

**EXPERIENCES OF GENDER EQUALITY AMONG SCHOOL GOVERNING  
BODY MEMBERS: A CASE STUDY OF ZANEMFUNDO HIGH SCHOOL,  
OTHUKELA DISTRICT**

**By**

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## DECLARATION

I, Eric Mduuzi Baldwin Sithole, declare that this is my own work, submitted in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I further declare that this dissertation has never been submitted at any other University or institution for any purpose, academic or otherwise.



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As the candidate's supervisor, I have/have not approve this thesis/dissertation for submission.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Abstract**

This study investigates gender experiences and perceptions of School Governing Body members in a school situation. In most cases SGB structures are formed by both males and females and generally females are found to be in majority. However, the decision-making power usually remains with males. This happens during meetings of the SGB as well as during formal and informal interaction where SGB members will be found together. This situation has negative consequences for the school as a whole.

This study therefore is focused on a school situation by using the SGB as an example of a place within school where gender differentiation and gender inequality exist. A qualitative case study was used. The study used interviews and questionnaires to parents, teachers and learners who are members of the SGB.

The results indicate that male members of the SGB of course do dominate in decision-making of the SGB. Females are still lacking confidence to speak freely and to challenge certain issues that are being discussed. Even if they are afforded with equal opportunities they fail to share their ideas.

The study also investigates the reasons and situations which lead to this inequality in gender perception. Amongst its findings, it was clear that the community surrounding the school does have an impact on the perception of members of the SGB. Rural communities especially create an impression, based on traditional values, that men are

better than women. The study also found that lack of information and gender training facilities in the community affect the school negatively.

This study is premised on the belief that SGBs hold the key to transforming schools and in challenging values of the past so as to establish a society based on democratic values. The study recommends that the issue of gender should be treated at community level first. Programs should be made to improve the self-esteem of females in the community as well as in the school.

The implication of this study was that gender inequality affects the management and governance of the school. Therefore it recommends the formulation of fair gender policies by the school SGB. The Department of education has done enough to introduce policies on gender; however, SGBs need a lot of training so as to implement these policies. SGBs will need a lot of support in order to deal with gender issue.

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# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

### **1.1 Background to the study**

In the South African context, School Governing Bodies are pivotal to the post-1994 democratic model of organisation, governance and funding for schools (Meeson, 1998, p.4). By now almost all public schools have School Governing Bodies (SGBs).

However, contextual realities mean that SGBs in different school contexts function at different levels and have unequal capacity. Through the South African Schools Act of 1996 (hereafter referred to as SASA), the Ministry of Education, has established that SGBs should be representative of the main stakeholders in the school namely parents, learners, teachers, non-teaching staff and the principal as ex-officio members, and reflect the principle of ownership of the school by the community it serves( Hunter Report, 1995). The report further recommended that SASA should also states that the composition of governing bodies should be sensitive to racial and gender representation.

With the creation of the SGBs, communities and families have opportunities to work together with their schools to identify problems they face and strategies to tackle them. As such, SGBs have a valuable role to play in raising awareness around issues of gender inequality including sex role stereotyping and the differential, unequal treatment of male and female learners as well as the issues of safety and regularity of attendance and the participation of youth in school governance (Mabelane, et al., 2001). Through the SGB, parents, learners and educators are to work towards the understanding of the discriminatory impact of gender inequality and the various aspects of gender that



contribute towards the challenges faced by girls in schools. In addition, Wolpe (1997) maintains that, through this awareness of gender inequality, the SGBs would collaborate on making schools safer, more representative and democratic and equitable for all learners, including girls and women teachers.

The new structure of school governance is aimed at a comprehensive development of capacity building in education system as a whole (Sayed, 1990). Capacity building in this sense refers to the power to act autonomously. Capacity building therefore is directed at empowerment and entails the development of both the material and human resources necessary for effective governance and management. To this effect the Hunter Report mentioned that:

The underpinning philosophy of the South African Schools Act is that schools are encouraged to become self-managed and self-reliant. The SGB therefore represents the new understanding of governance that is at the centre of the reorganisation of the school system. The SGB made up of key holders embodies the community level partnership that is now expected to take responsibility for ensuring that children of the community receive the kind of education that will produce citizens which the new South African can be proud of. (1995, p.3).

However, for many schools, particularly those in rural areas, a lot has to be done to equip them with the skills and resources required for democratic governance. For example, a study conducted by Meeson on school governance in 1998, found that after two years since the new structure was introduced, there were schools that still had School Governing Bodies that lacked skills necessary for the new structure. To emphasize, the same author went to comment that although over 75 percent of all public schools had already established school governing bodies, however, in most, the school governance process was hampered by poor infrastructure, as well as a lack of resources and training.

Meeso (1998) further commented that Constance Shilote, a principal of a rural high school in Giyani mentioned that her school was situated in a very poor place, thus were unable to develop their own people. The author further indicated that, through the principal it was established that, “the majority of people there were women, children and old men. According to her the main source of income was from the pensions of the elderly” (Meeson, 1998, p. 1). In this way the school lacks basic resources.

In addition, this point of view was emphasized when, the Teacher of June (1998) cited Meeson (1998) mentioned that, Lorraine Mogooa, chairperson of Barnato High School in Gauteng believed that SGBs should go beyond the issues of internal discipline and financial management. The importance of preparing students for a productive role in society cannot be underestimated. In this regard the chairperson stated that:

Government and industry should come together and develop a blueprint that stipulates what we should be preparing our students for. SGBs should also be helping to shape a curriculum that will enhance the future of our economy (Ibid, p. 8).

