

**THE ROLE OF PARENT GOVERNORS IN SCHOOL
FINANCIAL DECISION-MAKING: EXPERIENCES OF
PARENT GOVERNORS IN NDWEDWE RURAL SCHOOLS**

**BY
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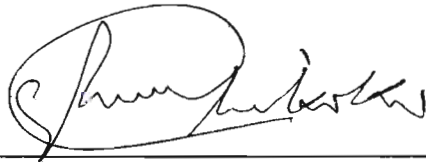
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SUPERVISOR`S STATEMENT

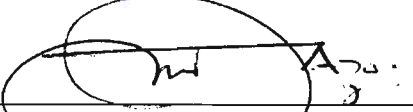
This dissertation has been submitted with/without my approval.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dr. V. Chikoko', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line.

Dr V. Chikoko
January 2009

DECLARATION

I, Qaphelisani Obed Khuzwayo, declare that this research report, "The Role of Parent Governors in School Financial Decision-making: Experiences of Parent Governors in Ndwedwe Rural Schools" is my own work and all sources I have quoted have been acknowledged. The University of KwaZulu-Natal has certified ethical clearance for this study.



Q.O. Khuzwayo

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated:

To my late mother, Funani who passed away on 10.11.2008 and my father, Muntukayise J. Khuzwayo, who displayed a high sense of altruism to me, despite their low level of schooling and through sugar-cane farming, nurtured me to become what I am.

To my late and beloved wife, Phumzile Adority Khuzwayo who passed away on 17.12.2008, the proposed eve of submitting this study. Despite her critical cancer illness, she always encouraged me to toil and toil for the completion and success of this work. From whom I shall never tire to continue drawing inspiration.

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I feel highly indebted to God who has been with me through the mill and odds trying to give this study its meaningful shape.

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I record my sincerest thanks to Dr Jenni Karlsson for lending me her book "DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLING IN SOUTH AFRICA" and providing moral support in respect of the 'RESEARCH METHODOLOGY CHAPTER'.

I thank the education officials of Ilembe District and the principals of the selected schools who allowed access to conduct this research. I also thank the ten selected parent governors for their understanding, willingness and patience during data collection process.

I am very grateful to our children, Siphumelele Thobile for imparting computer skills to me, Zanokuhle Praise-God for fixing and programming my computer in order to type and print my work, Senanyisiwe Pretty-Rose for typing and her words of encouragement and Godwin Ophezukonke Thuthukani for his kind and loving support. May this piece of work also give them the indeterminate inspiration to turn a tide against all odds in their life and schooling system.

ABSTRACT

This study focused on parent governors' experiences in school financial decision-making. Whilst the South African Schools Act, 1996, endorses decentralisation of finance control to all School Governing Body members, this is not commonly the case with **Ndwedwe** rural School Governing Body parent representatives in particular. It is argued that decentralised financial powers could increase parent governors' democratic participation in the school financial governance. However, reports from some parent governors in Section 20 and Section 21 status schools indicated that parent governors still face severe challenges in making financial decisions. In this regard, the study investigated the voices of parent governors regarding school financial decision-making. The study drew on a qualitative interpretive approach of parent governors' experiences in a small sample of schools selected by means of purposeful sampling. For the purpose of data collection, an interview schedule was designed to allow flow of probing, clarifying and motivating the respondents where necessary. Document analysis informed subsequent data collection from the interviews. The findings indicated that the majority of parent governors in the schools studied were still dependent on their principals, had language difficulties and faced huge challenges in the 'No Fee' paying schools. The study concluded that in the schools selected, school financial governance was not taking place as it should. To achieve quality in financial governance, continuous support of rural SGBs on financial decision-making is necessary, effective SGBs should twin with ineffective SGBs, financial documents must also include IsiZulu versions and the Department of Education should lift the restrictions on allocated funds.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background and purpose of the study

Democratic school governance in South Africa is a direct result of the South African Constitution Act 108 of 1996 which created the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (hereafter called SASA). This Act provides for democratic school governance through school governing bodies (hereafter called SGBs) in the national public schooling system. It is inclusive of various stakeholders such as parents of learners at the school, learners in the eighth grade or higher, educators, an *ex-officio* member (the principal) and non-educators (SASA, 1996, p.18). Amidst the key governance areas to be performed by such stakeholders, parents with others are tasked with the full control of school finances and they are legally bound to play a fundamental role in participating in school financial decisions.

However, reports from parent governors in some rural areas, suggest that they face severe challenges such as lack of participation in finance committees, partial involvement in school budgetary matters and little involvement in fundraising efforts. Some lowly educated rural SGB chairpersons and treasurers, who are parents, are still required to sign blank cheques. Another problematic issue is the Act that generalizes the financial school governance powers to all public

school governors at the expense of rural parent governors who were marginalized and have no financial competencies. With such little financial expertise, if any, they are expected to make financial decisions in different types of school categories such as section 20 schools, section 21 schools and handle efficiently the requirements of the 'No Fee' policy. This shows that school governance in general and school financial governance in particular are complex and problematic issues in most South African rural schools. The study focuses on the voices, experiences, challenges faced by parent governors in school financial governance issues.

Ngubane, (2002) claims that an effective school governing body is expected to establish sub-committees namely finance committees, fundraising committee, tuckshop committee, resource committee and so on. Expanding this notion, SASA, Act 84 (1996, p.22) states that the head of each sub-committee should be a member of the school governing body, preferably a parent who is a treasurer. Bearing the point of little financial experience the rural parents encounter, it should hardly be a surprise that it is difficult for them to meet their commitments to shoulder school financial governance matters. This suggests that school financial governance is failing despite democracy on school governance in all South African public schools.

According to Carrim, (2001), legally, parents in the school governing body must be in the majority by more than one member because they have a direct stake in the school affairs. They are empowered to determine, within the framework of the National Constitution, what is

in the best interests of their children. However, in the case of some schools in ex-Ndwedwe circuit now restructured as Ilembe South, the majority of parents seem to walk long distances to and from schools for meetings or workshops. This may hamper the zeal to offer high quality financial services to school governance. Given the circumstances that may block the participation of parent governors on school decision-making, it is noted, therefore, that rural parents struggle to meet commitments to school governance (Ministerial Review Committee, 2004, p.48). The study attempts to investigate how such parent governors cope with such complexities.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The study is on parent governors' experiences in school financial decision-making. The majority of parents are expected to take on governing responsibilities including governance on finance; however, they have little financial expertise (Ministerial Committee Review, 2004, p.10). According to Motha's (2003) research on financial accountability of primary schools, finance is a main responsibility of all governing bodies in South Africa but there is limited material on the way in which financial management and governance actually work. This demonstrates that there is a dire need to research governing bodies' experiences particularly parents.

1.3 Research questions

This study attempts to respond to the three questions on the next page:

1. How do parent governors experience financial decision-making in Section 20 and Section 21 schools respectively?
2. What challenges, if any, do parent governors face in `No Fee` paying schools?
3. How can parent governors' participation in school financial governance be enhanced?

1.4 Significance of study

The study seeks to identify the gap in the literature, namely the failure of available research to capture the direct experiences of rural parent governors in particular in the matters that pertain school financial decision-making. In this instance, the study addresses parents' experiences in making sound school financial decisions in both section 20 and 21 schools and it investigates the challenges that parent governors face in the 'No Fee` paying schools. Such experiences will help the Department of Education to improve the nature of school governance policy frameworks regarding financial governance in particular.

1.5 Definition of terms

1.5.1 Parent

South African Schools Act 84 (1996, p.4) defines parent as:

- a) the *parent* or guardian of a *learner*,
- b) the person legally entitled to custody of a learner, or
- c) the person who undertakes to fulfill the obligations of a parent towards the learner's education at school.

This suggests that 'parent' in the case of school, may be a person who is responsible for the provision of educational needs (payment of school fees or other educational requirements) of a learner. The study adopts the term 'parent' the external person who has the learners at the school or has the legitimate right to the learner custodianship. This person works alongside with others in the school governing body for making school decisions, *inter alia*, financial school decision-making.

1.5.2 Governors

Anderson and Lumby (2005) refer to 'governors' as parents, learners, educators and others who have roles to play in the school governing body. They argue that educators or learners are governors who have roles that are clearly internal to the school whilst parents and others are external stakeholders who play the role of a school governor to the school. This clearly demonstrates that the term 'governors' is widely used in the South African context to mean a group of people at schools who have power to provide governance support to the learning organization (school). The term 'governors' in this study refers to one group of people (parent governors) who have power over making decisions on school resources such as finance in particular.

1.5.3 South African Schools Act 84 Of 1996

It refers to the Act or a legal document that applies to school education in the Republic of South Africa. It is Act number 84 of 1996 that is a direct result of the South African Constitution Act 108 of 1996. The study adopts SASA because it frames the democratic

rights of school governors in ensuring that schools implement their (school governors') decisions effectively.

1.5.4 Financial decisions

Financial decisions refer to an act of deciding on monetary matters.

1.5.5 Stakeholders

Thurlow (2003) defines stakeholders as all those who have a legitimate interest in continuing effectiveness and success of institution such as school. The author argues further that stakeholders are those who have immediate or direct effect on the school and exercise statutory or other control over resources and policy. Bush and Heystek (2003) concur with Thurlow in mentioning that the concept of stakeholders is based on the notion that certain groups and individuals have interest, or stake in the activities of an institution. Stakeholders in this study also refer to a group of people as mentioned in section that describes governors.

1.5.6 *ex-officio*

It is a Latin word which means that a person acts by virtue of his or her capacity in an office e.g. school principal in his or her capacity as the school officer. School principal as an *ex officio* member in this study refers to an official figure with the absolute authority of playing a dual role both in school governance and day-to-day school operational duties.

1.6 Organisation of the study

The study consists of five chapters organised as follows. Chapter one describes the background and purpose of the study on the role of parent governors in school financial decision -making. It also outlines the key issues to be addressed in the statement of the problem, the research questions, significance of the study, definition of terms and organisation of the study. Chapter two presents definitions of key terms, reviews the relevant literature and frames the study into three theories. Chapter three presents the methodology adopted in the study that helped to answer the three research questions listed in this study. Chapter four discusses data presentation. Chapter five concludes the study by presenting a summary of the main findings, conclusions, the recommendations of such findings for the attention of relevant authorities in the Department of Education and the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter one introduced the study. In that chapter I argued that whilst SASA provides for democratic school governance and includes various stakeholders in school governance, SGB parents are still experiencing and facing severe challenges in terms of implementing the governance policies in general and financial governance policies in particular.

This chapter reviews literature around rural parent governors' experiences in making school financial decisions. In this regard, firstly, the chapter explores five key concepts namely governance, school governance, management, school management, financial management and financial governance. Secondly, policy frameworks namely Section 20 (S20), Section 21 (S21) and the 'No Fee' Policy are reviewed. Thirdly, researches in school financial governance are reviewed. Fourthly, theoretical frameworks that inform the challenges the parent governors face are discussed at length. Lastly, the summary for the chapter will be provided.

2.2 Exploring concepts

2.2.1 Governance

Governance, according to Tulloch (1993) refers to the act or manner of ruling or controlling with authority or conducting the policy and the

affairs of an organisation. Smith, Paquette and Bordonaro (1995) define governance as the act or manner of governing or the formal system for controlling the behaviour of those to whom the governance is generally directed. According to Webster (1977), governance means the exercise to control and direct the making of policies. It implies that in a government structure, things roll out through the designed policies and there are people who are accountable for policy-making. In the case of a schooling system, the accountable policy-makers are school governing bodies. Legally, the composition of school governing bodies (SGBs) in South Africa, as indicated in Chapter One, places parents in the majority by one member. This kind of SGB composition does not necessarily exclude other stakeholders, but it suggests that parents have the biggest stake in decision-making process. Therefore, based on this definition of governance parents as part of school governors are at the central point in the governance fora where school governance decisions are taken. However, this study explores whether parent governors in rural public schools are actually enjoying their front seat and overall authority in the decision-making process.

