

**THE COMMUNITY AND THE SCHOOL GOVERNING
BODY'S RELATIONSHIP IN TWO
BUSHBUCKRIDGE SCHOOLS**

by

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A

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DEDICATION

To

**My loving wife, Sheila, my father Thomas, my mother Elsie and my children:
Dzunani, Nhlawulo and Ndzalama**



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ABSTRACT

The South African Schools Act of 1996 mandated the creation of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in all public schools. This significant development, although welcomed and accepted by all stakeholders in education, seems to be failing because serious efforts are not made, and plans are not in place to sustain it.

This study is undertaken with the aim of looking at the workings of two SGBs in the rural areas of Bushbuckridge. Particular attention is given to how they interpret the Schools Act and how they interact with school management and other stakeholders as they go about their work.

The qualitative research paradigm is employed in this study and the two data collection methods used are interview and participant observation. The findings of the inquiry reveal that SGBs in rural areas are not functioning well, as they have not been adequately inducted to do the job. In addition, because most of the members are not properly educated and the written materials on their *modus operandi* are in either English or Afrikaans, they are unable to read and interpret these documents without assistance. The study recommends that rural communities should be properly educated on the importance and relevance of SGBs before members are elected so that competent people would be elected. Furthermore, the elected SGB members should be adequately work-shopped before they officially start their work.

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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section the background to the study and the research problem will be discussed. The rationale for the research problem, the research design and methodological preferences will be elaborated on. The section ends with a review of the researcher's assumptions and the general outline of the other sections of the essay.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The wind of change which has blown over and through South Africa from the early 1990s to date has been by all expectations far reaching and quite unexpected to many South Africans. It all began with the release of Nelson Mandela from prison, followed by the all-race democratic elections of 1994. These events have brought certain drastic and sometimes radical, but positive, changes to every realm and facet of the South African society. For instance, in the field of education several changes have taken place and it is one of these changes that will be the focus of this study, that is, the recent government stipulation that all public schools should have governing bodies. The study, which will be undertaken in the Bushbuckridge area of the Northern Province, will involve two rural schools as research population.

1.3 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

In 1996 the South African government, through its national Department of Education promulgated a new Schools Act (No.84 of 1996), stating that all public schools should have governing bodies. This development, although not altogether new, is different from the era of the school committees because it is backed by government legislation. Mkhonto (1998) indicates that the significant difference lies

in the fact that the school governing bodies (SGBs from now on) have clearly defined duties and are not faceless.

The first problem, however, is that the duties of the SGBs seem to overlap with those of the school management, which is headed by the school's principal. Many principals have raised their concerns about no longer being in charge. The problem is aggravated by the fact that the bulk of people in rural areas are largely illiterate. It is these illiterate rural people who constitute the core of SGBs in these areas. What is perturbing, is that all available literature on the functions and duties of SGBs is written either in English or Afrikaans, making these sources inaccessible to many SGB members. This is considered a flippant disregard of the constitutional stipulation that categorically states that South Africa has eleven official languages. Besides, it also creates enormous administrative bottlenecks and unnecessary bureaucratic red tape as the work of the SGB is hindered by inactivity caused by their inability to interpret government guidelines on their SGB duties. I want to make the claim that principals and SGBs struggle for power and authority by giving the Act their own ulterior interpretations. This view seem to also be one held by the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), which has called on the government to reduce the power and functions of the SGBs.

Another issue of contention is the representation of learners in the SGB. This is particularly sensitive when one comes to consider the Soweto uprising of 1976 and its aftermath. Learners in some cases elect students who are sometimes older than their teachers and have repeated some classes several times, as their representatives on the SGBs and these representatives have been known to instigate their mates to misbehave. This happens when their representatives get access to privileged information during SGB meetings. This is in spite of the stipulation in the Act that a parent should or can be a member of an SGB by virtue of the fact that his or her child is attending that particular school. That is, the parent concerned is not only representing his or her child but the other children as well. I would, however like to point out that in terms of learner representation this is limited

only to learners of grades 8 to 12 in high schools. A final problem is that there is no clear evidence that the SGBs in rural areas such as Bushbuckridge have been work-shopped as to the true extent and enormity of what their responsibilities and duty entails.

1.4 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to establish the root cause of the problems that SGBs in Bushbuckridge experience and to come up with ways on how they could function effectively to ensure smooth governance of schools. The ultimate aim of this study is to therefore systematically study the activities of SGBs in Bushbuckridge with regard to how they go about their work. It also aims to examine how conflicts are resolved and if the establishment of SGBs have actually led to effective management of schools. This study could serve as a guide for the education ministries, academics, schools and all interested persons in education in the implementation of SGBs through its focus on implementation aspects.

1.5 THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The problems presented, need to be investigated immediately if our schools are to run smoothly and the culture of learning is to be restored to our schools, particularly those in rural areas. The research question that was formulated is: ***Are SGBs in Bushbuckridge properly equipped to function as stipulated by the South African Schools Act?***

1.6 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design will be qualitative, descriptive (describe the activities of SGBs in rural areas) and exploratory (investigate how the SGBs in rural areas go about performing their duties) with elements of explanation and comparison. Qualitative research refers to any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by

means of quantification. Qualitative research can refer to research about persons' lives, stories and behaviour, but also about organisational functioning, social movements, or intersectional relationships (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 17). According to Keeves (1988) researchers use qualitative methods to understand phenomena and situations as a whole and within context. Furthermore, Keeves states that the task of qualitative research is to provide an interpretation or an understanding of events. Thus, this research is qualitative because the researcher endeavours to investigate whether the role-players in the SGBs do understand their functions. This would be tested by their interpretation of the South African Schools Act through a systematic inquiry.

Another emphasis in qualitative research is on the ways people in particular settings come to understand and take action in their everyday life situations. Silverman (1993: 11) writes that qualitative research

entails immersion in the everyday life of the setting chosen for study, values participants, perspectives on their works and seeks to discover those prospective is primarily descriptive and relies on the people's world as the primary school data

Interviews will be conducted with eight SGB members of which two are school principals, two are teachers and four are parents. As an SGB member and an HOD in a school, I will also draw heavily on my observations as I go about performing the dual functions of SGB member and teacher. The data collected will be triangulated which means combining and cross checking the various data collections methods used in the study to present valid findings, and a reliable study. According to Jick (1979: 45), triangulation is "the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon".

1.7 THE RESEARCHER'S ASSUMPTIONS

As a teacher and SGB member, I hold certain assumptions about the research problem and these are as follows:

- ❖ Principals feel threatened by the authority given to SGBs.
- ❖ Some SGB members by virtue of the fact that they are not properly educated are not able to interact effectively with the stipulations in the Act on their functions and duties.
- ❖ No elaborate or specific training programme has been given or provided by the department of education to SGB members.
- ❖ Community members and other stakeholders in education are not sure how to interact with the school through the SGB as there are no properly defined channels.



1.8 RESEARCHER'S PROFILE

I am a Head of Department in one of the high schools in the Bushbuckridge area of the Northern Province. I am also the Regional Secretary of SADTU in the Bushbuckridge region. I am also the chief examiner of History in the Northern Province. I had my early education in the Xanthia and Thulamahashe areas of Bushbuckridge. I then proceeded to the University of the North where I studied History, Church History and Xitsonga for a B. A. degree in 1989. Thereafter, I completed a Higher Education Diploma in 1990 and an Honours degree in 1992. I have taught in various schools in the Northern Province and also served as a teaching assistant at the University of the North.