It seems that this state of affairs still persists in a lot of schools. A lot has to be done especially in rural schools to build the capacity of schools for efficient and effective school governance. My experience as a rural school educator confirms this viewpoint, where I observed that most SGBs in these rural schools need clear information on their basic powers ;functions as well as training on such sensitive issues such as race, gender and HIV/AIDS so that they will have understanding and skills for formulating efficient policies regarding these issues.

Commenting on the need for a well-skilled SGB, the Hunter's Report recommended that:

A well coordinated capacity building programme be developed and implemented that provides educators and members of Governing Bodies access to the knowledge, skills, information and material resources necessary to sustain governance functions (1995, p. 5).

In addition, the Ministry of Education's first White Paper on Education and Training of 1995 underscored the need for the new education and training policies to address the legacies of the past and to provide equal opportunities to all based on non-discrimination.

The White Paper noted that:

All forms of discrimination especially that which is based on race/ethnicity and gender are dehumanising and degrading. It further states a need for active encouragement of mutual respect for our people's diverse religious, cultural and language traditions, their right to practice them in peace and without hindrance (Republic of South Africa, Ministry of Education, 1995, p.22).

To this effect, section 16 of the South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996 stipulates that all stakeholders play a major role in the schooling of their children today. These include parents, learners, teachers and the school management. The SGB was set as the vehicle through which this can be achieved. It is "the body that is entrusted with the responsibility and authority to formulate and adopt school policy within the national, provincial and district vision for education" (*Hunter Report*, 1995, p.54). Thus the SGB has a leading role to play in the affairs as well as the governance of the school. The body is responsible for determining and adopting policies within the national and provincial parameters of education.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

As the principal of the school in this study and an ex-Officio member of the SGB I have come to recognise a major problem in the composition and the functioning of the SGB. This relates to the fact that while the majority of the members are women, men tend to dominate the SGB structures and processes in terms of decision-making. For example, I have observed that in all the meetings that the SGB holds, discussions tend to revolve around certain male members of the group. Female members tend to take the back seat in the decision-making processes of the school. In most cases, the position of the chairperson, which, according to the South African Schools Act of 1996, should be elected amongst the parents, is still customarily an exclusively male position. So far it is still very difficult to convince some members of the SGB that everybody, including women, stands a chance to be elected.

This is not unique to my school. To illustrate, through the country's Constitution, the democratic government of South Africa has recognised that women have been subordinated throughout their lives and there is a need to take appropriate measures to ensure gender equality. However, little attention is paid to the role played by SGBs in as far as gender construction is concerned. It is a fact that women in general have had less access to decision-making and authority in the system (Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998). As stated above, the situation is even worse for governing bodies of schools in rural areas. As government is busy with programmes of gender awareness it looks like women and men in rural areas remain ignorant about gender issues (Goduka and Swadener, 1999). Men are still highly regarded as heads to various homes and societal organizations. In a

context where culture is used to subordinate women, the man is free to say anything, anyhow, wherever, just because he is a man (Iseke-Barnes and Wane, 2000). In contrast, women are always expected to listen and do whatever the men decide. It is taboo for a woman to speak while a man is still speaking, or stand up where there are men or oppose what men are saying.

Even within this context, schools can be regarded as critical role players in the transformation of South Africa, with the potential to challenge values of the past era and establish a society based on democratic values, more importantly as the locus of democracy in schools (Sayed, 1990). This research report is premised on the belief that SGBs hold the key to transforming our public education system in general and schooling in particular. They create a platform for those who have been marginalised for decades to finally have a say in how they want schools to be run. SGBs should formulate and implement policies that will rightfully address issues that impinge on schooling in an effective and equitable manner, eliminating discrimination based on sex, race, class and other variables (Dooms, 1997).

For these reasons, this report argues that the gendered nature of the SGB's operations has implications for the gender policy of the school. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the perceptions of the SGB members regarding gender equality/inequality in its structures and processes and the ways in which this impacts on the effective day-to-day running of the school.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways in which gender inequality persists in education, particularly in school governance structures. The study aimed to investigate the perceptions of the SGB members regarding gender equality and inequality in the decision-making powers of both men and women in the school and the consequences this might have for effective school governance and management. A qualitative case study approach was used to address the following research questions which informed the study:

1. In what ways do men and women exercise equal power and authority in influencing decisions in the SGB at the school?
2. What factors constitute the unequal gender relations between men and women in the SGB and their decision-making powers?
3. What influence can an SGB, which does not take the issue of gender seriously, have on the school as a whole?
4. What can be done to transform the gender dynamics in the SGB so as to promote equality in decision-making?

### **1.5 Organisation of the report**

This report is organised into 5 chapters. Chapter 1 has introduced the study and focused on the aim of the research study. Chapter 2 reviews literature on the influence of gender on school governance and effective teaching and learning. Chapter 3 describes the research design and methodology that were used in the study. Chapter 4 presents findings from the study, while Chapter 5 discusses the findings and draws implications for empowering SGBs through gender equity.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **The Influence of Gender on Effective School Governance: A Review of Literature**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

As stated in the last chapter, this study investigated the ways in which SGB members in one school interpret gender equity both in terms of the organisation's functioning and the functioning of the school as a whole. The study investigated stakeholders' perceptions of the nature and extent of gender bias in the school's SGB and the consequences thereof. The objectives of the study included understanding the stakeholder's perceptions with regard to:

1. The nature of and reasons for the gender dynamics in decision-making within the SGB at the school;
2. The possible consequences of male domination for the functioning of the SGB;
3. The influence an SGB, which does not take the issue of gender seriously, can have on the school as a whole; and
4. What might be done to transform the gender dynamics in the SGB so as to promote equality in decision-making?

