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Netshishivhe, F.R.

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THE IMPACT OF GOVERNING BODIES ON SCHOOLS IN NORTHERN PROVINCE, REGION THREE

F R NETSHISHIVHE

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F R NETSHISHIVHE

Student no.9700754w

Supervisor: Prof. M CROSS

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for the degree of
MASTER OF EDUCATION
in the Faculty of Education
at the
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February, 1999

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Education in the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.



on this 1st day of February 1999.

Signature

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ABSTRACT

The establishment of democratic governing bodies in schools is one of the requirements of the South African Schools Act, 1996. This study investigates the impact of governing bodies on schools in the Northern Province: Region Three. In doing so, the study examines the role played by the Provincial Education Department, headmasters, teachers and learners in the establishment of democratic governing bodies. It covers six schools from six areas of Region Three in the Northern Province.

Through interviewing officials of the Department of Education who are actively involved with school governance, the headmasters of each school visited, parents, teachers and learners, their views and perceptions were examined regarding the role of governing bodies in schools. The researcher also made use of observation to gather information on the work of governing bodies in schools. School environments and the state of buildings were observed as a measure to determine dedication and commitment of the headmasters, staff and members of the governing bodies.

Despite all the democratic processes followed in the implementation of school governing bodies, and the new powers and functions that have been given to them, governing bodies have not successfully democratised schools. Neither have governing bodies improved the culture of learning and teaching; contributed to the provision of quality education and curriculum development; helped in the maintenance of discipline, or raised funds for the schools.

This study has revealed that factors such as educational resources, time, different interest groups, lack of active participation, differing value systems in the sub-culture and different age groups impact ne[illegible]

the activities of governing bodies. The results of the study suggest that there is the need for programmes to train members of the governing bodies into the new ethos, including sacrificing their time; being committed and becoming actively involved in the activities of governing bodies and schools.

Key words:

school governing body

school governance

school administration

school principals

CONTENTS

		Page
ABSTRACT		iv
ABBREVIATIONS		x
INTRODUCTION		xi
Rationale of this Study		xiv
Outline of Chapters		xiv
Research Methodology		xv
Observation		xviii
Limitations of this Study		xx
Referencing Style		xx
Chapter 1		
LITERATURE REVIEW		
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Governance and Governing Bodies: Conceptualisation	2
1.3	Governing Bodies: Composition, Powers and Functions	3
1.4	Centrality of Parental Involvement	13
1.5	The South African Debate	19
1.6	Conclusion	26
Chapter 2		
CONTEXTUAL ISSUES		
2.1	Introduction	29
2.2	Contextual Issues	29
2.3	Conclusion	34

Chapter 3

NEW POLICY RELATING TO GOVERNING BODIES 36

3.1 Introduction 36

3.2 The Development of New Policy 37

3.3 Implementation 41

3.4 How Stakeholders View the New Governance Policy 47

3.5 Conclusion 54

Chapter 4

THE IMPACT OF GOVERNING BODIES ON SCHOOLS

4.1 Introduction 56

4.2 Democratisation and Participation in School Governing Bodies 58

4.3 Time, Commitment and Dedication of Some Stakeholders 61

4.4 Interest Groups within SGBs 64

4.5 Resources and Opportunities to Raise School Funds 66

4.6 Discipline and Conflict at School 69

4.7 Transport Costs and Difficulties 73

4.8 Value Systems of Different Sub-cultures and Age Groups 75

4.9 Conclusion 79

REFERENCES 85

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Interviews for teachers, parents, learners' representatives and head teachers of school governing bodies 94

Appendix 2 Questions for teachers, parents and learners who are not part of the SGB 101

Appendix 3	Interviews for the government officials	106
Appendix 4	A map of South Africa showing all the New Provinces.	109
Appendix 5	A map of the Northern Province including Region Three.	110
Appendix 6	Ballot papers used for the election of members of the governing bodies.	111

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 A comparison between existing and new school fees in the six schools studied

ABBREVIATIONS

ANC :	African National Congress
COLTS :	Culture of Learning and Teaching and Service programme
EOs :	Electoral Officers
ESKOM:	Electricity Supply Commission
LEA :	Local Education Authority
LEAs :	Local Education Authorities
LRC :	Learner Representative Council
NECC :	National Education Co-ordinating Committee
NEPI :	National Education Policy Investigation
NGO :	Non-governmental Organisation
NGOs :	Non-governmental Organisations
PAC :	Pan-African Congress
PTA :	Parent Teacher Association
PTAs :	Parent Teacher Associations
PTSA :	Parent Teacher Student Association
PTSAs:	Parent Teacher Student Associations
SASA :	South African Schools Act
SGB :	School Governing Body
SGBs :	School Governing Bodies
SRCs :	Student Representative Councils
UK :	United Kingdom
US :	United States.

INTRODUCTION

This research study arises out of the development of a new system of school governance in the Northern Province and the rest of South Africa. When South Africa became a democratic state in 1994, a new constitution was drawn up to protect the values and principles of democracy. In 1996, a new Schools Act was passed. According to this act, governing bodies in every school were required to be elected democratically. Section (20) of the South African Schools Act, 1996 entrusted governing bodies with the responsibility to provide quality education for all South African people. Governing bodies have been entrusted with powers to perform certain responsibilities and tasks in the interest of the community they serve. Members of governing bodies have been empowered to act and participate actively in the process of school governance.

Under apartheid, School Boards and then School Committees had been established as structures of school governance. School Boards and Committees were not elected democratically by parents. They were nominated either by the head teacher or the headman of the village in which the school was situated. As a result, "the School Boards and Committees were opposed by the political movement of the time which saw them as part of Bantu Education or an imposition of a totally separate and inferior education system which, to some extent, stamped them as organs of an oppressive system" (Hyslop 1990: 287). Neither School Boards nor School Committees conceded real powers to parents, preventing them from building a permanent and secure social basis.

In the mid 1980s, the National Education Co-ordinating Committee (NECC) mounted political pressure against the apartheid system of education, and demanded greater control of education by the communities

as well as a democratic, non-racial education for all South Africans. Parent Teacher Student Associations (PTSAs) in secondary schools and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) in primary schools were put in place by the NECC as a way of empowering black parents in education. The new government's interest in democratising the education system resulted in the call for restructuring schools.

In the Northern Province, governing bodies have been introduced as an attempt to restructure and democratise schools. Education came to be regarded as the responsibility of both the community and the state. Parents, who were marginalised by the apartheid system of education, now occupy a central position in the new system of school governance. Parents are given more powers than before to encourage them to take an active part in the education of their children.

Within the broad system of restructuring the education system, an assumption emerged that the inclusion of parents, learners and teachers in the structure of school governance could help in democratising and addressing past imbalances in education.

The aim of this study is to investigate the impact of governing bodies on schools. The study is informed by the following assumptions:

- participation creates a strong sense of ownership of the process undertaken within the institution, and represents a departure from previous authoritarian decision-making, dominated by the head teacher and education officials;

- governing bodies can create a co-operative environment, thus laying the groundwork for better achievements and new decision-

making patterns that are conducive to effective teaching and learning;

- governing bodies can build a culture of community responsibility and accountability by allowing the communities to assume an active and responsible role in determining and adopting policies in schools;

- democratic school governance decentralises decision-making processes, laying the ground for a culture of learning and teaching in schools.

Governance involves the increased participation and involvement of parents, employers, and members of the community in the running of schools and responds to the desire to make the governing of schools more representative (Rosemary 1993: 47). Many parents are dissatisfied with their children's schooling and need a forum where they can make inputs into education. According to Mkwanazi (1993: 5), participation is considered as a way of providing resources, facilities and even helping the school become relevant to local needs and conditions, as well as making it more effective and efficient.

The main argument to be explored in this study is that increased participation and involvement of different stakeholders in the running of the school is likely to enhance efficiency and effective governance which impacts positively on the teaching and learning process. Of course, this has to be supported by both physical and human resources, and monitoring by government officials.

Rationale of this Study

Before democratic governing bodies were established, power was seen to vest in the principal, the district manager and the headman in whose district the school is situated, while parents, learners and teachers did not play an active part in decision-making processes. This study provides a rationale for a new relationship in which parents, teachers and learners work together in school governance.

This study also provides a body of knowledge to inform governing bodies of possible strategies to deal with problems encountered when performing their assigned duties and functions. As such, the study explores and legitimises the participation of parents, teachers and learners in school governance and the impact this partnership can provide in schools. It can also be used by professionals and any interested person undertaking research on governance. Note that educational governance in South Africa remains extremely under-researched.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1 contains a review of literature relating to school governance. The review covers international and national sources. Conceptualisation of governance, powers and functions of governing bodies are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 2 gives an account of the location of the area under study and the context within which governing bodies have been established in the Northern Province.

Chapter 3 presents the development of new policies, new powers and functions given to governing bodies in the Northern Province and explores how these powers were devolved to the people.

Chapter 4 discusses the views of the government officials, parents, head teachers, teachers and learners on the impact of the governing bodies on schools. The study closes with a conclusion and recommendations.

Research Methodology

This study makes use of the following strategies:

- extensive review of primary and secondary literature on school "governance";
- interviews with stakeholders; and
- observation.

The researcher has randomly selected six schools in Region Three of the Northern Province. This is because Region Three of the Northern Province consists of six areas: Malamulele, Vuwani, Thohoyandou, Mutale, Soutpansberg and Sikgosese. In each of these six areas, the researcher has chosen one secondary school. Three schools are located in semi-urban areas and three schools are in remote, rural areas. This has been done to make the findings more representative and thus ensure a truer reflection of the situation in Region Three. (see Appendix 6 for a map of the study area)

The researcher conducted unstructured interviews with state officials who are actively involved with governance. The interviews explored the process of implementation, power devolution and the training provided to help build confidence in governing bodies. At school, the researcher conducted interviews with executive members of each governing body, including the principal of each school, learners, and teacher representatives. In addition two teachers and students who are not members of the school governing body were also interviewed from each of the schools selected for this study.

The reason behind these interviews is that executive members of the governing body are more actively involved in governance than the other members. By combining the views of these two groups one is more likely to generate representative data. The interviews dealt with powers, functions and constraints faced by governing bodies and successes achieved in the schools that were studied.

The principal and the teachers were interviewed in order to find out whether they regarded governing bodies and their powers as contributing positively to school governance and laying groundwork for better teaching and learning in schools. Lastly, community members were interviewed to find out how the community views governing bodies, and sees their impact on schools.

The **research interview** has been defined as "a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him on content specified by the research objectives" Cohen and Manion (1996: 271). This means that the interview helps to gather information through direct verbal interaction between individuals. Schumacher and McMillan (1993: 250) state that "this interaction has both advantages and disadvantages as compared with the questionnaire". Its advantages are that it is flexible and adaptable and can

be used with many different problems and types of persons, such as those who are illiterate or too young to read and write. The disadvantages of the interview are its potential for subjectivity and bias and its high cost and time-consuming nature. Despite the fact that interviews are prone to subjectivity and bias, they are still regarded as a reasonable means of data collection (Cohen and Manion 1996).

Furthermore Isaac and Michael (1983: 132) state that interviews:

- are "open to overt and subtle bias of the interviewer;
- are vulnerable to personality conflicts;
- require skilled and trained interviewers; and
- are sometimes difficult to summarise".

The researcher used in-depth interviews (unstructured) when interviewing government officials.

Unstructured interviews were used to encourage government officials to talk in detail about their views on the impact of governing bodies. Government officials are not free to discuss government policies with an unknown person. Use of unstructured interviews helped to relax the interviewees and aided them to understand the purpose of the interviews. Furthermore unstructured interviews were conducted for the purpose of obtaining information concerning the:

- composition of the governing body;
- preparations for the establishment of the school governing body;

- training offered;

- monitoring of the activities of the school governing body;

- problems encountered and measures taken to overcome them.

Structured interviews were conducted with parents, teachers and learners for the purpose of obtaining data with regard to the composition, powers and function of the School Governing Bodies (SGBs). Staff interviews focused on the staff's experience with previous structures of school governance, their perspective on the role of parents in present structures of school governance and their views on what they perceive are the possible changes brought about by the new governing bodies. Interviews with parents consisted of their life history and experience as members of the governing bodies.

Principals were also interviewed on the activities of governing bodies and the possible impact these structures of school governance are likely to bring. Triangulation of data helped to ensure validity and reliability of the study. To control bias in the research setting, feedback about findings was continually requested from informants. After the end of each day's interviews, the transcripts were reviewed and carefully recorded to avoid loss of detail through the passage of time.

Observation

As a technique for gathering information, the observational method relies on a researcher seeing and hearing things and recording these observations rather than relying on subjects' self-report responses to questions or statements Schumacher and McMillan, (1993: 257). The

observer remains detached from the group or process and thus acts purely as an observer.

After each interview was conducted, I took a walk around the premises observing the school environment and the state of the buildings. Observing the school environment and state of the buildings helped me to evaluate or judge the commitment and dedication schools show. For example, I observed a school in a rural area where the governing body has decided to install electricity from a private company, Electricity Supply Commission (ESKOM), and this deserved to be acknowledged. It showed commitment and dedication on the part of some governing bodies.

Vockell (1996: 29) further states that "information obtained through observational techniques is evaluated and judged against the commitment and dedication governing bodies show in schools". With observation techniques, however, an observer watches someone else's behaviour, judges that behaviour in some way and records the judgement.

Some school grounds were untidy as a result of small bushes, broken windows and chairs lying outside. This form of disregard may show a lack of responsibility and little commitment by some members of governing bodies. "They merely look for the occurrence or non-occurrence of some designated behaviour" (Vockell 1996:30). The observer can make some attempt to evaluate (rate) quality of the performance he or she is observing in relation to the maintenance of school property.

Furthermore the state of buildings was observed as to whether they are permanent or temporary structures. Observing, evaluating and judging the state of buildings and grounds is one of the responsibilities of governing bodies. The information obtained is forwarded to the Department of Education. Apart from the state of buildings and grounds I also observed facilities in the school such as drinking water, toilets, electricity,

classrooms and pit latrines. Information obtained was discussed with the head teacher and members of the school governing body to establish whether they had strategies to deal with shortages of facilities in schools. To test the validity of the information, the researcher carefully analysed the background within which each observation was conducted: whether the school is situated in a rural or urban area. The findings have been that schools in rural areas lack resources such as drinking water, toilets, classrooms, electricity and furniture when compared with schools in semi-urban areas.

Limitations of the Study

The study covers a specific area of the Northern Province. Even though it represents three schools in both the semi-urban and the rural area of Region Three, it cannot be generalised as being representative of the situation throughout the province and the rest of South Africa. Urban areas, such as Pietersburg, Potgietersrus, etc. in the Northern Province, which this research does not cover, have their own peculiar features.

Referencing Style

In the study, the Harvard style and the numerical style of referencing have been used by the researcher. However, the numerical style has been used only to acknowledge interviews / interviewees.

CHAPTER ONE

Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to provide background knowledge on structures of school governance. The study covers both national and international literature on school governance. It provides a foundation on how school governance was viewed in different contexts; how governing bodies were structured and what powers they were given. The centrality of parents in school governing bodies, and the experiences and problems encountered during the process of school governance have been analysed. Arguments about the role played by governing bodies and their impact on the running of schools have been investigated.

The literature review of this study is structured as follows:

- Conceptualisation of governance and governing bodies;
- Composition, powers and functions of governing bodies;
- Centrality of parental involvement in school governing bodies;
- South African debate on governing bodies, and

- Conclusion.

1.2 Governance and Governing Bodies: Conceptualisation

Education governance can be defined as "not simply the system of administration and control of education in a country, but the whole process by which education policies are formulated, adopted, implemented and monitored" Buckland and Hofmeyr (1993:1). This implies that "governance" is not only about the day-to-day running of schools. Governance involves giving support, guidance, development and the implementation of educational policies.

The sphere of governing bodies is governance, or policy determination, in which the democratic participation of the school's stakeholders is essential (Education White Paper 2 1996: 16). Education governance should involve all stakeholders in an active and responsible role, and encourage collective decision-making. Education governance is also conceptualised as a system by which people give orders to their subordinates, an image which may sometimes cause antagonism (Roger *et al.* 1980:87). In this case, it is likely to cause a rift between governors and teachers, as governors would take control of professional responsibilities about which they have little or no knowledge.