Niekerk, Van der Waldt and Jonker (2001) view governance as a means of ordering a group, community or society by public authority. They further argue that the purpose includes the maintenance of law and order, the defence of society against external enemies and the advancement of what is thought to be the welfare of the group, community, society or state itself. Coming closer to this study the public authority and the welfare of the community suggest that SGBs have overall powers (public authority) to control over school finances

(group's welfare). According to the Ministerial Review Committee (2004), school financial decision-making forms the major welfare of the SGBs. This is informed by the assumption that no schools can basically function without finances. It also assumed that governance in general, exists in public offices such as schools for creating orders (policies). This study explores how school governors exercise the authority to control the governance areas that include school financial aspects.

2.2.2 School governance

According to Sithole (1995), school governance refers to the institutionalised structure that is entrusted with the responsibility and authority to formulate and adopt school policy on a range of issues such as mission and ethos of the school, budgetary and development priorities. Potgieter, Visser, Van der Bank, Mothata and Squelch (1997) define school governance as an act of determining policy and rules by which a school is controlled, organized and effectively carried out. According to the Department of Education (1999), school governance refers to a process of making decisions in schools about the functioning of the school.

Such definitions of governance and school governance seem to have two commonalities such as governance that takes place at schools and it focuses on formulation and adoption of policies. However, they (governance definitions) are less concerned with who actually is involved in the process. Bush and Heystek (2003) address this issue when they claim that school governance means the schooling system that is inclusive of various stakeholders such as parents, learners, educators and other community members who must participate in the

affairs of the school. So, this study adopts school governance as the school structure that involves some external key players (parent governors) to the school with the legal authority to formulate policies in different governance areas that include school finances.

2.2.3 Management

Van der Westhuizen (1991) conceptualises management as an act of achieving objectives through utilizing the necessary people or materials, as a series of consecutive actions (planning, organizing, guiding, supervising and controlling to reach the set goals), as an act of decision-making which involves making the right decisions to achieve set goals through certain actions, as co-ordination of diverse tasks, as leading and guiding people to willingly strive towards achieving the goals of the group. It implies that management generally is the manner which people are influenced to getting things done in order to achieve organizational goals. Drawn from this concept are critical issues such as goal setting that make an organisation succeed and people who commit such plans into action. Apparently, the two critical issues twin management with governance in the sense that, in governance also school governing bodies are expected to make right decisions in order to achieve quality education. This management definition sharpens the quest of exploring the experiences of necessary people (parent governors) who are legally required to make the right decisions such as finance.

2.2.4 School management

Sithole (1995) views school management as an act that is responsible for the day-to-day running of the school by ensuring effective teaching and learning and efficient use of the school's human and material resources. This illustrates that educators and learners at school management level implement on a daily basis the policies as formulated and adopted at the school governance level by the members of the SGBs. This signifies the interdependence between school management and school governance. The assumption is that whilst management is concerned with making decisions on day-to-day matters, school governance provides immeasurable support. For example, school management compiles mini-budgets drawn at micro-political school levels (various school sub-structures) to enable school governance in drawing the school budget. In turn, management applies such school budget decision model in purchasing, utilizing and maintaining resources or school infrastructure (Sithole, 1995, p.106).

Anderson (2005, p.136) defines school management beyond daily operationalisation:

School management requires managers to be pro-active, forward-looking and responsible for steering the educational organisation in such a way as to achieve agreed vision rather than working on a day-to-day, operational basis and leaving the longer term outcomes to chance.

The school management and school governance definitions suggest that schools need to be run by visionary managers who always check

how consensual policies are carried out. This implies that, though, school governance and school management are distinct areas of school basic functionality, they are sequentially related activities. The study adopts the definitions of school management to argue that management people cannot be policy implementers devoid of school governors' (policy formulators) rigorous assistance.

2.2.5 Financial management and financial governance.

Bisschoff (1997) defines financial management as the manner in which schools generate more and more money to be used, administered and managed as school funds. It entails an accurate system for recording financial transactions which are necessary for sound financial control. This definition of financial management is silent on who actually at school decides in managing finances. People in school management or in school governance structures? However, Bisschoff and Thurlow (2005, p.12) in Potgieter, Visser, Van der Bank, Mothata and Squelch (1997, p.38) address this issue when they point out that:

Each SGB must make plans to obtain more and more money and other facilities to improve the quality of education at the school. It must take all reasonable steps with its means to supplement or add to the amount of money that the state can afford to give the school.

In the light of the above claim, it is clear that financial governance concerns with the manner in which SGBs in South Africa plan for generating sufficient income to provide the school with adequate teaching and learning equipment.

Anderson and Lumby (2005), claim that in each SGB, there are external stakeholders like parents who do not have direct day-to-day responsibility, hence day-to-day activities fall under school management. It is this complexity that makes Wessels and Nortier (2003) reflect on a general consensus that doing the job (implementing financial resources) requires good school management which is accountable to school governance for the results achieved (making financial resources available to school).

So, the inquiry adopts school financial governance to understand how fully engaged are parents on providing financial resources (money available to requisition teaching and learning materials) to school. The school governors' experiences are investigated in this regard.

2.3 Policy frameworks

The study is informed by three legal frameworks namely Section 20 status schools, Section 21 status schools and the 'No Fees' school policy. The literature on the emergence of such financial policy frameworks is informed by what the State suggests are issues to redress the imbalances of the past and catering for the neediest learners in the country (Department of Education, 2006). To achieve such purpose, the State decided to allocate funds to public ordinary schools.

2.3.1 Section 20 status

According to Government notice 29179 (2006), section 20 status implies that school governing bodies are given the powers to perform

their procurement duties, however, school allocation is centrally controlled by Head of Department (HOD) at provincial level. In this manner, Central control of school funds suggests that Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) embark on a common system to procure resources in bulk that are equivalent to the size of the school allocations for Section 20 schools. In S20 status, the service providers are not known at school level. In this instance, PEDs undertake to pay them (suppliers) on the basis of the orders received from schools. In exercising this approach, the Department of Education is aiming at developing the school governing bodies' capacity to conduct their own expenditure inputs in line with the relative size of their school funding and put in place the control measures to prevent embezzlement of financial resources (Government Notice 29179, 2006, p.38).

Section 20 status is informed by what literature points out as lack of transparency at the platform of policy consumers (SGB parent members). To illustrate, Tshifura (2002) argues that where there is lack of transparency and suppression in school financial resources, the likelihood is mistrust between figureheads involved in the process. The assumption in S20 schools is that schools place orders through the so-called 'EC 72 forms, however, the unit price is not known at institutional level and this result in schools receiving items with exorbitant prices which seems to aggravate levels of mistrust between schools and PED's' finance procurement officials.

To expand on this, Scott (2000) argues that the procurement and management of school deliveries occurs at the level of the Department. The author summarizes this approach as centrally

controlled, one-way, directive and binding the schools to wait for the procured goods that do not reach some schools on time and, at times wrong and unusable material reach the school. This sends a picture that school governing bodies, like in the past, are still placed at the far back in decision-making processes and denied the constitutional right to participate directly in financial decisions. Thus, this study explores their experiences around Section 20 policy framework.

2.3.2 Section 21 status

According to SASA (1996) Section 21 status is legitimately framed around the functions that are allocated by the Head of Department (HOD) to the school governing bodies of public schools. It entails that public school governing bodies are now more accountable and responsible for the effective management of recurrent expenditure. To realize effective management of such recurrent expenditure, SGBs are given authority over financial decision-making powers which include rights to maintain and improve the school's property or buildings, to purchase textbooks and educational school materials and to pay for services of the school to service providers directly (Government Notice 29179, Section 115, 2006, p.34 and Section 21 (a), (c) and (d) of SASA, 1996, p.16). S21 functions also refer to a single monetary transfer to schools that are informed by their national quintile as discussed broadly in this section under the 'No Fee' school policy, their enrolment and other national school allocation conditions that allow the schools to receive such funds.

Ministerial Review Committee (2004) argues that the HOD may decide to withdraw the Section 21 autonomy to handle funds. In this manner,

the withdrawal of Section 21 status is characterised by two major critical elements of school financial management namely failure to submit the required financial certificates timeously and lack of potential to keep expenditure documents. In terms of Sections 45 and 43(5) of SASA, (1996), Section 21 schools are required to keep documents for both learning and teaching support material (LTSM) and non-learning and teaching support material (Non-LTSM) expenditure monitoring as well as submitting compliance certificates, written assurances and audited annual financial statements to the Department of Education within six months after the end of each year. So, failure to comply accordingly results in each school being viewed in a serious light and has its status reviewed and discontinued (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, KZNDoE, 2008). This suggests that adequate financial skills and timeous submission of financial documents are pre-requisites for Section 21 status SGBs as reported above.

The assumption is that, generally, Section 21 SGBs are financially competent in terms of holding financial meetings, engaging in a process of obtaining at least three quotations and choose the quality and cheapest quotation out of the three, keeping financial sound documents and making shared financial decisions. However, owing to the nature of SGB members as pointed out in chapter one, obviously, the demands of S21 status can be problematic to sustain their effective functioning. So, the study seeks to investigate parent governors' experiences in implementing efficiently Section 21 legal innovation in rural public schools.

2.3.3 The 'No Fee' school policy.

According to Government Notice 29179 (2006), the 'No Fee' school policy is the legal approach that warrants schools to refrain from charging compulsory school fees. Literally, it means the removal of school fees in schools that are surrounded by poorest communities. Ndebele (2008) argues that the 'No Fee' policy intends to benefit learners in the poorest 40% of schools, to improve access to learning opportunities, particularly in indigent communities. This suggests that this policy framework is intended at providing access to education for all learners who are in pro-poor communities.

To achieve the above, the literature suggests that indigent communities are used as the barometer for schools' categorisation which leads to placing South African public ordinary schools into five groups (Quintile system). Considering that poverty around the schools in South Africa is not equally the same in all communities, schools in the most poor areas fall under quintile one, the second poorest schools fall under quintile two and so on. The assumption is that the government through quintile ranking, decides to spend more on education for the poorest learners in South Africa. For the Ndwedwe indigent groups, quintile ranking may assist in providing learning opportunities to every learner. As the parent governors under study are in schools of the poorest communities, the study seeks to understand their financial operationalisation at such quintiled 'No fee' schools.

Emerging issues around the 'No Fee' policy are based on the complexities in schools which may fuel the uneasiness of SGBs'

participation in financial decision-making. To illustrate, Maiga in Mali (2007) argues that above all, to address the deficits created by the abolition of school fees, rigorous planning of expenditures is necessary. This shows that repealing compulsory school fees posits challenges which are globally experienced by public school governors like in South African pro-poor schools. Legitimately, the monetary transfer that SGBs receive to fill in the gap that is created by the removal of compulsory school fees is part of the Norms and Standards allocation (Government Notice 29179, 2006). Ironically, SGBs cannot utilize such transferred funds for expenditure items that fall outside the category of inputs that are funded through the Norms and Standards. The assumption is that SGBs are now unable to pay for security guards, transport and incentives to volunteers that provide services such as cooking in respect of school nutrition or groundsmen where they are needed. However, the literature around wiping off compulsory school fees, allows SGBs to charge school fee voluntary contributions to cater for such uncovered expenses (KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Education Department, 2006).

By contrast, my experience is that parent governors including lay parents in rural areas fail to understand the necessity of charging school fee voluntary contributions despite lengthy explanations and agreements reached from their fully apprised financial meetings. Consequently, perpetuating charging voluntary contributions creates conflicts in some schools. Ordinary parents still believe that it is the influence of the SGB to keep them paying school monies.

To illuminate further, the conflict bred from charging school fees' voluntary contributions arises despite the dictates of the law that requires all pro-poor schools with indicators of poverty such as income, dependency ratio and literacy rate not to be charged school fees (Government notice 29179,2006). However, granting the 'No Fee' school status to such schools does not take place in all schools in the same poor geographical area at the same time. Subsequently, such differences create the challenge that parents in schools that are still charging school fees doubt the school governance and management of the school. In turn, they opt to transfer their children to schools where school fees are not charged. In this instance, SGBs for the 'No Fee' schools receiving such overwhelming number of learners may suffer the floor space problem to accommodate unbudgeted influx learners. Moreover, money transfers do not cover also the construction of new buildings which fall under capital expenditure costs (Government notice 29179, 2006, p. 25). To address the problem of the overcrowding, SGBs are required to apply for new additional classrooms to the provincial Department of Education (Government notice 19347, 1998). In contrast, the department at times takes years to practically respond. This shows that the 'No Fee' school policy in South Africa, deposits critical flaws that make SGBs parent governors in particular, experience difficulties in implementing the policy as desired. In the past, such SGBs would use school fund and other contributions to build classrooms.

