into one national and nine provincial departments in the period following the 1994 democratic elections, the post-apartheid government committed itself to transforming the education system through developing new policies and legislation aimed at achieving equitable access to education and improving the quality of education.

When the ANC won the election by majority vote in 1994, the liberation movement laid out specific steps that would ensure active participation in decision-making processes and develop a sense of ownership of schools by local communities. Consequently, the SASA (1996) makes it a requirement that all public schools in South Africa should have democratically elected SGBs.

These structures were allocated significant functions by the post-apartheid government as a means to entrench democracy as well as to improve the quality of education provided by the school. The argument advanced is that schools would best be served if decision-making happened where teaching and learning takes place. The SASA (1996) assumes that democratically elected SGBs would, among other things, contribute to school improvement and advance the democratic transformation of society.

The transformation of education in particular has been identified as a key area for the transformation of wider society. Education is now a site of transformation, not only for its own sake but also because it is crucial in the transformation of other spheres of society such as the economy and politics (Enslin and Pendlebury, 1998:261). In as much as schools were an important site of resistance to apartheid education, they are also one of the central mechanisms in the reconstruction of South Africa (Enslin, 1998: 226). Therefore, the role of school governing structures had to be redefined to enable them to fulfil this role.

Education is considered to play a vital role in the democratisation of society and, as such, education institutions should, themselves, be democratised in order to fulfil this role. The Department of Education (DoE) (1995:22) asserts that it should be the goal of education and training policy to enable a democratic, free, equal, just, and peaceful society to take root and prosper. The SASA (1996:2) reiterates that the country required a new national system for schools which would redress past injustices in educational provision, provide education of progressively high quality for all learners and in so doing advance the democratic transformation of society.

One way in which the transformation of education has been effected is through legislation on democratisation of structures of governance. The SASA is one of the school reform policies aimed at democratising and improving school education. It does so by decentralising responsibilities and powers to schools, thereby promoting democratic governance of schools by SGBs, which are comprised of parents, learners, teachers, and non-teaching staff.

The SASA (1996:24) requires the SGB of a public school to take all reasonable measures within its means to supplement the resources supplied by the state in

order to improve the quality of education provided by the school to all learners at the school. The SGB is thus identified as one of the most important agencies expected to improve both the quality of schooling and the level of democratic participation in school management (Karlsson, McPherson and Pampallis, 1997:26). Improvement of the quality of education and democratic participation are the key responsibilities decentralised to SGBs.

4.5 School context

This section of the chapter provides the school context in which the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement occurs. As explained in chapter one, the general aim of the study is to explore the role of democratic SGBs in promoting school improvement, particularly how members of SGBs understand the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement and subsequently how they perform their functions to promote school improvement.

This section intends to provide insight into the nuanced school-based dynamics such as the legacies of the schools, teachers employed in these schools, the relationships between different stakeholders at the school and to the state as well as the thinking about issues affecting school improvement. The section starts with a discussion of the profile of the schools by focusing on the following themes: the historical background of the four schools, the schools' physical conditions, their facilities and the learning environment. The profile of the four high schools where research was conducted is presented below.

4.5.1 The profile of the four high schools in Pimville/Klipspruit

The four schools where case studies were conducted used to belong to the former Department of Education and Training (DET) and as such were governed in terms of the regulations of that department. In the past, all these schools, with the exception of School A, had established either the school committees or school boards which were unilaterally imposed on the schools by the then DET.

4.5.2 A brief description of School A

School A was established in 1991 and is located in Zone 1, Pimville. At the time of this research, the school had an enrollment of 1 485 learners and employed 45 teachers. There are 39 classrooms in the school; one library which is not well-resourced; and six laboratories which are all used as classrooms. The water taps in all the laboratories have been vandalised. There is also a computer laboratory with 45 computers (some are not functioning). The school has been waiting for almost three years for the Gauteng Online project to provide internet connection.

Regarding extra-mural facilities, the school has a make-shift soccer field, volleyball, and netball courts. There are two tuck-shops and the school is well fenced, with the gates locked during school hours. The school also has security cameras monitoring the administration block and the computer laboratory. School A was not governed by the then DET school committees and school boards because it was established in 1991, at the time during which most apartheid governing structures collapsed. The PTSA was the first school governing structure prior to legislation of SGBs.

4.5.3 A brief description of School B

School B was established in 1948 and is oldest of the four schools. The school is located in Zone 7, Pimville, and had 940 learners enrolled and 30 teachers employed at the time of research. There is one library, three laboratories, a woodwork classroom and a graphic room. All the laboratories are dysfunctional.

The school has neither sporting facilities nor a tuckshop. The school has a fence although there are noticeable holes in it. The gates are locked during school hours. Some windows and doors are broken. The school was previously governed by the apartheid school committee as well as the alternative governing structure in the form of a PTSA.

4.5.4 A brief description of School C

School C is located in Zone 4, Pimville and was established in 1981. School C had an enrollment of about 1 400 learners and 44 teachers employed. There are 30 classrooms, one library, and two laboratories (one for science and the other for

biology). The laboratories are not fully functional due to, amongst other things, lack of gas. The computer laboratory was still under construction at the time of research. Other learning facilities at the school include a workshop, arts centre, and woodwork centre.

There is a soccer ground, basketball and volleyball courts, although these are in poor condition. The school is fenced and gates are closed during school hours. The school does not have security cameras or a tuck-shop. Most of the windows and doors are intact, although there are a few broken windows.

4.5.5 A brief description of School D

School D is located in Klipspruit and was established in 1978. This school had 1 495 learners and employed 45 teachers. There are 34 classrooms, one library and seven laboratories (one technology laboratory, four physical science and life sciences laboratories, one geography laboratory, and one computer laboratory). The school also has a music block, a consumer studies centre, a school hall, a printing room, and two sick bays.

The school is well fenced and the gates are closed during school hours. Windows and doors are intact although there a few broken windows were observed. There are, however, no security cameras at the school or canteen. There are large areas of unkempt and unused grounds, some of which are used by community members for gardening. Similar to the two schools above, School D was previously governed by both a school committee and a PTSA.

4.6 Comparison of the four schools

The comparative table of the four High Schools in Pimville/Klipspruit considers several variables. A comparison of the physical conditions in the four schools suggests that to a large extent, these are similar. Based on the physical conditions of the buildings and infrastructure alone, it could be concluded that the school environments of all the schools are conducive to proper teaching and learning. Although the four schools are not well resourced, they all have the basic infrastructure and resources required for learning.

TABLE 5
Comparative table of the physical conditions in the four high schools in Pimville/Klipspruit (Soweto) based on observation

PHYSICAL CONDITION OBSERVED	School A		School B		School C		School D	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Is the school fenced?	x		x		x		x	
Are the gates locked during school hours?	x		x		x		x	
Are the windows and doors intact?		x		x	x		x	
Are there security cameras in the school?	x			x		x		x
Are there computers for administration at the school?	x		x		x		x	
Are there computers for learners at the school?	x		x			x	x	
Is the school environment hospitable?	x		x		x		x	
The school has a library?	x		x		x		x	
The school has a canteen?	x			x		x		x
The school has laboratories?	x		x		x		x	
Laboratories are functional?		x		x		x		x
The school has sporting facilities?	x			x	x		x	

Apart from the general staff rooms, teachers have offices, which may be shared. The average educator-to-learner ratio across schools is 1:34 while the average learner-to-classroom ratio is 1:42. Based on the comparative table, School D is the

best-resourced school in terms of learning facilities and school infrastructure. All the schools are properly fenced and the gates are locked during school hours. However, it was observed that in all the schools there is a thoroughfare used by some learners (notably latecomers) as they enter or exit from the school behind some blocks of classrooms.

It was also observed that three out of the four schools do not have tuck-shops within school premises. This means that both teachers and learners use nearby shops to buy their lunch. Learners and teachers therefore have to leave the school premises during lunch. Whether all learners return to school after lunch remains uncertain. However, in all the schools late return from lunch is widespread.

Another major common factor within the four schools is that their libraries and some laboratories/workshops/centres are not functional. This was as a result of lack of books in the libraries, lack of equipment in the laboratories, shortage of staff such as librarians, theft and vandalism. This impacts negatively on the learning environment because although there are facilities for practical learning experiences, they cannot be used. Most of the learning is conducted in the classrooms and learners are deprived of practical learning experiences because of dysfunctional and/or under resourced facilities.

With regard to sporting facilities, these are mostly netball and volleyball courts, and soccer grounds in only two of the schools. For other sporting activities, the schools rely on facilities in the community. There is, however, a glaring absence of sporting facilities for sporting codes such as rugby, cricket and swimming. This is despite acres of unused land within school premises. Sporting infrastructure in these schools remains grossly under-developed and is a worrying concern for the transformation of sport, particularly in terms of representation of blacks in sporting codes that are predominantly white.

4.7 Conclusion

The chapter highlights the historical context of decentralised school governing structures in South Africa. Analysis of the historical context shows that there is an inherent contradiction between the historical conception of democracy rooted in the

people's education discourse and the dominant neo-liberal conception of democracy rooted in market economies. The framing of the role of democratic SGBs in promoting school improvement within one conception will always result in an irresolvable tension.

The essence of the contradiction lies mostly in the very conception and role of school governing structures. Whereas the neo-liberal conception defines this role in relation to the free play of market forces, the people's education conception defines democracy in relation to inequalities produced by unequal social relations (often the result of these very market forces).

The contradiction is further sharpened by the fact that the former conception and its implementation leads to the perpetuation of what the latter conception seeks to eradicate. This results in a zero-sum struggle between the free play of market economies and the imperative of education contributing towards the eradication of inequalities in society as conceived within the people's education discourse. Ultimately, the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement remains precarious since it is framed within contradictory ideological discourses.

The school context indicates that in all four schools, there are SGBs which have been democratically elected. With regard to the physical infrastructure, the schools have more or less similar conditions. Key learning facilities such as libraries and laboratories are noticeably under-resourced and/or dysfunctional. Sports facilities are largely not available, makeshift and/or in a derelict state.

CHAPTER 5: THE POLICY CONTEXT

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to outline current education policy on democratic SGBs. This chapter discusses the policy background of SGBs and school improvement. The chapter then explores how post-apartheid policy frames the role of democratic SGBs in promoting school improvement by tracking the evolution of policy leading to legislation of SGBs, the policy's conception of parental participation in SGBs and school improvement and how the role of democratic SGBs in promoting school improvement is defined in legislation.

This chapter explores some of the key features, assumptions, expectations of the policy with regard to how SGBs can promote school improvement. Specifically, the chapter explores how the SASA (1996) conceptualises the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement by focusing on the responsibility of the SGBs, the functions of SGBs as well as capacity-building programmes.

5.2 The evolution of policy on democratic SGBs

The White Paper on Education and Training (1995) is the first post-apartheid policy to devolve powers and responsibilities to provinces. It provides Provinces with the constitutional right to establish, run, regulate and finance schools (White Paper 1, 1995). The White Paper 1 (1995:67) further articulates the vision of the post apartheid government that "a new policy for school provision must be a policy for increasing access and retention of Black students, achieving equity in public funding, eliminating illegal discrimination, creating democratic governance, rehabilitating schools and raising the quality of performance".