Governing bodies are intended to govern, democratise and enhance the involvement of parents and the wider community (Davies *et al.* 1987:42). However, it remains to be seen whether involvement will bring about any significant change in education. According to Carr and Hartnett (1996:43)

there has been a shift towards democratisation and decentralised management of schools with greater involvement of the local community and people's representatives. For them, 'democracy' was regarded as synonymous with 'mob rule' and thus as one of the worst types of government possible. The reason behind this perception was that the initial attraction of democracy was not to promote a desirable vision of good society, but rather that it offered a system of government which would allow an already established view of society to work. It seems that there are mixed feelings about the establishment of governing bodies in schools. While Davies *et al.* (1987) believed that governing bodies democratise and enhance involvement of the wider community in educational matters, Carr and Hartnett (1996) regard democracy as equivalent to 'mob rule' and Rogers *et al.* (1980) think that democracy can foster a feeling of hostility or opposition.

Despite all these conflicting perspectives, governing bodies in South Africa have been established for the purpose of democratising schools, by involving and enhancing participation of all stakeholders in education. To achieve this goal, governors need to be effective in their work and to cultivate a positive attitude between them, teachers, and learners.

1.3 Governing Bodies: Composition, Powers and Functions

The introduction of governing bodies has been regarded as a way of involving parents and providing a means of achieving participation and accountability on behalf of the community (Deem *et al.* 1993:41). This section deals with the different models of composition, powers and functions of governing bodies.

The **first model** depicts governing body members as 'governors'. Governors have thus been regarded as one dimension of the way in which schools relate to their external environment (Glatter 1989). Following this approach governing bodies have been given the task of **governing** and professionals the responsibilities of **managing** the schools. In this model the composition of governing bodies varies considerably, depending on the size of the school. For example, where the school has between 299 and 599 pupils, the governing body would consist of four parents; four Local Education Authorities (LEAs); two teachers; five co-opted members and one headmaster. This model of education governance is practised in countries such as England and Wales. In these countries, the task of governing schools has been the responsibility of both the LEAs and the community or parents. In South Africa, new governing bodies also rely on the size of the school to determine the number of governing body members each school should have.

Cordingley and Kogan (1993) and Levacic (1995) came up with the functions and powers assigned to governing bodies in this model. Governing bodies need to:

- Appoint and dismiss staff;

- Suspend and discipline staff and pupils;

- Attend to salaries of staff as well as issues related to the implementation of the national curriculum;

- Draw up the school budget;

- Define the school policy;

- Allocate resources;

- Monitor school performance; and

- Ensure accountability of professional managers.

One can say that the abovementioned powers and functions exhibit some similarities with the model of governing bodies in South Africa. Apart from the appointment and dismissal of staff, the powers and functions given to the new governing bodies in South Africa resemble those outlined in the model above. For governors to be able to perform their tasks optimally, Beckett *et al.* (1991:77) proposed that a close relationship between the school and the governors should exist. The close partnership can only be achieved through regular school visits, as school visits are a positive experience and genuine means through which governors can come to know and understand the daily life and work of the school. These visits should not be interpreted either by the staff or governors as some form of inspection. They are a means of gaining knowledge and insight and understanding professional relationships and inter-relationships.

Beckett *et al.* (1991) also indicate that visits by members of the governing body are regarded as an important and a positive way of fostering the idea of partnership: governors should not be seen as intruders but as colleagues with concern and responsibilities which are complementary to those held by the staff. It is therefore proper for a governing body to follow a structured visit to a school. A structured visit follows an agreed plan and has a format that is

negotiated and understood by both parties affected by the visit. Short, informal visits are also intimidating for less experienced staff and, as such, governing bodies should guard against unnecessary visits to school which may be disruptive to staff.

Deem *et al.* (1993:104) concluded by suggesting four sub-models that support and strengthen the goals of school governors. Deem *et al.* believed that governors should be accountable, by ensuring that schools are working effectively within the policies set by local and central government. Governors should also play an advisory role, by providing a forum for reporting and advising the community on issues of education. They should be supportive, (by providing resources), and mediating, (by settling disputes arising in schools). The South African Schools Act 1996 expects members of governing bodies to be accountable for decisions taken; to be supportive by means of raising school funds and to be mediating by way of resolving conflicts and settling disputes at school. By studying this model, one can reflect on issues that are common within the South African perspective and international literature.

It is also important to note that "governors are performing supportive and advisory roles, rather than showing a sense of accountability expected from them" (Mychell and Thomas, 1994:98). School governing bodies have been established with the purpose of developing closer links between schools and parents and to give parents a greater say in the running of schools. Although governors can deal with a range of topics, there are important areas of decision-making about curriculum, assessment, admission policies and minimum staffing levels, which are firmly in the hands of the central government Brigley (1992:13).

For Brigley (1992), the disadvantages of this model are that governors complain that they spend too much time discussing the drainpipes and the state of the toilets and not enough time on the things that really matter, like the curriculum. Governors have had the responsibility of inspecting the premises on a regular basis and ensuring that the district officer is kept informed. When governing bodies perform their tasks, they suffer from structural flows (Bolman and Lee, 1995:27). Members of the governing body suffer from lack of clear role definition. Bolman and Lee (1995) suggest that, by watching what other board members do, new members gradually obtain a better sense of the role that they should assume.

The **second model** depicts governing bodies as a "board of directors" Brehony and Hemming (1990:29). Members of the governing bodies in this model wish to see schools run as businesses, with the headmaster of the school as Chief Executive and the governing body as a Board of Directors. Such governors have little patience with the views of parents who "rubber stamp" decisions made by headmaters and teachers, but are concerned with exam results and standards. They like to inspect the school accounts regularly and challenge what they regard as an old-fashioned notion where schools produce learners who cannot become future workers. These business-orientated members often pursue and question the appropriateness of what the school offers in relation to what they feel is required in the workplace. Their emphasis on exam results and standards is likely to bring them into conflict with the values of the school, since not only results matter, but the complete development of the child. Governing bodies in South Africa borrowed nothing from this model.

The largest part of South Africa is rural and the majority of parents are not employed. This is especially true in the rural areas where this research was

conducted. Parents the lack knowledge required to participate actively in matters concerning education. Also it should be noted that parents are concerned about their children's education. They want to see their children competing with the corporate world. The model also expects the quality of education to improve by democratising schools and encouraging parental involvement in education. This could be achieved by transferring the management model used in industries to education.

It is apparent that active participation and democratisation of schools is influenced by social class. Working and educated parents show a greater interest in education than uneducated parents. Social class based on family income influences parents' beliefs about their home-support roles in children (Kathleen *et al.* 1997:21). This has resulted in many parents in the United States (US) constructing their roles at a relatively low level of involvement in children's education. Parents coming from a low socio-economic class tend to show less interest in the education of their children, simply because they lack knowledge in matters relating to education, while parents from a higher socio-economic standard tend to be highly motivated to become involved.

The **third model** depicts governing bodies as school councils. The model originated as a result of a belief that, if local schools are to be more responsive, structures must exist which allow for under-represented groups to have a voice in school affairs (Franklin 1995:3). According to this model, governing bodies or site councils are regarded as representing the voice of the community. The model is practised in countries such as the United States of America. School site councils in the US are composed of elected parents' representatives, teachers' representatives, staff representatives and the site headmaster. Site councils report directly to the district school board and function largely in compliance with their policies and procedures. For

effective execution of their work, school site councils often rely on assistance from the principal, teachers, support personnel, outside consultants, lay citizens and student groups.

Local school councils are responsible for determining school policies: adopting rules and regulations; entering contracts and prescribing minimum standards necessary for the orderly and efficient operation of the school system; appointing personnel; adopting the school district calendar and district budget, as well as providing for proper handling of district funds. These are the powers which should be exercised by site school councils in compliance with the requirements of local district school boards in America. Apart from the inclusion of learners, governing bodies in South Africa resemble site councils in their composition, powers and functions. As site councils represent the voice of the community, parental voice comes from active participation. This participative approach by parents, teachers and learners can contribute to a foundation for good management of the institution.

Governing bodies (site councils) impact positively by enhancing democratic participation. Beck *et al.* (1995:155) argue that "enhanced democratic participation can be an effective lever for systemic educational change". This implies that schools can use a process of shared governance to control their own destinies and to reorganise themselves in a creative way. Despite this optimism, Lane (1992:68) is sceptical about this view when he says that "shared governance had done more than simply fail to alter traditional decision-making relationships, it had actually worked to reaffirm them". This has been done by developing loyalty towards schools and their councils. In South Africa, there is a need to address the past imbalances in education and, if participation cannot bring new changes, as Lane (1992) has stated,

there is more to be done to bring about equity in education.

For site councils to bring about innovations, governing bodies need to be united and use meeting(s) times efficiently and effectively" (Mahoney 1988:16). For Mahoney (1988), many parents are discouraged from standing as school governors, because they do not feel confident about taking their place on the 'board'. They are intimidated by formal business aspects played out in the governors' meetings. Many potentially excellent governors feel that they lack the experience and skills which are essential if they are to make meetings effective and productive. Governors feel uncomfortable in committees because they do not like to expose their ignorance of the procedures involved. Mahoney (1988) went further and suggested that every school deserves a governing body which is effective, interested and concerned. Concerned and interested governing body members know how to do their best in meetings and know their children's progress as to how they develop and how they learn. In South Africa, governing bodies are also expected to represent the voice of the community in which the school is situated. For the community to express their views there should be active participation and involvement in education governance. Empowering members with proper educational experience and knowledge of education could achieve active participation in school governing bodies.

Decentralisation of powers to schools is the **fourth model** for governing schools that this literature review covered. Decentralisation occurs in a governmental system where local government and community organisations exercise large amount of powers (Winkler 1989:4). Decentralisation is a means of distributing authority to different agencies, groups, and stakeholders (Lauglo 1995:1). The advocates of the model believed that decentralisation and democratisation of schools reduce the concentration of

decision-making powers at higher level and also give powers to officials who are close to the local level because they know what needs to be done.

It is also a means to deepen democracy by transferring power from the central to the local level and, as such, liberates education from ideological manipulation and misuse of authority by some government officials (Sayed 1992:5).

While the other two models concentrated powers and functions of governing bodies central level, decentralisation is more about power-sharing. The objective of this model is the devolution of power to the local level in which the communities should play an active role in education governance.

Decentralisation may promote better co-ordination among local services. It is also viewed as a political response to manage conflict and a strategy to stabilise the school system, rather than an attempt to improve education through the establishment of school governing bodies, (Lane 1992:69). This system of decentralising powers to school governing bodies as a way of managing conflict has been referred to as "compensatory legitimation" by Clune and White (1993) and "compensatory tokenism" by Sayer and Vivian (1989). Compensatory legitimisation implies that decentralisation of authority to school level makes people believe they have legitimacy to govern the school, while in reality they do not. This is practised in some of the states in the United States (US), United Kingdom (UK) and China. The state shifts the responsibility to legitimise decisions to the people, and therefore shifts the blame for failure away from itself. This view is supported by Fullan (1992:119) when he says that a "governing body impacts positively on substitution of responsibility". If power and resources can be moved to the school level (decentralised), authorities may also be able to shift most or all

the responsibility for failure to improve students' performance to teachers and administrators at the level of the school.

On the other hand, Beck *et al.* (1995:150) argue that "decentralisation and community control are programs designed by the state to produce parental and community satisfaction". Parents believe that schools are more likely to improve under a decentralised approach to school governance than under centralisation. Centralisation occurs where the central government has the most power or decision-making authority. School governance is either centralised or decentralised.

While it is evident that centralised control of education is not free from corruption, decentralisation of education is far more problematic than centralised authority (Lauglo 1995:3). Decentralisation promotes participatory democracy by providing participants with equal rights and opportunities when taking part in decisions affecting them. Decentralisation may also promote corruption at the level of the schools. This is evident from the nineteen departments of education in South Africa which did not reduce, but multiplied, corruption (Sayed 1992:6). Even though decentralisation is believed to transfer power by widening participation, it does not transfer power but rather shifts the locus of power from a central source to an equally powerful group at a local level. It also does not necessarily lead to increased participation of all the people involved but to certain individuals. The state may not transfer power but merely maintain power by co-opting the local community and devolving some of the non-essential aspects of education provision to them (Sayed 1992:7).

Countries, such as Zimbabwe, believed in centralised control especially during the period of transition to greater equal opportunities. Issues such as

curriculum, teachers' services, funding and building of schools were centralised (Chikombah and Rukanda 1995:18). In practice, education may have centralised and decentralised characteristics simultaneously, with changes in both directions occurring at the same time. The state favours what is best at a given time. In South Africa not all powers have been decentralised to schools since some of the powers are still left in the hands of the provincial and central governments. Such powers and functions include: maintaining and improving school properties; determining extra-mural curricula; purchasing textbooks and paying of services for school.

1.4 Centrality of Parental Involvement

Centrality of parental involvement is the **fifth model** covered by this study. According to this model parents have occupied a central position as a component of the school governing body. The previous models emphasise the composition, powers and functions of the governing bodies as well as the devolution of these powers to local level. Advocates of this model believe in parents as the most important stakeholders in educational governance.

In this model, Kathleen *et al.* (1997:3) stated that "across a range of studies, there has emerged a strong conclusion that parental involvement, which generally benefits children's learning and school success, is vital". Recently, work describing the correlation and forms of parental involvement and teacher and school influence on involvement, has been an important part of the current efforts to understand why parents choose to become involved and why their involvement is central and often functions to create positive outcomes for their children.

The model of parental involvement suggests that parents are influenced by several constructs drawn from their own ideas and experiences as well as their environmental demands and opportunities to get involved. As for Kathleen *et al.* (1997), the most fundamental decision for parents to become involved in children's education is a function of three constructs:

- The parent's construct of his or her role in the child's life;

- The parent's sense of efficacy for helping her or his child succeed in school; and

- The general invitation, demands, and opportunities for parental involvement presented by both the child and the child's school

The parents' construct of parental role is the first important reason it is necessary to involve parents in the education of their children. Role construct of the parents is likely to be influenced by the general principles guiding their definition of parental responsibilities; their beliefs about child development and child-rearing, and their beliefs about an appropriate parental home support role in children's education. The South African Education White Paper 2 (1996), Guide For Establishing Governing Bodies, South African Schools Act 1996 all spell out the rights of parents to become involved in the education of their children. Amongst them, they should be the biological parent of the child, or the foster parent, or the adoptive parent of the child registered at a particular school. Parents also have the right to choose the type of education their children should receive, but with due respect for the rights of other children because every child has the right to learn. The central role which parents play is also recognised and respected in South Africa.

Parental role construction appears important to the involvement process because it establishes a basic range of activities that parents construe as being important to and permissible for their own actions with and on behalf of their children.

The overall theoretical and empirical work suggests that parents develop beliefs and understanding about their requirements and expectations of their parental role as a function of their membership and participation in varied groups pertinent to child-rearing. Furthermore, parents' actions relating to their children, including their decisions about their children's lives, are influenced by parents' role construct and by the dynamic process that involves role expectations.

Kathleen *et al.* (1997:10) also viewed a major construct influencing parents' decision about involvement as their sense of efficacy for helping their children succeed in school. The most important question in this construct is whether parents are aware that their involvement in education can influence positively children's educational outcomes. The child's overall level of performance may influence parents' decision about involvement, although the evidence here is mixed.

Children's learning style and preference may influence parents' general predisposition towards involvement in their children's education. Meanwhile Kathleen *et al.* (1997) viewed the general invitations, demands and opportunities presented by the school as an important component of parents' involvement. Patterns of teachers' attitude and invitations are important to many parents' decision about participation in children's schooling. The value of creating a climate of opportunities and demands for parents' involvement in a school is to help parents understand teachers' interest in parental help

and support, parents' feeling of being needed and wanted in the education process and parents' knowledge about the work of their children.

In order to gain unity, bring innovations into schools and participate actively in democratising schools Mahoney (1988), Brigley (1992) and Barbara (1988) advocate the need for training. There is the need to train new members of governing bodies. All governors should be given the opportunity to inform themselves on matters of educational theory and practice which will play a more central part in their deliberations (Mahoney 1988:208). There are a number of difficulties, faced by governors today, which a basic training programme could help to overcome:

- Many are uncertain of the nature and extent of their powers and unfamiliar with committee procedures;

- Governors are sometimes confused by the complexities of laws and regulations and puzzled by education terminology;

- They do not always understand how the "administration machine" works or the process by which education policy decisions are reached;

- Some feel isolated because there are few opportunities for exchanging ideas with other governors.