Reports from some the 'No Fee' schools that require the payment of voluntary contributions illustrate that some parents refuse to

contribute as agreed. This compels school governors to cut down the number of no fee-uncovered expenses. So, all the challenges which come into light as a result of the 'No Fee' school policy motivate this study to examine how SGBs particularly parent governors address such financial complexities.

The second emerging issue is what SASA (1996) suggests as a strategic means to supplement the restricted funds to pay for the uncovered expenses. Such financial additional measures are aiming at improving the quality of education provided by the school to all learners. To realise this task, SGBs are given powers over such key financial issues as fundraising and budgeting as pointed out in chapter one. To assist in achieving their objectives, SGBs establish fundraising and budgeting committees that involve SGB chairpersons and treasurers who are parents, educators who are involved in teaching subjects that involve finances and non-teaching personnel with accounting skills (Department of Education, 1998).

The third emerging issue out of the 'No Fee' policy is banking and school cheques signing procedures which aim at increasing accountability to three SGB members with signing authority (Department of Education, 1996). To ensure accountability, in this regard the government indicates school details required for schools to qualify as the 'No Fee' schools. Such details include school Education Management Information System numbers (EMIS), names of schools that have an active commercial bank account and physical addresses of schools (SASA, Section 39(9), 1996). To be supported in choosing a

commercial registered and most reputable bank, the SGB structure is required to consult members of the community and get advice from knowledgeable people, preferable co-opted members with accounting knowledge who would decide which bank offers the best rates (KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Education Department, 2007).

Based on this legal framework, the school governing body chairperson or treasurer and the principal at the school, as noted earlier, are expected to follow closely the rules for writing cheques such as effecting consistent signature, crossing the cheque, checking information on the counterfoil and reading cheque details before signing. The alluded financial duties are informed by the assumption that some parent governors under study neither write nor read and do not understand the law of signing cheques. The bank does not accept cheques with inconsistent signatures and alterations. Signing using a cross (X) bears unnecessary fraud. In this regard, the study investigates whether parent governors under this study *per se*, are financially competent to deal with such financial complexities.

2.4 Some research in school finances.

The work that follows reviews literature around school financial governance undertaken between 2002 and 2004. The first research conducted by Tshifura (2002) was on the roles of SGBs in public schools and their interpretation of Sections 20, 21 and 24 functions in SASA Act 84 of 1996. Section 24 deals with the categories of people to be on the SGB of a public school. The author argued that there is little participation from parent members. Research also indicated that

school principals and SGB chairpersons appeared to play the dominant role in financial decision-making. Secondly, The Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD), (2003) researched on the functioning of SGBs amongst twelve schools. This study indicated, amongst other financial issues, the lack of SGB participation in fundraising and poor attendance at meetings. Thirdly, Bush and Joubert (2004) investigated the value of training on the aspects of policy-making including clarifying the respective roles of SGB and principal and on financial aspects of governance such as budgeting and funding. The authors discovered that financial management including fundraising and budgeting were the most significant training needs. Fourthly, The Ministerial Review Committee (2004) conducted a survey in the Mpumalanga Department of Education (MDoE) schools that were awarded Section 20 status and found out that such schools were not coping with such status accorded on them. Fifthly, Bembe (2004) also explored the responsibilities of SGBs in Mpumalanga four schools. The author reported many governance problems which included mismanagement, parental illiteracy and weak attendance at parents' meetings. Sixthly, Mestry (2004) conducted research on governing bodies' competencies and commented on SGBs' lack of experience to play an active role in school budgeting.

Emerging from the above alluded to research are the following issues: Many research suggest that there is SGBs' participation on school financial governance issues namely fundraising school budgeting and Section 21 status. However, such participation is inadequate and it is not clear how school financial decisions are taken. Researches

conducted in Mpumalanga Provincial Education Department showed that lack of SGBs' participation in school financial governance is a national issue. Some research indicates that parent illiteracy and insufficient SGB training are major causes of SGBs' uncertainties when executing school financial governance issues. So, research conducted give the premise that there is a developing literature on school financial governance and finance seems to be a main responsibility of all governing bodies in South African public schools. However, such research is silent on the experiences of school governing bodies on implementing new financial governance policy frameworks such as the 'No Fees' school policy, Section 20 and Section 21 statuses. Hence, one of the research questions provided in chapter one is framed around the parent governors' experiences on implementing the 'No Fees' school policy. This shows that further research on SGBs' participation and implementation of the financial frameworks at different school categorizations in rural contexts, is necessary. Whilst taking into cognizance the problematic factors such as illiteracy as discussed in researches conducted, the study explores the basic school functionality of the parent component under study.

2.5 Theoretical frameworks

This study is framed within three theoretical frameworks of management theories around the issues of educational change. Such theories are Participatory Democracy Theory (PDT), which is synonymous with Inclusive Theory (IT), Policy-Practice Dichotomy Theory (PPDT) and Political Theory (PT).

2.5.1 Participatory Democracy Theory

The Participative Democracy Theory is an approach that is utilized to check genuine and effective participation of all citizens in the matters that affect them (Carrim, 2001). The author argues that this theory is inclusive in the sense that it encourages the commitment of all stakeholders in an organisation like the school in particular. Concomitantly with the idea of Carrim, Lemmer and Van Wyk (2004) also define the Participatory Democracy Theory as the theoretical framework that allows freedom of participation for all citizens in the affairs that affect them. They argue that this theory has the tendency to encourage people to assume their responsibilities as citizens of a democratic state through the fulfillment of such basic responsibilities. Concurring with the above arguments, Stoll and Fink (1996) argue that parents who feel like partners in the education system listen to school people and act as critical friends. This suggests that schools ought to create parent user-friendly programs to enhance high quality of parent participation. On this note, Inclusive theory enriches this study in the sense that school financial matters form the basic responsibilities for every school governor to sustain basic quality education for all learners. In this manner, the basic quality education for all learners connects Inclusive Theory to the Bill of Rights which spells out that the voices of the majority citizens must be heard. The Bill of Rights is one chapter in the South African Constitution Act 108 of 1996 (The National Social Contract) that provides the principles of democracy, accountability, co-operation, maximum participation, inclusion, consultation and partnership (Carrim, 2001 and Sithole, 1995). This shows that the South African

Constitution Act 108 of 1996 is rooted in the Participatory Democracy Theory. However, the assumption is that all the basic principles of participatory democracy as reported above are practiced to some South African public schools excluding the schools under study. Thus, the study examines the parent governors' experiences in this regard.

Legally, public school parent governors execute financial responsibilities concomitantly with professional (educators) and non-professional staff (administration officials, security officers, etc) (Department of Education, 1996). In this regard, the legal framework does not divorce rural parent governors from other parent members in other areas and other education key players. In this effect, Inclusive Theory refers to the approach that allows the full participation of all interest groups who were excluded in the past in school governance issues. The effect of such inclusion is that no one stakeholder feels dominated by another and eliminates all forms of unnecessary bureaucratic over centralisation of deliveries.

While Participatory Democracy Theory points out the essence of parent governors' participation in school activities, it is arguable how they operate under Section 21 status schools under study where sound financial competencies are necessary key factors. In this regard, this theory seeks to provide a theoretical lens for addressing one of the critical questions of this study:

What are parent governors' experiences in making school financial decisions in Section 21 schools?

Participatory Democracy Theory is informed by what Carrim (2001), Lemmer and Van WYK (2004) and Suzuki (2002) suggest are basic principles of stakeholders' participation, transparency and accountability. Carrim (2001), Lemmer and Van Wyk (2004) factor in the freedom of participation for all citizens in their activities as the issue that is rooted on the notion of active citizenry. Though citizens in general refer to members of the state with different human rights to enjoy in that country, in this study in particular, they (citizens) refer to a group of people who constitute the school governing body and play a pivotal role in governance issues that include, amongst many, financial responsibilities. This study utilizes Inclusive Theory to check the participation of parent governors in the SGB as the important citizens who should have the loudest voice in the governance affairs of their schools (Carrim, 2001).

According to (Suzuki, 2002), Participatory Democracy Theory is also informed by the principle of transparency in schools. The author argues that this theory serves to install accountability mechanisms on stakeholders in respect of shouldering governance responsibilities such as financial responsibilities in particular. Diallo (2001) concurs with the basic notion of this theory through arguing that there is a need for greater accountability for the empowerment of communities to participate in educational decision-making. Theoretical terms such as transparency in schools and accountability for stakeholders to participate in a democratic decision-making process sound appropriate to democratic school governance; however, discrepancy arises on Section 20 status schools. The best example of such complexity is

around the control of Section 20 monies at the higher level of the department of education. By contrast, schools are held accountable for the prices of deliveries which are centrally controlled at the level of provincial procurement section. Based on this premise, the assumption is that Inclusive Theory generates fluid participation which weakens parent governors' genuine participation and absolute accountability in making financial decisions in Section 20 status schools under study (Bush 2003). So, the study investigates the reality of this theory in the context of public schools under study.

The fitness of the Participatory Democracy Theory at public schools may also be hampered by what literature indicates are social, academic and economic contextual constraints at the level of policy implementation. To Lemmer and Van Wyk (2004), Heystek (1999), Legotlo, (1994), Van der Westhuizen and Legotlo (1996), such shortcomings of participatory democracy are aggravated by the financial constraints the parents have and consequently they don't have money to pay for transport to attend school meetings. Owning their transport is extremely difficult. Secondly, some black rural parent members live far away from the school they serve. Thirdly, some parents are not healthy enough to travel long distances on foot like their children do. Fourthly, majority of parents who are illiterate do not understand financial terminology and, as such, they feel inferior to the academically better-qualified professional staff which results to limited contributions they offer on matters pertaining to financial governance. Fifthly, some black rural parents lack adequate training in order to understand their roles and such dearth of financial capacity provokes them to stay aloof from financial

governance activities. Lastly, long finance meetings with unclear straightforward agenda demotivate them and exacerbate unnecessary absences.

The assumption is that the threats alluded to above may also affect the democratic values of participation for the researched participants under study. To sharpen this postulation, in the context of the black rural area where this study is located, the study investigates such assumption which may block participation in school financial decisions and results into financial decisions being taken at the level of school management in spite of devolved powers to the majority of parents.

Additional to the shortcomings of Participatory Democracy Theory noted already, literature on this theory suggests that participating in decision-making is affected by time-constraints and participants' reluctance. To illuminate, Poo and Hoyle (1995) view participating to decision-making as a slow process. They argue that participative decision-making involves some elements of dialogue, disagreement, uncertainty, risk and conflict between different points of views by stakeholders. As such, the purpose of engaging into disagreement and dialogue revolves around reaching decisions through consensus. In the context of this study, disagreement and uncertainty may squander time to reach consensual decisions. So, the study explores the survival of consensual financial decisions under such conditions.

According to Steyn and Squelch (1997), participatory constraints seem to be a direct result of what is perceived as reluctance to share decision-making power and working an extra-mile when necessary. The

authors pinpoint stakeholders' unwillingness in participating to management and governance activities if such efforts to such participation involve extra hours. At face value, reluctance on the side of parent members in this study appear to be inevitable when considering that such stakeholders are neither residing in the school nor within the school proximity.

Parallel to the idea of Steyn and Squelch (1997), Bush (2003) argues that principals are required by law to share decision-making power with other education role-players. The location of such decision-making power is informed by the legal framework that principals form the cross-link between management and governance matters and they have the most professional knowledge for pioneering such decisions (SASA, 1996). By sharp contrast, Bush (2003) claims that in spite of such powers vested in principals, they seem to be adamant not to share legitimate front-line decision-making powers. Compatibly with Bush's (2003) view for sharing decision-making powers, in England and Wales, some principals used accountability and responsibility at the final end as the scapegoats for keeping aside parents on financial planning (Grant Lewis and Motala in Chisholm, 2004). McPherson and Dlamini (1998) hint foreign language as the major cause for eyeing down sharing of decision-making powers between parents and principals. This shows that sharing decision-making powers amongst stakeholders is a global issue. Given such shortcoming of Participatory Democracy Theory, the study investigates the parent governors' experiences if they are sidelined in sharing financial decisions.