Whereas the White Paper 1 commits government to the creation of democratic governance and raising the quality of performance, it was criticised for providing a broad vision and principles without outlining clear implementation strategies. One of the main weaknesses of the White Paper 1 is that it had almost nothing to say on implementation processes (Christie, 1997). Further policy was thus required to provide specific steps through which the vision and principles enshrined in the White Paper 1 could be realised.

Subsequently, the Committee to Review the Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools (also known as the Hunter's Committee) was established. The brief of this committee included recommending a "proposed national framework of school organisation and ownership, and norms and standards on school governance and funding which in the view of the committee are likely to command the widest possible support, accord with the Constitution, improve the quality and effectiveness of schools and be financially sustainable from public funds" (DoE, 1995:4).

This brief makes an explicit link between school governance and the improvement of quality and effectiveness of schools from public funds. As will be shown later in this chapter, the notion of 'financial sustainability from public funds' is abandoned in favour of shared responsibility for improvement of quality of education between the 'private' (i.e. parents and donors) and the public. This is the economic perspective that links SGBs to the mobilisation of additional resources.

However, policy also adopts an education perspective which links SGBs to promotion of school improvement. In this perspective, the state is trying to forge a partnership with communities in the provision and improvement of schooling through establishment of SGBs (Karlsson, McPherson and Pampallis, 1997:26). The political rationale for the establishment of SGBs views educational decentralisation as an intervention of and for democracy (Carrim, 2001:98).

Policy on SGBs exhibits these three perspectives which are sometimes contradictory. Although the focus of this study is on the educational rationale (i.e. school improvement), this rationale is linked to the political rationale (i.e. how democratic participation in SGBs leads to school improvement). The next section discusses in detail how current policy conceptualises the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement.

5.3 Parental involvement in SGBs and school improvement

Similar to the White Paper 1, the Hunter's Committee supported stakeholder representation in the SGBs where parents of learners should have the most stake and this should be reflected in the composition of the SGBs. The White Paper 2

(1996:12) amplifies the view of the Hunter's Committee report that "the parent body has a vested interest in the welfare of the school, and provincial departments should be able to count on parents and guardians to make every effort to improve the school's effectiveness as a place of learning and development for their children".

Whilst this view makes an explicit link between the numerical majority of parents in the SGBs and improvement of the school's effectiveness, it however doesn't state exactly how will the numeric majority of parents lead to school improvement and this renders this connection problematic. This proposal also militates against equal teacher and student representation, two key constituencies in schools that have been instrumental in the fight for democratic governance structures. Moreover, a parental majority on SGBs may have the potential of hindering equal participatory democracy (Sayed and Carrim, 1997:93).

Subsequent to the White Paper 2, the SASA (1996) was promulgated in November 1996. The SASA (1996) also concurs with the notion of parents having an important role in the SGB. The SASA (1996:1) defines the parent as "the parent or guardian of a learner; the person legally entitled to custody of a learner; or the person who undertakes to fulfil obligations of a parent or guardian or person legally entitled to custody of a learner towards the learner's education at school".

Three distinguishing features are central to this legalistic definition, namely, 'biological parenthood', 'legal custodianship' and 'fulfilment of obligations of a parent'. This definition places importance on the legal obligation of individuals who can be held accountable for the learner's education, including being taken to court for non- payment of school fees, rather than on the skills and expertise that parents can bring to the SGBs in order to promote school improvement.

Implied in the link between the numeric majority of parents in the SGBs and improvement of school's effectiveness is the parent's legal obligation to pay fees. Such fees will then contribute towards school improvement. This section highlights the implications of the connection between 'resources' and improvement of quality of education. The state can then count on 'legal persons' in the form of biological or legal parents and/or custodians unlike some 'elusive' community representatives who can't be held to account for payment of school fees.

This construct of parent deviates from the social construct of a parent held within the people's education discourse, where a parent was not necessarily a legal guardian but also a community representative (Mkhwanazi, 1992:2). Community representatives meant those with the 'expertise' to contribute instrumentally to schools (Sayed and Carrim, 1997:93). Such parents may be either community-elected or seconded by community organisations such as civics or existing management councils (Sithole, 1998:41). The SASA also deviates from the construct of the White Paper 2 by excluding civil society in the governance of schools.

This conception is also contrary to the notion of community participation as being inclusive of persons who are able to reflect the views, values and sentiments of the community. In line with the privatisation or marketisation of schooling, the SASA abandons the model of citizenship on which this tradition of 'parent as a citizen' is based, and instead makes parents primary clients because of their responsibility to pay fees and their majority position on the SGB (Harber, 2001:18).

In this regard, parental involvement is viewed as consumer representation and satisfaction. In market-like school environments, with stress on parental choice and competition between schools, the thinking is that parental involvement makes schools more responsive to the 'consumers' and therefore more effective (Woods, 1993:202). The SASA's (1996) construct of a parent tends to reinforce a bourgeois notion of parental involvement on who is eligible to participate or not in the SGB. When only parents of registered students can participate, civic organisations are excluded and only the views of parents of registered learners are considered.

This approach signals an impoverishment of the kind of community involvement that emphasises an individualistic approach where only individuals who donate to the school or purchase the soccer kit, for example, are allowed to participate in the SGB. The operation of the market in education promotes the consumer citizen who is a self-interested, utility-maximising, rational individual (Harber, 2001:18). Where the participation of parents in the SGB is linked to their responsibility to pay school fees, skills that reside with parents and community members whose learners are not enrolled at these schools are lost to the school. Thus, the logic of parental participation in the SGBs as a source of income reinforces the dominance of the economic rationale in the SASA's conception and constitution of SGBs.

5.4 Responsibilities of SGBs and school improvement

Apart from stakeholder participation in the SGBs, the SASA also allocates certain responsibilities to SGBs. It is thought that through the exercise of these responsibilities SGBs would be in a position to promote school improvement. The White Paper 2 (1996) and the Schools Bill (1996) outline the 'powers, responsibilities and duties' of all the SGBs in public schools. The SASA relocates these 'powers, responsibilities and duties' as 'functions and additional functions'.

The effect of the relocation is that the SGB is allocated only one responsibility. This responsibility is "to take all reasonable measures within its means to supplement the resources supplied by the state in order to improve the quality of education provided by the school to all learners at the school" (SASA, 1996:24). This single responsibility of the SGB fundamentally shifts from the notion of 'improvement of quality and effectiveness of schools that is financially sustainable from public funds'.

This could be an indication of the state's acknowledgement that it cannot 'improve the quality and effectiveness of schools from public funds'. Nonetheless, this responsibility reinforces the claim that current policy views the primary role of SGBs as fund-raising and collection of school fees. Hence the view that democratically elected school governing structures, set up explicitly with the aim of quality improvement, have increasingly been placed in a fund-raising role and this seems to dilute the commitment to principles such as democracy and equality made in the White Paper 1 (Motala and Mungadi, 1999).

Apart from setting schools up in a competition for resources, this responsibility creates a superfluous connection between supplementary resources from SGBs and school improvement. The reality is that the social class effects of education in South Africa are such that a small number of schools provide a relatively good quality of education, while schools in the urban townships, in which poorer communities reside, remain under-resourced, poorly managed and produce-poor quality outcomes (Motala and Pampallis, 2001:375). Reliance on supplementary resources from SGBs to improve the quality of education has potential to reproduce historical patterns of inequality since these school based structures are constrained by the historical social class conditions.

Parents from a middle-class background with established networks and access to the corporate world are likely to raise more funds than their working-class counterparts. Where school communities are responsible for raising a major portion of their budgets, or where (as in South Africa) they are allowed to raise their own funds to supplement what they consider inadequate state funding, this could lead to increasing inequity since poorer communities are less able to provide for themselves than relatively middle-class ones (Karlsson, McPherson and Pampallis, 1997:5).

This further attests to the claim that policy development processes in education have strengthened the forces of the market and therefore favour those with wealth (Karlsson, McPherson and Pampallis, 1997:25). The macro-political policy of reconciliation and the macro-economic policy of Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR), are isolated as having an underlying negative influence on education policies. The former policy has resulted in a consensus approach to solving problems and developing policy.

This has enabled privileged social groupings to influence policy in their own favour; they have worked to strengthen markets, where political representation and control of political institutions count for less than wealth. The latter policy which appears to privilege deficit reduction above all other aims has resulted in a situation where the affluent subsidise their children's education with private resources, while the poor rely on a state which has insufficient resources to fund an acceptable level of educational provision and to address the historical gap in resource provision resulting from years of apartheid education.

While on the surface consensus is noble, it has underlying negative consequences. Soucek (1999) cautions that consensus has been coupled with the strategic manipulative action which entails the couching of policies in progressive terms in order to ensure consensus but also to achieve a hidden – often contradictory – outcome. He further points out that, “progressive concepts like democracy, freedom, negotiation, fairness and accountability have seductive images which sell well and no one would like to oppose them yet they have slippery meaning; if stripped naked their paleolithic conservatism and social consequences are revealed” (Soucek, 1999: 85).

Similarly in South Africa, with a history of illegitimate structures of governance, unequal provision of education, institutionalised racism, and the culture of imposition and authoritarian rule, concepts like democratic governance, participation and consultation appear to be logical for entrenchment of a democratic dispensation. However, these progressive concepts have come to mean different things to different people with different and sometimes unintended social consequences that reinforce historical patterns of inequality in the provision of education.

Typically then, this single responsibility allocated to SGBs projects their role as primarily to raise funds in order to improve the quality of education provided by the schools. School improvement in this context is partly a product of supplementary resources generated by SGBs. Again, in terms of its articulation of the responsibility of SGBs, the SASA conception is that the role of SGBs is primarily predicated on the economic rationale. The success of SGBs to promote school improvement is dependent on how they effectively collect schools fees or raise funds for the school.

5.5 Functions of the SGBs and school improvement

This section focuses on the functions that must be undertaken by the SGBs to fulfil their responsibility. The SASA (1996) confers on the school governing body sixteen diverse functions which provide the policy framework for SGBs to promote school improvement. For the purpose of this study these functions are grouped into educational, strategic, administrative, human resources and financial functions.

5.5.1 Educational functions

Educational functions are directly linked to the teaching and learning process. The SGB is expected to support the principal, teachers, and learners, and to promote the best interests of the school. The SASA (1996:10) requires SGBs to strive to ensure the school's development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school, support the principal, teachers, and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions and to encourage parents, learners, teachers, and other staff at the school to render voluntary services to the school.

In this role, the SGBs are required to support the principal and staff members in doing their professional work. However, SGBs do not have a clearly spelled out function in

so far as supporting learners to do their academic work. The SGB's support function is skewed towards the principal, educators and staff. However, the scope of the SGB's expands to include learners in relation to the SGB's function of encouraging various stakeholders at the school to provide voluntary services to the school.

5.5.2 Strategic and policy functions

Strategic functions are those functions that require the SGB to provide strategic direction for the school. This entails developing strategic and policy frameworks. The SASA (1996:10) specifically tasks the SGBs with the function to define the vision of the school, develop the constitution, mission statement, and code of conduct for learners, develop school policies (language and religious policies), and determining school times.

