

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters, the problem was posed and investigated by means of a literature review. In this chapter the researcher sets out to explain the methodology used in gathering data. This chapter describes how the study is designed and progressed with the study of how government legislation affects the control of school funds in five public schools in Ekurhuleni East district.

The main aim of this study is to:

- Probe into the extent to which government legislation affects the control of school funds in Section 21 public schools'
- Elicit the perceptions of five principals regarding financial control systems;
- Research the five section 21 public schools with regard to the effect of government legislation in the control of school funds.

3.2 SAMPLE AND SAMPLING METHOD

The process of selecting a fractional part of the whole relevant group or population is called grouping. The basic idea is that selecting some of the elements in a population and focussing research attention on this finite group we may apply the findings of the study to the whole population of interest. A population is the full set of elements or cases from which a sample is taken **Slavin (1992:251)**

According to **Slavin (1992:252)**, a sample is a group of subjects chosen from a large group or population to which findings are assumed to apply. The sample in this study involved five Section 21 public schools, all of which are found in an

urban area. Three of these are primary schools while two are secondary institutions. All of these schools are located in the Actonville area of Benoni on the East Rand.

The reason for choosing these five schools was influenced by the researcher's easy access to the institutions. The researcher works as a Head of Department (HOD) at one of the institutions in Actonville – the same area in which the five schools are found. This position enabled the researcher to have easy access to the institution. Familiarity with all the school principals made it easier for the researcher to have access to these schools.

Before the researcher started on this study, permission was sought from the principals of the sample school to conduct the study in the sample schools. A letter to this effect is provided in Annexure A. Here follows a brief history of each of the sample schools.



3.2.1 Actonville Primary School

The beginnings of this school originated in a simple wood and iron structure in Stirtonville, Boksburg, way back in 1938 as a three-man school. During the 1960's circumstances dictated that this school should move from Boksburg to Benoni where it got established as the Actonville Primary School

With the passage of time, Actonville Primary attained "P1" status with classes ranging from Junior to Senior Primary levels. In 1984 significant changes were made to the main building allowing the school to accommodate 750 learners currently, the school's enrolment figures stand at 1150 learners. Its first principal in 1938 was Mr J.J. Collins and its current principal is Mr S.R. Singh

3.2.2 Benoni Primary School

Benoni Primary School was established in 1949. Housed in prefabricated buildings until 10 March 1983, the school commenced with a learner enrolment of 317 under the Principal Mr A.S. Jansen and eight teachers. A new building was erected and completed in 1983. After occupying this building, the school was opened by the Executive Director of the Department of Education and Culture Mr J.S.M. Zwiendelaar on 20 April 1985. This new school retained the name of Benoni Primary School and its current principal is Mr A. Veerasamy.

3.2.3 Pioneer Primary School

Pioneer Primary School is the youngest of the three primary schools found in Actonville today. This school's beginning dates back to January 1972 when it opened its doors to 751 learners and 25 educators under the principalship of M A. Gasiep. The schools current principal is Mr A.A. Ally and its enrolment figures stand at 1050 learners.

3.2.4 Willian Hills High School

William Hills High School was established in 1928 with four tin classrooms and offered classes from grade one to grade seven. The school was first named Benoni Coloured School and its first principal was Mr Ferrera. In 1936 the level of education offered at the school, increased up to grade 8 and the four tin classrooms were replaced by more permanent, prefabricated structures.

In 1937 the parents and educators of Benoni Coloured School made representations to the East Rand School Board to grant Junior Secondary status to

the school. It was largely due to the efforts and support of Mr William Hills, chairman of the East Rand School Board that the school assumed the status of a Junior High School in 1938. To honour his noble efforts and interest, the school was renamed the William Hills Junior High School.

In 1945, the William Hills Junior High School conducted its first matric class with an enrolment of three learners. In 1949, the school was renamed, the William Hills High School and it catered for learning levels from grade eight to grade twelve. It currently still enjoys this education status.