2.5.2 The Policy-Practice Dichotomy Theory

The Policy-Practice Dichotomy Theory (PPDT), as viewed by Jansen (2001) refers to the gap that exists between education policy intention and reality at policy implementation stage. The author argues that in post-colonial states, such theory commonly refers to the lack of fit between the education policy and the actual practice which is usually characterised by three policy implementation problematic elements namely lack of resources, the legacy of the past and shortage of potential to transfer policy vision into actual practice. To Jansen, the dearth of coherence between education policy and practice which should transfer the former (education policy) into contextual reality holds a powerful view that is hard to refute. The reason is that the policy is lodged in an extreme view that the policy-makers in a particular country are pre-conceived that it will exist within the school's environment that is stable, yet this is not always the case. Secondly, it is assumed that policy moves logically and naturally from intention to implementation. In the light of this, Jansen (2001) challenges the simple linear view of policy and practice because policy craft may be clouded with primary intentions that are totally opposed to change practice.

Concurring with Jansen's (2001) challenge about the lack of cohesion between education policy and practice, Bush (2003) fits together the Policy-Practice Dichotomy Theory with the Theory-Practice 'divide' which suggests that theory is perceived as esoteric and far away from practice, and yet the crux of theory is its applicability to practice. The crux of theory suggests that it can be useful and relevant if it

explains practice and provides its consumers with a guide to action. The assumption is that the gap between theory and practice can be filled so long as the former (theory) has relevance to the latter (practice) in education (Hughes and Bush, 1991).

Failure to translate policy vision into reality as alluded to above warrants Thurlow and McLennan (2003) to define such theory as the kind of policy theory that begets disjuncture when it fails to yield its intentions. Bush (2003, p, 43) defines PPDT as two kinds of education issues that are uneasy, uncomfortable bedfellows particularly when the education policy does not blend with the complexities of human behaviour in the organizational settings. This theory relates to the present study in that school governing bodies in the rural school settings arise from the politically sanctioned groups who have been never exposed to the school financial governance to say the least. This indicates that policy does not always lend on the environment of its beneficiaries (policy consumers who are parent governors in this study) which is often fertile.

In attempting to understand the experiences of parent governors they implement the three financial policy frameworks in this study, I utilise the Policy-Practice Dichotomy Theory. The assumption is that the policy such as the 'No Fee' policy posits confusion if basically it seeks to achieve regularity, uniformity (Morrison, 1998 and Bush 2003) and squarely provides education for all poorest learners on the one hand, but it fails on the other, to satisfy the needs of all learners around the similar poverty-stricken communities.

Reports from schools suggest that on the era before the 'No Fee' policy, schools were able to utilise meagre school fees to pay all expenditure inputs including payment for personnel for essential services. However now, the opposite trend occurs. This is what Thurlow and McLennan (2003) refer to as clash between policy focus and actual practice as indicated earlier on in this section.

In the scenario of Section 20 status, SGBs are faced with the dilemma of being not directly involved in their finances but held accountable at the final end. This is the kind of complexity that makes S20 status an airy fairy theory, as pointed above, and causes dilemmas during implementation stage. In the case of some Section 21 status schools, there may be shortage of capacity on the policy actors to handle lump-sum transferred funds. So, such policy shortfall at the implementation stage may threaten the survival of policy framework (Section 21 status) in the schools under study. This necessitates the dire need to explore the experiences of SGB parent members in the context of rural public schools in this regard.

2.5.3 Political theory

Drawing on the ideas of Bush (2003), Bolman and Deal (1984) and Baldrige (1971) to understand the conflicting issues that might threaten financial decision-making in public schools as organisations, the study adopts the Political Approach to organisations.

The Political Theory is characterised by what available literature suggests members of organisations engage in political activity in pursuit of their own interests (Bush, 2003). The author argues that

interaction exists between groups with a variety of interests. To illustrate, Baldrige (1971) argues that individuals and groups might have different objectives which lead to conflict between them.

Seddon, Billet and Clemans (2004) provide analysis on three forms of conflict. They argue that *interest conflict* stems from the interests and identities involved in social partnerships. If such conflict arises as a result of activities and tensions between partners at a day-to-day level, they refer to it as *role conflict*. According to Griffiths (2000), *regime conflict* is a kind of conflict that exists if individuals with sovereign rights meet as equals in collaborative decision-making processes. According to Bolman and Deal (1984), *interest conflict* further exists if people view schools as organisations that house in a variety of individuals and interests groups with different lifestyles, values, needs and political preferences to influence the goals and decision-making of the system.

In this study, the political interest groups with different objectives may be school governing bodies who, among other duties, are legally empowered to control school finances, however, on the other side, may have unsound goal to utilise such finances. The example, in this regard, is based on Provincial Education Department's (PED) bulk monies that are allocated and transferred to school bank accounts which may be a temptation to some SGB members, leading to illegitimate making a loan out of it.

As the literature around Political Approach continues to emphasize the presence of conflict in schools, this section utilizes this

theoretical approach to understand the type of conflict that emerges around the context under study. My experience as the SGB District Master Trainer in schools under this study, suggests that school financial governance faces serious conflict such as some SGB chairpersons and treasures who dismiss unpaid learners to return home. In this scenario, *role conflict* set in because the people who undertake to perform the duty of dismissing learners are not legally qualified to do so. Bolman & Deal (1984) cite the dearth of appropriate resources in organisations as one of the causes of *role conflict*. In the case of ring-fenced school allocation and no money to build new classrooms (legally cited as one of the capital expenditure key inputs), no financial resources to pay for transport to meetings; conflict is bound to happen when SGBs decide to engage in voluntary contribution discourse. The assumption is that the overwhelming number of learners crowded into few classrooms and different perspectives from parents in supplementing funds, flout quality teaching and learning goals. So, the Political Theory is used in this study to address the question of how parent governors make effective financial decisions where school allocation is only restricted to specific non-capital expenditure items.

By contrast to the definition of *regime conflict* noted earlier on, the advancement of *role conflict* will be inevitable if schools may have 'life-time SGB chairpersons' who keep cheque books and SGB minute books at their homes, certain SGB chairpersons or treasurers who are made to sign blank cheques as reported in chapter one. Should it be found out during research fieldwork that some professional staff

members take over the SGB financial responsibilities because of the prejudice they have against parents in taking financial decisions, then this will suggest the abuse of SGB autonomous power to take decisions on equal footing. The study will investigate the experiences of such SGB parent components in this scenario.

2.6 CONCLUSION

The concepts explored add value for comprehending the content of this chapter. Policy frameworks discussed are emergent legal financial policies within school governance which the government utilizes to address the social and education imbalances of the period before 1994. They warrant research because they are the crucial governance financial instruments to measure the efficiency of school governance as well as the success of quality education in schools. Hence the Department of Education decentralizes governance decision-making powers to school governing bodies. Some research was reviewed to weigh up the necessity for further research on financial school governance. The chapter unpacked three theoretical frameworks for analysing the rural school parent governors' experiences in financial decision-making. They form the critical resources that may assist the research efforts by mapping domains of understanding the actual policy practice in schools by people (parent governors) with supreme powers to do so.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research design and methodology of the study. First, the chapter explains the qualitative research design the study adopts. Second, it describes the respondents. This is followed by a description of data collection instruments, gaining entry, ethical considerations, validity and reliability. Finally, the chapter concludes with the process of data analysis.

3.2. Research design

The study adopts a qualitative interpretive approach. Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004) define qualitative inquiry as a research approach that has the potential to convert raw empirical data to a thick description that gives an account of the phenomenon. To expand, the above authors refer to qualitative inquiry as a research strategy that fits in the ideas of the researched in an open-ended way. Drawing from the idea of Denzin and Lincoln (1998), qualitative researchers are basically concerned with understanding the social phenomenon from the respondents' perspective. They attempt to interpret the data in order to make sense of the respondents' experiences. This qualitative study adopts a case study design. According to Merriam (2002), a case study is an intensive description of a single unit that is utilized to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation of those

involved. In line with Merriam (2002), McMillan and Schumacher (1997) argue that a case study data analysis focuses on one phenomenon. In this study, a case of ten parent governors is chosen to investigate their experiences of financial governance duties in **Ndwedwe** schools. So, financial decision-making is the phenomenon for the study.

In this light, the case study design is used to provide a thick description of how financial decisions are taken in Section 20 status, Section 21 status and the 'No Fee' schools. The case study is most appropriate to examine and obtain a detailed account of school financial governance decision-making and it will assist me to harness the experiences of parent governors while they are engaged in school financial activities in different settings.

3.3 Respondents

Selecting research participants (sampling) involves a variety of sampling approaches, however, this qualitative research study adopts a purposive sampling approach which aims at increasing the utility of information obtained from small samples (McMillan and Schumacher, 1997). Purposive sampling is an approach that includes selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study and it is used by qualitative researchers to understand something about the cases without needing to generalise to all such cases (Patton, 1990, McMillan and Schumacher, 1997). In concurrence with the above authors, Marshall and Rossman, (1995), Le Compte and Prissle, (1993), Merriam, (1998)

and Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit, (2004) claim that the purposive sampling approach looks towards the people who fit the criteria of desirable participants which derives from the participants' knowledge of the topic.

In this study, data will be collected from selected school governing body chairpersons and treasurers in their field of practice i.e. rural school setting. These respondents are chosen on the grounds that they represent other parents in the SGB finance committee as indicated earlier on and they are expected to be knowledgeable and informative about the school financial practices which form the phenomenon of the study and legally, the law places them at the central point of the finance committee where such financial decisions are practiced.

Ndwedwe rural schools form the site of the respondents because they are densely populated with SGB parent members who were denied democratic participation in school governance financial activities in the past. Moreover, they are required to be financially competent to manage school deliveries of Section 20 and handle bulks of Section 21 monies.

3.4 Data collection instruments.

The study adopts the two instruments for data collection namely semi-structured interviews and documents analysis. Johnson (2002), McMillan and Schumacher (1997) define data collection as a process that involves both interactive and non-interactive strategies. They

elaborative that both participant observation and interviewing data collection tools have the elements of interactive approaches whereas document study occurs when qualitative researchers are immersed only in obtaining clues noted down about the present or past occurrences. Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit, (2004) argue that in the semi-structured interviews, it is easier for the researched to rub shoulders with the researcher than to write responses in the questionnaires. Concurring with these authors, Cohen, Manion and Morrison, (2000) claim that semi-structured interviews involve a two-person conversation initiated by the researcher for a specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information. In this instance, I opt to use the semi-structured interviews because in such research situation, the researcher is present with the researched and can be able to provide clarity.

Semi-structured interviews are informed by the interview schedule which is a set of questions asked in predetermined order throughout the investigation. McMillan and Schumacher (1997) claim that interview schedule can be flexible, adaptable and can be used with many types of persons such as those who are illiterate or too young to read and write. This links to the nature of my respondents who are not too young to read and write, however, they are lowly educated. Being lowly educated suggests that participants can find it difficult to provide answers if they had been provided with other collection instruments such as questionnaires. Secondly, in this study, the interview schedule enables the researcher to gain an opportunity to make a follow up, clarify ambiguities, motivate where necessary,

and attempt to achieve specific responses or capture the experiences of parent governors in financial decision-making process under emerging recent financial governance policies. This suggests that there will be questions which are based on financial governance issues namely taking decisions in raising funds, buying educational equipment and handling the 'No *Fee*' school policy funds.

Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004) argue that certain types of documents are the main source of data. As discussed in this section, document analysis as one non-interactive data collection form will be used to compliment semi-structured interview. In this study, the official documents to be analysed are finance committee minute books, SGB minute books and SGB parents' minute books. These official documents are necessary to assess signs of consensual financial decisions.