These policy documents are intended to provide the overall framework within which the school operates. It is assumed that because the SGB is representative, all stakeholders would participate in the development of school policies and as such cooperate in the implementation. In this sense, apart from developing the school policies, the SGBs are tasked with creating a participatory environment at the school level which promotes conditions for school improvement to occur.

5.5.3 Property maintenance functions

Property maintenance functions are those functions where the SGB is allocated the decision-making and administrative role over the development and maintenance of school property. These functions include: administering and controlling the school's property, buildings, and grounds occupied by the school, and deciding when others may use this property (SASA, 1996:10).

Property maintenance refers to minor repairs and property development. Major maintenance work is excluded from these functions but forms part of additional functions. In this function, SGBs are expected to do repairs to windows, doors, taps and any other repairs. This function also has a security dimension in that SGBs must ensure that the school's property is well secured. By properly maintaining the school's property, the school's physical conditions are kept in a good state for learning purposes.

This function also makes provision for SGBs to rent out school buildings and property and possibly generate some income.

5.5.4 Human resources functions

The SASA (1996) has decentralised, amongst others things, the function to recommend to the Head of Department the appointment of teachers at the school to the SGB subject to the Employment of Teachers Act (1998) and the Labour Relations Act (1995). The Employment of Educators Act (1998:6) concurs that any appointment, promotion or transfer to any post on the educator establishment of a public school or a further education and training institution may only be made on the recommendation of the SGB of the public school or the council of the further education and training (FET) institution.

It is envisaged that through the exercise of this function, the SGBs would be in a position to recommend the best candidates for appointment at the school. Implied in this function is the fact that the best teachers would provide quality teaching and thus contribute to school improvement. The role of SGBs in promoting school improvement is linked to participation in the selection of one of the key participants in the classroom level, where teaching and learning occurs.

5.5.5 Other functions

In addition to the above functions, SGBs are also allocated 'other' functions which are not clearly specified. These may include functions that are particular only to certain schools and may not be generalised. In articulating these functions, the SASA (1996) requires the SGBS to discharge all other functions imposed upon the governing body by or under the SASA, discharge other functions consistent with the SASA as determined by the Minister by notice in the Government Gazette or by the Member of the Executive Council by notice in the Provincial Gazette.

5.5.6 Additional functions of the SGB

Over and above the functions allocated to all SGBs, the SGB can apply for additional functions, which are commonly referred to as Section 21 functions. The SASA (1996:10) further allocates the following additional functions to the school governing

body: to maintain and improve the school's property, and buildings and grounds occupied by the school, including school hostels, if applicable, to determine the extra-mural curriculum of the school and the choice of subject options in terms of provincial curriculum policy, to purchase textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school, to pay for services to the school, and other functions consistent with the SASA and any applicable provincial law. These functions have additional financial responsibility in the sense that the school can pay for some of the services directly from its budget.

5.6 Capacity-building training programmes and school improvement

The tendency to place SGBs in a fundraising role can be seen in the way the SASA (1996) frames the rationale for capacity-building training programmes. The SASA (1996:14) mentions that the capacity-building programme must be established to “provide introductory training for newly elected governing bodies to enable them to perform their functions; and provide continuing training to governing bodies to promote the effective performance of their functions or enable them to assume additional functions” (SASA, 1996:14).

The introduction of capacity-building training programmes has been adopted as a strategy to ensure that members of SGBs are able to perform their functions and also provide a basis on which the SGBs can be allocated additional functions. In this regard, capacity-building is a pre-requisite for the allocation of additional functions and a process aimed at empowering SGBs.

In SASA's conception, SGBs are not empowered for effective participation or for promoting school improvement but for assuming additional functions with more financial responsibilities. Pampallis (2000:36) observes that the national Department of Education is pushing schools to take Section 21 powers allowed in the SASA, since this is an indicator of effective governance. For Harber (2001:17) this can be interpreted either as a pragmatic recognition that the state does not have sufficient resources to provide an acceptable level of quality education for all, or as further evidence of acceptance of the global influences of the World Bank agenda of shifting the balance of funding for education from the public to the private sphere.

Cost-recovery and cost-sharing strategies owe more to contemporary neo-liberal policies in both developed and developing worlds aimed at the shifting of the relationship between public and private provision, state and markets. The principles have not been challenged by the new state in South Africa; indeed, they characterise its policy approach (Chisholm, 1996:54). Whereas the partnership between the public and the private is important, in some cases it represents reduction of the role of the state in dealing with the historical legacy of provision of unequal education. This could be problematic in South Africa, where intervention by the state is essential to deal with great developmental needs, high unemployment, poverty, and illiteracy (Karlsson, McPherson and Pampallis, 1997:25).

This shift towards the economic rationale tends to overlook and even contradict both the political and the educational rationales underpinning the establishment of SGBs. Schmitz (1995:58) notes that in the debates surrounding popular participation, there is mild ideological conflict over whether popular participation is good in itself and represents the goal of empowerment of the poor, and ultimately, the goal of democracy. The SASA negates the issue of how capacity-building training can promote the culture of democratic participation at the school level.

This study is critical of the rationale for such capacity-building training and how it is intended to empower members of SGBs and for what purposes. The emphasis on the shift in the role of SGBs away from ensuring active participation as an integral part of participatory democracy, towards the assumption of additional functions with more financial responsibility for the SGBs, is a further demonstration of the SASA's biasness towards the economic rationale.

5.7 Conclusion

The SASA's articulation of the responsibility and functions of SGBs is tilted towards the economical purposes rather than the educational and political purposes. Although the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement is contained in the responsibility and functions of SGBs outlined in the SASA, educational role is secondary to and dependent on the primary role of raising additional resources.

The role of SGBs in promoting school improvement is not clearly articulated in the SASA. Consequently, capacity building programmes for SGBs are aimed at empowering SGBs to assume additional functions with more financial responsibility rather than on empowering SGBs to promote school improvement.

CHAPTER 6: IMPLEMENTING SGBs: CONTEXT, CHANGE AND PERCEPTIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents experiences of members of SGBs regarding the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement in four high schools in Pimville and Klipspruit. The aim of this chapter is to explore how SGBs promote school improvement in reality. The chapter argues that the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement is mediated by various factors which render the role of the SGBs precarious. These factors include the historical legacy of under-provision of resources, school-based challenges such as late-coming, absenteeism and non-execution of assigned tasks, and socio-economic challenges such as poverty and unemployment.

The chapter analyses data based on the information gathered from interviews conducted with SGB members, observations of the school environment, and a review of secondary literature. This study used an approach to school improvement which examined processes and outcomes associated with interventions designed to improve schools (Teddlie and Stringfield, 2007:132).

The chapter outlines the participants' understanding of how SGBs promote school improvement in practice, key challenges facing schools and interventions undertaken by SGBs to promote school improvement. These issues are discussed with reference to the participants' perceptions, degree of awareness and understanding and the survey questionnaire and how this understanding mediates their actual practice.

The chapter then presents a critical analysis of school improvement theory and practice with reference to the conception and practice of school improvement, the state and SGBs in practice as well as social relationships and the role of SGBs. Based on these experiences, the chapter concludes that an analysis of the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement should appreciate the participant's conceptions, the historical and institutional context as well as the dynamics of school change processes.

6.2 The role of SGBs in promoting school improvement

This section presents an understanding of the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement based on the perceptions of the various SGB members representing different stakeholders who were interviewed. The question on how the SGBs promote school improvement seeks to clarify what exactly schools do when they engage in a school improvement initiative (Hopkins *et al*, 1994). This chapter intends to explore how SGB members understand the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement and how such an understanding mediates actual practice. Most respondents mentioned the execution of the following functions as a way in which their SGBs promote school improvement.

6.2.1 Management of the school budget and provision of resources

Management of the schools' budget emerged as the most important role of the SGBs in promoting school improvement. Interviewees argued that it is essential for the SGB to plan and budget in line with the needs of the school. The objectives of the schools cannot be achieved if the SGBs are not aware of the schools' needs. SGBs in all the schools have established committees that focus on the budget required to meet the needs of that school.

The needs that the SGBs are required to budget for include learner-teaching support materials, maintenance of school buildings, textbooks and educational excursions. SGBs are also responsible for payment of services such as water, electricity, phones and the maintenance of buildings. The principal at School C complained that the SGBs are incapable of managing school funds within the context of complex legislation such as the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) because of poor levels of literacy. Some teachers agreed that in most instances the school principals are effectively managing the school's funds on behalf of the SGB.

Most of the teachers agreed that ultimately school principals are effectively managing the school's funds on behalf of the SGB. Despite this, in all the schools there were no reported incidents of mismanagement of funds by the SGBs. This could be an indication that SGBs are effective in managing school funds.

SGBs were thought to be promoting school improvement by mobilising financial and other resources for the schools. SGBs are perceived to be key providers of resources to the schools. The main mechanism used by SGBs to provide additional funding for these schools is to fundraise on behalf of the schools. Fundraising initiatives include preparing and submitting applications for sponsorship, interacting with private companies and local business to adopt the schools and/or hosting sports and cultural events.

The schools' budgets are mainly spent on learning and teaching material. SGBs are thus required to raise funds for other needs of the school. For instance, at School A "one of the obstacles to holding effective meetings with parents is that there is no school hall and the SGB has been trying to raise funds and is still far from reaching the target" (Interview F). The school has tried to identify a sponsor to assist with building the school hall for four years without any success.

The SGB chairperson at School B reported that "the school applied for sponsorship for equipment and conducted fund-raising to buy more textbooks as school fees were not adequate to buy all the required learning material" (Interviews I and J). Their applications were, however not successful. At School C, the SGB chairperson mentioned that "the possibility of a response to fundraising applications is one out of ten" (Interview Q). SGBs also complained about lengthy procedures and meetings that must be attended before actual support is obtained from private companies. Despite engaging in numerous fundraising initiatives, SGBs reported minimal success in their efforts.

Members of SGBs however acknowledged that they also have challenges with writing good funding proposals, marketing the school to potential funders and establishing sustainable relationships with the private sector. SGBs identified lack of grounded partnerships with business outside the township as a key challenge. One of the teachers at School D indicated that "the school used to have a relationship with Ernst and Young but this relationship collapsed due to lack of support from management" (Interview U). The only main partnership in these schools is facilitated by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) and the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) to undertake revision camps for Grade 12 learners towards the end of the academic year.

6.2.2 Maintenance and improvement of infrastructure

Closely linked to management of the school budget, SGBs are perceived to be promoting school improvement by maintaining school infrastructure. Infrastructure maintenance and improvement functions performed by the SGBs include repairing broken windows, doors, locks, and fences and painting the school. The common approach used by SGBs is to establish maintenance sub-committees to identify areas that need to be repaired or improved. They then obtain quotations and report to SGBs who approve maintenance work that needs to be done. Some urgent repairs are often done without the approval of SGBs.

Apart from the legacy of the destruction of school property in the struggle against apartheid education, the SGBs function to maintain and improve school infrastructure is also made urgent by the perception of schools as easy targets for criminal activities. Recent improvements in infrastructure, the installation of computer laboratories and other facilities make schools attractive to criminals. This situation is aggravated when learners and officials at the schools collude with criminals to steal from and vandalise schools.