These four points, uncertainty, unfamiliarity, lack of knowledge, and isolation were found by the Open University when it researched its "governing schools" course in the late 1970s on Parental Influence at School in Britain. The Open University (Green Paper 1984) pointed out the inadequacy of most

existing training opportunities, arguing that "the responsibilities for governing bodies are so important and complex that a governor cannot be expected to discharge them effectively without some form of training".

In conclusion, it is evident that governing bodies differ considerably across the spectrum. There are those who believe that governing bodies are governors, in that they are responsible for ensuring equity and providing support to the schools. Others associate governing bodies with a board of directors, whereby parents dictate how the school should be run. The business-orientated school wishes their school to be run as a business. Governing bodies are also depicted as being school councils to serve as a parental voice. It is a platform by which parents addressed their views on education. The last international model holds that governing bodies are established to disperse power to local people. Despite all these different forms of parental involvement, the decision to become involved in education occupies a central position in education governance. Parents become involved in the education of their children because they have developed a parental role construct that includes involvement, because they have a positive sense of efficacy for helping children succeed in school. Parents' involvement has an effect on children's educational outcomes. However, the following factors inhibit active participation of parents in educational matters:

- Material resource problems, such as finding a parents' room were parents congregate prevents them from active participation;

- Lack of information resources;

- Staff members in most areas complain of being ill-prepared for their

jobs. Many reported low comfort levels and little knowledge on how to interact with parents;

- A clear difference in perspective, qualifications and experience between non-professionals and professionals;

- Gender and class. Men, for example, rarely participated, while women of high socio-economic status frequently did. Parents with no experience and little understanding of the benefits of participation had lower expectations and less motivation;

- 'Power sharing'. The efforts of sharing power and of developing a sense of responsibility with parents did not entirely negate the existing power relations of the organisation. Parents were still largely "helpers" rather than "players" wielding real power;

- Staff authority shaped staff and parent relations to participate in the school activities. Staff appear to want only "good" parents to get involved in educational matters.

Apart from these constraints, Maybour (1989:109) still believed that governing bodies enhanced partnership in education. Constructive partnership has many advantages because "parents are recognised as partners in a shared task" (Maybour 1989:109). Maybour states that partnership is not without obstacles. Parents still experience a feeling of inadequacy that they do not wish to expose to others, and embarrassment because they do not understand, and fear to look foolish by asking the meaning of something. These are some of the barriers that prevent parents

from assuming an active role as partners in the education of their children. Clearly the constraints to partnership cannot be resolved by parents alone, no matter how committed they are. These constraints exhibited by governing bodies will help us to shape and guide governing bodies in South Africa.

Despite all the constraints shown, governing bodies need to be actively involved in governing schools. They need to be accountable for whatever decisions are taken. Partnership seems to be important for the success of these bodies. As a result, the Northern Province Department of Education needs to encourage and motivate members of governing bodies to work hard to realise the goals of the policy on school governance.

1.5 The South African Debate

This section reviews models of educational governance in South Africa. The **first model** of educational governance is school boards and then school committees. In the mid-1950s in South Africa, school boards and committees were put in place by the National Party government as a way of including black parents in controlling and governing schools. Participation of black people in the administration and control of schools was aimed at providing blacks with an "illusion of self-government". School boards were appointed by the government. Each school board controlled a group of school committees. "Teachers who were rebellious were purged by these boards" (Hyslop 1990:211). In rural areas and homelands, the boards lost credibility because they gave powers to chiefs and homeland politicians to discipline teachers. Boards were given considerable powers to hire and fire teachers. The dismissal of teachers made school boards and committees unpopular

structures of school governance. Apart from promotion, transfer and hiring of teachers, members of the boards and committees discussed inspection reports, and investigated complains and anomalies. They decided on the suspension of pupils, controlled funds and advised the department on school matters. Furthermore school boards and committees were not trained, but relied on the guidance and advice provided by the principals.

These boards were meant to enforce separation of schools according to ethnicity, which formed the base line for separate education systems in South Africa. Mwanazi (1993:218) states that "by 1976 school boards and school committees were no longer effective and thus the state had failed to use them to play a hegemonic role". Parents, teachers and the community challenged these structures as they were accountable to the state and not to the people they were supposed to serve.

The school committees consisted of parents who represented a key link with the community. Teachers, headmasters and learners were not represented on the committees. They controlled school funds, decided on the erection of new buildings and played an advisory role to school boards. These structures of governance relied on school boards since they were given no real power to control schools. Their role was undermined by the government's reluctance to concede real control to the parents and the domination they suffered from the school boards. Political movements such as the NECC, African National Congress (ANC), Pan African Congress (PAC), and others, opposed school boards and committees in South Africa (Hyslop 1990:288). School Boards and Committees were regarded as structures of the apartheid government and not representing the interests of the people they claimed they represented. Hyslop (1990:227) states that "despite these inherent weaknesses and fierce organised opposition from

popular movements, the establishment of the boards went forward with a degree of success for the government". In 1956, there were 4000 school committees and 300 school boards, but the establishment was easier in rural areas than in urban areas because in urban areas resistance was stronger.

In South Africa, before the new governing bodies were established, Parent Teacher Student Associations (PTSAs) in secondary and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) in primary schools were put in place to replace school boards and committees as structures of governance. In this model, governing bodies comprised parents, teachers and students in secondary schools. A PTA operated at primary school level (Sithole 1994:2). The student component is excluded in primary schools, presumably because pupils are too young to get involved. Whether the inclusion of learners in the structure of governance makes any impact on the process of governance remains to be seen. Research has already revealed that parents are less willing to accommodate pupils when dealing with serious matters that affect discipline of teachers and other issues which are considered the domain of adult people (Sithole 1994:4).

PTSAs and PTAs were informal structures of school governance as they were not recognised by the government. In response to PTSAs and PTAs the government introduced management councils in schools. The composition of management councils was similar to that of PTSAs and PTAs.

Management councils, like school boards and school committees, were not recognised by the people as the government was not accepted because of its practice of apartheid (Hunter Report 1995:17). Sithole also indicates that the Natal Education Policy Unit has identified factors that have had a harmful effect on the smooth organisation and operation of PTSAs. PTSAs were not

statutory and officially recognised and, as a result, they were not given any powers or function by the apartheid government during the reign of the National Party. State education departments undermined the process of implementing PTSAs while, in rural areas, chiefs were vehemently opposed to PTSAs and especially to the participation of students in school governance.

School headmaters saw PTSAs as eroding their administrative control of schools. In particular, they resisted student participation. The lines of accountability for PTSAs were blurred. There was uncertainty as to whether they were accountable to local communities, to local education co-ordinating committees or to the narrower school community. Lack of skills and expertise, especially in technical and professional matters, affected the efficient and effective running of PTSAs. They were under-resourced and most operated without funding. Meetings were poorly and inconsistently attended. Parents who lacked relevant skills were often wrongly influenced and manipulated by school authorities. Te chers were sometimes problematic because they did not want to attend meetings after hours, and they tended to hold students in low esteem. An uncompromising attitude on the part of the students and misguided militancy were often interpreted as party politics.

Lastly, collective responsibility and democratic decision-making were undermined as various sectors or components of the PTSAs tended to promote narrow, sectoral interests. However, this did not stop the PTSAs from playing a role in decision-making and problem-solving, fund-raising and monitoring of the usage of school funds in some areas of the country. The different interest groups were able to monitor, manage and make decisions about the usage of school resources and to defuse common sources of conflict. PTSAs operated in a democratic and transparent manner, and

therefore without fear of victimisation. Teachers' academic and administrative expertise and hands-on classroom experience assisted parents to understand what is going on in the school. Through interaction with parents, teachers were able to understand the students' backgrounds and the context of their work.

Due to lack of clarity about their rights, powers and functions, PTSAs were not completely effective as structures of governance. In addition, they were not trained, and therefore lacked expertise and skills to fulfil their functions competently. The principle of inclusiveness in institutional educational governance structures, as stipulated by the ANC Education Department, was to be entrenched in the future system of educational governance. It states that "in principle, the governance of all schools should include parents, teachers and students (the latter at secondary level) as elected representatives of constituent groupings, together with representatives of the wider community served by the school ... The principal would be an *ex-officio* member of the board" (ANC Education Department 1994:26). Further, the powers, functions, rights and corollary duties of governing bodies must be clarified fairly quickly. Also important was the need to clarify the relationship between the PTSAs and political organisations.

The Hunter Report (1995:22) states that "structures of governance such as the PTSAs and PTAs were seen by the apartheid government as the beginning of a campaign to develop a new and democratic system of education [that] would empower all participants in the education process". Probably because of their perspective, they came to face hostility from government authorities. PTSAs demonstrated several strengths as a way of governing schools. Scholars such as Sithole (1994), viewed PTSAs as effective organs for conflict resolution, a process that improves the relations

between parents, teachers and students.

The Hunter Report (1995) sees education as a partnership between the local community and the provincial education department. Democratic movements led to the emergence of the concept of parents as community representatives. Parents, together with the school and other stakeholders, were to form a partnership to bring about educational changes and be part of school governance (Mhlongo 1995:17). As Corbett (1978:34) put it, "partnership is a difficult concept for those who are used to exercising powers". This implies that instead of working together to produce a desired goal, there is the possibility of one group dominating another, and this may result in the governing body becoming a "dignified" part of the school constitution or a rubber stamp of the decision of the provincial department.

To Mhlongo (1995:43), PTSAs were responsible for making policies on various issues of the school like admission, uniform, code of conduct, conditions of service and disciplinary actions". They [PTSAs] also met to discuss reports by the principal on school progress and problems encountered. The involvement of parents depended on various factors. These factors included the leadership style of the headmaster, the existence of structures, the nature and the culture of the school and the organisational design of the school. Leadership style and behaviour were vital in creating an open climate in school.

In the case of parents interviewed about their special responsibilities at Phambili High school, most responded that they did not have special responsibilities in the school, like helping teachers with school visits and outings; giving talks to the students; repairing school buildings; and assisting with sports (Mhlongo 1995:43). It was clear that before democratic governing

bodies were established parents were not given the opportunity to participate in the activities of the school. Teachers have seen parental involvement in the activities of the school as an interference in their tasks and responsibilities. Mhlongo (1995:47) suggests that involvement of parents in policy matters was influenced by various contextual factors. These contextual factors (organisational design, nature and culture of a school and leadership style of the principal) cannot promote parental involvement alone, but the availability of activities like fund-raising and special tasks for parents are essential to promote parental involvement in school governance. However lack of communication and report-back and feedback meetings inhibited the role parents played in the management level of the school.

Parents were seen as legal guardians and, in this sense, a parent was someone who was the biological parent of a child or who had taken custody of a child. Parental involvement in education was viewed as a way of contributing to the finance of education of their children. This was expressed by Mkwanazi (1993:5) when stating that "although school committees take their duties very seriously, their work consists mainly of the allocation of funds for one purpose or another". The apartheid government used the concept of community participation to decentralise and devolve financial responsibility to parents, thereby depriving parents of the statutory powers required to govern the school effectively. This view of parents as providers of financial assistance indicates how parents were disadvantaged in contributing effectively to the education of their children in the past. Moreover, as a result of the high rate of unemployment, it could be possible that some of the parents were unable to carry out this requirement.

1.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, governing bodies can impact positively on schools by enhancing democratic participation and involvement of different stakeholders in the running of schools. This democratic participation can be used by reformers as a lever for systemic change. The change can be achieved by democratising the education system and encouraging greater participation and control. From the different models this literature covered, it is apparent that the compositions, powers and functions of the governing bodies vary. In all the models reviewed, only PTSAs include learners in the structure of school governance. Based upon the above analysis, it is evident that learners are not recognised by many as an essential component of governing bodies. The new governing bodies in South Africa are similar to PTSAs and PTAs. The only difference is that PTSAs and PTAs were not statutorily recognised by the apartheid government and did not have real power in terms of access to resources or the power to implement changes while governing bodies have such powers. Following from the above compositions, it would be interesting to note the impact that learners and different stakeholders have on educational governance in South Africa.

The new government in South Africa emphasises democratisation and decentralisation of decision-making powers with certain powers and functions still centralised. My opinion is that decentralisation is not so much concerned with the transfer of power but rather with the way(s) through which the state may extend and retain its power. The new governing bodies in South Africa share some common features with the model of centralised and decentralisation governance, especially because not all powers were devolved to the local level. Governing bodies have to apply to the Provincial

Head of the Department of Education who may allocate these functions if the Provincial Head is satisfied that the governing bodies can perform them. Given the above context, it is evident that South Africa is following a 'mixed policy', that is, centralisation or decentralisation. Whether control of education is centralised or decentralised, it is useful to clarify levels of authorities in the system. In South Africa decentralisation of power may help to facilitate the implementation of the principle of rationalisation.

This literature review also revealed that governing bodies might enhance active involvement of parents. The involvement generally benefits children's learning and school success by improving the quality of education and by creating an environment conducive for better teaching and learning. For the involvement to benefit the children and the school, governing bodies should be accountable and work effectively within the policies set by the education department. Governance is also about administration and control, defining, adopting and implementing educational policies. Governing bodies raise funds and monitor their usage. Meanwhile governing bodies are not without problems. It is important to note that they suffer from lack of clearly defined roles and time to participate effectively in school governance. Members of governing bodies are subjected to unavoidable domination by the headmaster, senior government officials and other strong members of the community. There is no real devolution of power to members of governing bodies. In most cases no comprehensive training is given to equip them with knowledge and skills for good governance. For effective governance, training should be provided to enable governing bodies to use their powers efficiently and effectively. Moreover the government must take into consideration the fact that training people to acquire skills which they do not use in their daily work is likely to demotivate members of the governing bodies.

This is in line with Brain's view in Bush *et al.* (1989:225) when he stated that "implementation of governors is not cheap as it requires both time and cash".

All the models discussed above provide for some community involvement in the governance of schools. The degree of involvement, however, varies between models. The model which best informs this study is the PTSAs and PTAs. Governing bodies in South Africa resemble the PTSAs and PTAs in their composition and functions. These structures are both composed of parents, teachers, learners and interested stakeholders.

The most important questions of the literature review are whether the democratic governing bodies in South African schools can impact positively on the running of schools. Whether this structure of governance can enhance the democratic participation, involvement, accountability, support, and advisory function of the members of the governing bodies. Whether democratic governing bodies can help to create a favourable environment conducive to effective teaching and learning, rather than just dealing with conflict resolution and fund-raising activities of the previous structures of governance, remains to be seen.

It is necessary to ensure that governing bodies operate effectively in bringing about change in education. Parents, teachers and learners need to participate actively in the running of schools and to be competent in what they do. This could be done, for example, by monitoring their performance and providing support, direction and resources.

CHAPTER TWO

Contextual Issues

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine the context within which governing bodies have been established in the Northern Province. Context is important because it exposes the circumstances in which events and actions occur. It reveals key differences and makes the process unique (Lello 1993:133). In this regard, the context in which governing bodies operate in the Northern Province is unique and influenced by the circumstances which surround such schools. This chapter will outline the geographical position of the Northern Province and its effects on the establishment of governing bodies. The main economic activities practised, resources and different population groups found in the province will be analysed and their impact on governing bodies explored. The previous bodies of school governance and their impact on schools will be examined.

2.2 Contextual issues

The Northern Province is one of the nine provinces demarcated when South Africa became a democratic state in 1994. The Northern Province is situated in the northern part of South Africa and comprises the former Lebowa, Gazankulu and Venda homelands. It also includes areas such as Potgietersrus, Nylstroom, Warmbaths and others (see the attached map in

Appendix 5). The province is also characterised by long distances between cities and villages, resulting in the population being scattered all over the province. This pattern of settlement resulted in schools being situated far away from one another and makes it difficult for schools to be supplied with basic needs, such as water and electricity. For example, of a total of six schools visited in the course of this study, two schools have water and an electricity supply, while four schools have neither water nor electricity. Apart from dispersed settlements, unreliable rainfall and undulating terrain have contributed to the lack of basic needs in schools.