3.5 Data collection process

Depending on the places of residence for my respondents and their nature, each interview may take one hour and the whole interview process can take four to six weeks. Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004), claim that the interview can progress well only if the interviewer has planned in advance the logistics of the interview journey. The authors argue that a participant needs to feel comfortable with whatever mode of recording that is being used. So, in this study, to ensure comfortability of the respondents, it is planned to negotiate the intentions to tape the voices of the respondents for easy transcription and analysis. Another form of co-

recording the interview is by means of written notes that aim to harness some of the contextual factors that are not in the talk such as facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice and body language (McMillan and Schumacher, 1997, Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit, 2004). The authors point out that such cues might provide necessary data which may be unnoticeable during the conversation. In this regard, permission for note taking will be sought.

3.6 Gaining entry

Obtaining permission to access the research field of study is informed by what Bassey (1999) claims are both official and social procedures. This suggests that official permission to visit the field or site of study involves the consent of departmental authorities to conduct inquiry in the school organisation. In this study, official gate-keeping and permission-granting involve the *Ilembe* district authorities and school principals who manage **Ndwedwe** rural schools that form the sites of my prospective participants. In this instance, I will submit letters of application for permission to the District Manager, the Cluster Manager, the Ward Managers and the school principals. Permission is sought from all such education officials because as they are placed at the helm of the department and they are answerable at the final end.

On the other hand, Bassey (1999) claims that social permission is granted by the participants to the researcher to interact with them. To Bogdan and Biklein (1992), the researcher needs to level clearly the grounds of research acceptance by one's prospective respondents.

Bogdan and Biklein (1992) stress idea of courting the potential participants as the way the researcher needs to lay the groundwork for good rapport with those he/she will be spending time. To illustrate, in this study about financial decision-making experiences by parent governors, social permission will be sought from the respondents in two ways i.e. I intend to do site pre-visits to promote relationships, reduce anxiety and confirm my research request appearing in the consent letter which shows what benefit will be received out of the research process. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) illustrate that gaining access may take the shape of overt and covert approaches. In this study, overt approach applies to the way which I'll depict to the parent governors under study my study interests, purpose, credentials and university credentials to the gatekeepers as well as my participants.

3.7 Ethical considerations

To be ethical is to be aware that participants have their privacy and sensitivity which are to be protected if information about their personal interests sets off from them (Henning and Van Rensburg and Smit, 2004). So, in this study, the ethical issues of anonymity, confidentiality and freedom of participation are guaranteed in the consent letter. Regarding the participants' right to privacy, interviews will be characterised by coding the names of participants and disguising the names of schools through using pseudonyms (Smit, 1990). Coding the names of the participants entails giving each participant the pseudonym namely PG1 for parent governor 1, PG2 representing parent governor 2, up to the tenth participant who is

coded as PG10. To cater for anonymity, no questions will ever influence the participants to reveal in any form the names of participants and schools. In relation to confidentiality, Anderson (1999) warns that it involves a clear understanding between the researcher and the participant concerning how the data required will be collected and stored. In this manner, sensitive data that may indicate the unlawful style of financial administration at any school will be treated with care. In the case of voluntary participation, Vithal and Janssen, (1997) contend that researchers need to guarantee the point of free participation in the consent letter. In this study, prospective participants will be pre-informed that if they feel their human rights are violated they are free to withdraw at any time from participating in the interview process.

3.8 Validity and reliability

According to Deem and Brehony (1994, p.163), a qualitative research study can never be as valid, or reliable as quantitative research in the sense that others cannot replicate it exactly. However, McMillan and Schumacher (1997) contend that qualitative researchers adopt a combination of strategies to enhance validity. So, two of the multi-validity strategies in this study are mechanically recorded data and member-checking validity approaches. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1997), the mechanically recorded data approach is characterised by the use of tape recorders, photographs and videotapes, while member-checking involves rephrasing and probing the participants to obtain more complete and subtle meanings. Therefore, in the case of this study, I opt for using both validity

strategies as pointed out in this section to obtain an accurate descriptive data, complete record, re-adjust ambiguous questions if necessary and obtain fine picture of parent governor's actual school financial experiences.

3.9 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis refers to a systematic way of selecting, categorizing, comparing, synthesizing and interpreting data to provide explanation of a single phenomenon of interest (McMillan and Schumacher, 1997). Henning, E, Van Rensburg, W and Smit, B, (2004) further present qualitative content analysis as a tool for reduced, condensed and grouped content. This allows qualitative analysts to convert or transcribe data collected into final patterns to serve the purpose of the study. In this study, I will analyse the responses and integrate them with information reviewed from the literature. Data collected will be condensed into themes that address major research questions. Document analysis will inform subsequent data collection from the interviews.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses data collected from the parent sector of the SGBs in three Section 21 status schools and two Section 20 status schools in the **Ndwedwe** rural area. Out of the total of ten respondents, two from each school comprised the SGB treasurer and chairperson as discussed in chapter three. Four respondents were from the Section 20 status schools and six others were from the Section 21 status schools. Data are presented and analysed through five themes. The first theme relates to the biographical profiles for the SGB chairpersons and the treasurers from the rural schools studied. The second theme addresses the election of parent governors to school governing body. The third theme focuses on parent governors' experiences of financial decision-making in both Section 21 and non-section 21 status schools. The fourth theme addresses the challenges arising as the direct result of the 'No Fee' policy in school governance. The fifth theme relates to the school governing body capacity building in financial governance whilst followed by the emerging issues out of the whole research study.

4.2 Biographical profiles of the SGB parent governors studied

This section presents the biographical particulars of the two different types of the interviewees (chairperson and treasurers)

which might have a significant bearing on the interviewees' experiences on financial decision-making. As indicated in section 3.7, I have decided to give each parent governor a code namely; parent governor 1 (PG₁), Parent governor 2 (PG₂), Parent governor 3 (PG₃), parent governor 4 (PG₄) up to parent governor 10 (PG₁₀).

Table 4.1 Biographical profiles of SGB chairpersons and treasurers

School category	Treasurer/ Chairperson	SGB experience	Level of schooling	Distance from home to school
S21(no fee school)	PG ₁ chairperson	6years	Std 10(grade 12)	±500m
S21(no fee school)	PG ₂ treasurer	3years	Std 7(grade 9)	±200m
S21 (fee school)	PG ₃ chairperson	4years	Std 5(grade7)	±530
S21 (fee school)	PG ₄ treasurer	5years	J.C.(1957,Std 8)	±500m
S20 (fee school)	PG ₅ chairperson	3years	Std 6 (grade 8)	±600m
S20 (fee school)	PG ₆ treasurer	1year8months	Std2 (grade 4)	±2km
S20(no fee school)	PG ₇ chairperson	6years	Std10 (grade 12)	±500m
S20(no fee school)	PG ₈ treasurer	3years	Diploma	±3km
S21(no fee school)	PG ₉ chairperson	3years4months	Std 5 (grade 7)	±700m
S21(no fee school)	PG ₁₀ treasurer	9years4months	Std 7 (grade 9)	±300m

In table 4.1 above, PG₁ and PG₂ belong to the no fee Section 21 school A, PG₃ and PG₄ are parent governors from the Section 21 school B that charged fees, PG₅ and PG₆ belong to Section 20 fee paying school C, Section 20 school D with PG₇ and PG₈ charged no fees whilst PG₉ and PG₁₀ belong to school E that charged only voluntary contributions. The table also shows that not all Section 20 schools studied were no-fee paying and visa versa. Also, in Section 21 schools, financial matters

were done differently. This illustrates the gap between policy and practice in treating the parents and learners in the same geographical area as pointed out in discussion of the ' Policy-Practice Dichotomy Theory' point 2.5.2.

Regarding the SGB experience, the same table 4.1 shows that out of ten parent governors, only one SGB treasurer had an experience that was found to be less than three years. All other nine SGB parent members had three or more years school governance experience. This divided the parent governors into two groups namely the novice (PG6) which might have little experience to have been gained in the field of school financial governance. The second group with the majority of respondents can be called 'veterans' and therefore it is likely to have gained vast financial school governance experience. So, drawing from its experience, the latter group might be performing school financial responsibilities better than PG6.

In terms of the level of schooling, parent governors 1, 4, 7 and 8 can be classified as better qualified to cope with the language that is normally used in financial activities. The other six researched parent governors can be categorised as lowly educated and therefore unlikely to participate fully where financial terminology appeared in English, as their second language.

With regard to the distance between home and school, the majority of parent governors reside close to the school. This could have a positive impact in attending school governing body meetings. On the other hand, PG6 and PG8 stay furtherer than others. Though, at face

value, the two parent members can be thought as physically exhausted when attending school meetings, the opposite end was what PG8 pointed out:

The distance is not a problem to me, however, what counts, is what we opt to achieve for the betterment of learners.

It shows that to these parent governors, determination and learner's interest make a difference in school governance.

This is concurring with Senge, (2000), who maintains that the ultimate glue that binds people together depends on what they contribute to the organisation.

4.3 Election of parent governors to school governing body

This section focuses on the election of parent constituency to SGB with the view to verify the democratic status to act in school governance. Secondly, the study investigated the number of parent representatives in the SGB whether it concurs with what the law stipulates in terms of the number of parents to serve in school governing body which should comprise of one member more than the combined total of other members with the voting rights (Provincial Gazette of KwaZulu-Natal, No. 6480, 2006, p.1). This is to ensure that they have a direct stake in school governance affairs as pointed out in chapter one.

In this regard, interviews with SGB chairpersons and treasurers who were all parents indicated that SGB electoral officers followed the

SGB electoral procedures. To illustrate, one of the respondents, PG3 of school B had to say:

Parents meeting for electing us were called; parents nominated us and voted us through secret ballots. After the elections, meeting for electing officer bearers by elected members was done. Parents are five in this school governing body because there are three educators and one non-educator.

With regards to their experiences during the elections, the respondents revealed that at times, parents refuse to be elected to SGB, However, once assumed SGB responsibilities, they develop SGB passion and SGB phobia dissolves away. In contrast, some participants indicated that they substituted those female parent governors who withdrew because their husbands could not endorse their SGB contribution at schools. This indicates that the governance powers decentralised to parents are still clouded with threats in rural schools studied. Such incidents are likely to result in disempowerment in the area of innovative financial decision-making among parent governors in particular. This study revealed that if members come and withdraw suddenly, there is a dearth of financial governance growth.

Looking at the responses from all the respondents interviewed from school A to E, the majority of the respondents are clear on their significant role in school governance and they accept governance portfolios because they have the interest of their learners at heart.

4.4 Parents` experiences of financial decision-making in both section 21 and non-section 21 status schools

The interviews based on this section address one of the research critical questions as alluded to in chapter one:

How do parent governors experience financial decision-making in both Section 21 and 20 status schools respectively?

So, in this section, findings as an attempt to address the above illustrated research question are discussed and focus on the five key financial governance areas namely: fundraising, school budgeting, financial expenditure, finance committee and financial reporting.

4.4.1 Fundraising

In this study, fundraising entails decisions about getting additional funds from various financial sources such as donors and parents themselves. This is pioneered by the people with the decentralised financial powers to do so (Burke and Lilienstolpe, 1993). In this instance, SASA, (1996) requires SGBs to supplement the limited allocated funds from the Department of Education. As such, school governors are required to form fundraising committees that have to decide on how funds could be raised.

Data derived from all parent governors studied indicate that they are not directly involved in raising the allocated funds from the State. It was also clear that where fundraising decisions were taken, some parent governors relied largely on their principals on the ways of supplementing allocated funds. To illuminate, PG7 said:

Our principal is very active, he formed the fundraising committee whose members are teachers only and we are only informed of the committee achievements at SGB meetings.

In concurrence, PG4 from school B stated that:

I do not see any point of serving in the fundraising committee, because this matter is for the principal and we, parents, do not work full-time at school.

This suggests that SGB parent members in schools studied are merely non-performers and they are not directly participative in any financial decision-making based on fundraising. Fundraising activities, in this instance, still remain largely the activities of the professionals.

4.4.2 School budgets

School budgeting, in this study, entails financial decision-making about the estimated income and expenditure required to buy or purchase school requirements on the ensuing year (Department of Education, 2002). The SGB through its sub-committee, finance committee, collates the school needs from all the stakeholders.