Some of the maintenance functions that SGBs have undertaken include installation of security cameras and burglar bars, converting an administration room into a sick-bay, repairing toilets and painting school buildings. Large-scale repairs are not done by the SGBs but by the Department of Education. Theft and burglaries are the main recurring problems which contribute to broken facilities. These remarks by the principal of School A underscore the plight of township schools:

Our society is going through a tough period. The prevalence of the 'I don't care attitude' and anarchy are characteristic of a decay in moral values. Education is fighting for recognition since crime is attractive to our children. Crime impacts on schools, since thugs have become role models and crime is seen as a way of living for the poor. It becomes worse when parents appear not very worried about these activities which are seen as a way to help families to survive. This happens mostly in disadvantaged families (Interview A).

Common items targeted for theft include computers, typewriters and electronic equipment. The most sought-after items are metal and brass taps including those in laboratories and toilets. Ablution facilities such as toilet flushers and flushing systems are also stolen and it is alleged that they are sold to scrap yards. During the field visit at School C, ablution facilities for learners' toilets were being replaced with plastic installations mounted to the walls to deter theft. The plumbers repairing the toilets commented that apart from being sold to scrap yards, ablution equipment stolen from schools is used to repair residential toilets.

SGBs implement strong security measures to ensure that schools are in a good, safe and secure condition for effective teaching and learning to occur. SGBs also play an important role in improving the schools' appearance by painting buildings, repairing broken windows, doors and locks, and repairing fences in order to make the schools attractive and modern to learners. By ensuring that school property is well maintained and school facilities are improved.

6.2.3 Recommendations on the appointment of teachers

Another way in which SGBs are thought to promote school improvement is through participation in the selection process for appointment of teachers. However, most teachers interviewed complained that some SGB members are unduly influenced to recommend the appointment of certain applicants perceived to be favoured by those who wield some degree of power or influence. "Some parents are even approached at their homes in the attempt to influence the decisions made regarding which candidate should be appointed" (Interview L).

Faced with this pressure, some SGB members completely withdraw their participation in the SGB. Sayed (2002:44) suggests that SASA has propelled the SGBs into becoming sites of conflict and contestation as conflict is displaced from a national to an institutional level. Elmore (1993:36) observes that calling for authority and responsibility for key decisions to be 'decentralised' in an educational system is to say very little in the absence of some set of beneficiaries of decentralisation, and some indication as to how decentralisation is supposed to serve those interests.

SGBs as such are public sites of struggle and contestation. Through the exercise of this function, SGBs tend to be prone to corruption and nepotism as advances to

bribe some members are made to influence decisions in favour of certain individuals. Elmore (1993:37) notes that in some instances, the very closeness of schools to their communities means that schools became places where relatives and political cronies could be employed, rather than places where good education occurs. It is thus possible for SGBs to make recommendation for appointment of educators because of undue influence rather than on merit.

In such cases the influential (and possibly corrupt) rather than the best candidate stands to be appointed. Far from enhancing the selection of best candidates for the schools, undue influence on SGBs undermines a fair and objective selection process. This also jeopardises the chances of the SGBs to appoint the best candidates who can in turn contribute to school improvement.

The competence of SGB members to effectively perform this function was raised as another challenge. The principal of School C contends that “there is a need to review and remove the power of the SGBs to deal with short-listing and interviewing of staff” (Interview R). She insists that parents are not necessarily academics and yet – as members of SGBs – they are given the role of interviewing trained teachers. Her view is that “powers such as short-listing are exercised effectively when given to people who understand what a good teacher is, thus, the role of recruiting and appointing professionals cannot be given to people who do not understand what values they should look for in a good teacher” (Interview R).

Despite this view, other teachers felt that parents remain an important part of SGBs in that they curb corruption and nepotism that would happen in the appointment of teachers if this process was entirely left to the school principals and teachers. Instead of removing this function entirely from the SGB, they suggested guidelines on how to conduct interviews in a way that enables SGBs to recommend the best candidates for appointment.

The performance of the above three functions allocated by the SASA are identified as the main ways in which SGBs promote school improvement. SGB members also mentioned addressing the following challenges faced by the schools as yet another way in which SGBs contribute towards school improvement.

6.3 Key challenges facing schools and SGB interventions

This section discusses challenges faced by the schools and how the SGB assists in resolving these challenges. The intention is to understand, how, apart from the exercise of the functions allocated to SGBs by the SASA, do SGBs resolve challenges faced by the schools in a way that promotes school improvement.

6.3.1 Late-coming and absenteeism

All interviewees identified late-coming and absenteeism as serious problems affecting teaching and learning at the schools. Some of the learners mentioned traffic, walking long distance to school as reasons for late-coming. Another reason provided for late-coming is lack of parental supervision. It was reported that late-coming is rife amongst learners who stay with grandparents, have migrated to Soweto and do not stay with their biological parents or stay alone (often because their parents are domestic workers who stay in their places of work).

Absenteeism among learners was also reported to be on the increase in the recent past. Absenteeism is notably higher on Mondays and Fridays. Teachers complained that learners absent themselves when they have not executed their school work. Lack of parental supervision of school work is a major contributory factor. Learners who absent themselves from school and arrive late miss out on time to learn. Such learners are often ill-prepared for examinations and their results eventually negatively affect the performance of the school.

SGBs are actively involved and participate in the resolution of aspects of this problem. In all the schools, SGBs have developed codes of conduct to curb ill-discipline and invite motivational speakers to address learners. Learners who arrive late are made to pick up papers and clean the school yard. These measures are not effective because, despite their implementation, learners still arrive late. Frustrated by this situation, teachers and principals resort to corporal punishment, although it is banned as a disciplinary measure.

Absenteeism was reported as a problem even among teachers. In some cases, three to four teachers would be absent on a single day. The main reason cited for absenteeism among teachers is stress caused by the workload demands of the new curriculum. Teachers complained that it is often difficult to strike a balance between time spent on administration and time spent on teaching. The new curriculum is centered on generating reports and proper record-keeping which involves a lot of administration. High intake of learners also contributes to teachers' heavy workload. One teacher remarked that "because the school produces good results, there is high demand for access which makes us not to have free periods" (Interview C).

Absenteeism by teachers poses a problem for effective learning as schools do not have 'relief teachers' and teaching does not take place when a teacher is absent. Schools are exploring the use of apprenticeships to assist with the relief time-table. In some classes learners become disruptive and disorderly when the teacher is absent. Such learners do not use this time for learning purposes and refer to it as '*ukubamba ihlathi*' (meaning 'it's lazing around time'). Some learners use this time to smoke dagga or use other illegal substances during school hours.

SGB chairpersons and school principals identified the department of education's improved management and monitoring of educators' leave as a positive step in managing teacher attendance. The principal at School D highlighted that "in the past, the department was not as effective in monitoring educator's leave but things have changed since the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) issued circular 45/2008 which outlines roles and responsibilities for the management of leave for institution-based teachers" (Interview S).

Although this circular is important in clarifying the department's policy on leave, one of the teachers observed that "the main problem lies with the uneven application of the policy by some principals" (Interview U). This conduct has fuelled speculation that some principals are colluding with teachers who are part of their 'cliques' by not applying the rules of the leave policy. Such conduct undermines the maintenance of discipline among teachers in the schools

Absenteeism as a result of stress and non-execution of tasks shows that the new curriculum has placed a lot of pressure on teachers to do things in a new way. There

is an employee wellness programme (EWP) organised by the department to assist teachers with challenges such as stress. Most teachers however, complained that the programme is only available during school hours, the time during which they are supposed to teach. The effectiveness of the programme is minimal since most teachers do not have the time to attend the EWP. The role of SGBs in this area is limited.

6.3.2 Non-execution of assigned tasks

Non-execution of tasks assigned to learners also emerged as an area of great concern for teachers, who note that the new curriculum requires learners to do a lot of homework. Teachers identified insufficient academic support that learners receive at home as the major cause for non-execution of tasks. Teachers identified lack of parental support on curriculum matters as one of the factors impeding school improvement. One teacher argued that “many parents are not educated, yet the new curriculum demands that the child must be helped at home” (Interview G).

Another teacher highlighted that “the policy of the department is that learners who do not perform their tasks cannot be dismissed or even punished for not doing their work” (Interview H). This policy is viewed as weakening disciplinary measures at the school as there are no effective measures to deal with learners who are not willing to do their work and/or are uncooperative. Teachers suggested that curriculum policy needs to be reviewed and aligned with the disciplinary code at the school because it weakens disciplinary measures and undermines teachers’ authority.

Teachers further recommended that learners who do not perform their portfolio tasks should not be allowed to write exams but register as adult learners. Non-execution of tasks negatively affects the results and overall performance of the school. One of the teachers observed that “there is a stigma around teaching; parents and the community do not see schools as an area where they can play a role such as monitoring the conduct and performance of learners” (Interview G).

SGBs do not assist effectively in this problem area. This may be attributed to the observation that the SASA does not specify providing support to learners as a function of the SGB. It confines this support to the principal, teachers and other staff.

6.3.3 Poor family background

SGB members also reported an increase in learner truancy as a serious challenge. This is mainly as a result of learners who don't live with parents. Some of the children come from disorganised and poor families and as such are not motivated to come to school. Even when they are at the school, they are faced with challenge of not having money to buy food. Regarding a school boy who was repeatedly involved in theft and displayed aggressive behaviour, the principal at School C reported that:

We only understood the deviant behaviour of one of the boys after investigating his family background. It emerged that just before she passed on, the mother to these two boys negotiated with her landlord that they should not be evicted from the rented backroom shack. When she passed on, the landlord stuck to her side of the agreement and did not evict the boys even though they were no longer paying rent. But she was not responsible for providing them with food. So these boys would go to school for days without any food and this seemed to generate anger and explained the truant conduct of the elder brother ... our children would rather die in silence with their poverty (Interview R).

Learners from such family backgrounds often come to school hungry. This affects their concentration levels and ultimately their academic performance. In some cases learners absent themselves from school to fend for the family. Most interviewees agreed that family background plays an important role in the self-esteem of a child. Children from poor family backgrounds tend to be reserved.

Ironically, it is at School C where one of the learners interviewed complained that "it is difficult to confide in anyone at the school because one day you relate your problem to a teacher and the next day everyone at the school knows about it" (Interview P). Reported incidents of breach of confidentiality include divulging the cause of death within the family, particularly HIV/AIDS-related deaths. Breach of confidentiality prevents learners from seeking help from teachers as they are stigmatized when it is known that their parents died of HIV related illness.

Poverty and unemployment are two crucial socio-economic factors which have a direct impact on school improvement. Unemployment causes a situation where families end up with no or very little income, which causes poverty. This poverty results in learners that cannot be expected to learn properly relative to learners emerging from working families. The prevalence of high levels of poverty contributes to an increase in crime. Education competes with crime due to the perception that schooling is not meaningful because it does not address the immediate needs of poor families.