1.9 GENERAL OVERVIEW OF SECTIONS

Section one looks at the background to the study, the research problem and the aim, together with the researcher's assumptions. A profile of the researcher is also provided.

Section two is a literature review of relevant readings that informed this study. The South African Schools Act of 1996 is examined as the core document within the formulation of the theoretical framework.

In section three the data will be displayed and analysed against the theoretical framework of the study.

Section four will focus on the findings of the study and recommendations will also be made. The limitations of study will also be discussed and recommendations for further inquiries into this issue will be made.

1.10 CONCLUSION



The study has been elucidated with regard to its context, rationale and also its research questions. The problem under investigation in this study is the problems encountered by SGBs in rural areas in the daily performance of their work. It would be argued in this study that there is a need to explore the mechanisms which must be put in place to speedily empower the largely illiterate rural people who constitute the core of SGBs in rural areas. The underlying claim that I make is that it is not only SGBs in Bushbuckridge which are beset with acute managerial hiccups but almost all rural SGBs in South Africa.

SECTION 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section I will discuss and present theoretical evidence to support my main claim that SGBs are not equipped to function as stipulated by the South African Schools Act. The validity of my claim will be argued from the work of theorists such as Wiersma (1991:49) who states that:

In the review of literature, the researcher attempts to determine what others have learned about similar research problems and to gather information relevant to the research problem at hand.

It is against this background that the focus of this section will be on relationships that are established or that exists between a school, a community and / or a society. In addition, the South African Schools Act (Schools Act from now on) which has led to the formation of the SGBs will be discussed. The document serves to inform one on the exact nature of school governance, management and functions of SGBs, how these functions are carried out and to explore any possible areas of overlap and/or uncertainty between the SGBs and the school management. This also applies to the relationships between the SGB/school and the community. The SGB and the school are part of a community, as such I will start my discussion by looking at what a community is.

2.2 COMMUNITY

According to Musaazi (1987) a community is a group of people living in the same place, with common values and history, bound together by multiple economic, social, religious and kingship ties. This is the typical image of a community in many parts of rural South Africa and it might be called a 'traditional' community. It is

different from an 'adopted' community where a group of people live in the same place and share some common interests, but do not necessarily have strong historical links or local ties. Convenience and choice, as much as birth, may determine membership of such a community. In this study, the term community is used with the traditional community in mind. I would however, like to point out that as a result of modernisation, both types of communities can be found existing side by side in South Africa.

An example of the adopted community, which is of importance to this study, is the school. A school is a planned social institution which acts as an instrument of society for educating the young. From this, it can be deduced that there is a vital link between a community and a society and this link is captured by the German social theorist, Sergiovanni, who, coined the terms: *gemeinschaft* (community) and *gesellschaft* (society) to explain this relationship. For instance, in this relationship the interests of both the adults (teachers) and the children (learners) within the school (school community) converge with those of parents and citizens outside it. A school system must have public relation skills in place to communicate with the traditional community. So I now turn my attention to this relationship.

2.3 SCHOOL AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY

Social interaction is not always a one-way process; as such the interrelationship between a school and a community involves a careful understanding of the influence of one upon the other. For instance, there is no fixed and generalised patterns as interaction varies with the persons and groups involved. But the process can be understood and directed. Against this background, the most basic characteristic of the relationship between a school and its community must be flexibility. With this in mind, the school should be willing to take on and abandon functions and services in the light of changing needs and developments within the community and should resist becoming static. The reality however, is that schools in South Africa are faced with the problem of having educational programmes that are

mainly academic in nature and too static in the approach to situations and 'flexibility' is not practised. This, I believe, is what *Curriculum 2005* is aimed at addressing. An ideal situation would be to extend this curriculum innovation in South Africa to make schools to become the centre of community life. This will inevitably lead to the development of traditional communities as the scope for employment in the local communities will increase and thus discourage the movement of school leavers to cities.

With the present situation, schools are 'foreign' in the communities in which they are situated and ultimately they become alienated from the communities. An immediate consequence is that the products of the schools become 'unfit' to live in their communities because the school has prepared them for a different society. For instance, life in rural South Africa is predominantly dependent on subsistence farming but the learners are not enrolled for agricultural science as learning area. To capture the relationship between a school and a community in concrete terms, I present below a table from Musaazi (1987: 241).



Table 2.1 Possible links between schools and the community.

Type of link	School- community	Community-school
1. General services and help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Fund raising ❖ Schools as polling Stations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Maintenance of Facilities ❖ Provision of school security.
2. Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Education for adults and out of school youths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Parental help as teacher assistants
3. Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Staff and student Involvement in local Affairs -committees, Church and agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Participation in school committees

Adopted from Musaazi (1987: 241)

As I pointed out earlier in this discussion, the relationship between a school and a community should be based on flexibility. As such, the table presented by Musaazi (1987) should be considered as a guide and communities should adapt it to suit local conditions. In addition to this, I would also like to point out that some of the links suggested in the table are already operational but without clear and well laid out guidelines and principles.

2.3.1 Interpersonal relationships

By relationships with teachers I mean the interactions within the school between teachers and learners, and between principals and parents. For example, teachers can avail themselves to talk to learners about learning and school work, not just about behaviour. Teachers should ensure that they make all learners feel confident that they can do well and can achieve something worthwhile (Rebore, 1987).

The relationship between the teacher the learners forms the cornerstone of successful teaching and learning and includes all aspects of the teacher's influence on his/her pupils. I believe that if the relationship between the two parties is very strong, surely results will be amazing. It is my conviction that when teachers, parents and principals develop a good relationship, that will motivate the pupils to work hard in school activities. Mutual respect between teachers, parents, students and principals need to exist. Without respect for one another, a conflict situation may arise which will necessitate some form of conflict management.

2.3.2 Conflict management



In the past, conflict was ignored or not discussed at all in schools. School principals did not admit the existence of conflict in their respective schools. It is against this background that Knezevich (1975: 202) indicates that today conflict is recognised as inevitable, as a sign of the times. Further more, Knezevich, (1975) states that conflict is inevitable and that administrators must develop the competencies to cope with it. At the level of the school, the school governance structure has overlapping managerial tasks which may result in misunderstanding and conflict.

It is of utmost importance that SGBs should be aware that no single stakeholder within the school community could resolve conflict alone. In this regard it would be imperative that problems or conflict be faced head on. Van der Westhuizen (1995) states that a total absence of conflict in a organisation sometimes reflects a laissez

faire attitude by its employees, evasion of their responsibilities, lack of interest, or unwillingness to think critically and creatively. In a school context, conflict may occur through misunderstanding amongst school community members, that is, teachers, learners and parents. As far as conflict management is concerned, conflict should be attended to because any conflict situation at school level may bring the whole institution to a standstill. It is therefore important that all SGB members at a given institution work hand in hand to ensure that they manage all sort of conflict that may arise in their respective schools. It is important that parents should be involved in the activities of SGBs.

2.3.3 Participation of parents

Parental involvement is a very essential element in student achievement, because learners might not study at home, may dodge classes or withdraw from school. When parents are involved they will realise problems faced by their children and might be in a position to help them. If teachers lack the positive support of parents, many learners will not receive the full opportunity in education as noted by Kimbrough (1990).