The main economic activity in the Northern Province is farming. Most of the adult population works on farms. Many parents' income is relatively low and this has an adverse effect on their capacity to pay school fees. When interviewed one headmaster said, "We cannot raise the school fees as high as R50.00 because many parents work on farms and their monthly income is less than R300.00".[1]

Schools in rural areas covered by this study find it difficult to buy educational resources and thus would want the department to take responsibility. Most of the governing bodies in these poorer communities do not have access to additional funds for schooling. This view has been supported by one of the government officials:

> As a result of its vastness, low population density, lack of resources and infrastructure, the Northern Province has been

[1] Interviews with the headmaster, Tshinavhe Secondary School, at Vuwani, 17 September 1997.

declared a "disaster region" by the central government[2].

Furthermore, Northern Province has a high percentage of illiteracy. Many parents cannot read or write. This has an impact on their willingness to be incorporated in structures of school governance. In support of a high percentage of illiteracy a parent has this to say:

> parents are not ready to participate in structures of school governance because they lack the knowledge necessary to perform their tasks. I think they could be motivated by the training which will be provided by the government.[3]

Maybour (1989:109) has indicated that uneducated parents still experience a feeling of inadequacy that they do not wish to reveal to others and embarrassment because they do not understand as well as the fear of looking foolish by asking the meaning of something. This implies that educated and uneducated people exhibited clear differences in perspective, qualifications, experience and education help to bridge this gap.

As for learners, most of them in rural areas lack negotiating skills. They were used to mass actions and demonstrations as a way of meeting their demands. The new governing bodies relied on consensus when planning, managing and resolving disputes in schools. Negotiations and agreements play an important role when issues are discussed. For negotiations to be successful, members of the governing bodies require skills to settle disputes.

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[2] Interviews with the provincial Sub-Directorate on School Governance, Northern Province Department of Education, Pietersburg, 11 September 1997.

[3] Interviews with the headmaster, Malamulele Secondary School, at Malamulele, 15 September 1997.

Teachers in rural areas are denied a housing subsidy by the government if they live on a farm or tribal trust land. Teachers are then forced to live in the nearest town and commute to work. Because of the long distance they travel, teachers fail to attend meetings of the SGB and other communities. It is important for teacher organisations to discuss issues relating to accommodation. Another factor which impacts on functions and activities of governing bodies is that most teachers in rural areas are still under-qualified.

Lack of information services such as postal deliveries, telephones, newspapers and radios in schools delay meetings and capacity-building programmes directed at members of the governing bodies. It becomes difficult to inform members of the governing body about an urgent meeting because of communication difficulties. School boards and school committees in the Northern Province were established as structures of school governance. The most important function of school boards and committees was to establish, maintain and control community schools (Department of Education and Training Guide for Principals 1979:3). They also played a role in the promotion, transfer and dismissal of teachers. School Boards were met with strong opposition. As Hyslop (1990:287) has pointed out: "school boards and committees were not supported by the communities as they were not elected but nominated by the principal or the headman in which the school is situated".

In the Northern Province, PTSAs (in secondary schools) and PTAs (in primary schools) were established by NECC as a way of democratising schools (Provincial Constitution of PTSAs and PTAs 1990:10). A provisional constitution was drawn up to guide and lead members of the PTSAs and PTAs. These structures of school governance operated during the period of transition from apartheid to the government of national unity. The period was

characterised by negotiations and escalating crises in education, mass action of teachers, students and other education sector organisation. Policy development and formulation became an issue of struggle. The régime therefore blamed the escalating crises in education to PTSAs and PTAs. These structures of governance were not statutory and officially recognised by the government and this made it difficult for them to assert their authority. Given the above context, PTSAs and PTAs were under-resourced. Most operated without funding. Parents lacked relevant skills and expertise as no training was provided. It was the responsibility of PTSAs and PTAs to further the interest, well-being and education of the pupils. They were also expected to foster co-operation and sound relationships amongst parents, teachers and students (Northern Province Provincial Constitution 1990:2).

One could say that the context within which governing bodies were established in the Northern Province has been influenced by many factors. The fact that schools are situated far apart has an impact on the distribution of information and resources to schools. This has been echoed by the Provincial Sub-directorate on the establishment of governing bodies. He stated that "due to poor communication strategies, dissemination of vital information regarding elections has been one of the major problems".[4] Information reached its audience late, or was distorted due to being transmitted across long distances and, in some instances, did not reach its final destination. Materials distributed to the regions were often found still lying at area offices and delayed reaching schools.

[4] Interviews with the Provincial Sub-Directorate on School Governance, Northwern Province, Department of Education 11 September 1997.

2.3 Conclusion

Looking at the abovementioned situation one can conclude that governing bodies in the Northern Province have been established under difficult conditions compared to areas such as Gauteng, where schools and resources are concentrated in a reasonably small area.

Apart from poor communication aggravated by dispersed settlement, activities of governing bodies have been influenced by socio-economic factors. The majority of parents work on farms and this has an impact on their abilities to raise school funds. Coupled with low family income is the high rate of unemployment. Many parents are not educated. This lack of education results in lack of proper knowledge required to understand educational matters. It has already been indicated in this study that parents are less willing to involve themselves in school governing bodies without the required knowledge.

In rural areas some teachers are still under-qualified and this has an effect on the quality of education offered. Poor quality education has a bearing on learners' ability to communicate, especially when discussions are not conducted in their mother tongue. As a result their level of participation remains low. Lack of housing subsidies in rural areas led to teachers staying away from schools. Due to the long distances they have to travel to school, this has an impact on their power to participate in the activities of governing bodies after school hours.

When governing bodies were established in the Northern Province, there were many things in common with their predecessors (PTSAs and PTAs),

especially regarding composition and some of their powers. This helped to support and strengthen the new governing bodies as not all the members had to learn procedures and strategies followed when governing school. A new dimension was created in which parents, teachers and learners work together.

Lastly one could say that the establishment of governing bodies in the Northern Province has been thoroughly prepared by selecting teachers, and training them to run elections democratically.

In all the schools covered by this study, teachers agreed that they have been trained as electoral officers (EOs) by government officials to run elections of governing bodies. This provided the firm foundation in which governing bodies were established in the Northern Province.

CHAPTER THREE

NEW POLICY RELATING TO GOVERNING BODIES

3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the new policy on school governance introduced as a measure to restructure the education system in South Africa. The aim of this chapter is to analyse the development of new policy on school governance. It reviews the Hunter Report (1995) on educational governance, the White Paper 2, the South African Schools Act 1996, the document to Understand the South African Schools Act and the Provincial document Guide for establishing School Governing Bodies. The chapter outlines the development of the policy on school governance across the spectrum. It also looks at the implementation strategies set by the provincial department, the compositions, new powers and functions of the first democratic governing bodies in the Northern Province. The chapter concludes by examining the views of educators, parents and learners on the process of policy development and implementation.

The chapter explores the following issues:

- The development of new policy ;

- Implementation;

- Views of the educators, parents and learners on the process of implementation and;

- Conclusion.

3.2 The Development of New Policy

As the process of policy change developed in South Africa, "a popular education initiative was linked to the democratic movement, in the form of the National Education Co-ordinating Committee (NECC)" (Greenstein, 1997b:13). The NECC successfully managed to unite students, teachers, parents, communities and liberation movements (principally the ANC) to fight against the discriminatory education of South Africa. It advocated a unitary system of, non-racist and non-sexist education in the country for all. The National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) and the Implementation Plan for Education and Training devised detailed policies and strategies for transforming the education system of South Africa. These initiatives provided a framework for the government to institute a formal committee to deal with transformation.

When South Africa became a democratic state in 1994, a new constitution was drawn up to consolidate the principle of democracy. The new constitution (section 247) requires that all public schools should establish democratic governing bodies. The government appointed a committee to review the organisation, funding and governance of schools. Its report has been known as the Hunter Report. The review committee came up with proposals on how they think schools should be governed. According to the

Hunter Report (1995:1), "the new structure of school organisation should create the conditions for the establishment of democratic governing bodies comprising parents, teachers, learners, non-teaching staff, headmasters and members of the community". Furthermore, the review committee proposed that parents should have the strongest numerical representation in school governing bodies.

The review committee also proposed the roles and responsibilities of school governing bodies. Amongst them, governing bodies should be responsible for broad school policy that is, school missions, goals and objectives. They are also responsible for recommending the appointment of staff, admission policy, curriculum and financing education. It was suggested that capacity-building programmes should be a pre-requisite for successful governing bodies. The proposals were submitted to the Minister of Education who, in turn, published the Education White Paper 2. The White Paper 2 (1996:13) refined the proposals of the review committee and institutionalised this policy in education. The White Paper 2 (1996:14) further stipulated that "democratic governance and education should be a partnership between a local community and the provincial education department". Of the utmost importance, it advocated that governing bodies were given the task to enhance the provision of quality education in schools. Having weighed up the advice it has received, the Ministry accepted the proposal that parents should be in the majority in these school governing bodies. The proposed roles and functions of governing bodies in a public school were accepted subject to some amendments. It is in the White Paper 2 that the government clarifies the issues of 'capacity-building programme'. Provinces were given the power to fund and design capacity-building programmes for new governors. Appointments of teachers and non-teaching staff would be made by the department of education on the recommendations of, and in

consultation with, school governing bodies.

This was the first step the government had shown its commitment to a process of power devolution and responsibility to school governing bodies.

After the White Paper 2 was published, government went further to release the South African Schools Bill. In this Bill, the powers and functions of governing bodies were amended and clarified. It also clarified that the duty to finance schools is the responsibility of the central and provincial governments. The government also bound itself to be accountable for any lawful actions taken against school governing bodies. Members of the governing bodies should acquaint themselves with the principle of the Labour Relations Act. The Bill was tabled in Parliament for discussion and passed under the South African Schools Act, 1996. Following the proposals and amendments of the Hunter Report, the White Paper 2 and the South African Schools Bill, all the principles and proposals were written as laws which must be accepted and respected by all South Africans. According to the South African Schools Act, every public school should establish a governing body which represents the interest of the community it serves. The South African Schools Act, 1996 also provides for a uniform system for the organisation, governance and funding of schools. The present government has justified parental involvement on the basis that it establishes amongst communities a sense of greater responsibility for school education.

After the South African Schools Act was passed, the Department of Education then released a document, Understanding the South African Schools Act (1997). The aim of the document was to explain and simplify the basic aspects of the South African Schools Act. Concepts such as 'governance' and 'management' were clarified. The new powers and

functions of school governing bodies were written in language best understood by all stakeholders that are represented in the structure of school governance. Most important Acts which may affect school governance, such as the Labour Relations Act, Education Employment Act, Provincial Education Act and regulations were illustrated in the Department of Education document: Understanding the South African Schools Act. This was done to avoid possible conflict of interests with members of school governing bodies.

As a way to facilitate better implementation of school governing bodies, the Northern Provincial Department of Education establish a policy document 'School Governance' a guide for Establishing School Governing Bodies (1997). The aim of the document was to explain the possible procedures and steps required to establish democratic governing bodies in schools. The purpose, function and membership of school governing bodies have been highlighted. Clarity has been made about people who can qualify as governors, the period in office and termination of service. Furthermore, people who are eligible to vote were defined and the election procedures were outlined. Lastly, practical guidelines to conduct elections were tabled. Different forms, such as nomination forms, ballot papers, voters' registration forms were provided in the document.

The document paved the way for the implementation of the first education policy on school governance. In addition, one could make a point that the process of policy development on school governance was underpinned by the principles of democracy, participation, openness and consultation. The process of shaping the policy on school governance was participatory and negotiated. Committees were appointed, negotiations conducted between the government and schools and a bill was tabled for discussion in Parliament.

3.3 Implementation

The process of policy implementation on school governance has been democratic when compared with the past structure of school governance. The Northern Province Department of Education and its Sub-Directorate, as well as the Regional Co-ordinator in School Governance, have exerted maximum efforts in trying to implement governing bodies successfully. Efforts have been made by the Department of Education to secure the service of the Aurora Associates International, a non-governmental organisation (NGOs) which trains school managers and school governors, (that is a training of the trainers). Aurora Associates International played a part in training regional co-ordinators who were seconded officials from schools. These people were trained on how to implement governing bodies in a democratic way and in all procedures required by the South African Schools Act on the election of governing bodies.

The regional co-ordinators, in turn, train teachers from different schools around the province on how election and implementation of governing bodies should be. The training of the electoral officers (EOs) focused on:

- Running the elections in a democratic way, including dissemination of information in time, transparency and honesty during the process of elections;

- Using the registration voters' roll for parents, teachers and learners;

- Using a secret ballot paper and recognising spoiled ballots (for example, a double mark or writing more than one name);

- Nominating participants and identifying people who are eligible to vote (School Governance: Guide for the Establishment of Governing Bodies, Northern Province 1997:6).

The electoral officers were further trained to use different forms involved in the election procedures (see appendix 6). This study revealed that all the schools used these forms when conducting elections. However in some schools the circuit office failed to supply the forms in time and this delayed the election process. The reason for the delay was logistic and government officials have vowed to prevent such problems in future. When interviewed on the process of implementation the Regional Co-ordinator on the establishment of governing bodies said:

> Some of the electoral officers complained that the forms involved in the election procedures were too many and unwieldy, and this has a negative effect on the time set for running the elections.[1]

According to the South African Schools Act, certain criteria should be followed when electing members of governing bodies. Parents should be citizens of South Africa and have a South African identity book.

Only parents whose children are presently registered at the school may be elected as members. Learners, who are officially enrolled at the school and

[1] Interviews with the Regional Co-ordinator on School Governance Region Three 12 September 97.

should not be at a level lower than grade eight, may be elected as members of governing bodies. The learner has to be a member of the Learner Representative Council (LRC). Educators and non-teaching staff employed at the school may be elected as members, while the principal is always automatically a member of a school governing body. Electing parents whose children are enrolled at the school, learners who are currently enrolled at the school, and educators employed in that institution may help to strengthen their commitment, dedication and accountability for decisions taken at school. When interviewed, a government official said:

> It is important to adhere to the requirements of the Schools Act because parents whose children are not registered at the school may become less interested in matters concerning education[2]

In spite of the training provided, the sub-directorate on school governance in the Northern Province noted the following problems during the stage of implementation:

- Government officials indicted that there was a lack of both human and material resources to run the elections. Lack of person power at regional level resulted in most of the co-ordinators being overburdened with the tasks of elections;

- Photocopying and reproduction of materials became a nightmare since most of the area offices and some regional offices lack photocopying machines and other resources to reproduce materials sent to regions. (If there were machines, they lacked the capacity to reproduce the

[2] Interviews with the Regional Co-ordinator on School Governance Region Three, at Thohoyandou, 12 September 1997.

volumes that were required. Other departments were approached to assist in solving the problem);

- Poor communication strategy at all levels. Dissemination of vital information regarding the elections has been one of the major problems. Often information reached its audience either late, or distorted. In some instances the information never reached its destination. Materials distributed to the regions were often found still lying at Area offices and delayed reaching the schools;

- Lack of support system at some of the Area offices. The sub-directorate indicated a number of problems faced by some co-ordinators due to lack of visible support from the Area offices, especially around collection, capturing and submission of data regarding the elections;

- Poor understanding of roles and functions by both election officers and principals;

- Different and incorrect interpretation of the South African Schools Act (SASA), and provincial regulations led to confusion and irregularities during the process of elections;

- Lack of ownership and commitment at all levels by some stakeholders;

- Elections did not take place in areas such as Bushbuckridge and Tafelkop due to border disputes and such areas need an extension of time;

- Elections have not taken place at either special schools and pre-schools in the Province. However, regulations for special schools and pre-schools have since been developed in terms of the requirements of the South African Schools Act and will be implemented soon.[3]

At the level of school, this study has revealed that some schools experienced problems during the processes of implementation. The most important problem has been poor attendance of elections by parents. Only one school out of the six covered in this study experienced the problem.

According to one headmaster, turn-out by the parents was poor and this had a negative impact on the representative nature of the elections. When interviewed the headmaster pointed out that:

> Our parents are not ready to participate meaningfully in matters affecting the education of their children. When you call them for a Cultural Day and Prize Giving, they respond in large numbers because they know that no responsibilities will be delegated to them. When you invite them for election meetings, they respond poorly because they are not ready to be given responsibilities at school[4].