These challenges bring into question the ability and responsiveness of democratic SGBs to contribute towards their resolution, pursuant to democratic ideals of social justice, equality, and equity. As a result of their closeness to schools, SGBs are in a better position to contribute to the resolution of these socio-economic challenges. Mintrom (2001:616) posits that when thinking about educational governance and democratic practice, it is important to acknowledge the broader political economy within which education occurs. Interventions by SGBs to address such challenges are clearly limited.

Although there are attempts by SGBs to arrange social workers to assist with some of these cases, overall, SGB interventions have not been successful and more can still be done. Because they are already established by law, there is potential for SGBs to access funding from other government departments (such as the departments of social development and health) to help indigent learners and possibly to manage school's feeding schemes. SGBs need to develop programmes that respond to and counteract poverty at the local level. Alternatively, SGBs can establish networks with non-profit organisations to assist such learners.

Family background and the socio-economic conditions show that the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement cannot only be viewed through the lens of SASA assigned functions in a situation where the broader political economy is an obstacle to school improvement. The role of the SGBs in promoting school improvement cannot be narrowly confined within the confines of the school or even conditioned by legislation alone. To remain relevant, SGBs need to be responsive to and address socio-economic conditions which negatively affect the learning conditions and ultimately the performance of learners.

6.3.4 Quality and commitment of parents

Teachers and school principals raised concerns about the calibre of parents elected to SGBs. They argued that some parents elected to SGBs do not contribute meaningfully due to their low levels of literacy. Teachers and principals also observed that some parents are not consistent and committed to the education of their children and this is a stumbling block to school improvement. Such parents do not attend parents' meetings and do not respond to invitations to the school to resolve problems that teachers experience with their children.

It was the view of the teachers that parents should have an interest in the efficiency and quality of learning provided by schools. This is a serious challenge in communities where most of the parents have low levels of literacy and are highly dependent on learners to explain challenges at school. Such parents are not technically competent to assist learners. In as much as parents could tell their children to sit down and do their homework, or arrive at school on time, they couldn't do much to help them with the technical school work. In some instances, teachers observed that parents often expect them to take a parenting role by dealing with social problems that their children face.

The principal at School A estimated that "20% of learners are from child-headed families" (Interview A). According to most interviewees, this is due to the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS which is the major cause of deaths in the communities. These challenges indicate the ever-changing dynamics of the composition of the modern family in the township. The concept of a network of community representatives and/or community-based organisations as legal guardians responsible for several learners needs to be explored.

Interviewees also mentioned the failure of governors to understand and focus on important issues. This was attributed to a limited understanding of school structures and curriculum demands. Lack of proper discussions in SGB meetings is also a key challenge to school improvement as most discussions on curriculum issues are dominated by teachers with parents having little to say. Where governors are not literate their role can be easily undermined on the basis that they do not understand or constructively engage with issues raised in SGB meetings.

6.3.5 Incoherent leadership

Incoherent leadership emerged as one of the critical factors affecting school improvement. Reported tensions between the principals and SGB chairpersons tended to distract schools from their strategic goals. Such tension often leads to lack of co-operation and weak communication between the SGB and teachers, and within the SGB itself. Part of the tension emanates from lack of and/or resistance to, acceptance of each other's roles and lack of respect for the limits of the position held by the school principals or the SGB chairpersons.

One of the areas of contention leading to the tension is the management of school funds. It is difficult for some principals to accept that SGBs should take control of funds, a role traditionally performed by school principals. This tension was acute at School D, where the principal complained about the frequent visits of the SGB chairperson to the school as though the SGB chairperson was a full-time employee. He argued that "the chairperson of the SGB is forever at school as if he is the manager, governors need to only visit the school as and when required and not as and when they wish to" (Interview S). This principal argued that this was unnecessary, as the main role of the SGB was to play a decision-making and oversight monitoring role and not become involved in the day-to-day running of the school, which remained the principal's responsibility.

Learners also voiced their concern about what they view as intimidation by parents in the SGB and lack of trust of learners by the SGB. They argued that as stakeholders at the school they needed to be taken seriously. Such intimidation was noted by a learner at School D who, when referring to parent members of the SGB, contended that "these fathers don't want to understand and will not listen to us" (Interview V). Leadership characterised by intimidation and victimisation of learners does not augur well for school improvement. SGB members need to understand that democratic governance is intended to create a condition of mutual co-operation in promoting school improvement because all the stakeholders are constructively engaged.

At School B as well, there appeared to be some tensions between the principal and some teachers. This was evident when at least two teachers refused to participate in the study despite the request from the school principal for them to do so. There is

also little support from parents, and a distant relationship with non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations. Lack of shared vision seemed to be a major contributory factor to a negative learning environment. This may have been caused, in part, by the lack of experience of the principal as the youngest and least experienced of the four school principals. Structured leadership development and mentorship programmes for newly appointed and inexperienced principals may be a solution.

School leadership plays a crucial role in school improvement. Research reveals that school board members in the high achieving districts demonstrated greater understanding of, and influence related to, the seven critical conditions for school improvement, one of which is shared leadership. (Land, 2002:250). Fleisch and Christie (2004:102) affirm the importance of active and accountable leadership in the functioning of schools. Strong, academically focused principal leadership at the school site is important for school improvement (Teddle and Stringfield, 2007:152). SGB chairpersons concurred that a good principal makes a difference. If the principal doesn't perform, the school will fail.

Leadership in a school is surely a joint function of SGBs and school principals. In some of the schools there appear to be serious problems in establishing that leadership collective. It would appear that if SGBs are intended to provide strategic leadership then in reality they are being undermined.

6.4 School improvement: A critical analysis of theory and practice

Having discussed challenges faced by schools and SGB interventions, this section provides a critical analysis of the role of democratic SGBs in promoting school improvement. Building on the literature reviewed, this section isolates central features of school improvement and uses these features to critically analyse the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement. Similarities and differences between school improvement theory and practice at the four schools are highlighted. Emerging observations and constraints of SGBs in promoting school improvement are also highlighted.

6.4.1 School improvement: conception and practice

Literature and discussions on school improvement conceptualise school improvement as changing learning conditions and other related internal conditions in schools in order to accomplish educational goals more effectively. The situation in the four schools suggests that school improvement is not influenced by the school-based factors only. There are also external factors that affect the learners' school attendance, concentration and ability of learners to complete assigned tasks.

Socio-economic factors such as unemployment and poverty are obstacles to learning and the learning process. Discussions on school improvement need to expand the focus on such external factors. In the case of South Africa, these factors are related to, and are a product of a historical legacy of unequal provision of educational resources. The challenge of remedying such a legacy cannot be relegated to SGBs. Hence, Fleisch and Christie (2004:96) assert, rather than being the product of a set of interlocking school-related factors, or of institutional level changes, the experience of school change in South Africa suggests that historical context needs to be an overriding consideration that frames all judgements of effectiveness and improvement.

Although literature explains school improvement as a systemic and sustained effort to enhance student outcomes and strengthening the school's capacity to manage change, school improvement initiatives in the schools studied were ad-hoc and mainly focused on fairly limited attempts to resolve immediate challenges. In all four schools, there was no documented school improvement programme or action plan. As a result, it was difficult to identify both key objectives that the schools have set and also the role of SGBs in achieving these goals.

Typically, these schools do not have clear change management strategies to guide the implementation of changes introduced. Although most respondents agreed that schools have a change management strategy, none of the schools produced a change management strategy when requested to do so. Therefore, while the schools may be undertaking school improvement initiatives, there is no concerted effort to manage the change process. This makes school improvement initiatives *ad hoc* and unstructured and indicates a lack of strategic approach to school improvement.

Implementation of school improvement in these schools is not guided by a common, shared and documented approach. There is also no school improvement programme centrally designed by government to provide the framework for the schools. This school improvement framework can be adapted to suit the conditions at each individual school. Although engaged in school improvement initiatives, schools typically do not have a school improvement framework guiding their efforts, outlining key areas of school improvement and the measures of success.

Interviewees provided different understandings of school improvement. For instance, most interviewees mentioned that “school improvement is about putting effective systems in place in order to achieve the goal of the school, for example, ‘curriculum delivery’”. They agreed that improvement of learner achievement is central to school improvement. The dominant indicator of school improvement remains Grade 12 results, so much so that some interviewees equated school improvement with improvement of Grade 12 results. This confirms Taylor’s (2007:524) observation that the Grade 12 examination is the only system-level indicator of the school sector in South Africa. Although some respondents were of the view that SGBs do promote school improvement, they were not certain if this necessarily led to improvement of learners’ results.

Another view, however, was that school improvement is about “processes or a programme that the school should be involved in, in order to provide infrastructure, resources and staff to meet the requirements of the school and produce learners as expected by the country” (Interview R). In the first definition the goal of school improvement is narrowly focused on school-based goals whereas in the second definition, the goal is broadly linked to the type of learner required to meet the socio-economic and political needs of the country.

This distinction between a narrow and broad definition still needs to be addressed in the South African context. Similarly, there is a need to clearly unpack what exactly is meant by educational goals as well as the broader goals of meeting the country’s needs. Whereas literature correctly notes the limitation of focusing on examination results as the only goal of education, other goals that schools must inculcate in learners, such as a democratic norm and the tolerance of diversity, seem to be neglected.

Another view articulated mainly by learners is that school improvement is not only about the provision of proper school buildings and the establishment of effective systems in order to produce good results. It is also about making learning more fun by not only concentrating on the academic aspect but also on other activities such as sports, music, dance, and debates. One of the most neglected aspects of learning in all the four schools – partly resulting from inadequate facilities – is participation of learners in extra-curricular activities.

Apart from a lack of attention to extra-curricular activities, sporting grounds and facilities remain seriously under-developed. Development of sporting facilities is currently not a priority for SGBs, despite research showing that the effect of sport on educational attainment is statistically significant and positive (Pfeifer and CorneliBen, 2009). There is only limited attention given to upgrading sporting facilities and encouraging learners to participate in sports.

A narrow focus on learners' attainment to the exclusion of participation in sports negates some of the positive effects of sports on educational attainment. Using the allocation of time model which splits leisure activities into good and bad activities, Pfeifer and CorneliBen (2009:2) find that time spent on sport does not necessarily reduce time allocated to schooling but can also reduce bad leisure activities, which might harm educational productivity. Learners and educators in all four schools reported many instances of 'bad leisure activities' such as smoking dagga and gambling on school premises which negatively affect learners' attainment.

Sport is not yet viewed as an inherent part of the solution to problems related to lack of discipline and truancy in these schools. Sport also teaches soft skills like taking orders, leadership, or teamwork and can also help to form the character of young people because it teaches good behavioural habits like motivation, discipline, tenacity, responsibility, and perseverance which cannot be taught in class (Pfeifer and CorneliBen, 2009:2). These behavioural aspects should lead to reduced truancy, increase the willingness to succeed in school, and encourage social interaction with other students, all of which are associated with higher efficiency of learning because time is used more productively.

The limitation of narrowly focusing on learners' attainment as an indicator of school improvement to the exclusion of developing complementary behavioural aspects is that schools may produce learners who are academically excellent yet socially deviant. Where school improvement is only about academic attainment, schools are also unlikely to unearth sporting and cultural talents which can later benefit the country in international sports and cultural games.