The last chapter introduced and described the study and highlighted its purpose. This chapter reviews literature related to the influence of gender on effective school governance and teaching and learning. Firstly, the chapter analyses the policy framework governing the creation and functioning of School Governing Bodies in South Africa.

The last chapter introduced and described the study and highlighted its purpose. This chapter reviews literature related to the influence of gender on effective school governance and teaching and learning. Firstly, the chapter analyses the policy framework governing the creation and functioning of School Governing Bodies in South Africa. Secondly, it briefly describes the roles and responsibilities of the School governing bodies. Thirdly, the chapter reviews research and theoretical literature related to gender inequality and its impact on school governance.

## **2.2 Policy Framework**

School governing bodies in South African public schools have been established in accordance with Section 247 of the Constitution and the South African School's Act (SASA) of 1996, which stipulates that:

The term governing body should be used uniformly to describe the body that is entrusted with the responsibility and authority to formulate and adopt school policy within the national, provincial and district vision for education (Hunter Report, 1995, p. 54).

As stated in the previous chapter, the Hunter report (1995) proposed that the decision-making authority of schools would be shared among parents, teachers, community and learners. As such, parents, students, teachers, non-teaching staff and principal (ex-officio) would serve on the governing body. The report further recommended that parents should make up the majority on the governing body. However, careful consideration must be taken on the fact that representation on the governing body should bear differentiation in



terms of race, gender and religious orientation, so that the more marginalised sectors of society are not further marginalised through the way in which governing bodies are constituted. It continued:

If necessary, additional members should be nominated to ensure a gender balance. The parents and guardians should have the largest representation of the constituencies represented on the governing body, the membership of which should reflect such diversity as there is within the relevant school community (Hunter report, 1995, p.55).

It was envisaged that the majority of parents in the SGB would enhance communication with, and feedback to the parent body of the school.

In terms of Section 16(1) of SASA the role of governing bodies in schools is governance that entails policy determination in which democratic values and inclusive partnership of all stakeholders is essential. The SGB also develops and maintains the infrastructure and property of the school and implements policies of the school operating within the provincial legislation framework. Concurrently, Section 16 (3) of SASA stipulates that management of the day-to-day organization of teaching and learning is the responsibilities of teachers and the school principal.

### **2.2.1 The Roles and Responsibilities of the SGB**

According to the SASA (1996), one of the most important roles of the SGB is the development of school policy/policies in line with the school's vision and mission.

Policies to be designed by the SGB have to include amongst others policy on admission, language, and religion, code of conduct for learners, harassment and sexual violence. The SGB's willingness and ability to develop these policies is to assist the school to function effectively and in a consistent manner so as to help the school in the fulfilment of its vision. The SGB also plays a major role in the adoption of a school constitution and drawing up a mission statement of the school with full participation of various stakeholders. The constitution of the school as a guiding principle of the school must highlight gender perception and identify how issues of gender will be addressed by the school. While drawing up the vision and mission statement and setting up goals for the school, SGB must take into consideration gender dimension as part of its responsibility.

A major challenge for the SGB is "that all teachers in public schools who are paid by the provincial education department should be appointed and employed by the department on the recommendation of and in consultation with the SGB" (Government Gazette, 2005, p.20). This is a challenge as most of our SGBs lack the capacity needed to fulfil these ideals as most of its members have limited education, knowledge and skills to effectively serve and influence decisions in the selection committees.

In giving this responsibility to SGBs, the government states that "it would be the clearest indication of the extent to which real devolution of decision-making power to the school level has taken place" (Government Gazette, 2005 p. 221). However, as part of its mandate, the provincial Department of Education would have the discretion to decline a recommendation on the grounds of professional incompetence, inappropriate

qualifications and misconduct (Department of Education, 2001). This is an indication of partnership between the provincial department and the school governance. However, this idea is still challenged by many educators who feel that parents in the SGB will not have adequate skills to serve in the selection committees and that fairness and objectivity will not be well adhered to. The roles and powers of the SGB are currently under review. According to Section 6 of Act 76 of 1998 as amended “any appointment, promotion or transfer to post on the educator establishment of a public school or a further education and training institution, may only be made on the recommendation of the governing body of the public school or the council. In response to this the new Minister of Education Dr Naledi Pandor has made an amendment of section 6 of Act 76 of 1998 as amended by section 15 of the Act 48 of 1999 and section 7 of Act 53 of 2000. Subsection 3 (c) of section 6 of the Employment of educators Act of 1998 as amended states that the governing body or the council, as the case may be, must submit a list of:

- (i) At least three names of recommended candidates
- (ii) Fewer than three candidates in consultation with the Head of Department in order of preference.

When the HoD considers the recommendation he or she will ensure that the SGB has met all the requirements and if the SGB has not met the requirements the HoD may decline the recommendation and appoint any suitable candidate on the list.