The headmaster further states that absenteeism is also a problem among members of the executive committee. In two previous meetings not all members of the executive committee attended the meetings. Even though this cannot be the only reason for poor attendance, some parents have shown less interest when coming to school governing body meetings. For different reasons, previous governing bodies such as school boards, school

[3] Interviews with the Provincial Sub-Directorate on School Governance, Northern Province, Pietersburg, 11 September 1997.
[4] Interviews with the headmaster Malamulele Secondary School, at Malamulele, 16 September 1997.

committees, PTSAs and PTAs suffered from the same problem: lack of diligent attendance by parents. In other schools, especially were members of the governing bodies are popular and known to the community, attendance has been reasonably good and elections were conducted successfully.

Despite the abovementioned problems, elections of the governing bodies went well as scheduled throughout the province. Perhaps the most important reason could be that members who were elected to the positions of governing bodies came from the communities within which the schools are situated. Apart from working as school governors, they also help the communities in civic organisations. When interviewed the chairman of the SGB, who is a member of the royal family said:

> These people have just elected me to this position. Maybe it is because I have been serving them well in the royal office.[5]

They are highly supported and, in most cases, are elected unopposed. In rural areas it is rare to find a member coming from a different ethinic group as in urban areas. This makes election procedures simple because members are well known by the people who voted for them. The disadvantage of this situation is that members are just elected without understanding and following the correct election procedures. This affects their commitment, dedication and willingness to co-operate and sacrifice their time.

As they are presented with challenges and difficulties, they need

[5] Interviews with the chairperson of School Governing Body who is also a member of the Royal family, Khangale Secondary School, Hatshikundamalema, 23 September 1997.

opportunities to come up with creative ways of dealing with the most problematic tasks of governing bodies. Though the process of implementation has been faced with financial constraints, the training provided to electoral officers helps in the implementation of governing bodies in the province.

3.4 How Stakeholders View the New Governance Policy

The idea of community involvement in school governance has gained currency with all stakeholders in education. For a long time, democratising education was a demand in the education struggle conducted by the democratic movement.

The government had always tried to maintain as much control as possible in the hands of the education department. Although legislation provided for nominal parental involvement in schools, parent committees never had more than advisory powers. The government never conceded any role in governance to teachers or students (Dlamini 1993:2).

The composition of the new governing bodies, which includes parents, teachers, learners and the headmaster, is a great achievement for the South African education system. The education department is proud of the inclusion of all stakeholders having an interest in the provision of quality education of schools. The Sub-directorate and the Regional Co-ordinator of school governance in the Northern Province both responded by acknowledging the inclusion of parents, learners and teachers in structures of governance as a major victory in schools. When interviewed the Sub-

Directorate of school governance summed it up thus:

> For the first time in the history of South Africa and the Northern Province teachers, learners and parents are constitutionally recognised as members of the school governing bodies. This is a great achievement.[6]

The government officials see the provision made by the South African Schools Act, to invite teachers, learners and parents to participate actively in the democratising process of school governance, as a major step towards democratising the education system in South Africa. Government officials revealed that schools have a responsibility to implement governing bodies in accordance to the South African Schools Act. When asked about the way governing bodies have been composed the headmaster declared that:

> I welcomed the composition in that parents, teachers and learners are represented in the structure of school governance and this inclusion will help to reduce the load of work principals had before. He further indicated that headmasters now share the responsibilities of what happens at school with parents, teachers and learners, unlike before when headmasters used to be accountable for whatever decision was taken at school.[7]

In all the schools the study covered, headmasters came out in support of the inclusion of teachers, learners and parents in school governing bodies. Only one headmaster slammed the inclusion of learners. He claimed that "learners are still too young to get involved in matters of governance and school administration".[8]

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[6] Interviews with the Sub-Directorate in School Governance, Department of Education , Pietersburg, 11 September 1997.
[7] Interviews with the headmaster, Raluswielo Secondary School, Sibasa, 19 September 1997.
[8] Interviews with the headmaster Tshinavhe Secondary School,at Vuwani, 18 September 97

Apart from being non-adult. learners are difficult to convince, especially when they come up with a standing position. To change the learners' preconceived ideas is a difficult task. He further stated that "when issues of serious concern were discussed, learners take time to agree on something and this lead to time-wasting"[9]. Generally speaking, it is not often where we find ourselves in this argumentative situation. Other problems are solved through the concern of parents, teachers and learners.

When the researcher interviewed the learners on how they viewed their inclusion in the governing body, the response elicited mixed feelings. About 75 % of the learners responded positively to being included. They stated that for a long period they have been left out in matters that concerned them. Policies, rules and regulations were formulated at the level of the school on their behalf. Now the South African Schools Act allows for the inclusion of learners in the school governing body. Learners regard it as a great step forward to democratising the education system. As a structure of school governance, learners believed that their inclusion on the governing bodies will impact positively as they represent and serve their interests at school. The problems of learners as individuals and as a group will be easily addressed by this structure of governance. A learner, expressed her sentiments of being a member of the governing bodies as follows:

> To be a member of the governing body is helpful. It helps to solve problems between learners and teachers and between learners and parents. The position of being a member is challenging and I like to work with parents because there is transparency and a chance of getting to know each other well.[10]

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[9] Interviews with a teacher in the SGB, Tshinavhe Secondary School, 18 September 1997.

[10] Interviews with a learner who is a member of the School Governing Body, Raluswielo Secondary School, 19 September 1997.

The above statement implies that some of the learners have already recognised the importance of the governing bodies in schools. If learners can identify governing bodies as structures that can help them socialise and solve problems at school, then the presence of these structures of governance is important. But the other group of learners (about 25 %) see the governing bodies as a structure which is less helpful to them.

They said that being a member of the governing body has a negative effect on the time set aside for learning. According to them, learners are spending the time for learning and preparing for their future with adults who are either professionals or workers. Adults have nothing to lose but learners are wasting their time. They believed that teachers have the responsibility to teach, while learners should learn, so as to bring the culture of teaching and learning back on track. When asked about the importance of being a member of the governing body, another learner had a different opinion:

> To be a member of the governing body implies attending endless meetings. I do not like to discuss issues with my parents because they will always support the ideas of teachers. Apart from that, it wastes my time set for learning[11]

Apart from the problems experienced by some of the learner representatives in the governing body (time-wasting), other learners welcomed the decision by the government to incorporate them. They see the school governing body as a structure through which learners could participate in grievance procedures, the drafting of documents (such as the school plan and the school policy) as well as engaging teachers and parents in contesting issues that affect them.

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[11] Interviews with learner who is not a member of the School Governing Body, Raluswielo Secondary School, 19 September 1997.

The incorporation of parents in the school governing body has been accepted by almost every parent interviewed. Parents believed that they are now recognised through an Act as members of the school governing body. They further said that before new governing bodies were put in place, members of the governing body were either nominated by the headman or chief of the village to be on the governing body. In certain areas parents state that headmasters used to draft onto the school boards or school committees only those parents who were loyal to them or to the headman or the chief of the village.

Parents see the new governing body mechanism as being more transparent and representative because members are elected by parents themselves to be on the governing body. Parents said that the new governing body system provides the opportunity to know and understand what is happening at school, unlike before when they were only involved in resolving conflicts and crises as well as paying school fees. They welcome the SGB and raise no objection in the way the structures have been composed. When interviewed a parent summed it up thus:

> We have been waiting for this opportunity to come so that we can participate with confidence in the education of our children. It's long that we have been called collaborators of apartheid and now that we have been elected to the positions by parents themselves we see no problems. The only thing left for us is to work hard with teachers in improving the education of our children.[12]

The above statement demonstrates the 'drive' parents have in working towards better education in schools. They have been working under an apartheid government but now they are elected democratically to the new

governing body. It is necessary that schools accept parents, not as collaborators but as partners, in the process of educational transformation.

The powers and functions of governing bodies have been outlined in the South African Schools Act, 1996 and the provincial document: Guide to Establishing Democratic Governing Bodies (1997) on school governance. According to the South African Schools Act, 1996 governing bodies should draw up a school constitution in accordance with the requirements of the Act. They are also responsible for drawing up a school policy which includes: admission policy; school fees; maintenance of physical assets and school stocks; attendance registers (pupils); punctuality; school uniform (attire); conduct and discipline; staff matters (professional and staff development); pupils' assessment and parental involvement. They also promote and strive to ensure the development of the school by providing quality education for learners.

They are expected to draw up the school budget and establish budget priorities according to guidelines set by the member of the Executive Council. Governing bodies have the power to appoint and recommend staff.

What is important, according to this study, is how the powers and functions of the governing bodies in the Northern Province have been devolved and decentralised to the people on the ground. This study has revealed that, one week after the election, members of the governing bodies attended an inauguration ceremony conducted by government officials. During the inauguration ceremony members of the governing bodies were officially given powers by the officials from Education Department. Their powers and

[12] Interviews with a parent who is a member of the School Governing Body, Tshinavhe Secondary School, at Vuwani, 18 September 1997.

functions were clearly outlined in accordance with the requirements of the South African Schools Act, 1996. Concepts such as "governance" and "management", which confuse many, were explained to them by the government officials. In this way governing bodies were made aware that they are responsible for school governance and not school management as many usually think. The day-to-day running of the school belongs to the headmaster and teachers while governing bodies are in charge of drawing up the school's plan; school's policy (including rules and regulations); maintenance of the schools and grounds.

At the inauguration ceremony the government officials spelt out powers decentralised to schools (see the abovementioned section on powers and functions) and how these powers should be exercised. Governing bodies should exercise their powers within the parameters of the South African Schools Act 1996 and the Bill of Rights. Many parents believed that the inauguration ceremony has empowered them and this will make their decisions carry weight, rather than before when they were used as a "rubber stamp". Parents said that rubber-stamping the decision of the government belittled members of the governing body. Furthermore they appreciated the initiative of the government only if it is not an act of brainwashing them, but an improvement on the way they work. When interviewed a parent said:

> We have attended the inauguration ceremony in which we were officially given powers by the Department of Education. As a result we feel confident in what we do and say at school.[13]

According to this statement, inauguration has given more courage and

[13] Interviews with a parent who is a member of the School Governing Body, Raluswielo Secondary School, at Sibasa, 19 September 1997.

enthusiasm to parents in working towards the improvement of the education system. It helps to define the boundaries within which members of governing bodies operate when executing their tasks.

They now believe that they are also legally covered by the government in terms of any legal action taken against them.

Furthermore, training procedures for members of governing bodies were outlined during the inauguration ceremony. Members of governing bodies would be trained with the help of Aurora Associates International. According to government officials training would first focus on how to draw up a school policy document, a school plan as well as management of school funds. Lastly, government officials explicitly stated that governing bodies would be monitored from time-to-time with the aim of identifying problems and providing strategies to deal with such problems. Achievements could be appreciated and sustained by means of encouraging members to keep up the standard of good work.

3.5 Conclusion

The development of a policy on school governance in South Africa has been made out of some levels of consultation and negotiation. During the period of apartheid, policy development and implementation was solely the responsibility of the government. The current policy has been debated by members of Parliament, and stakeholders having an interest in education and inputs made to improve the policy.

This shows the government's willingness to devolve power to provincial and local levels. As it was the responsibility of provincial government to implement democratic governing bodies, training has been conducted to put such bodies into place. Aurora Associates International played a role in the training of electoral officers in schools. Looking at the implementation phase, there has been a problem of logistics where the information was delayed or reached its audience late. Despite these drawbacks, elections went ahead as planned.

Education officials, educators and learners, expressed satisfaction about the way governing bodies were put in place, which qualifies the democratic nature of governing bodies and school governance.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Impact of Governing Bodies in Schools

4. 1 Introduction

The policy of education governance in South Africa has been instituted with the aim of democratising schools and providing equal education opportunities. The establishment of democratic governing bodies is thus in line with the process of democratising schools. The South African Schools Act and the 1997 provincial document on the establishment of democratic governing bodies have set the basic requirements and procedures to be followed in every school when governing bodies are established. The chapter investigates how the new powers and functions are exercised by members of the governing bodies in schools. It analyses the impact of school governing bodies on the improvement and provision of quality education. The central argument of this chapter is that, despite all the democratic processes followed in the implementation of school governing bodies, these have not successfully:

- Democratised schools;

- Improved the culture of learning and teaching;

- Contributed to the provision of quality education and curriculum development;

- Helped in the maintenance of discipline and raised funds for the school.

This study has carefully recorded interviews with government officials, headmasters, teachers, learners and parents to examine the impact of governing bodies in schools. Information related to education governance has also been gathered by the researcher. From the study certain factors emerged as having an impact on governing bodies. To advance the argument, this chapter analyses and examines key factors that emerged in education governance. Amongst them, the following are the most important factors of the chapter:

- Democratisation and participation in school governing bodies;

- Time, commitment and dedication of some of the stakeholders;

- Interest groups within SGBs;

- Discipline and internal conflict in schools; and

- Educational resources in schools.

Having looked at the above factors, they were integrated, analysed and the possible effects and impact on the premised arguments of this study were examined in this chapter. In summary the inter-relatedness of various factors, and the extent to which they influence the activities of governing bodies in schools, were traced and noted.

4.2 Democratisation and participation in school governing bodies

Members of current governing bodies have been elected democratically as opposed to the previous bodies of school governance. In each school covered by this study, all members expressed their satisfaction on the way in which the elections were conducted. They believed that the whole process of election has been transparent, fair and democratic. Invitation letters (see the attached invitation form in appendix 6) to various stakeholders were dispatched by electoral officers (EOs) to all parents whose children attend the schools and proper time was provided for parents to attend election meetings.

As a result of this planned invitation, different stakeholders such as parents, teachers, learners and other community members near the schools participated in the election procedures. The provincial document provides the required steps and the different forms (see appendix 6) which should be used when electing members of governing bodies. These procedures ensured that the elections were conducted in a democratic way. The practice of electing members of governing bodies has also been adopted in countries such as Britain. As Martin (1989:109), has indicated:

> In Britain the register constitutes the list of electors in the election of parents, governors or in ballots concerning seeking grants – they maintain the status for the school. Where there is more than one child in a family attending school, each parent still has only one vote.

However, Cordingley and Kogan (1995:12) state,

> The concept of democracy should move away from the simple 'ballot box democracy,' the right to elect or refuse to be

> elected during election time, to a more diffuse and active concept of accountability and control, responsiveness and redress of grievance.

This implies that the use of a secret ballot vote alone does not necessarily result in democratisation of education. As for Cordingley and Kogan (1995), democratising education also includes accountability and responsibility for the decisions taken by members of the governing body. This will encourage members of governing bodies to be answerable and accountable for their decisions and actions.

Despite the fact that governing bodies have been elected democratically, democratisation and participation by parents, teachers and learners have not been successful in all the schools covered by this study. The study has revealed that not all members of governing bodies participated or were consulted equally when decisions were made and implemented. Decision-making powers are still the responsibility of the educated members of the school governing body. Parents are less motivated to participate because they lack proper knowledge in areas around policy planning and formulation, curriculum and drawing up school plan. Learners are still young and inexperienced and cannot participate actively in many matters affecting school improvement and development. As a result, teachers, headmaters and some educated stakeholders lead and control the activities of the SGB. When interviewed, a parent said:

> As parents we feel inferior because of the lack of proper knowledge on matters affecting school and this left teachers and principals controlling and directing the activities of the governing bodies.[1]

[1] Interviews with a parent who is a member of the School Governing Body, Vhulaudzi Secondary School, at Tshitavha, 22 September 1997.

Apart from a strong commitment by both the government and the political organisations in South Africa to democratise schools, democracy is about involvement and participation of all role players in the decision-making process. Participation of different stakeholders in education creates a sense of partnership in education and this co-operative environment between the state, parents, and learners and educators, helps to foster a feeling of ownership of the school (Dlamini 1993:5). Participation of all stakeholders would benefit the school from a wide range of expert knowledge which exists in the community the school is situated. It is important that our school organisations reflect that involvement. Due to lack of educational knowledge, many parents (especially in rural areas) do not have the desire to participate in educational matters. They feel less motivated to get involved in the sphere of education, in which some of them did not participate or were unsuccessful, during their time. When interviewed about the level of parent participation in educational matters, here is what a parent had to say:

> I personally did not go to school. How do you think I can tell the teachers what to do? That is impossible. Even if we can be trained, I do not think this can change my perception that school is the domain of the educated people, not us.[2]

Participation and involvement of different people in educational governance requires professionalism and expertise to understand the context within which educational transformation operates. As many parents are uneducated, especially in rural areas, they are faced with certain unrealistic expectations when they attempt to engage themselves meaningfully in structures of school governance.