Therefore, it is necessary that parents should be part of school management. They should take a major interest in the school curriculum. When parents do not participate in school activities, children are likely to face negative consequences, for instance missing classes, not attending school regularly and becoming apathetic to school work. Teachers expect parents to participate in their children schooling by communicating with the schools and by helping their children at home. To participate effectively, parents must be informed about the school system and how it functions (Trueba, 1989). Through the help of principals and teachers, parents can be made to understand the school management process. Parents will also be able to advise and correct rather than disturb the school management process. The principals with the help of the governing bodies need to have parents' days or

evenings where they will be informed about the progress of the children. Parent's days, for instance need to be organised in such a way that it will lead to enrichment.

There needs to be a co-operative spirit between home and school, that is, between parents and teachers for the benefit of learners' progress. In support of this Kapambwe (1980: 1) maintains that "Schools and homes can then be thought of as complementary to each other in the sense that what takes place outside the classroom continually influences what goes on inside and vice-versa". I believe that parental involvement is very important to both the school and the learners to uplift the standard of results. Johnson et al (1983) support the above statement by saying the success of home and school co-operation tends to be evaluated by teachers on the basis of parents coming to school. Parents who come to school are perceived as interested and serious about their children's education and development.

Parents should check, consult teachers and assist their children in attaining good results.



"Parents need to deal effectively with the problems of homework, school work, habits, discipline and motivation (De Roche 1985: 169). It thus calls for parents to monitor on a daily basis the work of their children, to see if ever they are doing their work as expected. Parents must promote the idea that success results from hard work. They could reward positive performance at home or school, and support and encourage achievement. They must also help their children to be punctual and to get tasks done on time (De Roche 1985: 173). The literature supports the idea that parents are very important in the education of their children. They have a special role and duty as parents to perform.

Recent developments in education introduced the participation of parents through representation on the SGBs. Learners' problems are more easily resolved by parents and teachers together than by either alone. "Parents attitude strongly

influence their children's progress, so schools that set out to educate parents can enhance the classroom experience. Everard and Morris (1996: 207) state that "at primary level it is known that parental involvement is a determinant of school effectiveness". The school – community relationship as outlined above needs to be managed and governed by an authorised body, hence I will now focus my attention on school management and governance.

2.4 CO-OPERATIVE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT/GOVERNANCE

Today, co-operative governance is one of the most significant democratic principles underlying the new South African constitutional dispensation and education system. The concept of co-operative governance is further entrenched in chapter 3 of the constitution of the Republic of South Africa. In terms of this chapter, all spheres of government and all organs of state must observe and adhere to the principles of co-operative governance. The Schools Act has given formal legal effect to the establishment of democratic structures of school governance. The democratic structures, provide the basis for co-operative governance between education authorities and the school community as a whole.

In the report by the National Commission on Higher Education, for example, the whole chapter had been focused on co-operative management in higher education. The report states that:

The assumption is that no single actor (including government) can address or resolve social problems. Modes of governance in complex societies are thus necessarily interactive. This is especially appropriate in the South African context, where the state and civil society have to be reconstituted (NCHE, 1996:173).

The concept of co-operative school management links up with Khoza's wish for an "Afro-centric approach to management in South Africa" (Christie, Lessem & Mbigi,

1993: 122). Khoza uses the buzz-word '*Ubuntu*' to conceptualise an Afro-centric approach to management when he says:

In community concept management has strong philosophical base in the concept of *Ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* is a concept that brings to the fore images of supportiveness, co-operation and solidarity...

Boon agrees with Khoza in this when expounding his interactive –leadership theory. He then summarises the essence of *Ubuntu*, in the following English translations of expressions in African languages:

In Sotho: "It is better to do things as group than as an individual".

In Xhosa: "A bird builds its nest with another bird's feathers".

In Zulu: "A home is a real one if people visit it" (Boon, 1996: 32 - 33).

The above expressions are also in line with the preamble to the Schools Act no. 84 of 1996:



... (A) new national system for schools which will ... provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners and in so doing lay a strong foundation for the development of all our people's talents and capabilities, advance the democratic transformation of society ... (and) uphold the rights of all learners, parents and educators, and promote their acceptance of responsibility for the organisation, partnership with the state (SA Schools Act no. 84 of 1996: 3).

The Act puts emphasis on co-operation between stakeholders in order to deal with community issues. This Act also grants schools greater powers of self-governance. It is therefore evident that the Act encourages parents, and members to work together in order to improve their communities.

2.4.1 School management and governance

Traditionally in South Africa, and elsewhere, school governance and management have been hierarchical and authoritarian in nature. Mkhonto (1998) concurs that the concept of SGBs is not altogether new as these structures were in existence in the apartheid era and were known as school committees. However, the concepts, governance and management are distinguished. According to Squelch (1998) governance refers to policy determination and management to the day - to - day operation of a school. In the past, locus of control was mainly in the school principal, with minimal participation from teachers, parents or learners. The school principal has generally viewed the school as his or her domain, and has organised and managed the school according to his or her particular frame of reference and leadership style. Holt and Murphy (1993: 175) observed that school leaders in most countries in the past have been "lords in their own education fiefdoms". Moreover, although SGBs have played a significant role in managing schools, their role has largely been of a supportive nature, with limited decision making powers.

Squelch (1998: 102-103) has identified the following five assumptions on co-operative school governance and management:

First, it is a democratic form of governance based on the principles of representation, equity and participation. This therefore implies that structures of school governance are representative of the school community and such representatives are democratically elected according to fair, democratic procedures.

Secondly, co-operative school governance presupposes devolution of powers from the central level to local level. That is, governance and management are decentralised. The concept "devolution" suggests a transfer of powers from one organ to another and not merely a delegation of powers, whereby the organ with devolved powers performs its functions in its own name, and accountability rests with the school's "corporate body" and not the individual principal. Thirdly, it further

rests on the principal of shared decision making, which presupposes open communication, constitution and a willingness to negotiate. Fourthly, it requires active participation of all stakeholders who have a vested interest in the school. This therefore implies creating the necessary climate, structures and support mechanisms for engendering genuine participation and involvement.

Fifthly, co-operative school governance is considered to be a more effective means of improving the standard of schools because it is more inclusive and seeks to meet collective needs and aspirations of the broader community. Subsequently, the examples of what has taken place in the international context will be provided from which we can learn.

2.4.2 International trends in School Management

As already indicated elsewhere, the philosophy of co-operative school governance and management is not altogether new. Over several decades, many countries have implemented a process of decentralisation aimed at creating more effective schools, which are flexible and responsive to rapidly changing environments (Mahoney, 1988; Sharpe, 1994). Co-operative governance took place in Chicago in the late 1980's. Like in South Africa, it was made necessary by the steady decline in education standards in the United States. In 1987, the US Secretary of Education, William Bennet, declared the Chicago public school system "the worst in the nation" (Walberg & Niemiec, 1994: 714). The poor performance of the Chicago schools was blamed on a "bloated, uncaring central office bureaucracy".

In response to the crisis, the Illinois General Assembly adopted the Chicago school Reform Act of 1988, with the specific mandate to improve the quality of education and student achievement in Chicago. At the heart of the reform legislation was the transfer of considerable power and decision-making authority from the central office to local school councils. According to Walberg and Niemiec (1994), the rationale for the transfer was simply that local citizens and school personnel know their schools

best and, if given the chance, are in the best position to solve most of the problems experienced by schools. Walberg and Niemiec (1994: 715) state that despite radical reform legislation and transfer of considerable power to local school councils, there has scarcely been any demonstrable progress on outcome goals Chicago schools continue to rank very low by national standards.