The expectation that SGBs make recommendations regarding the employment of educators demands a lot of expertise and insight about teacher qualifications, teacher responsibilities and the required skills and knowledge and others (Dooms, 1997). The

SGB is also expected to evaluate teachers' applications, starting with their application forms, in ways that will not lead to unfair discrimination of candidates. According to Mabelane et al (2001) the interview atmosphere should be cordial, unthreatening and free of patronising approaches and that every effort must be made to protect persons from disadvantaged groups of the population. Of particular relevance to this study, the Employment of Educators Act of 1998 stipulates that "racial and gender composition of the interview panel should be carefully considered and that affirmative action which is a way by which equal opportunity in employment and decision-making are acknowledged for everyone, should be embraced in the whole process of selection" (Potgieter et al, 1997, p. 13).

Another role of the SGB is to administer the school's finances and raise funds for the school. According to Section, 23 of SASA, the SGB has to "take care of, control and protect the school's assets carefully since they are of considerable value to the school. Potgieter et al. (ibid) further state that the Minister of Education must determine norms and standards for the funding of public schools. To supplement the state provision of financial resources, the SASA makes it possible for parents to pay school fees that will help the school to obtain more money to buy facilities to improve the quality of learning. In terms of Section 37 of SASA, the SGB also needs to come up with fund raising strategies that will include donations and sponsors from business people, concerts etcetera.

Many of our schools, including the one under study are situated in deep rural areas and thus lack basic facilities such as classrooms, books, libraries, toilets etc. It is the duty of the SGB to ensure that such facilities are made available to schools through the use of school funding. Equal access with regard to gender to all facilities of the school should be catered for when buying the school material and improving the school infrastructure. For instance when buying textbooks and other educational materials the SGB should select those free of gender bias and make available those that deal with gender issues.

A further responsibility of the SGB is to determine the extra-mural curriculum and choice of subjects according to provincial policy guideline. To this effect, Mahaney states that:

The SGB would have the general direction of the curriculum as actually given from day to day within the school. The head teacher would have responsibility for the internal organisation of the school including the discipline that is necessary to keep the pupils applied to their study and to carry out the curriculum in the sense desired by the governing body (1988, p.11).

The new curriculum framework and the outcome-based (OBE) curriculum being implemented in schools require considerable changes in schools in as far as their structure and organisation is concerned. In addition, according to Kabali-Kagwa (2000) curriculum is the vehicle with which values are imparted. The visible curriculum refers to the subjects, activities and extra-mural programmes that are offered to schools. Curriculum 2005 states as its intention “to provide children with opportunities to develop to their full potential as active responsible and fulfilled citizens who can play a

constructive role in a democratic, non-racist and equitable society” (Kabali-Kagwa, 2000, p.2). Such transformation includes eliminating the gender differentiation which can be observed in subjects such as home economics, typing, woodwork, mathematics, science and history, as well as the gendered sport activities that privilege boys over girls in the schools. Further, the influence of the hidden-curriculum, which refers to the interaction and the way that learners are being treated by teachers and adults in the school, is also important. It conveys teachers’ values, beliefs and expectations about learners and society. Kabali-Kagwa argues that:

The strategies used by teachers, the choice of resources, career guidance to learners, access to resources, the importance awarded to various programmes, subjects or sports activities-all these things reflect the hidden curriculum (2000, p. 5).

In addition, the silent curriculum refers to places in the curriculum where certain information, ideas are not present. For example History is all about men. Women who played a role in the shaping of society are not spoken of or their importance is underplayed. It is the duty of the SGB to scrutinise and sift out undesirable gender misconceptions in the curriculum (Malherbe, 2000). Thus, it is important for the SGB to have the appropriate knowledge, skills and commitment to devise supportive mechanisms to facilitate the process of curriculum transformation to reflect the values and principles outline above (Measor and Sike, 1992). Obviously, as I argue in this report, many SGBs, particularly those serving rural schools, simply do not have such capacity.

Another major task of the SGB is to formulate a language policy for the school. The SASSA recognises that there are many cultures and languages in our country. This Act creates a school system in which the various cultures and languages are respected, protected and advanced. Language plays an important role in any community in that it conveys values and beliefs about a culture. The use of language in an organisation such as a school must be carefully considered as language commonly communicates ideas and values that entrench negative stereotypes, gender discrimination, prejudice, physical and emotional violence (Malherbe, 2000). How often do we hear people saying “he” when they actually mean “she”, the common use of the term “chairman” instead of chairperson? In this regard, the SGB should take it upon itself that gender neutral language is adhered to in the school. and unless they have the understanding, skills as well as the commitment to adhere to these, the educational and human rights of learners as well as the marginalised groups may not be catered for. This study was concerned with exploring these aspects in the SGB of the school under study.

The Constitution of South Africa (1996) stipulates that everyone has the right to dignity and privacy. Cases of violence especially against women and girls are becoming common in schools. These cases include rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, assault and bullying. Now and then we read about cases of girls being raped in school toilets, empty classrooms and hallways. Girls are fondled, subjected to aggressive sexual advances and verbally degraded at school. As Wolpe asserts:

There is little doubt that, irrespective of punitive and restorative measures, education can play highly significant part in tackling some of the root causes of

this. It is only when this is done that adequate ways of eliminating these social scourges will be able to be developed in the education system (1997, p.92)

It is clear that girls in schools need protection and that the physical environment in the school should be conducive and violence free (Kabali-Kagwa, 2004). Commenting on this, Holland-Muter charges that:

The national and provincial education department have to enforce what little existing protection there are for young girls, ensure that they coordinate with the justice systems and most importantly, move beyond the talk to actually developing a comprehensive policy on sexual violence and harassment at schools (2004, p.6).