[2] Interviews with a parent who is a member of the school governing body, Khangale Secondary School, 23 September 1997.

4.3 Time, Commitment and Dedication of Some Stakeholders

Democratic governing bodies provide a basis for co-operative governance in schools. While it is the responsibility of the provincial education department to provide basic teaching and learning materials, it is the task of the communities to ensure that schools are turned into places where effective teaching and learning can take place. Democratic school gc .nance is aimed at establishing a culture of learning and teaching. Governing bodies require enough time to organise, plan and run meetings so that the culture of learning and teaching can be reclaimed. This research has revealed that members of governing bodies do not have the time to participate meaningfully in the activities of this structure. In most cases parents are self-employed or work far away from their homes and are only available at weekends and during holidays. When interviewed a self-employed parent pointed out that:

> I am not employed by the government and I cannot use all my time discussing school matters. I need more time to sell my fruit as my family depends on me.[3]

Even though this could not contribute to the collapse of these structures, lack of time, dedication and commitment are some of the problems faced by governing bodies. While learners agreed that they are represented on the school governing body, others slam the time spent on meetings. They believed that being a member is a waste of time that should be set aside for learning and studying. When interviewed on the issue of time, commitment and dedication a learner had this to say:

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3 Interviews with a parent who is a member of the school governing body, Mabea Secondary school, Bochum 25 September 1997.

> Members of the governing body spend the whole day attending meetings. Surely this is a waste of time for studying? Adults have already seen their future and, as for us, we need to concentrate on our studies.[4]

In most cases formal letters should be sent to the employers of parents to request permission for them to attend SGB meetings. This system takes time and not all the members can attend meetings during work time. When interviewed about his availability to attend meetings a parent said, "Only if the secretary of the SGB sends a formal invitation letter to my employer on time, do I not have any problem attending meetings"[5]

As a result of time constraints, in some of the schools covered by this study, meetings of the SGB can only be attended at weekends or at night.

Teachers also complain that long meetings affect the time spent for teaching and learning. Even though other teachers are optimistic about the future of SGBs many complained about too many meetings and the large amounts of time spent on such gatherings. They think it is not good for teachers to stay away from needy classes as this has a bad effect on the learners' outcomes. For teachers, learners, parents and the interested community, time is required to formulate and adopt policies around the provision of quality education in schools. Lack of time has an impact on policy formulation and adoption since some parents could not attend the meetings. According to government officials one of the goals of introducing democratic governing bodies is to make sure that stakeholders participate in the policy formulation process at local level. When interviewed the sub-directorate of school governance said, "It has been the responsibility of the government to

[4] Interviews with a learner who is not a member of the school governing body. Raluswielo Secondary School, at Sibasa 19 September 1997.
[5] Interviews with a parent in the SGB, Malamulele Secondary School,

formulate education policies without involving people who are affected by such policies"[6]

Even though the provision of quality education is not directly related to governance, good governance and strong leadership have a positive effect towards the provision of quality education in schools. When teachers, parents and learners know what to do they commit themselves to the improvement of quality of education. Lack of commitment has been the result of some members of governing bodies being elected to their positions unaware of the responsibilities they faced. They did not fully understand the requirements of the South African Schools Act in transforming and democratising schools. When interviewed a parent said, "I do not know my tasks, but I have been told we will represent parents in the school governing body".[7]

This is against the education department campaign to re-launch the Culture Of Learning and Teaching and Service programme (COLTS). Current members of the governing bodies should understand their tasks as a means to improve quality in education. COLTS emphasises the improvement of the physical infrastructure of schools and training of school governors.

When interviewed on the provision of quality education, many teachers and headmasters responded by saying that the quality and the standard of education has gone down in schools because of a lack of commitment by learners, parents and teachers. Headmasters believe that parents have a

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[6] Interviews with the Provincial Sub-Directorate on school governance, Department of Education, Pietersburg, 11 September 1997.

7 Interviews with a parent who is a member of the school governing body, Khangale Secondary School, 23 September 1997.

role to play in bringing back the lost culture of teaching and learning.

Corporal punishment may no longer be applied and learners are uncontrollable. Parents will help to create an environment conducive to teaching and learning in schools. An environment conducive to teaching and learning has a bearing on provision of quality education in schools. Epps (1992:147) states that "an accepted belief about parental involvement in education is that it has a positive effect on children by encouraging their cognitive and affective development". It is believed that parents' involvement in schools can bring together efforts amongst educators and parents to improve the academic achievement and change the way schools are governed.

4.4 Interest Groups within SGBs

Despite an increased belief that the school is the centre for change, schools exist within the context of parents, community, school district, other education organisations, institutions and levels of government. There are many conflicts of interest and ideological differences between these groups and they cannot be ignored: "Each of these groups or institutions has an agenda, each has a 'turf' or self-interest to protect, and each wants to have an impact on school governance" Fink and Stoll (1996:133).

Teachers, parents, learners and the government have different interests in education. The education department is of the opinion that through decentralisation of power to schools, governing bodies will democratise and increase participation. This could be achieved when community members

work together in improving and developing schools. Learners regard the governing body as a structure which addresses the problem of corporal punishment at schools. It is only when coming to issues of punishment that learners will actively participate. Learners remained less interested in matters concerning curriculum, planning and development. This could be attributed to the fact that, for a long time, learners had no structure to address the long-standing problem of punishment. When punishment is no longer an issue learners sit back and relax. When interviewed, a learner said:

> It is long that we have been severely punished by teachers without voicing our opinion about corporal punishment and the pain we feel. Governing bodies will help us to address this problem.[8]

Teachers look at the SGB as a forum to address the problem of discipline in class. After the abolition of punishment, teachers had no means to punish learners when they arrived late, failed to do homework, failed tests and played truant. When governing bodies address these issues teachers are actively involved, knowing that parents may come with another alternative to corporal punishment. Teachers believe that for effective teaching and learning to succeed there should be order in the classroom. When interviewed a teacher had this to say on discipline:

> We see the governing bodies as a forum to address discipline in classrooms. Now that we cannot punish these children, their parents should come with some alternative to corporal punishment.[9]

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[8] Interviews with a learner who is not a member of the school governing body, Mabea Secondary School, at Bochum 25 September 1997.
[9] Interviews with a teacher who is not a member of the school governing body, Vhulaudzi Secondary School, at Tshitavha 22 September 1997.

Parents in contrast, regard governing bodies as a forum to address their long-standing problems with teachers. Many parents have lost faith in teachers. They believe that teachers are not doing enough teaching in classes. They are against teachers going on strike and teachers staging 'mass action'. When interviewed a parent explained that:

> Teachers can no longer be trusted. They engage themselves in politics and leave our children with no-one to attend to them.[10]

Through the governing body we are going to discuss some of these issues and emerge with a common understanding. Teachers, parents and learners need to form a unit and work together in improving education rather than to look at each group's individual interests. The emergence of different interests amongst the stakeholders could be the result of lack of recognition during the apartheid period. Parents, teachers and learners were not recognised by the apartheid government and did not have a forum to which grievances could be addressed.

Governing bodies cannot concentrate on curriculum development, and maintenance of buildings and grounds, if their components still exhibit these differences of interests. There is a need to understand governing bodies as an organ responsible for the general improvement of the school and not a *milieu* to further one's interests.

4.5 Resources and Opportunities to Raise School Funds

[10] Interviews with a parent who is a member of the school governing body, Vhulaudzi Secondary School, at Tshitavha 22 September 1997.

The Department of Education has the responsibility of providing the necessary resources and infrastructure in schools. The vast area of the Northern Province is characterised by drought and a large unemployment rate. Coupled with these problems the province is experiencing a massive shortfall and budget cuts from the central government which contribute to poor quality education and the low pass rate of learners.

The budget cut in the province has led to non-employment of new teachers in schools and retrenchment of temporary teachers by the national government. Greenstein (1997a:2) indicated that the 1997/1998 budget and funding of education in the Northern Province was R4 000 030,00 (that is, 4 % less then the previous year). A decrease of 4 % indicated that the Northern Province has experienced a 4 % cut on budget spending in education while other provinces, such as Gauteng, Eastern Cape, Western Cape, kwaZulu-Natal, Northern Cape and North West received budget increases for the year 1997/1998. The difference in budget allocation has been that budget system reflected primarily the different population sizes of each province and not the size (area) of the province as such.

According to Chisholm and Vally (1996:21), "the funding model contained in the South African Schools Act, expects school communities to contribute to school resources". As for the Northern Province, structural improvements and the provision of facilities and equipment in schools remain an important element in the establishment of the culture of learning and teaching. As a result of inadequate funding, schools have to supplement their budget by raising additional funds. Raising additional funds has been a problem in the Northern Province since the region has a limited number of business people who can donate money to schools. Members of the governing bodies in the Northern Province are faced with the problem of shortage of funds for

structural improvements, building classes and the provision of teaching and learning facilities and resources. When interviewed on the availability of resources one headmaster put it thus:

> In this school, there is a shortage of five classes, and 70 to 90 learners occupy one class. There is a shortage of furniture, textbooks and teachers. As a result, it is difficult to exercise effective teaching and learning.[11]

In all the schools covered by this study, headmasters have expressed their concern about the budget cut which led to shortage of money to administer schools. Depending on the needs of the school, annual school fees have been raised to the figures shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: A comparison between existing and new school fees in the six schools studied.

School Studied	Existing Annual School Fee	New Annual School Fee	% Increase
School 1	R20.00	R40.00	100.0 %
School 2	R30.00	R50.00	66.6 %
School 3	R30.00	R50.00	66.6 %
School 4	R20.00	R50.00	150.0 %
School 5	R25.00	R40.00	60.0 %
School 6	R30.00	R40.00	33.3 %

[11] Interviews with the headmaster, Vhulaudzi Secondary School, at Tshitavha, 22 September 1997.

Headmasters believed that raising school funds is the only way schools can supplement their budget since donations from the business sector are limited. Schools, however, are constrained the by high unemployment rate of parents and low family incomes of less than R350.00 per family per month.

Except one school, which raises money from participation in cultural dance competitions, soccer competitions and selling school letters, others do not have any means to raise additional funds due to the lack of resources. In most cases schools do not have computers or typewriters or money to buy the necessary stationery. This is what one headmaster had to say,

> Money raised through competitions is not sufficient and usually returned to the participants as a form of incentive. Learners do not have money to buy newsletters and the school always run at loss.[12]

The method of funding employed by the state will not help much to address the backlogs of the apartheid era in the Northern Province because of its vastness and the low teacher-learner ratios.

4.6 Discipline and Conflict at School

When the news broke that the use of corporal punishment in the teaching profession is illegal, many teachers and headmasters were left feeling hopeless because they did not have any alternative way to keep discipline at

[12] Interviews with the headmaster, Malamulele Secondary School, at Malamulele, 16 September 1997.

schools. Large number of learners were beaten at schools for minor infringements, such as arriving late; not having a school uniform; making a noise; failing to pay school funds and many similar offences. In support of abolishing corporal punishment, psychologists have been quoted in *Matlhasedi* (1996, vol. 4, no. 1) as saying that "the use of corporal punishment thus teaches a child that violence is a legitimate means of asserting one's authority over others".

Corporal punishment has been regarded as a violation of human rights and in June 1995 the Constitutional Court abolished corporal punishment for juveniles. Delivering his judgement, Justice Langa said, "it is a practice which debases everyone involved in it so close to the twenty-first century. Juvenile whipping is cruel, it is inhuman and it is degrading. No compelling interests has been proved which can justify the practice" *Matlhasedi* (1996:45). The ruling by Judge Langa put an end to corporal punishment in school.

Teachers were left with no alternative but to abide by the ruling of the court. Parents, teachers and learners blame bad discipline in schools for poor matriculation results, lowering of standards and the lack of a culture of teaching and learning in schools. In the article, "Halls of Conflict and Chaos", Tshabalala (1997) blames "bad discipline" as having much of the blame for the poor matriculation results. Bad discipline leads to chaos, class disruptions and stay-aways, all of which have a negative effect on the time allocated for teaching and learning. When interviewed about discipline a teacher representative in the SGB states that "poor matriculation results have a bearing on the lack of discipline in class. If this situation is not addressed it

will be impossible to improve matriculation results"[13].

This study has revealed that many schools in the Northern Province rely on the support of parents to solve problems arising in school because of poor discipline. As an alternative to corporal punishment, schools have constructed security fences to curb late-comers and truancy during school hours. It is believed that learners who come to school late should be locked out of school to prevent disruption of lessons. As a result learners are forced to arrive in time to avoid being locked out. Security fences also help to curb vandalism of and theft from school properties.

The parents of learners who commit an offence are called to school to discuss the problem with the parents, teachers and the learner. This system has been used by all the schools covered by this study. In this situation, parents usually determine the type of punishment their children should be given if found guilty. When interviewed on the system of calling parents to school, the headmaster responded:

> Though it is the only system we can use to maintain discipline at school, it takes time as it requires learners to leave the class and go to call their parents. [14]

Apart from calling parents, a learner who commits an offence and agrees to be punished is given a task to do, such as cleaning the classrooms, toilets and the school grounds. Many parents and teachers are still not satisfied by the manner in which learners are punished in schools. They still regard whipping of learners as the only way discipline can be reclaimed in schools.

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[13] Interviews with a teacher representative in the SGB, Mabea Secondary School, at Bochum, 25 September 1997.
[14] Interviews with the headmaster, Raluswielo Secondary School, at Sibasa 19 September 1997.

When interviewed a parent said,

> We still believe that corporal punishment is necessary to maintain discipline in schools and, as parents, we feel that giving children a task to do cannot help to solve the problem.[15]

Learners have a different perspective about punishment. Learners believe they belong in the classroom and that they are not labourers who clean the school surroundings and grounds. When interviewed a learner said:

> We come to school to learn and not as workers who clean the school surroundings and grounds. Though it is a difficult thing to do, teachers and parents must forget about punishment.[16]

Governing bodies spend much of their time discussing issues around discipline in schools while other matters, such as drawing up the school plan, developing the school curriculum and maintaining the environment and grounds are given less attention.

In *Matlhasedi*, Vally (1996:20) offered the following alternatives to corporal punishment:

- Teachers should use positive disciplinary measures, such as rewarding positive behaviour. This implies that teachers should be exemplary and a model of appropriate behaviour as well as providing behaviour modification techniques. Behaviour modification can be identified by encouraging or discouraging what "triggers" a certain

15 Interviews with a parent who is a member of the school governing body, Khangale Secondary School, 23 September 1997.

16 Interviews with a learner who is not a member of the the SGB, Mabea Secondary School, at Bochum, 25 September 1997.

behaviour;

- Counselling of learners having problems;

- The development of a democratic approach to discipline in a school atmosphere, compatible with the principle of equity, mutual respect and responsibility.

Governing bodies in the Northern Province are still struggling with the best way to maintain discipline in schools. There is a need for teachers to change their attitude towards corporal punishment and to adopt a more positive approach. Conducting an awareness campaign that effective teaching and learning can occur without punishment is necessary. When problems erupt at schools parents are always involved in solving them, but the shortage of time by both the teachers and parents has an adverse effect in resolving this crisis.

4.7 Transport Costs and Difficulties

As a result of undulating topography and scattered settlements, schools in rural areas are situated far away from each other. In such areas parents have to walk or travel by taxis for long distance to schools. At other schools transport is scarce and parents had no option but to walk. When interviewed a parent said:

> I am 67 years old and cannot walk for long distance. I am a

pensioner and do not have money to pay for a taxi.[17]

This research study has revealed that parents are demanding transport subsidy from schools because of the long distance they travel when attending meetings of the SGB. "To get to school often requires time and expense of travel" (Glatter 1989:196). Other parents went to the extent of demanding remuneration for the work they are doing. This is what a parent had to say about remuneration:

> The government has money, they must pay us for the work we are doing. After all we are not employed.[18]

It is also important to note that there are good things behind the reimbursement of transport costs demanded by parents. Schools will benefit from the working together of parents, teachers and learners. When good governance is established and schools democratised, effective teaching and learning are possible. The position of the government is that a parent is elected to the governing body by virtue of being the biological parent of the child. Whatever service the parent renders to school is done for benefit of the child. Despite the call by the government that communities should have "ownership" of the school, many parents still believe that schools belong to the government and that the government should pay for whatever is done for the school. Headmasters are also of the opinion that the government should subsidise transport costs incurred by members of governing bodies when they attend meetings. Schools do not have money to pay transport costs and this has a negative effect on the level of attendance.