However, PG9 and PG10 from Section 21 status primary school E reported that:

We see ourselves participating in school budget when we bring to the school budget forum what we see as the infrastructure that needs re-

construction or renovation. Jointly with others in the finance committee, we decide on the sources of income.

The 2008 school budget plan file observed and the response indicated above suggests that some parents among the SGBs studied, particularly under Section 21 status schools are directly participating and contributing to school budget drawing through offering what they see as inadequate at their schools.

Two parent governors from school C proudly reported that they spend school monies according to the restrictions of their budget plan.

In this instance, they voiced out:

We do our budget a year in advance and on the following year, we buy whatever, we fitted under the column of expenditure in our budget plan.

This response indicates that they understand the requirements of school budget and how school monies should be spent.

On the other side, PG6 from Section 20 status school indicated that the principal does everything for them. In this regard she reported that:

We respect the presence of our principal, we do not sit for budgeting, and however, we are informed of the school allocation and its school split. We also informed the principal that she must go ahead because

the budgetary terminology is too technical and beyond our understanding.

This response shows that some parent governors are not participating on actual designing of school budget and they are not prepared to turn a tide against such anomalous action which robbed them off their shared financial decision-making. The language also impacts negatively on the participation of other parent governors studied.

With regards to the whole key theme, it is evident that participation on school budgetary decisions of parent governors studied differs from school to school and the language plays a major influential role.

4.4.3 Financial expenditure

In relation to financial expenditure, the study explored financial decision-making in the two expenditure areas namely: buying or purchasing school equipment and doing repairs or renovations. In the area that involves expenditure, decisions on purchasing school equipment entails reviewing school budget, prioritising budget items and drawing the action plan for getting such equipment to the school. Hence, this section focuses mainly on the role played by SGB parent constituency on deciding about school purchases.

Data derived from all the respondents revealed three categories; parent governor full participation, parent governor little participation and parent governor lack of participation. With regards to full participation of parent representatives on purchasing school material, parent governor 2, (PG₂), responded as follows:

At times we go out for getting quotations and after which, all SGB members select the best quotation through interviewing the service contractors.

This was the confirmation that some parent governors in rural schools studied are deeply involved in taking decisions about the best and appropriate quotation. Evident to the above response was the 'quotation file' with the quotations for service providers and the SGB minute book. Concomitantly with PG2 as alluded to above, PG9 and PG10 in one Section 21 school appeared extremely participating in the committee that selects quotations and they offer a positive contribution. Furthermore, both felt excited with their newly initiated way of engaging all SGB members on buying and bringing school equipment to school. They decided to call such method as ' *Operation Siyagijima Sonke*' which means that every SGB member chooses the budgeted project and the parent pairs with the educator to move out for getting quotations and finally bring the item to school. To illustrate, they reported that:

All what is seen in this school is the brainchild of the so-called 'Operation Siyagijima Sonke'. Nine of us select a project from the school budget and move out to liaise with the service providers for quotations. This makes us to be ready with answers to whosoever wants to know how school development is done in our school. To acknowledge our efforts, we name our projects using founders' names.

To them, this appeared to increase the sense of school ownership and accountability. Their action plan forms studied, revealed high level of accountability and commitment. In this instance, the above response and official documents studied illustrated that some SGB parent bodies in rural schools studied are at the centre of school democratic governance.

Regarding parent governors' little participation on financial expenditure, responses from seven participants show that they depend too much on their principals on deciding what to buy, who to buy and how to choose the best quality school equipment. To illustrate, they said:

We request our principal to go ahead because she is on the better side of knowing everything, however, she reports back on items bought.

On the other side, in some two Section 20 schools, an ultimate lack of parental involvement and complete shortage of transparency were noticeable. Respondents in these schools claimed that principals just handled decisions to buy school needs all by themselves or at times, some principals seemed to work closely only with the chairperson. In this regard, PG4 reported that:

I just don't know why there is a need of a treasurer in this school. The principal and the chairperson connive on governance matters that need the treasurer in particular.

This concurs with Gagu (2002) who argued that managerial style that resembled this one leads to decisions that serve sectional interests rather than the needs of the school. The findings of this nature therefore, indicate that holistic SGB democratic participation in school governance issues is still the area that is not yet practiced in this school. Such practice might arouse frustration, mistrust and conflict among the stakeholders.

Data collected in terms of financial decisions on doing repairs and maintenance show that SGBs do things differently. For example, SGB chairperson and treasurer in one Section 20 status school indicated that:

We decided to request the principal to approach the 'Norms and Standards Section' at the Regional office to liaise about our balance of R84 000 to be redeployed to school repairs and maintenance. However, after every promise from the Department of Education has been acknowledged, to our dismay, we were informed that such R84 000 was no longer available.

This suggests that in Section 20 schools where the school monies are retained in the Department of Education, SGBs face financial challenges on school improvement. However, whilst in the face of such challenges it was not clear whether the SGBs had ever decided on how to spend that R84 000. Based on the minute book observed, no indication of such budgetary decisions appeared.

With the responses from two Section 21 schools, parent governors indicated that repairs and maintenance were done through the budgeted allocated funds at the bank. However, it was not clear how they normally decide to utilise such funds. In this regard, two parent governors from school A reported that:

Repairs and maintenance in this school are done using the allocated monies at the bank. We just sign cheques to utilize these monies.

4.4.4 Finance committee

In terms of Section 30, (1), (a) of SASA, 1996, one of the financial roles of the SGBs is to establish the finance committee. Basically, the finance committee should comprise the SGB chairperson, SGB treasurer, the principal or his delegate, any member of the teaching staff or any co-opted person with the necessary financial expertise (Department of Education, 1998, p.3). The Act argued that the treasurer of the SGB who is a parent member must chair this committee. This places the parent governors at the heart of financial decision-making as pointed out in chapter one. Hence, this section focuses on the nature of parent component participation in this committee in particular.

Though all the participants acknowledged that finance committee is the root of financial expenditure, in the absence of finance committee minute books, it was discovered that the finance committees in most schools studied did not exist. To illuminate, data from the four schools with eight parent governors interviewed, illustrate that parent governors do not understand the significant roles of finance

committees. For example, the eight respondents held the similar view as hereunder indicated:

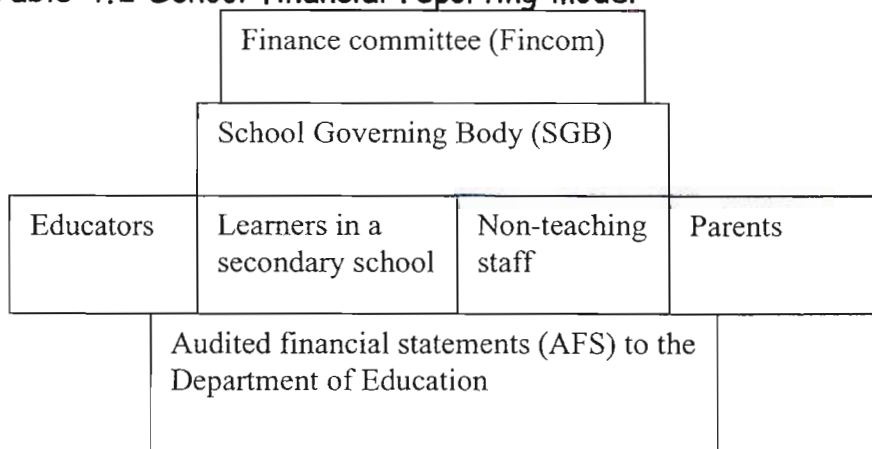
To be honest, we do foresee the need for the formation of finance committee in these schools because at times only the principal, chairperson and the school governing body treasurer sit for the signing of cheques.

This response shows that sometimes the stakeholders tend to deviate from the normal dictates of the SASA. These findings suggest that financial decision-making procedures are flouted in spite of transparency and inclusivity as espoused in the South African Constitution, Act 108, 1996.

4.4.5 Financial reporting

Financial reporting forms the essence of financial transparency and the practical tool that is used to inform others on school money transactions. In this instance, the following table provides the model that may assist when reporting about school finances:

Table 4.2 School financial reporting model



This model of reporting about finances places the finance committee at the helm of the other structures because it forms the main ground where financial decisions need to be taken. The second structure (SGB) forms the first floor which should receive monthly financial reports per the voice of its treasurer and then decides who the auditor should be. Thirdly, the financial reporting trend reaches the stage where all various stakeholders are informed about school financial position. Clearly, though the financial reporting stages except the auditors' stage, financial reporting remains the duty of the school governing body parent treasurer who should be assisted by the designated member of the staff (Provincial Gazette of KwaZulu-Natal, 2006, Section 18(2)). The Department of Education (2003) argues that if there is an oversight of the financial reporting linear route, then either intentional or unintentional misrepresentation occurs. So, the school financial reporting model was used in the study to investigate the nature of financial reporting in each financial constituency and the experiences of parent governors when such reporting was done.

In this regard, responses derived from the question about financial reporting, revealed that the SGB treasurers assisted by others as alluded to above do not do financial reporting. Secondly, responses show that where financial reporting is effected, it does not stem out from the finance committee. It also emerged that all the participants held a view that financial reporting is only significant to parents. Educators, learners in secondary schools and non-educators seemed to be unintentionally brushed aside in terms of financial reporting. This

portrays a picture that transparency on school finances is an area that requires a special heed.

With regard to the findings on the method of preparing for financial reporting, the majority of my participants claimed that:

Only the principals are entrusted to call financial reporting meetings. We are not there to take over the responsibilities of the principal even if we would like to do so, but we are not educated enough.

This is contrary to the law that recommends the SGB chairperson and treasurer to ensure that preparations are done well (Department of Education, 2002, p.15). Whilst the law is perfectly clear in this instance, it is evident that the nature of my respondents compels them to depend on their principals.

In the area of producing user-friendly financial statements that are easy to non-experts, my respondents indicated that the SGB members in their schools made everything possible to use the language that best suited the majority of IsiZulu speakers. The SGB minute book and financial report statements studied showed evidence to the nature of terminology used at the parents' financial reporting stage. To illustrate, PG5 reported that:

When reporting on school finances, parents are always given a vernacular written and detailed account of income and expenditure. This makes it easier for non-professionals to engage in the discussion of school finances.

This is in line with what the Department of Education (2002) indicates:

Financial statements must be easy for the ordinary lay persons for whom they are intended.

In the light of this claim, parents as the non-professional people in some schools studied are participating and contributing positively in financial reporting produced in their language.

4.5 Challenges which emerged as a direct result of the `No Fee` policy

Basically, this section addresses one of the critical questions as pointed out in chapter one:

What challenges, if any, do parent governors face in no fee-paying schools?

Data emerged out of such critical question illustrate that some SGBs in two Section 21 status schools studied, use allocated funds to pay for the staff personnel. They justified this action by saying:

We steal from the funds given by the Department, collecting fees from parents is a difficult matter altogether because parents are no longer prepared to contribute any money to school any longer, since they heard from the media about `No Fee` policy.

This illustrates that some parent governors in the two researched Section 21 rural schools in particular had a dire need to employ the services of the staff personnel, however, they are faced with two dilemmas namely: to interfere with the restricted monetary transfers and to win the attitude of the parents who were no longer prepared to contribute any fee, small it may be into the school fund. In this instance, the treasurer in school A responded to the challenge alluded to above by indicating that:

Our parents, once heard the government announcing categorically from the media about the non-compulsory school fees at schools and hear no emphasis on voluntary contribution of school fees, then we are faced with non-contribution problematic cases even if the schools have the staff to remunerate. In our school, some parents refuse to pay even if the agreed voluntary contribution fee is R26.00 per learner for the whole year.

Response from the disgruntled treasurer, PG10, showed that the government fails to defend in the media such schools that are still charging fees. She quoted the following extract from the Department of Education (2003, p. 24):

We, as the government, believe that even the poor identified schools can still pay a small-scale fee depending on their school needs.

This indicates how SGBs in some rural schools studied are interpreting government financial policies and how they feel about the concerns

brought on board by the `No Fee` policy in their schools that were marginalized in the past.

Other interviewed respondents commented on the timing of the `No Fee` policy. They voiced out that:

It is unfair that our neighbouring schools are given the status of not paying school fees and in our schools we still paying.