In the 1990's Kentucky, like Chicago established decentralised, democratic school governance. The legislature passed the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA). This Act introduced radical reform measures to school governance. By 1996, every school in Kentucky was supposed to have a new governing body in place. In 1994, the Kentucky legislature mandated that any school with 8% or greater minority enrolment, elect a minority member to the School – Based Decision-Making Councils (SBDM) if one had not been elected (Lindle: 1996).

As far back as 1967, the Plowden Report in England was already emphasising the importance of parental involvement in education. Furthermore, it was the Taylor Report of 1977 that provided the most detailed recommendations for the restructuring of SGBs and the decentralisation of decision-making powers. It therefore called for all schools to have their own representative governing body that exercised full authority and decision-making about the way the school operates. With regards to representation, the Taylor report favoured a structure which would offer equal representation of different groups such as teachers, parents, older students Deem 1994).

A particularly significant development in the establishment of self-governance, was the introduction of "grant-maintained schools "under the Education Reform Act of 1988. In grant-maintained schools, SGBs have total responsibility for every aspect of the running and functioning of the school. The SGB is equal to the executive board in a commercial business (Squelch: 1998).

In Australia and New Zealand, the process of restructuring and decentralisation in education was driven by issues such as quality, effectiveness, accountability and flexibility (Sharpe, 1994). Sharpe (1994: 4) defines devolution as a process through which an agency such as government deliberately relinquishes aspects of control over the organisations for which it is responsible, thus moving along the continuum in the direction of total self-management. The devolution of power and authority to school communities has been effected through the establishment of SGBs. Although all states and territories are engaged in devolution, the Victoria initiative and devolution project has been cited as one of the most advanced and a model example for other states (Gamage, 1994; Sharpe, 1994). The first school council was gazetted in March 1983. Each council consisted of the principal and elected parents, teachers, community and in secondary schools, the students.

In line with international standards South African schools have also moved towards greater decentralisation. However, the changes brought about by the Schools Act of 1996 call for some analysis of issues/challenges facing schools in terms of co-operative governance. Before the laws of the 1990s, governing of schools was a much less demanding activity. They actually did not make fundamental policy decisions nor did they shape management policies to any great extent. SGBs in many instances had symbolic powers rather than actual authority. In black schools SGBs did not have powers at all. In 1996, legislative developments resulted in SGBs gaining more power and responsibilities. However, democratic school governance has now been initiated and formalised through legislative mandates intended to exact compliance with regulation and functioning of SGBs. It is therefore imperative that parents should be involved in the education of their children so as to enhance their achievements and progress. The best way of participation would be through election and co-option into the SGBs.

2.4.3 The election and composition of SGBs

A basic aspect of the establishment of new SGBs was the adoption of fair and democratic procedures for the election process. Extensive departmental regulations were prescribed and a programme, which at times seemed rather cumbersome, was put in place for the elections of the various constituencies. The Department of Education (1997: 29) states that the elections for SGBs give the individuals opportunity to vote for their representative to sit on the SGB.

Anyone who wished to be in an SGB, had to be nominated and seconded. Elections had to be held if there were more nominations than the number of places available on the SGB. By casting their votes, members of the school community were elected on the SGB of their school. Candidates who get the most number of votes become the elected members of the SGB. According to the Department of Education (1997) there are three categories of people who can become members of an SGB. These are; the school principal, members who are elected and members who are co-opted from the community.

The principal automatically becomes a member of the SGB because of his/her position. SGB members who are elected are parents, teachers and learners. Parents who qualify to be in the SGB are those that have officially enrolled children at the school and are not employed at the same school. Such a person should be a parent or guardian of the learner or a person who has legal custody of a learner or a person who is in charge of the learner's school education. Teachers who are entitled to be on the SGB are those that are employed at the school. Only officially enrolled learners, in a level not lower than that of grade eight can be elected on the SGB. It is only the representative on the council of learners which can elect members to serve on the SGB. Anyone who is employed at the school as a member of staff and who is not a teacher is eligible to serve on the SGB.

An SGB may co-opt some community members to assist them in the SGB. Such members are termed co-opted members. Co-opted members are invited to assist the SGB to fulfil its functions though they do not have the voting rights. According to the Department of Education (1997: 13), if a school is on private property, then one of the co-opted members will be the owner of the school premises. The Department of Education (1997) also suggests that schools that provide education for learners with special needs should have at least one co-opted member who is an expert in this area. In terms of the Schools Act, the SGB is vested with a certain degree of authority, hence I will turn my attention to decision making authority.

2.4.4 Decision making authority

One important aim of co-operative governance is to reduce bureaucratic control and enhance shared decision making at local school level. The new structure of SGBs provides for considerable parent involvement on substantive issues and they extend beyond the traditional fundraising activities and tuck-shop duties. The Schools Act places parents in a very strong position and, they effectively, have the power to influence decisions on very fundamental issues, for instance the school budget, language policy and discipline. Unlike the previous school committees, today's SGBs are empowered. From a purely legal perspective, principals no longer occupy the role of primary decision maker. They now find themselves as ordinary members of SGBs, which are dominated by parents and non-teachers. Despite this position, the primary place of power, authority and decision making often remains with the principal because he or she is the key educational leader in the school and responsible for the day-to-day running of the school. Although the principal's decision making authority has been curtailed to some extent and he / she may not serve as the chairperson on the SGB, strong SGBs need strong leadership from principals.

Presently, the nature of decision making that school governors are engaged in also raises the question of whether governors do participate in substantive issues. It is

common for SGBs to deal with less important issues that have little impact on improving education, such as, school maintenance matters and school uniform issues. More important issues, for example those concerning curriculum and personnel evaluation that have a direct bearing on learner performance, are left to the principal and staff alone. This is mainly because teaching personnel believe that parents are not equipped to participate in such matters and should not interfere in the professional and academic side of school life. However, the Schools Act empowers parents and makes specific provision for parents to participate in substantive issues, which principals and teachers cannot ignore. For example, section 8 of the Schools Act requires the SGB to adopt a code of conduct after consulting with parents, teachers and other leaders. Section 39 also stipulates that school fees at public schools may be charged only if the majority of parents vote on a resolution to do so. The Schools Act confers certain responsibilities on the SGB, which is obliged to consult with the parents on matters which require full participation in the decision making process.

2.4.5 Effective governors for effective schools



It is only effective governors who can govern effective schools. Effective SGBs could be the ones that understand their roles and functions. However; SGBs are made up of individuals who have different levels of expertise and experience, and who have various reasons for being school governors. Schools who can draw on parents and community members with particular expert knowledge, eg, lawyers and accountants, are at advantage over schools that do not have these resources. Squelch (1998:111) quotes one of the respondents interviewed on the effectiveness of SGBs, as saying:

Enlightened parents enrol their children in better schools for better learning conditions. The law that parents in the governing body must strictly have children in that particular school is also causing problems

because we end up electing parents who are not keen to serve in the governing body because of their social background.