Holland-Muter (2004) asks: If girls do not feel schools are safe places, living with daily threats of violence and ridicule, how are they expected to learn, and more importantly grow up with a positive self-image and a sense of direction and purpose in the world? To this effect Mabelane points out that Section 8 (1) of SASA states that:

A governing body of a public school must adopt a code of conduct for the learners, parents and educators of the school. A code of conduct is meant to ensure that all stakeholders in a public school agree to the establishment of a disciplined and purposeful school environment in order to achieve and maintain quality education (2001, p. 4).



Educational policy makes provision for gender equality in schools, including provision for equal access to schooling for both boys and girls, as well as the protection of girl-children and women teachers against gender-based violence. To illustrate, SASA stipulates that:

Everyone has the right to basic education and the state must develop the education system so that further education increasingly becomes available to everyone (Potgieter, 1997, p.6).

The Constitution of South Africa to which SASA conforms, states that human dignity, the achievement of equality and advancement of human rights and freedoms are the cornerstone of South African society (Government Gazette, 2005). So, the constitution of the school as designed by the SGB must ensure that discrimination based upon such things as race, creed, colour or sex is not permitted. Yet, as discussed in Chapter 1, while most schools have been successful in establishing SGBs, many of them, particularly those in rural areas, still struggle with issues of gender inequality in the decision-making powers and authority of the body. In particular, women still find it difficult to exercise their power and authority in issues of school governance and tend to refer to men for decision-making. This study examined reasons for this, as well as its impact on the effective governance of the school.

The next section reviews literature related to the role of gender in effective school governance.

### **2.3 Gender inequality and school governance**

The School Governing Body is made up of males and females coming from a society that is informed by different value systems. The family, in which a child is raised, is a fundamental place for moral development and for the formation of a child's basic attitude to others (Connell, 1987). Okin (1989) argues that the family is the first of a series of associations in which we participate, and from which we acquire the capacity, crucial for a sense of justice, to see things from the perspective of others. Gender inequality is most commonly found in a society where women are confined to the home and denied the possibilities of participating in work outside and denied access to resources. As such:

Inequality in educational participation and outcomes reflects broader inequalities in society. These embrace social norms and customs, which create powerful incentives that guide people's behaviour and determine the roles that women and men can have in the family and community (UNESCO, 2003, p.117).

Among certain cultures, Malherbe et al. (2000) argue that the difference between males and females were and are still widely assumed to be natural and hence not amenable to change. The assumption is that women are born with natural roles and should be reared to fulfil these roles from childhood. According to Carmine in Malherbe et al, (2000, p.121) parents are the major transmitters of culture in any society. Children are socialised at a young age to learn that power and prestige are awarded on a gender basis. Girls are made aware, from a very early age, that boys have greater access to the benefits of power and prestige because of their maleness. It is the society that reinforces the division of labour along gender lines. For example, boys are taught stereotypical behaviours earlier and

more harshly than girls and there is 20 percent greater probability that such behaviours will stay with them for life (Stitt, 1988).

This might be why women in general, and women in rural areas in particular, tend to have only limited decision-making powers, despite the fact that they are the ones who take care of the homesteads. Every rural area has got its chief or induna who controls the people in that area. He is the one who calls people for meetings (imbizo). Women are seldom allowed in these meetings nor allowed to have a say. Women feel that they cannot speak freely or oppose what is being said by men in these izimbizo.

Schools, according to Sutherland in Malherbe (2000) reinforce what children learn about gender roles in the family situation. They emphasize gender stereotyping by transmitting predominant social values that put girls and women primarily in the role of mothers and wives.

In the school situation, research has revealed that most textbooks and other learning materials reflect the stereotyped view of gender roles in society for example Maths, woodwork, Science, History are subjects meant for boys and Typing, Domestic Science, Languages are subjects for girls. Learning material is deeply rooted within a patriarchal understanding and learning (Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998). To address this, school governing bodies were established for communities to exercise their voices in deciding how the school should function and in promoting positive educational outcomes for the society's boys and girls. However, participation of women in school boards reflects more general gender inequality in decision-making processes and in the exercise of influence over

schooling (Marland, 1983). This situation usually results from a society where membership is based on positions in the community and school that are usually held by men. Hence, women feel inhibited from taking part in formal discussions where tradition assigns decision-making roles to men.

## **2.4 The Impact of Gender Inequality on School Governance and Schooling**

Feminist researchers have been committed to the view that schools do have a role in constructing, defining and reinforcing gender roles and gender identity. In this sense they describe the process by which schools contribute to this gender imbalance. They have scrutinised the curriculum, the social and moral ordering of the school and the styles that some teachers adopt. To this effect Arnot (1986), cited in Walter (1996) critiques the deterministic approach, by which she means that the child is viewed as coming to school as passive or naked in the sense of being unaffected by previous experiences and incapable of resisting social pressure. Instead, as Connel (1989) cited in Walter (1996) maintains, a number of different views of what it means to be a boy or girl are transmitted and modelled in the school. Pupils, then, choose elements from this gender and mix them with ideas that derived from their own background and community culture. In addition, certain traditional vehicles exist through which educators transmit the information, skills and experiences to learners. This is done through textbooks and other instructional materials. Textbooks appear to be authoritative and are treated with reverence by many teachers. Thus we tend to absorb the subtle messages they convey through language, illustrations and content.