This illustrates that pro-poor schools in the same area receive the no fee-paying status at different times. This scenario shows that school fee ban in the schools in the same indigent communities causes confusion among the members of the same community.

4.6 School Governing Body capacity building

The general interview question that was based on financial issues uncovered in the four themes above, revealed the dire need of SGB capacity building. To illuminate, both PG2 and PG3 argued that:

We have been asked everything of financial activities; however, we have not been probed specifically on the issue of training workshops, though they are imperative to all SGB members.

This suggests that some of my participants feel the need of school financial empowerment and they point out that financial school governance development workshops should be the matter for everybody in the school governing body.

When these SGB key financial roleplayers probed further on the significant of financial governance workshops, the following reasons emerged. The first reason relates to the new SGB members who are elected every three years or even before where there is a need to conduct by-elections. The need to conduct by-elections entailed changes that occurred as a result of resignations, deaths, low member-morale, absences from SGB meetings on two consecutive occasions and newly amended financial policy frameworks. The second reason pertains to the newly appointed principal, who may not be fully conversant with financial governance issues.

In the area that relates to financial policy framework, PG4 warned that:

Frequent school governance workshops are necessary because even if the financial policies are clear, things happen differently at the implementation stage (particularly in this school).

This illustrates that to make school governance policies talk, according to the researched SGB treasurer in school B, continuous SGB empowerment is imperative. Furthermore, in the light of this response, it appeared that some parent members in this study are still dissatisfied in spite of decentralised financial control accorded to them.

Five other participants spelt out that:

District school governance workshops are too general and minimal. Too general in the sense that such workshops if conducted, they turn to focus largely on general roles and responsibilities of SGBs, not on financial governance in particular.

This is an indication that while the department of education has made some effort in training the school governing bodies, the financial governance workshops focusing on parent governors still remain a huge challenge. This suggests the need of financial governance workshops to be conducted in isolation with other SGB workshops.

4.7 Emerging issues

Emerging from the findings based on the respondents' biographical profiles was that despite the constraints, namely lowly educated SGB parent members, walking long distances on foot to schools and parent sector's second language used on school governing body financial documents as pointed out in chapter one, it appeared that parent governors in the five schools investigated, did not have a problem of participating and attending SGB financial meetings. However, on the language issue, it emerged that school financial documents bearing complex technical language was a problematic issue.

Regarding the experiences of parent governors during the elections, it was evident that the SGB elections were conducted according to the requirements of the Provincial Gazette of KwaZulu-Natal Notice No. 6480, 2006 whose stipulations had been discussed in this chapter under 4.3. However, it was divulged that some parents withdrew their participation from school governance after the elections due to phobia

regarding SGB demands and due to the issues pertaining to low education and familial problems. On the other side, five parent governors indicated the issues of determination and passion about the education of their children as the driving forces of accepting nominations to school governing body.

In the area relating to parent governors' experiences on making school financial decisions in both Section 21 and Section 20 schools, the findings show that parent governors in the researched schools are not yet fully participating on financial governance as required by SASA, 1996, section 36, hence they felt excluded. It emerged from the responses of the majority of my respondents that some school principals were exercising shared decision-making though not to the fullest interest of school governors' participation which is the heart of democratic school governance. To illuminate, eight participants out of ten revealed that the principals were given a go-ahead and reported back to the SGB forum. In the instances where there were elements of strong dominance by principals, it was perceived as the direct result of low education status and sheer exploitation of SGBs' ignorance of their democratic participation rights as espoused in the South African Constitution, Act 108 of 1996. Surprisingly, the majority of the respondents were not aware of their democratic rights in school financial governance. In some cases, in Section 20 schools in particular, principals handled financial governance issues by themselves that led to the non-attendance to the financial meetings and malicious withdrawal of other parent governors before their expiry term of office.

Data collected from four schools on the formation of finance committee indicate the non-existence of such vital financial governance structure. In this regard, eight parent governors out of ten interviewed were not aware that it is people in the finance committee that form the primary root of income generation and expenditure reports each time there is SGB meeting. Concurring with the importance of the finance committee, the law stipulates that finance committee should comprise at least three SGB members and it should be chaired by the member of the SGB as pointed out in chapter one (Department of Education, 1998). It entails that at the third financial reporting stage as pointed out in this chapter in table 4.2, a financial report given to parents at parents' meeting is sourced from the finance committee. The non-existence of this committee in schools studied suggests that there are financial repercussions in schools namely; financial decisions misrepresentations of the stakeholders with a direct stake and parent governors public school governance is not yet at the centre of those whom decentralisation of finance was purported as discussed on chapter one.

Though the government encourages the action of voluntary contribution of school fees by parents (Province of KwaZulu-Natal, 2006), it emerged that the term 'voluntary contribution' created serious challenges in no fee-paying schools in particular. The findings show that ordinary lay parents for learners in the schools studied are challenging school governors that effect fee voluntary contributions. This implies that ordinary lay people are refusing to pay fees because to them, the term 'voluntary' suggests that one would contribute the school fees in the interest of his or her own free will. The non-

contribution in this regard boiled out despite the governments stipulations that:

Government does not believe that a complete school fees ban in the case of poor schools with better levels of public funding is the optimum solution (Department of Education, 2003).

The findings from some respondents reveal that there are serious challenges that emerged as a result of the `No fee` Policy in Section 21 schools. SGBs in the two Section 21 schools with SGB paid staff voiced out that they rob certain amounts from the allocated funds to pay such staff. At times, in dealing with non-paying parents, they opt to send learners home during teaching hours to remind their parents about their dues, or failing which, they would retain the learners' report progress cards. Though this seemed to contravene learners' democratic rights on education for all, to them, apparently, it is the only way of reducing the high number of unpaid learners and get money to pay for school staff. It also emerged from the participants that the pro-poor schools receive the no fee-paying status not at the same time or year, yet such schools are in the same poverty-stricken communities. As such, this seems to raise confusion, discomfort, and mistrust among the SGBs of the neighbouring schools.

Emerged out of the complete field of study are different types of SGBs in relation to financial governance in the five schools studied. Table 4.3 below provides the sample of such five schools. Stoll and Fink (1996) developed the same kind of mapping schools according to nature of associatedness or effectiveness and improvement in the

school. In this instance, the table locates the five schools for my respondents in terms of their experiences and effectiveness on financial decision-making.

Table 4.3 Location according to the SGB performance.

Schools studied	Type of SGB	Characteristics of the SGB observed
1.	1. Sinking SGB	High degree of ineffectiveness, non-performing parent governors, conflict between SGB members and the principal emerged and the latter took financial decisions alone, no finance committee meetings held, no minute books, SGB members come in and go out, signing of blank cheques being the order of the day, learners sent home during school hours.
2.	2. Strolling SGB	School governance neither effective nor effective, no SGB policies such as constitution, no school financial policy, no code of conduct for learners, no school vision and mission statement, no by-elections to fill up vacancies, however, SGB meetings held when there is a need.
3.	3. Struggling SGB	School governance effective, however, governance and management build on the governance strengths, at times the principal moves to the neighbouring schools to import governance policies for submission purposes, during elections newly appointed principals depended on the support of the neighbouring schools as mentors, little knowledge of filing SGB documents, some general internal SGB workshops, however, not on financial governance.
4. Schools A-D (PG1 to PG8)	4. Cruising SGB	School governance effective, however, parent governors not directly engaged in financial decision-making. Financial reports done but not done by the SGB treasurer, only one SGB minute book for finance committee meetings, parent meetings and SGB meetings available, rely largely on the principal for buying school equipments and getting quotations. Parent governors not fully aware that structurally they should be involved in getting some projects for the school.
5. School E (PG9 and PG10)	5. Moving SGB	Self-reliant school governance. Finance committee with two parent governors out of whom one chairs the meetings, financier delegated by the principal and one member of the teaching staff. Sound human relations observable, shared financial decision-making noticeable, different minute books for different financial structures available. Financial reporting from finance committee to SGB, then to parents meeting and reported by the SGB treasurer assisted by others. Initiated ' <i>Operation Siyagijima Sonke</i> '. Conducted internal school governance workshops based on school year planner using seven school governing body manuals. Everybody actively involved on further school development plans.

Adapted from Stoll and Fink (1996)

The table 4.3 shows that only school E with PG9 and PG10 out of five schools researched fits into the 'moving' SGB school because all SGB members are actively involved, perform school financial duties according to the requirements SASA, (1996). This suggests that some SGB members in the five SGB schools studied are dedicated and have the necessary financial competencies. Schools A to D out of the five schools selected, belonged to the 'cruising' SGB school because the survival of the SGB depends on active role played by the principal. This suggests that the majority of parent governors in my study are not directly involved in financial decision-making.

Generally, the table 4.3 illustrates that the majority of rural SGBs in the schools studied were not clear of their school financial governance duties. Hence, the schools A to D needed financial governance attention.

The next chapter focuses on the summary, conclusions, recommendations and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS.

5.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses four issues. Firstly, it summarises the study. Secondly, it draws conclusions from the findings. Thirdly, it suggests the recommendations in response to the conclusions and finally, it address the limitations of the study.

5.2 Summary

Chapter one outlined the background and the purpose of the study. In this respect, I reported that South African Schools Act 84, 1996, places both the SGB chairpersons and treasurers as parents at the central point in school financial governance, yet they have little school financial knowledge. In this instance, they are faced with severe challenges namely lack of participation in finance committees, little involvement on school budgetary matters, partial involvement in fundraising efforts and such parents are also expected to perform governance duties equally alike with their colleagues in ex-Model C schools. With the emergence of new financial policies namely Section 20 status, Section 21 status and no fee policy, I became interested in exploring the voices, experiences and challenges parent governors face in school financial governance.

Chapter two reviewed literature and to achieve this, the following issues were discussed. Firstly, the five key concepts pertaining school financial governance were discussed. Secondly, the chapter discussed the South African financial policy frameworks under which the SGB parent members are required to make financial decisions. Thirdly, the chapter reviewed some research studies on school financial governance undertaken between 2002 and 2004. Finally, three policy theoretical frameworks (Participatory Democracy Theory, Policy-Practice Dichotomy Theory and Political theory) were discussed. These theories shed light on the experiences and complexities facing the parent governors in the field of practice.

Chapter three described the methodology of the study. The study adopted a qualitative case study design involving two data collection instruments namely semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten selected participants who comprised of five SGB chairpersons and five treasurers. They were selected because they were the parent representatives who should make financial decisions with their co-partners in the finance committee. In this regard, my participants were expected to be information-rich about school financial activities; hence they form the major stakeholders in school governance. Finally, school official documents such as finance committee minute book, school governing body minute book and school governing body parents meeting minute books were analysed to complement the verbal data collected from the ten interviewed SGB parent members.

Chapter four presented and discussed the research findings. This was done through five themes. The first theme addressed the biographical profiles of the SGB chairpersons and the treasurers in the selected schools. The second theme related to the elections of parent governors to school governing body. The findings in this regard indicated that SGB parent members were elected according to the election procedures contained in the Act as pointed out in chapter four (item 4.3). It was indicated that only few parents seemed to refuse to be elected due to various personal reasons. The third theme described the experiences of parent governors on financial decision-making in both Section 20 and 21 status schools selected. It emerged that the majority of parent governors depended entirely on the calibre of the principals in making financial decisions and only one SGB for PG9 and PG10 participants had formed functional finance committee. The fourth theme addressed the challenges that emerged out of the 'No Fee' policy. In this instance, the findings showed that Section 21 status schools in particular had severe dilemma of remunerating non-teaching staff. It was apparent that before the emergence of the 'No Fee' policy, SGBs were paying with ease the people who provided the school essential services. To deal with this issue, they interfere with the ring-fenced allocated funds as pointed out in chapter four (item 4.7). The fifth theme discussed the issue of SGB capacity building. The findings revealed that SGBs in rural schools in particular need a continued financial support programmes. Hence the issue for continued support programmes is discussed under recommendations.