In 1979, the school moved to new premises, situated in Wynberg street, Actonville, Benoni. This new school retained the name William Hills High School and was officially opened by the then director of Indian Education Mr G.Krog on 6 October 1979. This school still occupies the premises in Wynberg street, and its current principal is Mr V. Moonsamy.

3.2.5 Liverpool Secondary School

According to the annals of the school, this institution absorbed the access learners from the three Primary schools of Actonville, in 1979, with classes ranging from grade one to grade eight. The school was named William Hills Primary School and occupied the old buildings of the William Hills High School. One year later the learner enrolment figure rose from 914 at its inception to 600 learners.

In 1983 the William Hills Primary School was split into or primary and a high school section. On 14 April 1983, 402 primary school learners with 12 educators were transferred to the newly established East Rand Primary School under the principalship of Mr V.A. Katha. Learners from grade 5 to 9, totalling 756 remained at the old premises. In August of 1983, the school officially became

known as the Liverpool Secondary School and its first principal was Mr M. Moodley.

The school's first matric classes were introduced in 1986. Learner enrolment during that year was 885 and the school had a teaching staff of 40. The school's first matriculation results revealed an overall pass rate of 96%.

The new school building was erected next to the old premises. On 8 July 1987, the new school building was officially occupied. It currently still occupies these premises and its present principal is Mr N.R. Kalan.

3.2.6 Comparison of the five schools



Similarities:

- The five schools fall under the jurisdiction of the Gauteng Province;
- The schools are located in the same district (Ekurhuleni East District);
- All the schools enjoy section 21 status;
- The schools all have functional School Governing Bodies; and
- The schools are easily accessible by the researcher.

Differences:

- These differences lie mainly in the socio-economic status of the parents with regards to funding and the degree of parental involvement in the affairs of the school;
- Two are secondary and three are primary schools.

3.2.7 Reasons for the choice of the five schools for research purposes

The researcher works as a Head of Department (for Language Literacy and Communication) at a primary school in the Actonville area. This position enables the researcher to interact with the community of the above schools. The researcher, therefore, has information on both positive and negative aspects attached to these schools.

With the promulgation of SASA of 1996, the researcher is interested in learning if government legislation guides the control of school funds. The researcher is also interested in finding out how those schools which are perceived as good, go about improving their financial control systems.

3.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

In a qualitative study the “variables” are usually not controlled because it is exactly this freedom and natural development of action and representation that we wish to capture (**Henning, 2004:3**). However, a qualitative study includes advancing the assumptions of qualitative designs, indicating the specific type of design reflecting on the researcher`s role, discussing data collection, developing data, recording procedures, identifying data analysis procedures, specifying verification steps and delineating the narrative outcomes of the study.

Creswell (1994:145) as one of the theorists on qualitative research presents the following six assumptions:

- Qualitative researchers are concerned primarily with process rather than outcomes or products;

- Qualitative researchers are interested in meaning, i.e. how people make sense of their lives, experiences and the structures of the world;
- The qualitative researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis;
- Qualitative research involves fieldwork. The researcher physically goes to the individuals, settings, site or institutions to observe or record behaviour in a natural setting;
- Qualitative research is descriptive in that the researcher is interested in process, meaning and understanding gained through words and pictures; and
- The process of quality research is inductive in that the researcher builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses and theories from details.

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative research method so that he could share in the knowledge and understanding of others. This would also allow him to explore how people structure and give meaning to their daily lives (**Stevens, 1993:66**).

3.4 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Since a brief discussion of qualitative research has been completed, the researcher will now discuss the research instrument.

- 3.4.1 All research is generally concerned with obtaining answers to questions. The interview will be the data-collection instrument used in this dissertation. The designs of the empirical investigation are the five semi-structured interviews consisting of five questions (See Annexure A). This research indicates and or has bearing on the effect of government legislation on the control of school funds.