Subject choices especially in secondary schools influence and limit subsequent tertiary and career choices (Bundler, 1992). In most cases teachers are the major perpetrators of this. Most girls for example do not go for advanced science and mathematics classes even if they do well in those subjects.

Teacher behaviour can also impact on gender inequality. According to a UNESCO report:

Teachers in mixed-school settings interact more with high-achieving, white male. When questioned, most teachers prove to be unaware of such bias in their behaviour. From the moment boys enter school; most teachers expect them to be noisy, aggressive, sloppy, poor at reading and good in maths. Girls are expected to be well behaved, quiet, neat, and good at reading. (2003, p.116).

Social norms that see women and men as making unequal contributions to society and having unequal entitlements to its benefits can make it impossible to achieve a society free from gender discrimination. Thus, whether women and men are being treated equally will depend on whether the fundamental freedoms and choices they confront are the same (Iseke-Barnes and Wane, 2000). In a school situation this will depend on the capacity of the school governance. The neglect of gender issues within the school and its governance could contribute a lot to gender inequality. Gender inequality in school will reflect broader inequality in society.

This study examined the extent to which one SGB in a school in Othukela District was unable to transcend these societal trends and to establish a working environment in which

both men and women are able to equally influence decision making in school governance and the reasons for it.

## **2.5 Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks**

This study is located within the broad areas of gender and feminist theories in education. In particular, the study is informed by the social learning and critical theories.

### **2.5.1 Social learning theory**

According to this theory children learn about appropriate attitudes and behaviour from their parents, peers and teachers. According to Kelly in Measor and Sikes (1992), theories can be divided into reinforcement theories and observational theories. Reinforcement theories emphasize the importance of rewards and punishment. Children learn that appropriate behaviour is rewarded and hence reinforced, while inappropriate behaviour is discouraged or even punished. Because children are in a dependent position, they want love and approval and so come to accept and repeat what they have been taught. The process works for sex role learning as it does for other kinds of socialization. The child is rewarded or punished for sex appropriate behaviour and eventually such behaviour becomes second nature. As adults, therefore, individuals have internalised this learning and enact the sex appropriate behaviour in their day- to- day interactions in the home, the community and societal institutions, including the school. The study is premised on the notion that SGB members would be no exceptions.

### **2.5.1 Critical theory and educational research**

This study is also informed by critical theory in its quest to understand the gender regime of the school under study, particularly its influence by and on the functioning of the SGB. Critical theorists do not merely aim to understand the situation (gender inequality) and phenomenon but to change them. Critical theory therefore identifies the false or fragmented consciousness that has brought an individual or social group such as the SGB members to relative powerlessness in the case of women or power for men, and then questions the legitimacy of this. It argues that much behaviour is the outcome of particular illegitimate, domatory and repressive factors. While it seeks to bring about a more just, egalitarian society in which individual and collective freedoms are practiced, it also attempts to eradicate the exercise and effects of illegitimate power.

Critical theory and critical educational research examines and interrogate the relationship between school and society. It questions how schools perpetrate or reduce inequality, the social construction of knowledge and curricula, who defines worthwhile knowledge, what ideological interest this serves and how this reproduces inequality in society and power is produced and reproduced through education. The school through its curricula transmits both the power and the powerlessness. It depends upon that society how it questions the legitimacy of particular situations to avoid the illegitimate, domatory and repressive powers and to create a just democratic society. This study is based on this theory in the sense that certain individuals or groups or males in particular (for example SGB male members), through illegitimate situations find themselves having more powers to decide

than their women counterparts. However, because of its limited scope, this study could not go beyond description and analysis.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has reviewed literature related to gender inequality in school and school governance. Gender equity is one of the prerogatives of the South African national policy. The National Department of Education has set up a Task Team on gender in 1997 and the Gender Equity Task Team was launched in 1998. The aim then was to mainstream gender equity in education and to build capacity to implement gender equity policy and programmes especially in schools. This study focuses on school governance that has been given powers by the SASA to determine policy and to adopt a code of conduct for learners, parents and educators in a school so that a disciplined and purposeful school environment would be established for quality education. This study examined how members of the SGB at Zanemfundo High School interpret gender equity both in terms of its own functioning and the functioning of the school as a whole.

Literature on gender suggests that issues of gender inequality manifest themselves in education thus resulting in women's oppression especially in decision-making. Feminist research has revealed how the family, society and school respectively can transmit notions of gender relations that will result in gender inequality in general. Schools reinforce what children learn about gender roles in the family situation. They emphasize gender stereotyping by transmitting predominant social values that put women as



subordinates. Research has revealed that textbooks and other learning material reflect the stereotyped view of gender roles in society.

Hence gender differentiation in the SGB will reflect the type of society in which the SGB is established. The questions such as why men dominate discussions in the SGB, what consequences are there for male domination in the functioning of the SGB, how and why gender inequality negatively influences school governance were answered through a qualitative case study of one SGB at the school.

The next chapter presents the research design and methodology used to gather and analyse data in this study.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Research Design and Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This dissertation is a qualitative case study of Zanemfundo High School, Ladysmith and it examines the perceptions of School Governing Body members regarding gender inequality in the structures and processes of school governance. I chose a qualitative case study approach for this study as I believed that it would allow an understanding of how people perceive, understand and interpret their world in this case, their membership and participation in the SGB (Blumer, 1969 cited in Patton, 1990).