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[17] Interviews with a parent who is a member of the SGB, Vhulaudzi Secondary School, at Tshitavha, 22 September 1997.
[18] Interviews with a parent who is a member of the SGB, Raluswielo Secondary School, at Sibasa 19 September 1997.

It is important to note that schools in rural areas are more affected by transport costs than schools in semi-urban areas. This is because in rural areas schools are situated far away from each other following the pattern of population settlement. Another contributing factor is the high rate of unemployment in the Northern Province. Many parents are not employed and have no income. They cannot attend meetings because they do not have money to pay transport over long distances.

Often other members of governing bodies also cannot attend meetings because they, too, do not have money to pay for transport over long distances. This contributed to absenteeism at meetings by members of school governing bodies. Absenteeism at meetings affected schools more in remote areas than schools around town, where resources are concentrated in one area. When interviewed one headmaster said:

> I think the government should pay members of governing bodies, especially parents who are not working and do not have money to pay for transport when they attend meetings.[19]

Looking at the issue of transport it is apparent that it has a negative impact on the activities of governing bodies. There is the need to motivate parents to work hard and some form of compensation, especially in kind, is required to boost their morale. Without the active participation and co-operation of the different stakeholders, a sense of partnership in education will be difficult to achieve.

4.8 Value Systems of Different Sub-cultures and Age Groups

[19] Interviews with the headmaster, Malamulele Secondary School, at Malamulele, 18 September 1997.

"Culture change can occur, but it is a vastly more difficult, lengthy undertaking than most people imagine" Evans (1991:49). According to Evans (1991) quick organisational cultural change simply strengthens the culture and stimulates resistance. Evans has the opinion that culture, which involves attitudes, actions, norms and standards that have developed over a substantial period of time should be a "systemic change". This does not mean that culture cannot change or governing bodies cannot shape it, only that changing and shaping take time.

As mentioned before, governing bodies consist of parents, learners and teachers. Culturally older people do not argue with young children and women do not take decisions and make choices in the presence of men. Although it is good to observe existing norms and standards, schools in rural areas are affected more than schools in semi-urban areas. This is because in rural areas humanitarian values and morals are more highly observed and regarded than in urban ones.

This study has also revealed that women featured prominently on school governing bodies. The reason is that many young and middle-aged parents who can participate and actively involve themselves in structures of school governance have been re-deployed to Pietersburg when the former homelands (Venda and Gazankulu) were incorporated into the Northern Province. To protect their existing job positions, active civil servants were forced to leave their families and go to work in the capital city, where all the government departments are concentrated. As a result only old-age pensioners remained behind to take on the most demanding work of the middle-aged group. This research study has revealed that many parents in the SGB are old-age pensioners who, in most cases, do not understand educational concepts such as a democratic school, and democratic

participation. The old-age group no longer has stamina and when meetings are prolonged they become frustrated and walk out. They are often intolerant and lack vision, zeal and direction which are a powerful uniting force. In most cases this group of parents is at loggerheads with learners, who they accuse are wasting time by taking too long to understand issues discussed. When interviewed a parent summed it up thus:

> We cannot be called to come here and discuss issues with our children. We must tell these children what they must do and not do, rather than wasting our time, persuading them to agree over something.[20]

Though this study cannot single out old-age pensioners, young learners also fall within the same category. In the governing bodies, learners are also affected by the presence of their biological parents. They find it difficult to argue with their fathers and mothers when they disagree over an issue. As one learner put it:

> Working on the governing body with my mother is a difficult task to engage in. When we disagree over an issue it becomes difficult to argue in my mother's presence.[21]

As they are still young, this sector of the population is also affected by lack of accountability. When they are responsible for participating in learning activities or for completing work within set time-limits, it becomes very difficult for them to avoid the temptation to procrastinate. They spent most of their time finding ways to justify postponement of difficult tasks.

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[20] Interviews with a parent who is a member of the SGB, Khangale Secondary School, at Ha-Tshikundamalema, 23 September 1997.
[21] Interviews with a learner who is a member of the SGB, Raluswielo Secondary School, at Sibasa, 19 September 1997.

As a result, serious questions need to be raised about how well prepared are learners to make constructive and purposeful decisions in school governance. How well are learners able to select educational fields which best serve their long-term interests? Although it cannot be generalised that all learners and old-aged pensioners are less actively involved and restricted, this study has revealed that, in most cases, the middle-age group in structures of school governance remains actively involved. They are the ones who plan the meeting times and invite members of the governing bodies to such meetings. They ultimately lead discussions and probably influence the outcome of the meetings.

In conclusion, the factors outlined in this chapter - participation and involvement, time, commitment and dedication, different interest groups, transport costs and long walking distances - are the most important problems faced by governing bodies in schools. These factors limit the activities of governing bodies in schools and affect the ability to redress past disparities and the provision of quality education. The situation is further aggravated by lack of resources and poor discipline in class. Governance is a shared task which requires partnership and support at all levels of organisation. Where there is no active participation by all members of the organisation, domination of one group by another cannot be avoided.

4.9 Conclusions

Political organisations, and different stakeholders in South Africa, demanded democratic governing bodies in schools, hoping to liberate and transform education from the past apartheid system. This study has examined the development of democratic governing bodies in Region Three, Northern Province. It was concerned with the impact of powers and functions of governing bodies on schools as well as the extent to which such powers can transform the education system. The composition of governing bodies and the process of implementation have been investigated.

Many people believed that installing governing bodies will provide equal education opportunities, promote national unity and eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender, race and colour. Installing democratically elected governing bodies will enhance the sharing of responsibilities and increased accountability by the state and interested sectors, such as parents. As a result the aim of establishing governing bodies has been to involve parents and to share the tasks of school governance with the government. Different stakeholders supported that governing bodies should be composed of parents, educators, non-educators and headmasters. In most cases the working together of these different stakeholders in problem-solving and delivering services at school has been seriously affected by the lack of meaningful past participation and democratisation of schools.

Governing bodies are expected to deepen social democracy in schools. Parents, teachers and learners who were disadvantaged in the past are now participating in the process of democratising education in schools. It is becoming apparent that communities are taking an interest in the education of their children. They stand for elections and participate in meetings and

school activities. For governing bodies to democratise school, this study has revealed that there is a need for time to participate in such structures. Without parents sacrificing time to participate actively in school governance, democratising and socialising schools will continue to be a nightmare. There is the belief that local democracy is necessary to transform education. Governing bodies in the Northern Province have managed to secure democratic representation but not democratic participation and involvement in decision-making processes. It should be noted that many consultation modes have a negative effect in providing appropriate quality education in schools. Depending on the style used in practising democracy in schools, a democratic governing body is a good lever for transforming and democratising the education system in South Africa.

Governing bodies are supposed to broaden participation and ownership of the school. This study has revealed that participation by parents, teachers and learners is characterised by different interests which negatively affect the development of a sense of ownership of the school and the education system. Both professionals and non-professionals participate in a bid to redress the past inequalities in the provision of education. Many parents are not educated and believe that educated members should have a strong voice because of their knowledge and experience of education. Where this situation exists, the possibility of one group being dominated by another cannot be ruled out. Participation and ownership of the school remains an important tool, however, to encourage the exercise of a democratic decision-making process within the institution.

There is a general belief that parents can contribute to the provision of quality education at schools. Though the provision of quality education cannot be the responsibility of parents alone, quality education also relies on

quality learning and teaching materials. Introducing democratic governing bodies is not enough for the provision of quality education. There is the need to change people's attitude and behaviour towards the provision of quality. The different stakeholders need to understand how quality education, through better teaching and learning, can be enhanced. For governing bodies to be successful in transforming education, their attitudes, skills and knowledge should be harnessed to support the transformation process.

The establishment of governing bodies has led to decentralisation of powers and functions at local level. Decentralisation of powers and functions at local level is essential if democracy in schools is to be substantive rather than formal. This study has revealed that democratised school governance has yet to become reality in many school environments because certain powers, like control of finance, curriculum and organisation of schools have not been fully handed over to teachers, parents and learners. Other powers need to be applied for from the provincial head of department who may refuse or accept the application. Furthermore the powers and functions exercised by governing bodies are limited to the requirements of the South African Schools Act, 1996, the Labour Relations Act and Human Rights. The activities of governing bodies are not free from interference and their decision-making powers are restricted to the provincial rules and regulations.

Raising funds by increasing school fees is not sufficient to fight the historical imbalances and to transform the education system in the Northern Province. The little money raised is probably used to construct temporary shelters rather than building approved fixed classrooms. The current regulations on *per capita* expenditure based on the teacher to learner ratio will see the Northern Province being under-funded because of its large area and relatively small, but widely scattered, population.

The shortage of funds threatens to become a major problem to transformation in the short- and medium- term, especially in science and technology which are expensive subjects to develop and sustain. Even internal and external redistribution of resources is limited and not sufficient to drive change. The shortage of private [business] companies that can sponsor some of the projects has worsened the possibilities of funding schools from the private sector.

The abolition of corporal punishment and the alternative forms of punishment parents and teachers are implementing seem insufficient to maintain discipline in schools. The culture of learning and teaching can only be reclaimed if the environment in the classroom is conducive for effective teaching and learning. The government should provide, together with parents, alternative forms to corporal punishment if the culture of teaching and learning is to be achieved. Furthermore, parents are abusing their rights because what they are doing (giving a disobedient child a task to do as punishment) is not recognised by the South African Schools Act, 1996.

There is need for proper training and guidance for members of governing bodies when executing their tasks. School-based management, through the structures of governance, needs provision of considerable training, technical assistance and other forms of support for participating schools. They need help, direction and encouragement in dealing with instructional issues and in overcoming many obstacles that hamper growth and development. The real impact of school governing bodies is more symbolic than substantive in that the fundamental purpose of self-management of schools is to help educators survive the "stress" of environmental pressure, to realign schooling with the dominant values of its environment and to restore the mantle of legitimacy in school.

Under-qualified educators impact on the culture of teaching and learning. The education department needs to introduce programmes to upgrade teachers' qualifications. The most important question this study has asked is whether members of the governing bodies were elected being aware, certain and fully understanding the contents of the South African Schools Act, 1996 and the challenges they are facing. For me it seems most of the members are confused by the complexities of laws and regulations enshrined in the South African Schools Act. This became apparent when members of governing bodies complained about transport costs; the lack of time, and too many meetings.

In the process, it is also important not to under-estimate the power of different interest groups within SGBs. For effective changes to occur, members of governing bodies need to speak with one voice towards bringing about change. It is also important to note that governing bodies are working within cultural constraints which need time to change and shape. The fact that the hard-working middle-aged members of the governing bodies have been lost as a result of redeployment cannot be denied. The most active, middle class parents who, generally, are educated have been re-deployed to far away posts where they cannot be available during elections of the SGBs. This leads to old-age parents taking on more demanding work, such as that of being elected to school governing bodies.

This study recommends that when the impact of governing bodies is evaluated it is necessary to take into consideration the influence of culture, which has some barriers on the way democracy is exercised. The issues of age group within the structures of the SGBs; transport costs and transport subsidies (as they affect attendance of the activities of the SGB) also need to be addressed. Poor discipline in classrooms needs to be addressed as a

matter of urgency. Lack of resources and limited opportunities to supplement school fees worsen the situation. There is a need to finance changes and to supply the required resources to drive change. As a result, significant changes and innovations in education will not occur unless teachers and non-teaching staff are directly and actively involved in the planning and development of desired change. All school personnel and parents should be given opportunities to participate in the quality process through team work. Quality improvement in education should not be viewed as a "quick fix" process. Effective school governance is a long-term effort which requires organisational change and restructuring. Sincere commitment and effort by school governing bodies and school managers are essential to execute changes and transform the system of education.

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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW FOR TEACHERS, PARENTS, STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIVES AND HEADMASTERS IN SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

Please tick (√) the response that is appropriate to you and supply answers where required.

SECTION A

1. What gender are you?

Male		Female	

2. How old are you?

3. Work or position you hold?

Headmaster	Teacher	Learner	Parent	Other, please specify

4. How did you become a member of the SGB?

Elected		Nominated	

5. Before the new governing bodies were put in place, what form of structure was used to govern the school?

School board	School committee	PTSA / PTA	Other, please specify

5. Do you see any difference between the 'new' and the 'old' structures?

Yes		No	

6. Can you elaborate?

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SECTION B

6. What is your task on the SGB?

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7. How did you come to know this task?

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8. Have you been trained for your task? If yes, who trained you.

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9. How often do you hold meetings of the SGB?

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10. Do you still remember what was discussed in the meetings?

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11. Can you give me five most important decisions taken at the meetings? What happens after the decisions have been taken.

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12. How do you set the amount to be paid for school funds in your school?

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13. How do you address the issue of students whose parents cannot pay school funds?

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14. Do you raise funds to supplement school funds? For what purpose have you raised the money. What was the response from the community concerned?

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15. No school is without its internal problems. Can you tell me how you settle conflicts with students, teachers and parents? Can you give examples?

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16. Have you drawn up the school plan for the 1998? Plea. may I see it?

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17. How do you see the SGB contributing to improving the way schools are governed? Please elaborate.

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18. If you were elected to this position for the second time, would you accept? Please elaborate.

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19. Can you give me four things you think could be done to improve the way governing bodies are performing their work.

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20. What are you doing presently to improve the image of your school?

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APPENDIX 2

QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS, TEACHERS AND LEARNERS WHO ARE NOT PART OF THE SGB

Tick [√] the response that is appropriate to you and supply the answers where required.

SECTION A

1. What gender are you?

Male		Female	

2. How old are you?

3. Work or position you hold?

Headmaster	Teacher	Learner	Parent	Other, please specify

4. Do you have a child enrolled at this school? For how many years has your child been enrolled?

Yes		No		How long?	

SECTION B

5. How many times did you attend meetings of the SGB in this school?

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6. Who invited you to the meeting?

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7. Do you still remember the purpose of the meeting?

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8. Can you tell me about any project or work done by this body.

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9. Would you like to become a member of the governing body in future? Please elaborate.

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10. What are your views about school governing bodies?

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11. Do you think it is correct for parents to contribute to school funds in accordance with their family income? Please explain.

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12. Do you as a community member have any access to the school facilities? How do you treat school property?

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APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Please tick [√] the response that is appropriate to you and supply answers where required

SECTION A

1. What gender are you?

Male		Female	

2. How old are you?

3. Work or position you hold? Please specify.

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SECTION B

4. Can you explain what has been done to put in place democratic governing bodies in the Province?

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5. What is involved in the training of members of the governing bodies?

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6. Who provides the training?

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7. What results do you expect from the training of governing bodies?

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8. What form of mechanisms have been put in place to monitor these expectations?

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9. What sorts of problems are you encountering? How are you planning to overcome them?