Even if parents do have expertise, they cannot be expected to keep up-to-date with all the current ideas, initiatives and problems in education. Moreover, the time factor also presents a problem. According to the Schools Act, SGBs are only required to meet once a term, although many will meet more often than this. Meetings are usually held in the evenings with limited time available for meaningful discussions about complex educational issues, with the result that parent governors seldom take up serious learning related topics. If time can be planned and managed, this can prevent much of the conflict and tensions that arise both from insufficient communication and consultation. According to Squelch (1998) one respondent to a question on SGBs training said:

Many of the parents judging from the level of education have inadequate expertise, but the willingness to assist the school is quite satisfactory. There need to be workshops conducted in order to empower them with the understanding of their powers and duties with regards to school governance. (In this school the parent governors' education levels ranged from grade 5 to grade 9)

She goes further to state that school governors first of all need some knowledge on basic education matters, and how schools work. Secondly, they need teamwork skills for working in groups and participating in a democratic decision-making process, such as negotiation skills and conflict resolution skills and, thirdly, they need budgeting skills and how to conduct meetings. If governors can be empowered with all the above skills as identified by Squelch, schools can be effective. The culture of learning, teaching and services will prevail.

2.5 ACTIVITIES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE SGB

2.5.1 Financial school management

Financial problems also constitute the most serious inhibitory factor in the creation and provision of quality education in schools. Therefore, schools have to make adjustments in a bid to ensure that dwindling resources do not result in a lowering of standards. Parents in South Africa must make an even-bigger financial contribution to the effective functioning of the public school. This therefore places a heavy burden on the principal and the SGB to make sure that expenses incurred in respect of the effective management of education is dealt with.

Public schools are funded by the state; a situation on which chapter 4 of the Schools Act no. 84 of 1996 provides full particulars. In section 34 of the Act, the following is confirmed:

The State must fund public schools from public revenue on an equitable basis in order to ensure the proper exercise of the rights of learners to education and redress of past inequalities in education provision (SA Schools Act no. 84 of 1996: Section 34).

Section 36 of the Schools Act, however, addresses the issue of inadequate state funds for education by instructing each SGB actively to strengthen these funds:

A governing body of a public school must take all reasonable measures within its means to supplement the resources supplied by the State in order to improve the quality of education provided by the school to all learners at the school (SA School Act no. 84 of 1996:section 36)

School fees may, in terms of Section 39, be charged only if a resolution to do so has been adopted by a majority of the school's parents. The governing body controls and administers the fund, and it may, by process of law, enforce the payment of school fees by parents who are liable to pay in terms of Section 40. In terms of Section 37 of the Schools Act, the school fund, all proceeds thereof and any other assets of the public school must, however, be used only for either educational purposes or for the performance of the functions of the governing body (SA Schools Act no. 84 of 1996: Sections 37,39 & 40).

2.5.2 School management of personnel

The new legislation does not put much attention on the management of personnel. The most important aspects in this connection are contained in the Educator's Employment Act, of 1994. However, certain amendments to the Act are entrenched in Schedule 2 of the Schools Act. In Section 16 it is specified that:

The professional management of a public school must be undertaken by the principal under the authority of the Head of Department (the Head of each provincial Education Department) (SA Schools Act no. 84 of 1996).

The area of professional management vis-à-vis the school governance appears to be still a grey area. For example, the SGB cannot instruct educator X on how he or she should teach History. However, if the SGB has evidence that X is frequently late for classes or does not check the homework of the learners, it should take reasonable steps to deal with this problem. To me, this is one critical area which has some overlaps with regards to the functions of school management as opposed to the functions of SGBs.

2.5.3 The functions of SGBs

In terms of the Schools Act, the SGB's functions are divided into two categories. The first category comprises 13 functions whilst the second category comprises only 5 functions.

Section 20. (1) (a-m) provides the following as functions of all SGBs:

- ❖ promote the best interests of the *school* and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all *learners* at the *school*;
- ❖ adopt a constitution;
- ❖ develop the mission statement of the school,
- ❖ adopt a code of conduct for *learners* at the *school*;
- ❖ support the *principal*, *educators* and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions;
- ❖ determine times of the *school* day consistent with any applicable conditions of employment of staff at the *school*;
- ❖ administer and control the *school's* property, and buildings and grounds occupied by the school, including *school* hostels, if applicable;
- ❖ encourage *parents*, *learners*, *educators* and other staff at the school to render voluntary services to the school;
- ❖ recommend to the *Head of Department* the appointment of educators at the school, subject to the Educators Employment Act, 1994 (Proclamation No. 138 of 1994), and the Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act No. 66 of 1995);
- ❖ recommend to the *Head of Department* the appointment of non-educator staff at the school, subject to the Public Service Act, 1994 (Proclamation No. 103 of 1994), and the Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act No. 66 of 1995);
- ❖ at the request of the Head of Department, allow the reasonable use under fair conditions of the facilities of the *school* for educational programmes not conducted by the school;

- ❖ discharge all other functions imposed upon the *governing body* by or under this Act; and
- ❖ discharge other functions consistent with this Act as determined by the *Minister* by notice in the Government Gazette, or by the member of the *Executive Council* by notice in the Provincial Gazette.

The Schools Act further says that the SGB may allow the reasonable use of the facilities of the school for community, social and school fund-raising purposes, subject to such reasonable and equitable conditions as the SGB may determine, which may include the charging of a fee or tariff which accrues to the school.

According to Section 21. (1) of the Schools Act, an SGB may apply to the Head of Department in writing to be allocated any of the following functions:

- ❖ To maintain and improve the *school's* property, and buildings and grounds occupied by the school, including *school* hostels, if applicable;
- ❖ to determine the extra-mural curriculum of the *school* and the choice of subject options in terms of provincial curriculum policy;
- ❖ to purchase textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school;
- ❖ to pay for services to the *school*; or
- ❖ other functions consistent with *this Act* and any applicable provincial law.

Section 21. (2) of the Schools Act empowered the Head of Department either to approve or to disapprove any application of such functions.

The Schools Act further provides for the parent and the general community, on the strength of their involvement with the SGB of a school, to become involved with that school. The duties and powers of such a SGB, as described in the legislation, remain a deciding factor, especially concerning the self-governance of schools and co-operation. Various sections in the Act compel SGBs in respect of certain matters over and over again to consult the parent community, even though they

have been democratically elected. For instance, they are compelled to consult the parent community before determining the school fees (Section 39 (1), approving the budget (Section 38 (2) and confirming the general code of conduct (Section 8 (1)). Thus, an important element of co-operative education management is promoted in this way, namely that the co-operation between the school and the parent community shall not be reduced to a mere once-off event. Rather, it would be a continued co-existence. If this relationship can be strengthened, schools can have the potential of growth and development.

2.6 SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

The concept of school development cannot be divorced from what Townsend (1994) calls the 'core-plus' model. This core-plus model is a framework where the 'core' might be the state mandated obligations of the school, including some similar to those that relate to success in literacy and numeracy, but the 'plus' would be determined by the school on behalf of the school community. Thus, the Department of Education, Arts, Culture and Sports (1997: 20) says that the governing body must draw up and amend a school development plan which promotes the best interests of the school through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school.

It further says that the SGB must encourage parents, learners, teachers and other staff at the school to help by offering their services voluntarily. As a form of school development, the governing body may establish services and community partnerships related to social, health, recreational, nutritional and transport programmes, to further the objectives of the schools act. However for the school to develop, its school governors need to develop a vision and goals. The vision and goals will then provide a theoretical basis for the school's development.