5.3 Conclusions

The study commenced with the proposition that parent governors with little financial competencies were experiencing difficulties in school financial governance decision-making. Hence, the three research questions guided the study. So, the first research question focused on the experiences of parent governors in financial decision-making, taking into cognisance that some SGBs operate in different school financial groupings such as Section 21 and Section 20 status schools. The second research question was an attempt to investigate the challenges, if any, parent governors might encounter whilst operating in no fee-paying schools. The final research question aimed at finding out how the participation of SGB parent members can be enhanced. This question is fully addressed by way of recommendations.

Regarding parent governors` experiences in school financial reporting and participation in school budgetary activities, one may conclude that some parent governors have difficulty with English as a language.

In the area of walking long distances to and from school, some parent governors in the selected schools had no problem. Instead, they seem to have a strong SGB passion and determination.

Given that some parents in the schools studied refuse to pay school fee voluntary contributions and some school governors interfere with the ring-fenced allocated funds, it can therefore be concluded that 'No Fee' paying schools have huge challenges.

Having found that some Section 21 `No Fee` paying schools have used the ring-fenced funds to build school development capital cost services, one may conclude that the restricted monetary funds do assist in improving the greatest physical infrastructure.

5.4 Recommendations

Informed by the emerging issues from data presentation and the conclusions above, the following recommendations are suggested:

SGBs in rural schools in particular need to be continuously developed on financial governance. District school governance unit officials should compile a programme aiming to develop newly appointed principals and newly elected SGBs on financial governance. Furthermore, there must be a monitoring tool such as requesting schools to report quarterly to the district about their financial governance strengths and areas of development. Such reports should include, *inter alia*, finance committee decisions, monthly reconciliation statements and school budget control statements.

Successful SGBs should be persuaded to mentor ineffective SGB schools. This can be achieved through clustering schools and deal directly with financial governance. School governing bodies in rural schools should also be twinned with the SGBs of other racial groups to enhance school governance in rural schools.

To create and promote active participation of rural parent governors in all financial documents, a body of language experts must be in place

to translate policy documents from foreign language into the language that favours the majority of lowly educated lay people. Audited financial statements should be compiled in IsiZulu version too. School principals must assist in drawing school budgets that are user-friendly to their co-partners in school governance e.g. non-professional SGB component in particular.

Principals of schools should watch their attitude towards SGB parent members. They must believe that parents, lowly educated or not, have the ability to make best financial governance decisions if given school governance development opportunity.

The Department of Education must have discussed new financial policies with SGB fora before publicising into the media. This will assist in breaking a divide between policy and practice and eliminate public confusion that impact negatively on school financial governance.

This study has shown that some SGBs in the selected schools effect unlawful remunerations from the monetary transferred funds. In this regard, the Department of Education should lift the restrictions on the allocated funds.

Further studies are needed which should include bridging the gap between parent governors and school principals when dealing with school financial governance. This will lessen the scenes where school principals run school financial governance matters all by themselves or with their confidantes.

5.5 Limitations of the study

This study was undertaken in five schools out of about 170 schools in Ileembe South circuit (ex-Ndwedwe circuit). This gave the total of ten selected respondents. The study would carry more weight if more than ten respondents were interviewed. Furthermore, if more respondents participated, more essence to the study would be produced and making the findings more balanced.

The parents were difficult to find since they do not work full time at schools, so, at times, the researcher could not have much time with them as he could wish. The first four schools withdrew randomly owing to the reasons that follow. Firstly, some husbands refused participation of their wives in this study. Secondly, some principals did not authorize entry. They cited passive co-operation of parent governors in their schools. Finally, untimely illnesses made it difficult to get some respondents.

Since, the research was conducted in a rural area, the researcher found it difficult to reach the participants on rainy days. Roads were muddy and impassable. Some planned appointments were postponed thus causing unnecessary delays.

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APPENDIX ONE: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

RESEARCH OFFICE (GOVAN MBEKI CENTRE)
WESTVILLE CAMPUS
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 – 2603587
EMAIL : ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

9 MAY 2007

MR. QO KHUZWAYO (9804173)
EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT

Dear Mr. Khuzwayo

ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0209/07M

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been granted for the following project:

“The role of parent governors in school financial decision-making: Experiences of parent governors at Ndwedwe Circuit”

Yours faithfully

MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA
RESEARCH OFFICE

cc. Faculty Research Office (Derek Buchler)
cc. Supervisor (Dr. V Chikoko)

2007-05-14

APPENDIX TWO: LETTER TO SCHOOL HEADS

Box 63319

Verulam

4340

14 August 2008

The Principal

Sir/Madam

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

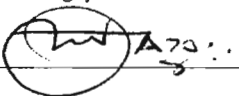
I, Q.O. Khuzwayo, MED student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, hereby request permission to conduct a research in your school. I intend to interview your SGB chairperson and treasurer on the study titled "**The Role of Parent Governors in School Financial Decision-making: Experiences of Parent Governors in Ndwedwe rural schools**". Secondly, I humbly request permission to observe financial minute books as a form of subsequent data collection analysis from the interviews.

I shall spend not more than sixty minutes with each participant on the day that will be convenient to them.

Data collected will be treated as confidential and will not be disclosed for other purpose. Your school and participants' names will never be shown in any manner.

For further inquiries in this regard, kindly contact my supervisor, Dr Chikoko at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (031-2602639).

Thanking you in advance.



Q.O.Khuzwayo (0835972921)

Tear off and return this slip

Permission to conduct research with our SGB chairperson and treasurer is approved/not approved.

Wishing you every success on your study.

Principal

APPENDIX THREE: INFORMED CONSENT

Box 63319
Verulam
4340

Lilunga loMkhandlu Wesikole elihloniphekileyo

ISICELO SOKWENZA UCWANINGO

Mina ngingu Q.O. Khuzwayo, umfundi waseNyuvesi yaKwaZulu-Natal eThekwini. Ngicwanginga ngeqhaza elibanjwe abazali abakuMkhandlu wesikole ekuthatheni izinqumo ngokusetshenziswa kwezimali zesikole ikakhulukazi endaweni yaseNdwedwe.

Ngicela ungiphe imizuzu engeqile emashumini ayisithupha (60 minutes) ukuzwa ngelenu iqhaza ekuthatheni izinqumo ngezimali zesikole.

Okushilo uma uphendula kuyogcinwa kuyimfihlo futhi ngeke kudalulwe kwabanye abantu nangengozi.

Uma unemibuzo mayelana nalesisicelo noma ufuna ukwazi ukuthi ngizolusebenzisa kanjani ulwazi engilutholile ungangishayela kulenombolo 0835972921 noma ushayele uthisha wami uDokotela Chikoko ku 031-2602639.

Ngiyabonga ngesikhathi sakho.

Q.O. Khuzwayo
0835972921



Usuku: 14.08.2008

University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Klebhula lapha, ugcwalise ubuyise

Ngicela ungigcwalisele lelifomu, ukukhombisa ukwamukela isicelo sami esibhalwe ngenhla.

Ngiyazwisisa futhi ngiyaqondisisa ngeqhaza okufanele ngilibambe kulolucwaningo. Kanti-ke futhi kusobala ukuthi akuyona impoqo ukuba yingxenye yalolucwaningo, ngingahoxa noma nini uma ngingahambisani nokuthize.

Ngiyazwisisa ukuthi okuphathelene negama lami nelesikole kogcinwa kuyimfihlo nokuthi angeke kuvezwe kuboma kumuphi umbiko.

Ukusayina _____ Usuku _____ Isikhundla sami _____

Ngiyabonga kakhulu ngesikhathi sakho.

Q.O. Khuzwayo
0835972921

APPENDIX THREE: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR CHAIRPERSON/TREASURER OF SGB

A. Biographical information/ Imininingwane ngawe

1. How long have you been working as a SGB member in this school?
1. *Unesikhathi esingakanani uyilunga loMkhandlu walesisikole?*
2. What are your achievements as SGB members in this institution?
2. *Yikuphi enikuzuzile kulesisikole njengamalungu omkhandlu wesikole?*
3. What would you say are some factors influencing your successes, if any?
3. *Yiziphi izinto ezingadala ukuba nisebenze kahle, uma zikhona?*
4. Some parents refuse to be elected as SGB members. What are your experiences in this regard?
4. *Abanye abazali abakuthandi ukukhethwa, babeka izizathu ezahlukene. Nina ningabazali nikuthatha kanjani ukukhethelwa ukusebenza emkhandlwini wesikole?*

B. Generation of funds/ Ukutholakala kwemali yesikole

1. What are sources of funds in this school?
1. *Iqhamukaphi imali yokufeza izidingo zesikole?*
2. What are some of the challenges you face under the existing allocation status of this school?
1. *Kungaba yiziphi izinselelo uma zikhona ezidalwa indlela uHulumeni asixhasa ngayo lesisikole?*
2. What challenges emerge as a direct result of 'No Fee' school policy?
3. *Uhulumeni ushaye umthetho wokungakhokhwa kwemali yesikole. Unamthelela muni kulesisikole lomthetho?*
4. How funds are raised in this school?
4. *Uma imali evela kuHulumeni ingazifezi izidingo zesikole, nina nenza njani?*
5. What are your experiences in drawing school budget?
5. *Nina bazali enikuMkhandlu wesikole nibamba liphi iqhaza uma kwakhiwa isabelomali (ibhajethi)?*
6. How school monies are safely kept?

6. *Niyigcina kanjani iphephile imali yesikole?*

C. Financial expenditure/ Ukusetshenziswa kwemali yesikole

1. How are school funds spent in this school?

1. *Imali yesikole niyisebenzisa kanjani kulesisikole?*

2. How do you plan for (a) doing repairs and maintenance

(b) buying school equipment and (c) initiating school projects?

2. *Nenzenjani uma (a) nivuselela kabusha izakhiwo zesikole nokuzigcina zisesimeni esigculisayo? (b) nihlela ukuthenga impahla enkulu yesikole (c) nisungula amaprojekthi amakhulu esikole?*

3. Do you do financial action plan? If so, what are your experiences in putting it into practice?

3. *Nabelana kanjani amandla okuletha izidingo zesikole?*

4. How do you feel about being participating on financial decision-making?

4. *Nizizwa ninjani uma niyingxenye yokuthatha izinqumo ngezimali zesikole?*

5. How do you use cheque- book in this school?

5. *Niyisebenzisa kanjani isheki bhuku kulesisikole?*

D. Financial structure / Uhlaka olulekelela ezimalini zesikole

1. How are finance committee members selected?

1. *Niwakhetha kanjani amalungu ekomidi lezimali?*

2. How does each member become eligible?

2. *Ilunga lekomidi lezimali kumele libe umuntu onjani ukuze lisebenze kahle?*

3. How frequent are finance committee meetings held?

3. *Ikomidi lezimali lihlangana kangaki ngonyaka?*

4. What roles do finance committee members do?

4. *Nibamba liphi iqhaza njengabazali kulelikomidi?*

5. How do you make sure that decisions taken are never forgotten?

5. *Nenzakanjani ukuba izinqumo enizithathile ningazikhohlwa?*

E. Financial reporting/ Umbiko wezimali

1. Why do you think financial reporting is necessary?
1. *Nikubona kubaluleke ngani ukukwazisa ngesimo sezimali zesikole?*
2. How often is it done?
2. *Kulesisikole niwenzela kangaki umbiko wezimali zesikole, wenziwa ubani, kobani?*
3. How do you arrange for financial reporting?
3. *Nikuhlela kanjani ukubika ngezimali?*
4. How other stakeholders are made aware of the allocated funds?
4. *Nibazisa kanjani abanye ngemali engene ebhange ivela kuhulumeni?*
5. What efforts are made to produce user-friendly financial statements that are easy to non-experts to understand?
5. *Nenza kanjani ukuba izitatimende zezimali zizwakale kangcono nakubantu abangafundile ngokungako?*

F. General information/ Ukwazi okuvulelekile

1. What would you say about the value of SGB training on financial governance in this school?
1. *Ungathini ngokubaluleka kokuqeqeshwa kwamalungu oMkhandlu wesikole ekuphathweni kwezimali kulesisikole?*
2. Overall, what would say are your experiences in respect of financial decision-making not covered above?
2. *Sengigcina, yikuphi ongakusho okungathintekanga kulengxoxo yethu mayelana nokuthathwa kwezinqumo zezimali?*