Permission of the five respondents was obtained prior to interviewing (See Annexure B). A tape recorder was used as an aid during interviews. Questions used were open ended in nature and given to the respondents well in advance for their perusal. This approach to the interview afforded the respondents greater freedom of expression and enabled more open responses.

3.4.2 Selection of Interviews

The interview phase of the research took three months to complete. Five schools principals of the five designated schools were interviewed during this time. The aim of the research was to elicit the views and understandings of all the school principals. The approach is an attempt to determine and gain a representative perception of acceptable financial control systems at section 21 public schools.

In the case of selecting research participants, the researcher needs to get participants who can travel with him on the journey towards more knowledge about the topic (**Henning, 2004:71**). In this regard, the researcher aligned himself with what **De Vos (1998:300-301)** termed a “friendly conversation”. Here the respondents are encouraged to speak as freely as possible, where semi-structured questions are used in a conversational manner to allow the respondents to reconstruct their personal experiences in their own settings.

Analysing of qualitative data concentrates on the meanings expressed through words and through the use of conceptualisation. Before the analysis of the data, the responses of the interviewees were transcribed verbatim. The researcher then went on to interpret the data by identifying important themes and associations between them (**De Vos, 1998:3.1**).

3.4.3 Participants in the five interviews

The discussion on the method used in this study will be followed by a presentation of the questions used during the interviews of all the principals.

3.5 INTERVIEW GUIDE

Questions for the interviews of the five school principals covered the following:

- The extent to which government legislation affects the financial control system of Section 21 public schools;
- Elicit the perceptions of five school principals on financial control systems; and
- The implications of poor or negative financial control systems at schools.

3.5.1 The extent to which government legislation affect financial control systems at Section 21 public schools:

- What do you understand by government legislation?
- Define a public school which has section 21 status?
- How, in your opinion, does section 21 status affect a school's financial control systems?

3.5.2 Eliciting perceptions of principals with regard to financial control systems;

- Briefly explain how the financial control system at your school operates
- What do you think are the strengths of your school's financial control system?
- In your opinion, what are the weaknesses of your school's financial control system?

3.6 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND VALIDITY OF THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Validity and reliability are the effective strategies that can be used to establish the credibility of data and are critical to the accurate representation of subjective human experiences (Krefting, 1991:220). According to Krathwohl (1993:741), validity is the evidence that a test measures what it is intended to measure. Reliability is evidence that a test measures consistently in some respect.

In order to determine the validity and trustworthiness of the interview, the following questions emerged:

- Are the findings of this particular study valid and transferable to other groups of participants and other situations?
- Can this study be repeated if the same group of principals are used in the same setting?

Participants were selected by virtue of their relevant experiences both as educators and principals actively involved in the continuous school improvement policy. All the school principals had no cause or motive to conceal or distort relevant information pertaining to the research study.

The strategies used to record, analyse and report data was executed with precision, planning and thoroughness. The physical, personal and social context in which the relevant data was obtained was specifically demarcated.

Ethical issues pertaining to validity and trustworthiness were also carefully considered. In this study, the researcher maintained the following ethical considerations:

- Prior consent, concerning the interview and its taping was obtained by the respondents;
- The right to privacy and anonymity of the respondents was guaranteed; and
- The privacy and openness of the respondents were protected and no pressure was applied to achieve the objectives of the researcher.

3.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher wanted to include as many schools as possible, but only five schools were purposefully selected due to a lack of time. The sample schools were readily accessible to the researcher. The study was limited to determine the views of five public school principals. The five respondents were interviewed and their views were recorded and transcribed.

3.8 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this section was to discuss the sample, the method of data collection used, the research method used, the research questions and research instruments used. Validity and trustworthiness of the instrument was also discussed. In chapter four the following issues will be looked at:

- Data gathering;
- Data organisation, analysis and interpretation, and
- Identification of categories.