The study focused on four main research questions:

1. What are the SGB members' perceptions of gender inequality?
2. What are their perceptions of how gender inequality affects school governance?
3. What are their views regarding the effects of gender inequality on decision-making in the school?
4. What are their views regarding what can be done to transform the gender dynamics in the SGB so as to promote equality in decision-making?

Qualitative data was therefore sought to address the identified research questions. This research focused on a school situation by using the SGB as an example of a place within school where gender differentiation and gender inequality exist. The study investigated the ways in which participation in the SGB is gendered. In particular, it examined the ways in which male members tend to dominate discussions and decision-making in the

SGB and the SGB members perceptions of the effects of their dominance on decision-making in the school.

### **3.3 The School Context**

This study is a case study of Zanemfundo High School in Ladysmith. The school is situated in a rural village in the district. It is about 37 km north of Ladysmith. The school is a co-educational institution with an enrolment of 480 learners, 13 educators, including three School Management Team (SMT) members: two Heads of Department (HODs) and the principal (myself). There are five male educators and eight female educators. All SMT members (three) are males. All educators are commuters (they do not live in the community in which the school is located, staying instead in the nearby townships and suburbs of Ladysmith). The SGB consists six parents (three males and three females), two educators (one male and one female) and two learners (one male and one female). The SGB chairperson is a female and the deputy is a male. The principal (the researcher) is an ex-officio member of this SGB.

The school is situated in a very poor community with a high rate of unemployment. The community where the school is situated is under the authority of an *Inkosi* or traditional leader. In view of the fact that the school serves a traditional community based on the authority of an *Inkosi*, there are gender influences that affect the running of the school. There is still a strong belief in the community that a man is the head of the household. I have observed that masculinity is a major challenge in the school and that it tends to impede democratic processes in the school. I have also observed that the SGB, which is a

link between the school and the community, is a major culprit in bringing about male domination in the school. As part of the institution and a member of the SGB, I therefore decided to embark on this research study.

### 3.4 Participants

Members of the SGB (parents, teachers and learners) were selected as respondents. This includes one co-opted parent. In addition, one educator who is not an SGB member volunteered to participate in the study. This was done especially as the study is solely about the SGB, which is a key role player in the governance of the school. There was no problem of accessibility to the school-based respondents as they are working inside the institution and others are found in the surrounding community and the parent members were all willing and able to participate. To secure their participation, a short meeting to request the members' participation was held, in which the purpose of the study was explained, and all were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they could opt to withdraw from the study if they so wished.

The table below shows the number and portfolios of the participants.

Participants	Male	Female	Portfolio in SGB/School
1. Learners	1	1	SGB learner
2. Educators	1	1	SGB educators
3. Educator		1	HOD
4. Parent		1	Chairperson

5. Parent	1		Dep. chairperson
6. Parent		1	Secretary
7. Parent	1		Member
8. Parent		1	Member
9. Parent	1		Co-opted parent

### **3.5 Data collection methods**

To address the research questions identified in the sections above, three methods of data collection were used. These were interviews, questionnaires, and observations at SGB meetings:

#### **3.5.1 Interviews**

Unstructured interviews were held with the seven parent members of the SGB (four women and three men). I made appointments to meet them as individuals at their homes at times convenient to them. A brief explanation concerning the visit was given before the interview. Each interview lasted for about an hour or less. Interviewees' consent was sought to audiotape interviews. The tape recorded interviews were later transcribed by the researcher. Questions were translated into IsiZulu so that interviewees would be able to understand them clearly. Respondents could also respond in IsiZulu which is their home language. These had to be translated back into English by the researcher.

Kvale (1996) points out that the very strength of the research interview is its privileged access to the common understanding of subjects. Magi (1999) points out that besides

using telephones, meeting people in the street and work place for interviewing, going to a person's home is considered the best way of collecting information. This is one of the reasons why I preferred to meet the interviewees at their homes and to meet them as individuals in a relaxed atmosphere. The unstructured response formula was used so that the respondent would have more freedom to give his/her own answer as fully as s/he chooses. The disadvantage of unstructured interview as Magi (1999) argues is that it is a little more free and is respondent-centred and also it uses the open-ended response on a far more regular basis than normal and therefore tends to be susceptible to bias and error. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) in Cohen, (2001) state that the unstructured interview is useful when the researcher is not aware of what s/he does not know and therefore, relies on the respondents to tell him/her. Open-ended questions allow the researcher to gain as much information as possible without limiting the respondents.

The interview was also preferred because it was the easiest method to collect data from the respondents. It allowed them to express their opinions freely and to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live. Above all the interview was preferred because some of the respondents were people with primary education and/or illiterate, so they could not be able to read for themselves the questions on the questionnaire.

Firstly, interviews were held with parents to find out how they understand the issue of gender inequality and how gender inequality could affect the school governance (See Appendix A). Secondly, educators were also interviewed to examine their perceptions of gender inequality in the manner the SGB treats this issue in the school as a whole and

what implication it has on effective teaching (Appendix B). Third, learners in the SGB were interviewed regarding their understanding of gender in the school and in the SGB itself (Appendix C). Fourth, one educator (non-SGB member) was also interviewed to share her opinion on how they as teachers feel gender inequality affects them and the school. The interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed by the researcher. In analysing data, the researcher used the counting frequencies of occurrence of ideas, themes and words as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) cited in Cohen (2001). The researcher had to determine if there were themes, ideas or words common to all or for most of the interview. These were used to organize the analysis of data in the next chapter.