According to Townsend (1994: 129) community needs would include the expectation held by the various members of the school community, but also those

wider requirements that society expects of all schools. One major responsibility of the SGB is to establish the specific needs of its local community.

Underlying the purpose for the development the school goals is that there is a link between the needs of the community and the activities and structures implemented by the school to fulfil these needs. Thus, Townsend (1984) argued that educational activities should be based on the needs and problems of people for whom they are planned. SGBs should assist the school to develop policies on issues such as the length of the day, medium of instruction, rules about religious observances, dress code, code of conduct for learners and code of rights and responsibility. The Department of Education (1997) states that policies are usually strategies designed to bring about certain goals. It is a kind of decision making which involves negotiation around key values and principles.

Teachers are responsible for the day-to-day planning of the classroom activities. They therefore plan according to the goals of different subjects they teach. Thus, the staff takes responsibility for the development of a curriculum that helps to achieve those identified goals. According to Townsend (1994) parents and community members might be involved in the development of curriculum statements through membership of curriculum committees, or by giving their views to those involved, but the principal and the staff will take responsibility for the final product, because this is where their background knowledge and experience as subject specialists are needed.

It is important for the SGB to monitor all the school's programmes during their implementation as well as to evaluate them once they are completed. Monitoring is the process of checking and asking questions about what is happening while it is happening. According to the Department of Education (1997) evaluation means looking at the information you have collected and asking questions about such information. A continuous evaluation of the success of the activity will assist the school to maintain an on - going commitment to a quality education programme.

Thus, the SGB will have to satisfy itself that they know their weak points and their strong points. It is therefore through the process of monitoring and evaluation that the SGB will be able to see whether they are effective or not. This evaluation will then help them to improve on the weak points and maintain their strong points.

2.7 CONCLUSION

In this section a theoretical background for the study was provided. From the theoretical background it is evident that all stakeholders in a community need each other. For the school to be effective, it needs to be managed or governed in a co-operative form. The SGB members need to understand and internalise their functions and duties. Any compromise of both the knowledge of co-operative governance and the duties and functions of SGBs may amount into conflict. SGBs therefore owe it to themselves to ensure that they know how to manage effectively.



SECTION 3

DATA COLLECTION, DISPLAY AND ANALYSIS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section has as its focus the processes of data collection, and its display and analysis as determined by the research question. The research format decided on for this inquiry is deliberated on in detail, with specific reference to methods of data collection, relevant data processing techniques and the route followed during the interpretation of data. The research phenomenon under investigation in this study is, whether SGBs based in rural areas are properly equipped to function as stipulated by the South African School's Act of 1996.

3.2 THE SETTING

The setting of this study is the Bushbuckridge area of the Northern Province. The Bushbuckridge area is divided into three Transitional Local Councils, namely, Bushbuckridge North, Bushbuckridge South and Bushbuckridge Midlands. The research population are the SGBs of two schools. The first school is a secondary school located in Bushbuckridge Midlands whereas the second is a primary school in Bushbuckridge North. The secondary school is a community initiated project established at Agincourt village whilst the primary school was started by the University of the Witwatersrand for the children of its workers at the WITS Rural Facility (WRF) at Acornhoek and its surrounding areas. I have ties with both schools. I am a Head of Department (HOD) in the secondary school and a vice-chairperson of the SGB in the primary school.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study because I am interested in eliciting the opinions of SGB members on how effective the SGB functions. Le Compte and Pressle (1993: 55) define research design as “putting things together, bringing to consciousness and to the notebook-as many aspects as possible of the research’s planning and preparation for enquiry”. Similarly, Merriam (1991: 6) writes that

a research design is similar to an architectural blue print. It is a plan for assembling, organising and integrating information and it results in a specific end product. The design is determined by how the problem is shaped, by the question it raises, and by the type of end product desired.

According to Le Compte and Pressle (1993: 39) the aim of a descriptive research is to "examine events or phenomena ... characterise something as it is ... there is no manipulation of treatments or subjects; the researcher takes things as they are : The approach I am using in this study is descriptive because its ultimate aim is to systematically scrutinise the activities of the SGB's and record them as they are.

Miles and Huberman (1994: 27) state that qualitative researchers work with small samples of people situated in their context and studied in-depth. In this study a non-probable method of sampling called purposive or purposeful sampling is used. According to Merriam (1991: 48) purposive sampling is based on assumption that

one wants to discover, understand and gain insight, therefore one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most.

The sample population of this study consists of eight people, two school principals and the two SGB members from each school and two teachers from both schools.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

For the purposes of this study, I have made use of in depth interviews, observations and literature review as research methods. Those methods, therefore, combined together constitute triangulation. Gall et al (1996: 574) state that :

Triangulation is the process of using multiple data collection methods, data sources, analysts, or theories to check the validity of the study. Triangulation helps to eliminate bias that might result from relying exclusively on any one data-collection method, source, analyst, or theory.

The primary method for the enquiry was the interview. Sax, (in Landman, 1998: 67) defines an interview as representing a direct attempt by the researcher to obtain reliable and valid measures from one or more respondents. Patton (1987: 109-114) identifies three approaches to qualitative interviewing, namely the informal conversation interview, general interview guide approach, and the standardised open-ended interview. According to Patton, the informal conversational interview relies entirely on the spontaneous generation of questions in the natural flow of an interaction. An interview guide is prepared to make sure that essentially the same information is obtained from a number of people by choosing the same material. The advantage of an interview guide is that it makes sure the interviewer has carefully decided how best to use the limited time available in an interview situation. The standardised open-ended interview consists of a set of questions carefully worded and arranged for the purpose of taking each respondent through the same sequence and asking each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words. Flexibility in probing is more or less limited. For the purpose of this study, I have made use of a combination of interviews and the general interview guide approach.

The interviews for this study were organised over a period of four days. I was able to interview two people per day. In my request for the appointments I clearly indicated the aim of the study which is to gather information on how the SGB's operate. The appointments were made with the participants a week before the interviews. After everything was confirmed, I compiled a timetable for appointments, which indicated the date and time of interviews. I also used a video camera to record data for the interviews. One advantage of this data collection device is that I am able to analyse the gestures and body language of the interviewees during the interview process.

I limited my sample to eight SGB members who were considered representative of the population of the investigation, that is SGB members from Bushbuckridge. The sample population comprised two school principals, four SGB members from the parent component and two SGB members from the teacher component.

Figure 3.1 is a graphic illustration of the percentage of representation of the participants of the study on the SGBs.

Institution	Principals	Teachers	Parents
School 1	100%	50%	100%
School 2	100%	50%	100%

The above figure represents the composition of the SGB at both schools. As indicated above, principals constitute 100%, teachers 50% and parents 100% of representation. The table is supposed to reflect also the representation of the learner component at the secondary school. However, I have discovered in the course of the interviews that the learner component is lacking in the secondary school SGB. When I enquired from the principal about this omission, he said that the SGB is doing nothing about the matter of inclusion. The principal is also a member of the SGB, as the table indicates.

I was able to establish a good rapport with the respondents. The respondents felt free to express themselves because I ensured them of the confidentiality of the interviews. They therefore opened up to me and freely expressed their feelings, perceptions and opinions about the SGBs. I also used probing to get additional information when the responses were not satisfactory.