The conception and practice of school improvement needs to be relevant to the circumstances in which schools find themselves. It was evident from these schools that their conception of school improvement was not predicated on mainstream school improvement literature. In all cases, school improvement initiatives did not attempt to emulate best practice but were mainly responding to the immediate school-based challenges. This conception of school improvement is consistent with a common sense meaning which relates to general efforts to make schools better places for pupils to learn.

6.4.2 The state and SGBs in practice

The study found that the view that links school improvement to *school-based* governance tends to downplay, or even actually remove from the discussion, the state as a crucial social actor at the school level. The role of the state manifests itself at the level of the school in various dimensions. The state facilitates the flow of physical infrastructure, develops curriculum policy and other legislation, and it acts as an employer.

The role of providing resources is essentially that of creating material conditions necessary for quality education to take place. The state thus provides the necessary, but not sufficient conditions for school improvement. The role of being an employer lodges the state into a class relation in which it occupies the social role of a capitalist employer. The stability of this relation, over and above resource provision, completes the theoretical conditions necessary for school improvement to occur.

Within the neo-liberal framework, the role of provision of resources to the school brings forth the socio-economic character of the SGB, and consequently the class character

of the community from which the school draws its learners. Within the framework of neo-liberalism, democratic school governance accentuates the class relation at the school level by drawing in those sections of the community that are not in an employer-employee relation to the state, but who are either employer, employee, or occupy intermediate socio-economic positions in society. In particular, the class composition of the SGB determines whether the dynamics of the state's class relation at the school level is reinforced or not. This implies that democratic SGBs play the role of sustaining or reinforcing, rather than creating, the conditions necessary for school improvement.

The state has an overall social presence, which allows state activities to be co-ordinated on a social scale. School governing bodies on the other hand, are autonomous, detached units of "people's governance" scattered across the country. Because of the increasing tendency to decentralise, and hence localise issues, the activities of these bodies in tackling these issues cannot be as co-ordinated on a social scale as the state's activities, despite the social character of those issues.

The absence of a comprehensive school improvement programme, taking into account the material conditions at the schools and the need to redress past imbalances in infrastructure development, renders the SGBs ineffective in promoting school improvement at the level of resource provision. If this role is left to the SGBs, it will lead to a perpetual entrenchment of historical imbalance in resource provision which undermines school improvement initiatives.

6.4.3 Social relationships and the role of SGBs

School improvement is shaped by factors far beyond the remit of local SGBs, such as curriculum frameworks, post-provisioning policies, teacher compensation, assessment materials, the nature of training and development of teachers, infrastructure provision and school environment, including teacher identity and accountability. Another factor, perhaps more significant, is the social relationship between the state and teachers, a relationship that is far from peaceful and yet which shapes teacher performance. With regard to this factor, the effectiveness of the SGB in promoting school improvement is called into question, since the employer-employee relationship between the state and teachers is predominant.

The dynamics within the school, which are social in character, are invariably expressed by the social relationship between the state and (organised) teachers, and between the state and organised learners. Organised teachers are in a direct class relationship with the state. The relationship between learners and the state is rooted in the social role of the state as resource provider, which brings to bear the overall social class relationships at the level of the school, since school governing bodies are composed of people whose socio-economic backgrounds predominantly determine the socio-economic background of the learners. Thus, the dynamics of the social relationship between these people and the state at the school level is expressed by the activities of the learners in relationship to the state.

In both these relationships, the social character comes out openly through national action, and in some instances through acts of defiance such as illegal marches by learners and protest action by teachers (the protest by SADTU-aligned teachers in Soweto is an example). From this perspective, SGBs become increasingly redundant in shaping the dynamics within schools because they are composed of the very class forces that are in oppositional relationships with the state.

This leads to a tendency of SGBs to be secondary to these relationships, in that the functioning of the relationship between teachers and the state, and the role of the state as resource provider jointly determine the context within which SGBs can function (i.e. whether SGBs promote school improvement or not). It is thus very difficult to imagine an 'effective governing body' when the social relations between the state and its employees, and the state and learners in general gravitates towards conflict, or generates alienation that is characteristic of neo-liberal policies – such as reduced job security, greater decentralisation of financial responsibility, coupled with the state shifting its role as a resource provider to parents, and reduced social security associated with fiscal discipline.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented practical experiences of how SGBs perform the role of promoting school improvement. The chapter shows that SGBs are thought to be promoting school improvement by performing their SASA assigned functions. Three prominent functions are: managing the school's budget and provision of resources,

maintaining and improving infrastructure, and making recommendations on the appointment of teachers.

The chapter shows that SGBs are faced with challenges that undermine their efforts to promote school improvement. These challenges include late-coming and absenteeism, non-execution of assigned tasks, poor family background, quality of home-life and commitment of parents and incoherent leadership. SGBs assist in various ways to resolve these challenges although their efforts are limited in resolving some of the challenges. Most such interventions are not necessarily spelled out in the SASA but are a necessity of the material conditions within which schools operate.

The chapter further shows that SGBs operate within certain constraints. These include legislative functions allocated to SGBs, the introduction of the new curriculum, co-operation of learners, parental participation, and contestation with management. The chapter concludes with a critical analysis that outlines the importance of addressing the historical legacy of under-provision of resources as a necessary condition for school improvement and the importance of the role of the state in this regard.

The role of SGBs in promoting school improvement is further weakened by the absence of state-led or school-driven school improvement programmes, and the direct relationship between the state and its employees. In view of these challenges, the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement remains precarious.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a conclusion for the study and recommendations. Recommendations are based on discussions in previous chapters. Discussions in the previous chapter show that SGBs are unable to play their supportive and intervention roles because of various factors. These factors show that the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement is conditioned by complex educational, political, social, and economic dynamics at play both at national and local levels.

At the school level, these factors include lack of leadership collectives, lack of motivation and co-operation between teachers and learners, lack of school improvement plans and ad-hoc monitoring and evaluation of the schools' progress. The key challenge for the SGBs is to break from their current not very productive roles to intervening to manage the social relations that make their job so difficult.

The role of SGBs in promoting school improvement is also mediated by a legislative mandate which provides SGBs with powers and determines what they can or cannot do, the role of the state, the role of the principal and school management, direct relationships between the state and its employers, as well as socio-economic challenges in the locality where schools are situated.

This conclusion argues that certain conditions need to be satisfied in order for school improvement initiatives to produce the desired results. These conditions include a combination of inputs, context, complexity and mediation. The study then presents three sets of recommendations. The first set relates to dealing with the school-based challenges. The second set of recommendations relate to creating an enabling environment to support SGBs to play their roles and overcome the obstacles that they face. The final recommendation argues for some changes in legislation which may be long term.

7.2 Inputs, context, complexity and mediation

Discussions in the previous chapters show that the success of school improvement initiatives is influenced by different conditions. As such, there is no direct relationship between SGBs and school improvement. The conception and practice of school improvement is shaped by inputs, specific context, complexity and the mediatory role of stakeholders. As a result, there is a need to take these factors into consideration in discussions on school improvement. The role of SGBs in promoting school improvement is mediated by different factors which are discussed in detail below:

7.2.1 Inputs

The study shows that various input factors influence school improvement. These factors contribute towards improving the learning and teaching processes at the school. Key inputs through which SGBs are perceived to contribute towards school improvement are adequate school infrastructure, learning and teaching material and financial resources.

Although SGBs attempt to mobilise resources for the schools in order to promote school improvement, they are not always successful. SGBs' efforts to improve school infrastructure and finances are constrained by a lack of response from business, coupled with the SGBs' inability to develop sound fundraising proposals. The development of the infrastructure emerged as an urgent area of concern for school improvement because of the historical legacy of the provision of unequal educational resources and opportunities which affected both the quantity and quality of education provided for blacks.

Most notably, most laboratories are dysfunctional whilst libraries do not have sufficient books and dedicated librarians. Learning occurs mainly in classrooms and is theoretical. This impedes effective learning at these schools as learners are deprived practical learning experiences. Inadequate infrastructure does not encourage a culture of reading, because learners roam around the school instead of going to the library when a teacher is absent or occupied with other work. School infrastructure and resources as key input factors negatively affect the learning

process at these schools. SGBs do not have the capacity to complement state resources to the extent of reversing this legacy.

The quality of teachers and standards of teaching methodology were also identified as important inputs affecting school improvement. SGBs have an opportunity to influence school improvement by participating in the appointment of teachers. In this function, the role of SGBs includes short-listing and interviewing applicants and then recommending the appointment of educators to the provincial Department of Education.

In this way, SGBs are in a position to recommend the best teachers for the school. The performance of this function, however, has been subject to some malpractices at the school level. This includes mainly undue influence (including bribes) placed on SGBs to recommend certain individuals for appointment. Where this happens, the quality of teachers recommended by SGBs for appointment is compromised.

The role and participation (or lack thereof) of parents in their children's education was also identified as yet another important input. Participating in both the SGB as well as assisting learners with school work was identified as a role in which parents can assist in terms of promoting school improvement. This is important moreover that the SASA vests its trust on parents and awards them majority representation in the SGB on the understanding that they can contribute significantly to school improvement.

The SASA's conception of parental participation in the SGB, however, is geared towards empowering parents to raise more funds for the school, rather than to contribute meaningfully to school improvement or even entrench a democratic culture at the school. More specifically, capacity building training provided to SGBs is not focused on, for instance, how parents can assist learners with their school work. Again, the role of SGBs is not directly linked to the teaching and learning processes. The ability and effectiveness of the parent component of the SGB to execute some of the SGB functions was questioned. This is based on the level of literacy among some parents which is perceived to constrain the SGBs in performing their functions effectively.

7.2.2 Context

Apart from the input factors, the context in which school improvement efforts are undertaken is important. This study identified various dimensions to the context issues, that is, the conceptual, historical and the practical context. Although identified as distinct contexts, these dimensions are interrelated. The notion of school improvement was initially introduced as conceptually aligned to the school effectiveness research.

SGBs developed out of a particular historical moment. As post apartheid school-based structures, SGBs are not a complete overhaul of the previous school-based governing structures. SGB have features of both apartheid school boards and committees and the people's education's PTSA's. Whereas struggles for democracy discredited apartheid school governing structures for lack of legitimacy, there was a global shift towards decentralised school governance as a cost recovery mechanism. Apartheid governing structures were also established for this reason. This shift was in line with neo-liberal policies which sought to minimise the role of the state in the provision of social services.

With the people's education movement, the conception of school governing structures was rooted within a social democratic tradition which argued for a central role of the state in the provision of education. This was particularly important for the purpose of redressing past inequality and injustices. There is an expectation that the provision of education in post-apartheid South Africa will reverse the patterns of social and economic inequality generated throughout the years of apartheid. The role and purpose of school governing structures was thus linked to broader struggles for democracy and the eradication of inequalities.

This conception is, however, at loggerheads with the dominant neo-liberal orthodoxy which argues for the minimal role of the state. As a result, in their constitution through a democratic process, SGBs have the strong people's education features of participatory democracy. This marks a fundamental departure from apartheid school governing structures which were unilaterally imposed on the schools by the state.