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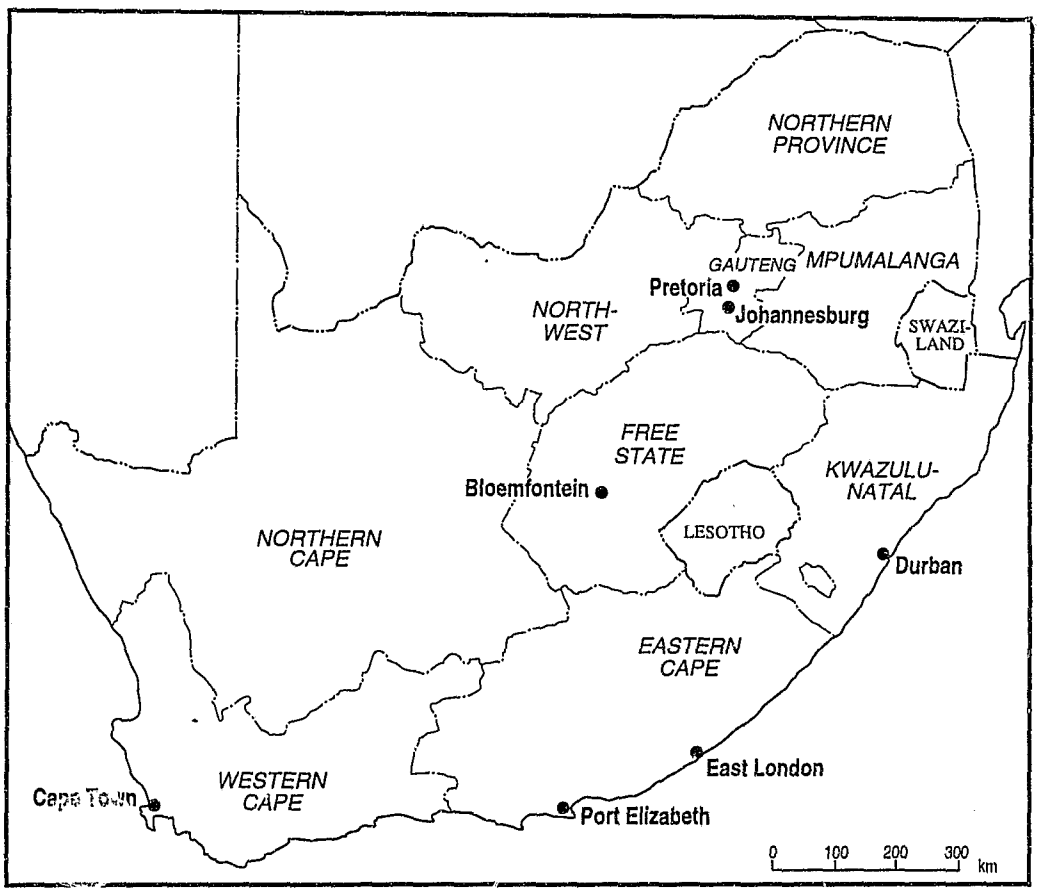
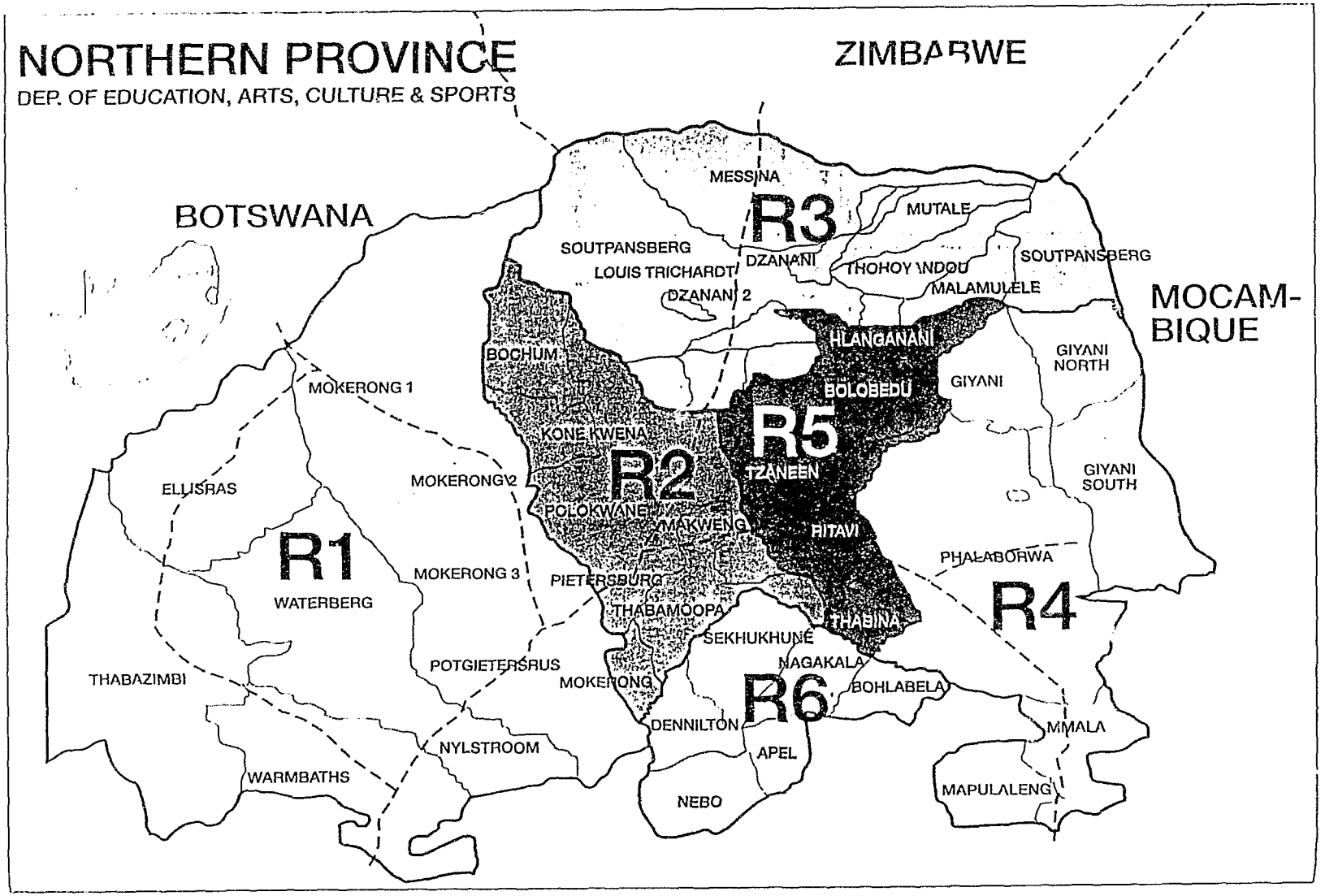
APPENDIX 4

A MAP OF SOUTH AFRICA SHOWING ALL THE NEW PROVINCES


NORTHERN PROVINCE
GAUTENG
MPUMALANGA
Pretoria
Johannesburg
NORTH-WEST
SWAZI-LAND
FREE STATE
KWAZULU-NATAL
Bloemfontein
LESOTHO
Durban
NORTHERN CAPE
EASTERN CAPE
East London
WESTERN CAPE
Cape Town
Port Elizabeth
0 100 200 300 km

APPENDIX 5

A MAP OF THE NORTHERN PROVINCE INCLUDING REGION THREE.



LOCATION OF REGIONS AND DISTRICTS IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE

APPENDIX 6

BALLOT PAPERS USED FOR THE ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNING BODIES

RCL1

The Northern Province
Department of Education,
Arts, Culture and Sport

Region.....

Area.....

Circuit.....

School.....

School Address.....

.....

Name or number of class .....

Elections for MEMBERS OF A LEARNER REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

A nomination and election meeting for your representatives on the LRC will be held in this classroom on

(day) ..... at (time) .....

This class may elect one/two (delete which not applicable) representatives to the LRC. The election will be by secret ballot and each learner will have one vote for each representative from this class.

Nominations for representatives may be made verbally at the meeting, and must be seconded and the person being nominated must agree to being on the LRC.

NAME OF ELECTION OFFICER (CLASS TEACHER): .....

SIGNATURE: .....

DATE: .....

School Stamp

RCL2

The Northern Province
Department of Education,
Arts, Culture and Sport

BALLOT FORM

for the election of
CLASSROOM REPRESENTATIVES
to the Learner Representative Council

The Election Officer will draw up a list of names of nominated learners and state how many votes you can have.

Write in the space below the name of the learner who you wish to be your representative on the Learner Representative Council of this school.

Single sex schools have only ONE VOTE.

Co-educational schools have TWO VOTES:
one for a male representative and one for a female representative

NAME

School Stamp

The Northern Province
Department of Education,
Arts, Culture and Sport

Region.....

Area.....

Circuit.....

School.....

School Address.....

.....

Elected members of the LEARNER REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

The following learners have been elected as representatives to the Learner Representative Council:

NAME	CLASS

NAME AND SIGNATURE OF ELECTION OFFICER

.....

DATE .....

The Northern Province
Department of Education,
Arts, Culture and Sport

To be filled in by the Election Officer

Region.....

Area.....

Circuit.....

School.....

School Address.....

.....

NOMINATION FORM

for the election of a LEARNER MEMBER to a School Governing Body

(Based on the SCHEDULE L of the Provincial Notice No. 257)

DATE .....

NAME OF **NOMINATING** LEARNER .....

ADDRESS OF NOMINATING LEARNER.....

.....

I propose the following learner for the position of Learner Member

NAME OF **PROPOSED** LEARNER .....

ADDRESS OF **PROPOSED** LEARNER.....

.....

SIGNATURE OF **NOMINATING** LEARNER .....

SIGNATURE OF **PROPOSED** LEARNER .....

I second the above proposed learner for the position of Learner Member

NAME OF **SECONDING** LEARNER .....

ADDRESS OF **SECONDING** LEARNER .....

.....

SIGNATURE OF **SECONDING** LEARNER.....

This section is to be filled in by the Election Officer.

Check that the nomination form has been correctly filled in under the terms of regulation (r16) then put a tick in the appropriate box below.

Nomination accepted ☐ Nomination rejected ☐

Reasons for rejecting a nomination .....

.....

Name of Election Officer.....

Signed by Election Officer.....

NT1

The Northern Province
Department of Education,
Arts, Culture and Sport

Region .....

Area .....

Circuit .....

School .....

School Address .....

.....

Notice of Nomination Meeting and Poll for the Election of a NON-TEACHING MEMBER to a School Governing Body

A meeting for the nomination of non-teaching staff for election as a member of the School Governing Body will be held

on ..... (date)

at ..... (time)

at .....(place)

A candidate may be nominated in two ways:

(a) by filling in the nomination form NT2 (which you can get from the Election Officer) and handing it back to the Election officer not less than one day before the nomination meeting; or

(b) by proposing a non-teaching member of staff as a member during the nomination meeting, provided that another non-teaching member of staff present seconds the nomination and the nomination form is filled in and handed to the Election Officer within the time allowed in the nomination meeting for this purpose.

If more than one candidate is nominated then a poll will be held

on ..... (date)

at ..... (time)

at .....(place)

Date of issue of notice .....

Signature of Election Officer .....

Address of Election Officer .....

.....

.....

The Northern Province
Department of Education,
Arts, Culture and Sport

BALLOT FORM

for the election of a member of the NON-TEACHING STAFF to a School Governing Body

(Based on SCHEDULE N of the Provincial Notice No. 257)

The Election Officer will draw up a list of names of nominated non-teaching staff members with a number by each name.

Write in the space below the name and/or the number of the member of the non-teaching staff who you wish to be your representative on the Governing Body of this school.

You have only one vote.

NAME	NUMBER

School Stamp

E2

The Northern Province
Department of Education,
Arts, Culture and Sport

To be filled in by the Election Officer

Region .....

Area .....

Circuit .....

School .....

School Address .....

.....

NOMINATION FORM

for the election of an EDUCATOR MEMBER to a School Governing Body

(Based on SCHEDULE J of the Provincial Notice No. 257)

DATE .....

NAME OF **NOMINATING** EDUCATOR .....

I propose the following educator for the position of Educator Member

NAME OF **PROPOSED** EDUCATOR .....

SIGNATURE OF **NOMINATING** EDUCATOR .....

SIGNATURE OF **PROPOSED** EDUCATOR .....

I second the above proposed educator for the position of Educator Member

NAME OF **SECONDING** EDUCATOR .....

SIGNATURE OF **SECONDING** EDUCATOR .....

This section is to be filled in by the Election Officer.

Check that the nomination form has been correctly filled in under the terms of regulation (r15) then put a tick in the appropriate box below.

Nomination accepted ☐ Nomination rejected ☐

Reasons for rejecting a nomination .....

.....

.....

Name of Election Officer .....

Signed by Election Officer .....

The Northern Province
Department of Education,
Arts, Culture and Sport

PARENT REGISTRATION FORM

In order to elect parent members for the School Governing Body, a register of all eligible parents of officially enrolled learners in the school must be prepared. This will then form the electoral roll for voting.

A 'parent' can mean:

- the parent or guardian of a learner;
- the person legally entitled to custody of a learner;
- a person who fulfils the role of a parent or custodian with regard to the learner's education at school.

Only two parents of any learner are eligible to vote

Please complete the following form and return it to the school Principal as soon as possible. If you are not on the school register you will not be able to vote or stand as a school governor.

NAME OF SCHOOL.....

NAME OF LEARNER.....

CLASS OF LEARNER.....

NAME OF PARENT (1) .....

ADDRESS OF PARENT (1) .....

.....

SIGNATURE OF PARENT (1) .....

NAME OF PARENT (2) .....

ADDRESS OF PARENT (2) .....

.....

SIGNATURE OF PARENT (2) .....

DATE .....

The Northern Province
Department of Education,
Arts, Culture and Sport

To be filled in by the Election Officer

Region .....

Area .....

Circuit .....

School .....

School Address .....

.....

PROXY VOTE FORM

for the election of a PARENT MEMBER to a School Governing Body

(Based on SCHEDULE D of the Provincial Notice No. 257)

DATE .....

NAME OF PARENT .....

ADDRESS OF PARENT .....

.....

I name the following parent to act as my proxy for the ballot for a parent governor

NAME OF PROXY VOTER .....

ADDRESS OF PROXY VOTER .....

.....

SIGNATURE OF PARENT .....

This form must be handed in to the Election Officer by the proxy voter on the night of the voting in order to get a ballot form. **The proxy voter must be on the school register.** The proxy voter must make sure that they have some form of **identification** for the Election Officer.

This section is to be filled in by the Election Officer.

Check that the person requesting a ballot form is the person named above as the proxy voter. Then put a tick in the appropriate box below.

Ballot form issued ☐ Ballot form not issued ☐

Reasons for not issuing a ballot form .....

.....

.....

Name of Election Officer .....

Signed by Election Officer .....

The Northern Province
Department of Education,
Arts, Culture and Sport

BALLOT FORM

for the election of PARENT MEMBERS to a School Governing Body

(Based on the SCHEDULE E of the Provincial Notice No. 257)

The Election Officer will draw up a list of names of nominated parents (with a number by each name) and how many votes you can have.

Write the name and/or the number of the parent/s who/m you wish to be your representative/s on the Governing Body of this school.

YOU HAVE ☐ VOTES.

NAME	NUMBER

School Stamp

REGION: ..... AREA: ..... CIRCUIT: ..... SCHOOL: .....CLASS DESIGNATION: .....

Voters' Roll for NON-TEACHING STAFF (based on SCHEDULE I of the Provincial Notice No. 257)

NAME OF NON-TEACHING STAFF	ID NUMBER	PERSAL NUMBER	RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS	POSTAL ADDRESS	SIGNATURE OF VOTER

SIGNATURE OF SCHOOL PRINCIPAL ..... DATE.....

SCHOOL ADDRESS .....

TEACH, LEARN AND SERVE

REGION: ..... AREA: ..... CIRCUIT: ..... SCHOOL: .....CLASS DESIGNATION: .....

Voters' Roll for PARENTS (based on SCHEDULE G of the Provincial Notice No. 257)

NAME OF PARENT	ID NUMBER	NAME OF LEARNERS	RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS	POSTAL ADDRESS	SIGNATURE OF PARENT

SIGNATURE OF SCHOOL PRINCIPAL ..... DATE.....

SCHOOL ADDRESS .....

TEACH, LEARN AND SERVE

The Northern Province
Department of Education,
Arts, Culture and Sport

Region.....

Area.....

Circuit.....

School.....

School Address.....

.....

Names of ELECTED SCHOOL GOVERNORS

DATE.....

PRINCIPAL .....

NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF PARENT MEMBERS

1.....

2.....

3.....

4.....

5.....

6.....

7.....

8.....

9.....

NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF EDUCATOR MEMBERS

1.....

2.....

3.....

NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF LEARNER MEMBERS

1.....

2.....

3.....

NAME AND ADDRESS OF NON-TEACHING STAFF MEMBER

1.....

TOTAL NUMBER OF MEMBERS .....

NAME OF ELECTION OFFICER .....

SIGNATURE OF ELECTION OFFICER .....

Author Netshishivhe F R
Name of thesis The Impact Of Governing Bodies On Schools In The Northern Provice, Region Three Netshishivhe F R 1999

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