Nachmias et al (1987: 243) state that probes motivate the respondent to elaborate or clarify an answer or to explain the reasons behind an answer. In order to save time, I also made use of an interview guide. An interview guide specifies the questions, the sequence in which they are to be asked, and guidelines for what the interviewer is to say at the beginning and the end of each interview (Gal et al 1996: 313). I ensured that I did not end the interview until I was satisfied with the responses.

According to Bailey (1989: 239), the observational method is the primary technique for data collection of non-verbal behaviour. Observation is preferred when one wants to study in detail the behaviour that occurs in some particular settings. Vierna et al in Landman (1988: 77) defines observation as a research technique, which utilises direct contact between the researcher and the phenomena of interest in natural settings. However, the major concern about the validity and reliability of observational data concerns the effects of the observer on what is observed

(Patton 1987:76). This therefore implies that if the observed is aware that he/she is observed, the observer may not get the real picture about the phenomenon under investigation. After I had conducted the interviews with all SGB members I decided to observe their activities within their respective areas of operations.

I did not inform them that I will be observing their activities. People may behave quite differently when they know they are being observed compared to how they behave if they are not aware of being observed (Patton 1987: 77). In this study, I have used covert observations. According to Patton (1987: 77) covert observations are:

More likely to capture what is really happening than are overt observations, which allow people in the programme to become aware that they are being studied.

In this investigation, I have observed a school management meeting, an SGB meeting and also an SGB workshop.



3.5 OBSERVATION

3.5.1 Workshop process observation

During the course of this study, I met a governance officer at one high school in Bushbuckridge. The officer visited my office to finalise logistics of the workshop. In our conversation, she disclosed to me that she is a Governance officer from Bushbuckridge region. She also told me that she was coming for a workshop on SGBs. I then told her that I am engaged in a research study on SGBs, and further requested her permission to observe the workshop proceedings. She granted me permission. After a team building exercise the officer asked the attendants what their expectations were. Amongst other things they said they expected the workshop to educate the SGBs about their roles, responsibilities, internal

relationships and the management structures, learners, teachers and community members. Finally the officer told the workshop participants what her expectations were. Her expectations were similar to those of the workshop participants, for example, to empower SGBs about their functions. Before the end of the workshop the officer gave the participants the opportunity to evaluate the workshop. Some SGB members indicated that the workshop empowered them. Some said that they were not satisfied with the manner in which the question of finances was handled in the workshop.


3.5.2 Researcher's comments on workshop

The parents and the teachers were very keen to know what their role and functions are within their respective SGBs. They asked a lot of questions and also raised some concerns. One participant confessed that he is a Sotho, hence he could not express himself very well in Xitsonga, since the workshop was conducted mainly in Xitsonga. The officer therefore tried to speak in Sesotho for the sake of the participant. In the process she got stuck and she could not translate words such as "*Xisihalali*" (non-conformist) from Xitsonga to Sesotho. The participants also wanted to know what to do in the case of a learner component on the SGB if there is a sensitive case involving a teacher or pupil in the case of misconduct. This question reflected the SGBs' problem with the inclusion of learners in their structures. After the workshop, I asked the officer about the absence of the learner component in the workshop. She said that it was because the workshop was convened during school hours whilst learners were expected to be in class. After the workshop, I interviewed two principals about the workshop. Both of them were dissatisfied with the way in which the workshop was conducted. One of them said that the workshop was unsuccessful because the officer has no experience on issues of management.

3.5.3 School management meeting

On the 28th of June, 1999 I observed a management meeting at our school as a participant observer. At that meeting the principal gave us a report of their previous SGB meeting. Amongst other things he indicated that one SGB member was tasked to make a draft of the school policy towards the end of 1998, but to their disappointment the member in question could not present it in their meeting. He further reported that the school's bank account had been closed but that the SGB could not provide reasons why it was closed. Thus the meeting agreed that one of the members who used to handle funds before the Schools Act was promulgated should assist the SGB in finding out exactly what might have happened at the bank. The principal further stated that another important function of the SGB is the handling of the school's finances, hence his concern about the closure of the school's bank account.

3.5.4 SGB meeting



On the 18th of May 1999 I observed an SGB meeting at Lumukisa Primary School as a participant observer. The main item on the agenda was the school finances and corporal punishment. During the course of the meeting there was a heated debate as to who has more powers in managing the school's finances. The principal expressed some ill feelings about her exclusion from being a signatory. On the question of corporal punishment, the chairperson reminded SGB members that corporal punishment is outlawed hence any teacher who administers it is doing that on his or her own risk. The chairperson unequivocally said that the SGB would not protect any teacher who contravenes the clause on corporal punishment.

3.6 DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS

Patton (1987) regards data analysis as the process of bringing order and organising what is there in patterns, categories and descriptive units. Data analysis

therefore helps the researcher to test new knowledge and hypothesis. After transcribing all the data I have collected from the interviews and observations, I then proceeded with open coding of each section. Open coding is part of analysis that pertains specifically to the naming and categorising of phenomena through close examination of data (Strauss & Corbin 1990: 62). I coded the information by paragraphs, using multi-coloured pens to identify the main areas of my research. The main areas that I identified were related to the research question and they were as follows:

- ◆ The functions of SGBs
- ◆ The training of SGBs
- ◆ Communication amongst SGB members

3.6.1 Interviews

According to my initial plan the interviews were supposed to be conducted in English. I felt this would enable me to determine the extent to which they can cope with technical language and also establish the true level of their education. This is not meant to imply that only English speakers are properly educated but to establish whether or not the SGB members have actually interacted with the documents supplied by the department. This is important because of the claim I made in section One that all the documents are either in Afrikaans or English and as there was no induction the members with the limited education are unable to interact with or interpret the documents adequately. Hence their inability to perform satisfactorily. Surprisingly, all the interviewees wanted to be interviewed in English. This I suspect is based on the stereotype that once a person can speak English, he is educated. As would be seen from the data their performance in the interview confirms the claims I made in section One. The interviews were conducted from the 7th of May 1999 to 10th of May 1999, from 9h00 to 12h00 daily.

Scholastic Background

I set out to find out what these SGB members scholastic backgrounds were. As opposed to my first assumption that the majority of SGB members in the rural areas is not properly educated, the data have proven to the contrary as it is reflected in the table below. However, the reality is that 70 to 80% of SGB members particularly from the parent component are not properly educated.

3.2 Demographic information on the interviewees

School	Capacity	Educational background
1	Principal SGB (Member) SGB (Chair) SGB (Member)	BA, UED Matric Matric
2	Principal SGB (member) SGB (member) SGB (member)	PTD PTD, BA PTD Matric

Patterns of interviews

◆ Functions

Out of eight interviewees, only five confessed that they do not know the functions of the SGBs. The remaining three claimed to know the functions. But according to the interviews I conducted, they have proven not to be knowing their functions very well. The following are examples from questions and responses:

Parent 1: Q: Have you read about your functions as SGB member?

R: We ask teachers how we are expected to work.

Principal 1: Q: In your understanding, what are the functions of all SGBs?

R: They are representing the parents.

Parent 2: Q: Can you draw a line of demarcation between the functions of all SGBs and allocated functions of SGBs?

R: No, is not easy to do that as I said we are using our common sense.

Codes: Q=Question

R=Response

◆ Training for SGBs

Interviewees overwhelmingly said that no training was ever conducted for them. It is important to note that the interviews were conducted before the workshop that I observed. The following are some interviewees' responses about questions on training.

Parent 2: I was never ever work-shopped.