However, in terms of their purpose (the practice of decentralisation based on the delegation of responsibilities to the school level in order to leverage more resources

from parents), SGBs are consistent with the neo-liberal tradition already prevalent in apartheid school governing structures. This conception is deeply rooted in market economies. A combination of these conceptually contradictory traditions places SGBs in a precarious position.

In addition to the conceptual and historical contexts, efforts to promote school improvement must appreciate the textured dynamics within which schools operate. The school improvement literature increasingly recognises that schools at different stages of development require different strategies, not only to enhance their capacity for development, but also to provide better education for their students (Sackney, 2007:171).

Although the four schools had more or less similar conditions and draw their learners from the same geographical location, there were distinct features within each school which have a direct bearing on school improvement. There is a strong acknowledgement that the role of the school principal remains one critical factor determining the effectiveness of school improvement programmes. This management role is further complicated by the relationship of the SGB chairpersons with the governance role.

It emerges that where there is mutual co-operation between the school principal and the SGB (particularly the chairpersons of SGBs); school improvement initiatives are likely to be effective. Tensions between the school management and the SGB tend to render the SGBs ineffective. Managing relationships at the school and ensuring that everyone works towards a common vision is a key challenge for SGBs.

The impact of external factors on the learning process is also an important consideration in a discussion on school improvement. Schools do not operate in isolation from the communities in which they are located. Poverty and unemployment are two external factors which impact negatively on school improvement. Although SGBs attempt to deal with challenges caused by these external factors, it emerges that socio-economic challenges are far beyond the realm of SGBs. More structured and state-driven intervention is required.

7.2.3 Complexity

An analysis of the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement shows that this role occurs within a complex environment. SGBs have to promote school improvement within complex school dynamics. Within and across the four schools, the conception of school improvement is not predicated on a common understanding. School improvement tends to be loosely understood as 'doing something to improve the current conditions'.

These conditions are broad and include the provision of teaching and learning material, maintenance and upgrading of physical infrastructure, intensifying security for the schools, teaching methods, sports and cultural activities, dealing with social challenges, truant conduct and exam results. Linking SGBs to school improvement does not only refer to the SGBs creating proper conditions for schools to function properly, it also refers to the ability of SGBs to enable schools to respond to various socio-economic and school-based factors that affect school improvement.

The SGBs also have to contend with the complexities of the school culture. This culture is a product of everyday life experiences of main participants in the learning and teaching process. The role of SGBs in promoting school improvement occurs within the complex and direct relationship between the principal, learners and teachers. In addition to this direct relationship, there is also the dimension of other policies such as the curriculum and disciplinary policies.

The effectiveness of SGBs to instill discipline among teachers is complicated by the employer-employee relationship between teachers and the DoE. Although there are reported cases of absenteeism and late-coming which undermine school improvement efforts, the SGB cannot do much directly deal with these issues as this is the sphere of the school management team. In this case, the role of SGBs is constrained by what it is assigned in terms of policy. Unless school improvement strategies and policies are driven down to the learning level, not much will change in student learning (Sackney, 2007:180). Teacher absenteeism impacts negatively on this learning level, yet SGBs cannot deal with issues of teacher discipline as they do not have authority. SGBs are rendered redundant by such instances.

7.2.4 Mediation

The key argument of this study is that there is no clear-cut relationship between democratic SGBs and school improvement, since the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement is mediated by various factors. Sackney (2007:180) confirms the need to take a more holistic, ecological view of the school and how to improve it as a social organism. This refers to the totality of patterns, connections, relationships, interactions, and mutual influences that emerge among people and the forces that impinge on them.

The role of SGBs in promoting school improvement is further mediated by the nature and quality of relationships between learners and teachers and among teachers themselves. The effectiveness of SGB's school improvement efforts depends on these relationships. Over and above the functions assigned by the SASA, SGBs are faced with a challenge at the school level to mobilise teachers and learners to co-operate with each other and comply with departmental and school policies such as adherence to agreed times and the execution of tasks.

It is inconceivable for school improvement to occur in an environment characterised by ill-discipline and disrespect for laid down policies. One of the key principles emerging from school improvement literature is that "schools have the capacity to improve themselves, if *conditions* are right. The major responsibility of those outside the school is to help provide these conditions for those inside (Barth, 1990:45). This observation further indicates that the role and effectiveness of SGBs in promoting school improvement is mediated by internal dynamics within the school and even inside the classroom.

The curriculum and how it is being implemented at the school level is a key mediatory factor determining the success or failure of SGB efforts to promote school improvement. This signals lack of vertical and horizontal coherence and alignment between governance and curriculum restructuring as argued within the 'systemic reforms' literature. Coherence means 'having the quality of holding together as a firm mass' and 'logically consistent'. Coherent education policies therefore need to be congruent, to send the same messages, and to avoid contradictions. The idea of coherent policy is not consistency for its own sake but consistency in service of

specific goals for student learning (Fuhrman, 1993: xi). In this case, the system of educational governance is not aligned with curriculum intentions.

The chapter on literature review has already shown that the introduction of the new curriculum doesn't necessarily lead to an improvement in the quality of teaching and in learner achievement. Equally, the democratic process of electing SGBs, does not, in itself, lead to school improvement.

What matters is exactly what the SGBs do to purposefully promote school improvement. What SGBs can or cannot do is, in turn, mediated by policy on governance and curriculum. Current policy, both on governance and curriculum does not clearly articulate the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement. Although the SASA alludes to this role, the responsibility and functions it allocates to the SGBs are not explicit with regard to promoting school improvement.

7.3 Recommendations

The study has shown that school improvement initiatives must acknowledge that every school operates within a unique environment. Whereas inputs such as school infrastructure and resources are important, the complex context including factors such as the conception and practice of school improvement and the relationships occurring within the schools where school improvement initiatives are undertaken, must be acknowledged. Similarly, the mediatory factors such as resources and policy constraints need to be considered. Based on the review of literature, the analysis of the policy and school contexts as well as issues emerging from the case studies, the following recommendations are presented.

7.3.1 Develop structured school improvement programme

The study found that the four schools operate under tremendous pressure and unique conditions. SGBs should strive to address the underlying causes of conditions that compromise the teaching and learning processes. The schools experience pressure due to the implementation of the new curriculum. As a result of this pressure, learners tend to absent themselves from school and do not execute assigned tasks. Teachers do not cope well with the pressures of the new curriculum

either. Teachers are stressed, regularly absent from school, and are ineffective when teaching.

The study recommends the development of structured and sustainable school improvement programmes that address key challenges faced by both learners and teachers as key players at schools and directly influence school improvement. The aim of the programme should be to assist and support learners and teachers to cope with the demands of the new curriculum or any policy changes introduced. The programme should provide material and moral support to both learners and educators such that the reasons affecting the teaching and learning process (late-coming, absenteeism, and non-execution of tasks) are prevented. The school improvement programme can include objectives such as ensuring that all learners have textbooks, and that teaching material for practical lessons (such as drawing equipment) is available. SGBs should have the tools to assist learners who are not performing their tasks.

Linked to such objectives should be clear performance targets for the schools. For teachers, the school improvement programme should promote hard work, commitment and regular attendance of classes. SGBs should encourage teachers to be honest about areas that they find difficult to cope with so that they can be assisted in a positive manner. Internal support can be provided by teachers who teach the same subject, for example enlisting the services of external experts and/or forming partnerships with tertiary institutions. Partnerships created by SGBs do not only have to be financially beneficial to the school.

The key aim of the programme should be to assist teachers to adapt to changing curriculum needs and be able to transfer knowledge to learners with ease. This can be done by, for instance, facilitating training for teachers on modern and creative teaching methodologies aligned with the curriculum. Proper understanding of the content would enable learners to execute the tasks assigned to them. When more tests and work is given to learners, it prepares them for exams and life beyond school.

Through the school improvement programme, SGBs can communicate the schools' vision, objectives, expected results for the school, and its role in ensuring that these

results are achieved. Where objectives are specified and commonly shared, teachers and learners know what they are expected to do and are more likely to execute their tasks in accordance with the school's expectations.

The second challenge relates to socio-economic problems such as poverty and unemployment prevalent in local settings. Within the ambit of powers allocated by the SASA, SGBs should develop interventions that respond to socio-economic challenges. These interventions can include networking with non-governmental organisations, the private sector and other government departments to solicit support for indigent and/or truant learners.

7.3.2 Develop, implement and institutionalise change management

Coping with educational and social pressures is a challenge that affects the nature and quality of interpersonal relationships. Educational and social problems affect how teachers teach and how learners learn at school. Educationally, the key challenge lies with the implementation of the new curriculum. What emerges clearly is that the management of change in these schools cannot be left to chance.

Teachers need training on how to manage schools, classrooms and stress better, since they face a number of challenges. The development and implementation of a change management strategy should be central to any school improvement programme. Institutionalisation of change is also a key challenge. Once the change management strategy is developed, SGBs can appoint teachers and learners to be change agents who will lead the change process.

In order to change the quality of teaching and learning experiences, teachers should be encouraged to attend conferences where curriculum issues are discussed. Upon their return, they should share information with their colleagues. Schools should also establish or strengthen relationships with former model C schools or private schools. This can include participation in activities such as debates and science experiments in order to share learning experiences and discuss difficult topics. The aim of this exercise is to emulate positive learning experiences from, and share expertise with, other schools. SGBs can provide funding and other forms of support.

At the interpersonal level, the change management strategy should focus on increasing respect among learners and elimination of bad values and practices. Bad practices include jealousy and competition among learners, theft of calculators, drawing equipment, school bags and textbooks, and lack of respect and co-operation. There is a clearly identified need for schools to help learners to improve respect and politeness as some learners are overtly defiant and disrespectful.

The school environments require teachers to be counsellors and social workers as they have to deal with various social problems experienced by learners. Teachers need to be empowered to deal with and help learners resolve some of the problems they bring with them to school. SGBs can budget for and fund training that enables teachers to identify and recommend solutions to learners' problems.

SGBs must appreciate that schools are places where learners spend most of their day under the supervision of teachers. Schools must therefore be places where learners can be assisted rather than being scoffed at when they have problems. SGBs should thus position schools to be caring and secure environments for learners and teachers.

Some interventions that SGBs can introduce to change the schools' culture can include inviting motivational speakers (including previous learners) to talk on interpersonal relationships, conduct team-building, and teach learners more interpersonal skills. When teachers are dedicated and work as a team which always plans to win, learners can emulate this conduct. Teachers must be an embodiment of good values and should, for example, stop smoking in front of learners.

Another key factor is that SGBs must encourage meaningful participation and involvement in their activities. Good communication with teachers and a supportive role where the SGB does not criticise but is constructive is an indication of an effective SGB. Some of the key features of vibrant SGBs are accessibility, responsiveness and the ability to solve problems experienced at the school. The starting point therefore, is for SGBs to acknowledge that they also need to transform the schools' culture. Over time the schools' culture will be shaped by a change in the individual conduct of SGB members, learners and teachers as well as the inculcation of a new value system.