Parent 3: No training, we use our discretion

Parent 4: No, I never received

Teacher 2: No, they did not give me any training. Some of the things I just went home and read from the books.

◆ Language issue

The participants from the high school cited language as one of the problems facing SGB members. More than 80% of the interviewees stated that the majority of SGB members cannot interpret SGB related documents as it is written in English. The

following is an example of responses on language and interpretation.

Parent 1: I think there is a problem of language.

Principal 1: Not all of them understand but we are trying to explain everything to them.

Principal 2: We were fortunate even in the past to have educated people around ourselves.

The following matrix provides a broader view of these SGBs views on their functions and training:

Table 3.3 SGBs views about their activities and support service

	Interviewees	Functions of SGBs	Training of SGBs
1	PSP	FNK	RNT
2	PSPR	FK	-
3	PST	-	RNT
4	PSP	FNK	RNT
5	HSP	FK	RNT
6	HSPR	FNK	RNT
7	HST	FNK	RNT
8	HSP	FNK	RNT

CODES:

- IW = INTERVIEWEES
- FOS = FUNCTIONS OF SGBS
- TOS = TRAINING OF SGBS
- PSP = PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENT

PSPR =	PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL
PST =	PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER
HSP =	HIGH SCHOOL PARENT
HSPR =	HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL
HST =	HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER
FNK =	FUNCTIONS NOT KNOWN
FK =	FUNCTIONS KNOWN
RNT =	RECEIVED NO TRAINING

3.7 CONCLUSION

The salient aspects of the investigation were discussed in this section, that is, the design of the study, methods of data collection and data collection and processing. The data was prepared for the next step of the inquiry, which is the interpretation of the data. The two types of data generated by the interviews and observations confirmed the claim with which I started this inquiry. That is, the SGB members do not know their functions. The findings made will be discussed in the final section.

SECTION 4

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This investigation has attempted to answer the research question which the researcher formulated in the first section. The research question is: ***Are SGBs based in rural areas properly equipped to function as stipulated by the Schools Act?*** The consolidated data is interpreted against the background of the existing theoretical framework. The implications of the findings are also discussed. The investigation also covers some recommendations for policy makers, teachers, learners and SGB members in particular.

4.2 FINDINGS

The findings presented here are based on observational data collected during the enquiry and supported by the interviews I conducted in the course of the study. The findings are as follows:

- ❖ These two SGBs in rural areas do not actually know what their work entails. This, as indicated in the data is due to the fact that they were not work-shopped before or after appointment.
- ❖ A major stumbling block to the effective performance of the SGBs is the language issue, that is, the materials available to them are not user-friendly, as many of them cannot understand technical language such as a government Act, nor are they fluent in either English or Afrikaans.
- ❖ The officer in charge of workshopping the SGBs is not capacitated. This

became evident in a workshop she attempted to conduct in one of the circuits in the Bushbuckridge area.

- ❖ The inclusion of learners in the SGB is considered a grievous mistake by the teacher and parent component of the SGB.
- ❖ The secondary school SGB does not feel any need of the learner component, hence their exclusion from the SGB.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ More research on the functioning of SGBs in rural areas needs to be done. The findings of this investigation may be supported by other research; thereby stressing how important it is for SGB members to be trained (Mkhonto, 1998: 39). This suggestion is still standing because in the very area where Mkhonto conducted this research, there is still a lot of work to be done on the functioning and training of SGBs.
- ❖ All the SGB members need to undergo intensive training after they are elected into the office. The trainers of SGB members also need to have both academic and professional knowledge of governance issues, including knowledge of educational and legal issues.
- ❖ The Schools Act needs to be user- friendly. School principals should be allowed to be office bearers. They could occupy positions such as that of secretary because they are the ones who receive circulars, government gazettes and other official documents on behalf of the school.
- ❖ The Schools Act should be amended, so as to make clearer the powers of the treasurer and those of the principal in terms of accounting procedures. School

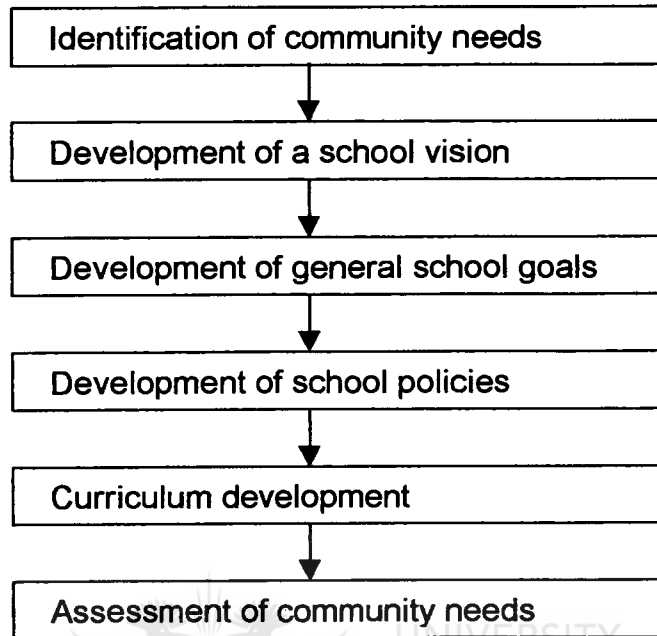
- ❖ principals also need to be made signatories to their school's accounts because they are also key in implementing the school budget.

The learner component should be removed from the SGBs because they find it difficult to reconcile their work as learners and their membership in the SGB. For example SGB meetings and workshops are convened during school hours whilst they are expected to be in class.

- ❖ Community members also need to be made aware of the role of the SGBs in the schools in their communities. SGBs need to be accountable to the communities they serve. The Association of SGBs should assist the government in empowering SGBs particularly those in the rural areas.
- ❖ SGBs must be encouraged to join the Association. SGBs need to be educated on aspects such as their functions, the difference between management and governance, the labour relations Act and other relevant issues related to education.
- ❖ They also need to be appraised about conflict management and conflict strategies.
- ❖ Above, all SGBs should develop a vision for their schools. Below, I have developed a model of a school as part of my recommendations. For the purposes of this research aspects that will be covered are those that I feel are within the scope of the SGBs.



Table 4.1 A model for the development of the core plus school. Adopted from Townsend (1994)



4.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study covered only two schools in Bushbuckridge. A blend of rural and urban schools could have made this study more comprehensive. Prescriptions on the number of pages in this essay has also delimited this study, hence my limited focus area.

4.5 CONCLUSION

The school governing body is an important core of our education system. Their success lies in all stakeholders in education, that is, policy makers, teachers, parents, and community members. Each of them should know their functions

accordingly. The government should not regard the eleven official languages as a mere symbolic gesture like when politicians greet in Tshivenda, Xitsonga and Isindebele and immediately switch over to English the language under usage. The materials for the consumption of SGBs need also to be translated into all the eleven official languages. Non-governmental Organisations need to be involved in assisting SGBs through massive awareness of their roles and training programmes. In essence the government should appoint competent government officers.

Above all, the resolutions of National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) on the people's education summed up the role of education in this fashion: The success of the people's education depends on how it manages to organise all groups of people to take control of all aspects of their lives. These groups of students, teachers and parents need to work together with mutual understanding to build democratic organisations. It is against this background that all stakeholders in schools that is, school principals, HOD's, SGBs, parents and learners need to pursue unity, in pursuit of culture of learning, teaching and service delivery.



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