7.3.3 Build an effective leadership collective

Leadership cohesion and a common vision are necessary conditions for school improvement initiatives to be successful. There is a need for concerted efforts to improve relations between school principals and SGB chairpersons. The study further recommends building an effective leadership collective by training school principals and SGB members and through other structured interventions. Although training is currently provided for SGBs, such training should be adapted over the years to address pressing issues facing the schools rather than focusing mainly on empowering SGBs to raise funds for the schools.

There is a need for some state funding for the functioning of the SGB. SGBs can also be training on methods of identifying and co-opting specialists and forging strategic partnerships. There is equally a need to encourage parents to participate effectively in SGBs and be involved in the learners' school work. Where parents are encouraged to engage with SGBs constructively, they stand a chance to attract the best people to the SGBs.

7.3.4 Review legislation

The study has identified some of legislative challenges with regard to how the SASA conceptualises the responsibility and functions of the SGB. The responsibility of SGBs needs to be reviewed in a way that emphasises the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement. Specifically, this role should not depend on the mobilisation of resources to complement state resources. This dependence has the effect of perpetuating past inequalities.

Similarly, the functions of SGBs need to be reviewed to be more specific on what exactly SGBs should do to promote school improvement. The role of SGBs can be better amplified to show how SGBs can assist learners, teachers and parents to manage and cope with change as a result of curriculum or other policy changes. The study is also critical of the narrow definition of 'parents' adopted by the SASA. According to this definition, the pool from which the schools can draw skilled parents is narrowed particularly when assistance with curriculum challenges is minimal or

not forthcoming due to low levels of literacy among many parents. The challenge is that parents are not providing the curriculum support needed. Weak parental support on curriculum matters is at odds with the requirement of the new curriculum that demands that learners be assisted at home.

Progressive and skilled parents who are willing to serve schools are excluded from participation in SGBs by SASA's individualised definition of parents. On their own, SGBs are completely powerless to review the rules of representation and participation in the SGB as this is a policy matter beyond their control. The state should consider a review of legislation to better articulate the role of SGBs in promoting school improvement.

7.3.5 Improve monitoring and evaluation of the schools' performance

Monitoring and evaluation of the performance of the schools is weak and unstructured. In fact, in all four schools, there was no tool to monitor and evaluate the school's performance. SGBs do not have action plans guiding their activities and against which they can assess the school's performance. Another challenge, although not the responsibility of the SGB, is the fact that the educator performance management system, the integrated quality management system (IQMS), is not being implemented. If this system was implemented, teachers' files could be used to identify areas that require improvement and used as inputs for the school improvement action plan.

SGBs rely on the principal's and teachers' presentation and interpretation of results. Teachers only report the results to the SGB as there is no framework for monitoring and evaluation and there are no set targets. When results are good, there is no clear identification of what contributed to success based on SGB interventions. SGBs should be able to analyse the results of the whole school from Grades 8 to 12 per learning area to identify poor learning areas and identify mechanisms to resolve problems. It is important to focus on processes as well as outcomes when assessing the success of the program (Teddle and Stringfield, 2007:152).

Monitoring and evaluation should address not only the performance of the school in terms of results but should also evaluate aspects such as discipline, school

attendance, execution of tasks, and improvements in school infrastructure. Cases of learners who absent themselves for longer periods should be followed up. There is a need to identify different areas that should be the key focus areas for monitoring and evaluation.

The emerging conception of school improvement is mediated by both the legislation which allocates certain functions to SGBs and the material conditions to which SGBs must respond. Monitoring and evaluation of the schools' performance in this context is not only about improvement of results but also about improvement of schools' material conditions and overall well-being of learners in the schools.

SGBs can use the monitoring and evaluation system to check whether SGB committees fulfil their mandates. Clear objectives can encourage members of committees to work towards their attainment. Each committee can be tasked to deliver on a specific mandate, such as proper financial management, efficient retrieval of textbooks, maintenance of school infrastructure, and curriculum support for teachers. Teacher and learner representatives on the SGBs can identify their needs. While teaching and learning needs are a priority, SGBs should accommodate other needs (particularly those of learners') and evaluate their achievement over several years.

Identification of stakeholder needs should be channelled through these committees. Stakeholder needs should be prioritised and included in the school improvement action plan, with clear objectives and targets. SGBs should assess the performance of the school against this plan to check if objectives were achieved or not. Each committee should assess its performance against the stated objectives of the school.

Where objectives have been achieved or exceeded, due recognition should be given to SGB committees. Where objectives are not achieved or are partly achieved, lessons learned can be documented to inform future strategic planning. Committees need to be assured that their role is appreciated as they contribute towards the commonly agreed and well-documented objectives of the school. This link between the performance of SGB committees and school improvement is currently missing. Hence, whereas SGBs are recognised for their efforts, there is no certainty whether these interventions lead to school improvement or not.

7.4 Conclusion

The research has shown that while schools play a central role in society, such a role is conditioned by the broader orientation and the relation between different social forces, since schools are rooted in a specific social structure. In particular, the school is a site of class relations between the state and its employees. These social relationships, in which the state is central, form the context within which the role of democratic SGBs in promoting school improvement has to be understood. The double articulation of the state at the school level, as a structural expression of the dominant social relation in the process of 'production of learners', determines the quality, quantity, and the technical relationship between the very 'inputs and outputs'.

The school improvement that is proposed here is not premised on school improvement for its own sake, but it should initial a radical break from the features of apartheid colonial education that have been inherited, the transformation of which is now increasingly shaped by global forces. This school improvement discourse must combat the root causes, the micro-social and micro-economic bases, of the continued reproduction of inequality in all aspects of the social life of South Africans.

School improvement does not operate outside of a history of the unequal provision of resources and SGBs do not exist independently of the incessant conflict among social forces. Schools operate within a social context. When narrowly focused within the school and in isolation from the historical legacy, school improvement initiatives tend to reproduce and perfect the features that define their context. The demise of official apartheid has left the democratic dispensation with a terrible legacy. It is this legacy that is now being perfected by the operation of market forces. Deconstructing the market-based conception and practice of school improvement is at the heart of decisive and relevant school improvement for South Africa.

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INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

Person interviewed	Date of interview	Interview code
Principal- School A	20 October 2008	Interview A
Educator 1- School A	20 October 2008	Interview B
Educator 2- School A	21 October 2008	Interview C
Learner 1- School A	21 October 2008	Interview D
Learner 2- School A	21 October 2008	Interview E
SGB Chairperson- School A	21 October 2008	Interview F
Educator 1- School B	22 October 2008	Interview G
Educator 2- School B	22 October 2008	Interview H
Learner 1- School B	22 October 2008	Interview I
Learner 2 School B	22 October 2008	Interview J
SGB Chairperson- School B	27 October 2008	Interview K
Principal- School B	27 October 2008	Interview L
Educator 1- School C	23 October 2008	Interview M
Educator 2- School C	23 October 2008	Interview N
Learner 1- School C	23 October 2008	Interview O
Learner 2- School C	23 October 2008	Interview P
SGB Chairperson- School C	26 October 2008	Interview Q
Principal- School C	28 October 2008	Interview R
Principal- School D	28 October 2008	Interview S
Educator 1- School D	28 October 2008	Interview T
Educator 2- School D	28 October 2008	Interview U
Learner 1- School D	28 October 2008	Interview V
Learner 2 – School D	28 October 2008	Interview W
SGB Chairperson – School D	28 October 2008	Interview X

ANNEXURE A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

SECTION 1:

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

A. General Information

1.1 Gender

Sex (Please place a cross in the appropriate box below)	
Male	Female

1.2 Number of years as a teacher in this school

Years as a teacher (Please place a cross in the appropriate box)				
Less than 1 yr	1-5 Years	6-10 Years	11—15 Years	16-25 Years

1.3 Educational qualifications

Qualifications (Please place a cross in the appropriate boxes)				
Diploma	Bachelors Degree	Postgraduate Degree	Postgraduate Diploma	Masters degree

1.4 Age of respondent

Age (Please place a cross in the appropriate box below)				
20-30	30-35	36-40	41-50	50-65

Please Note: All information you provide in this questionnaire will be treated as **strictly confidential**. Individual responses will **not be assessed**. Results will be analysed in group terms only (e.g. Responses of teachers indicate etc.).

SECTION 2
PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

B. The role of the SGB in promoting school improvement

1. What do you understand by the concept 'school improvement'?

2. How does the SGB promote school improvement?

3. What are the challenges faced by the SGB in promoting school improvement?

4. Does effective learning and teaching take place on a daily basis? ☐ Yes ☐ No

4.1 What factors would you say contribute to effective learning and teaching taking place or not taking place?

5. Do teachers receive support from the SGB? ☐ Yes ☐ No

5.1 If yes, what kind of support do they receive?

6. What problems do teachers experience on a daily basis at the school?

7. What role does the SGB play in solving those problems?

8. Did the SGB receive capacity building training?

☐ Yes

☐ No

8.1 Which aspects of training did you find most important in equipping the SGB to promote school improvement?

9. What do you think lacked in the SGB training programmes provided?

10. Which teacher related aspects do you think such training programmes can improve?

11. If you were to make any changes to the SGB, what would those changes be?

12. What kind of teacher related support does the SGB receive from the district office?

13. What support do you get from those outside the school to improve the conditions within the school?

14. What needs to be improved about the school's culture in relation to?

14.1 The quality of interpersonal relationships.

14.2 The nature and quality of learning experiences.

15. What are the suggestions for improving the performance of the SGB in promoting school improvement?

16. How does the SGB monitor and evaluate the performance of the school?

ANNEXURE B: RAPID SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

A. The role of SGBs in promoting school improvement

This section consists of various statements in respect of the role of the SGB in promoting school improvement. There is no right or wrong answers. Read the statement below and express your views by marking your response with an X. Please give your opinion using the scale below:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. The SGB promotes school improvement.					
2. Governors and parents are actively involved in the SGB					
3. The SBG helps to improve learner performance.					
4. Teacher attendance is monitored effectively					
5. The SGB received adequate capacity building training to enable it to perform its functions					
6. The school has a code of conduct that regulates staff and learner behavior.					
7. The school has the capacity to improve itself.					
8. The conditions within the school right for school improvement to happen.					
9. Adults and learners learn and energize each other.					
10. Roles and responsibilities of the education authorities at the district level are clear.					

11. Roles and responsibilities of school leaders, teachers and parents at the school level are clear.					
12. The school has a change management strategy.					

ANNEXURE C: OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

A. SCHOOL PROFILE

1. Year established:
2. Location:
3. Previous Department:
4. Previous school governing body:
5. Learners enrolled:
6. Teachers employed:
7. Number of classrooms:
8. Number of libraries:
9. Number of laboratories:
10. Other learning facilities:
11. Extra mural facilities:

B. SCHOOLS PHYSICAL CONDITIONS AND FACILITIES

Items observed	Yes	No
Is the school fenced?		
Are the gates locked during school hours?		
Are the windows and doors in tact?		
Are there security cameras at the school?		
Are there computers for administration at the school?		
Are there computers for learners at the school?		
Is the school environment hospitable?		
The school has a library?		
The library is functional?		
The school has a canteen?		
The school has laboratories?		
Laboratories are functional?		
The school has sporting facilities?		
Other observations		