### **3.5.2 Questionnaires**

One of the research questions in the study was: What is the SGB's perception of gender inequality? To address this, questionnaires were administered to the educators and learners who are members of the SGB. The purpose of the questionnaire was to solicit data regarding the educators' and learners' perception of gender inequality in the SGB and its impact on decision-making in the school. The questionnaire is, according to Cohen, "a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher and often being comparatively straightforward to analyse"(2001, p. 245). Questionnaires allow respondents to be more honest in their responses. It is more important for its confidentiality. Questionnaires are recommendable because they allow

respondents to answer from his/her point of view, selecting what is relevant to him/her.

They allow respondents to be more honest in their responses.

The questionnaire particularly in this study targeted educators and learners as the assumption was that they can read the questions for themselves and would be able to respond to them individually. The respondents were three educators and two learners. In analysing the data, educator's responses were each viewed separately from learners' responses.

### **3.5.3 Observations**

A second research question was: What is the effect of male dominance in decision-making? To address this, several SGB meetings were observed and the participation or non-participation of the various members noted. The aim was to observe how discussions take place amongst the members (that is who responds first and mostly to the issues under discussion and who speaks longer than others). As the principal, I usually chair the meetings of the SGB, and guide the meeting by posing questions or issues to be discussed. For the purpose of the study, I observed the manner in which different SGB members would respond. This took place during the four official meetings of the SGB in 2005 (that is one meeting per quarter). Journal notes to record issues, ideas and responses were used during the meeting sessions. For ethical purposes all members of the SGB were informed about that observation and that the principal is the one conducting the observation.



Observational data are attractive as they afford the researcher the opportunity to gather live data from live situations (Cohen, 2001). The researcher is given the opportunity to look at what is taking place in situation rather than at second hand. ( Pattern, 1990). In this case I was able to see things that might otherwise be unconsciously missed, discover things that participants might not freely talk about in interview situations. As such, the observations allowed me to move beyond perception-based data as reported by participants.

A participant observer approach was used. As it is in a school situation, as an ex-Officio member of the SGB, I was able to share in some particular activities, recording impressions, conversations, observations, comments, behaviour, events and views of all participants in a situation. By staying in a situation over a long period I was also able to see how events evolved over time, catching the dynamics of situations, people, personalities and roles. For example, the questions I attempted to address included:

1. What are the roles of participants?
2. Who is making decisions?
3. Who is talking and who is listening?
4. Is there any gender stereotyping?

These questions were recorded during the period of observation. Questions were pre-written before meetings and the responses recorded during as well as after the meetings. I then compared the responses to each question across all the meetings of the SGB for the year.

### **3. 6 Some ethical considerations**

As I am the principal of the institution under study as well as the researcher, it must be acknowledged that the power dynamics between myself and the participants might have negatively impacted on the study (for example the responses to the interviews questions). To illustrate, it was difficult to convince the participants of their role in this study as they see me, the principal, as the ultimate authority in the school. From the first meeting I had with the participants, they believed that I was going to address them on certain educational issues or it was something to do with academic matters. When I handed to them the samples of the questionnaire, they fully believed that it was from the provincial department and they were somewhat bound to respond. I took my time to explain to them that this is my own private study and that they were not compelled to respond if they do not want to. I had to convince them by bringing all materials pertaining to my studies and my correspondence letters with the University. I also assured them that their contribution could be part of the transformation process the department of education will be pleased to adopt. For ethical consideration, their names will be kept anonymous throughout this report.

### **3.7 Trustworthiness and Limitations of the study**

Authors such as Kvale (1996), Miles and Huberman (1994) and Silverman (2000), all emphasize the importance of the use of qualitative research in allowing the reader to scrutinise and assess methodology and data analysis. Kvale (1996) maintains that reasoned judgement might be used to guide future researchers on the extent to which findings from one study are generalisable to another situation. He also stresses that

methodology must be described in sufficient detail for the reader to ascertain the relevance of the design for the topic and purpose of investigation. The interview was selected because it provided the respondents more time to express their opinions reflecting the real situations of their surrounding environment. Kvale (1996) argues that detailed description of methods and procedures as well as explicit exploration of the researchers own personal assumptions, values and biases give an indication of the degree of objectivity (see the section above).

To establish trustworthiness of the data in this study, methodological triangulation was used. According to Cohen methodological triangulation refers to “the use of the same method on different occasions or different methods on the same object” (2001, p. 113). Triangular technique is normally used in the social sciences as an attempt to explain the complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint. It is assumed that exclusive reliance on one method may bias or distort the researcher’s picture of reality s/he is investigating. The reason for the use of triangulation is that the more the methods contrast with each other, the greater the researcher’s confidence. In this study three methods were used i.e. questionnaire, interview and observation. The use of these three dimensional methods of research in this study was because they are recommended as the most useful technique where a researcher is engaged in a case study. Hence the use of these three methods helped the researcher to view the collected data in three different angles. As this study touches upon a very controversial aspect in the educational requirements, there was a strong need for triangular method to be used.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the research design and the data collection methodology used in this study. It gives a full picture of how participants were selected and why a particular method of data collection was used for certain respondents. The researcher gave justification for using each data collection method and the ethical procedures followed in collecting data.

The next chapter presents the findings from the study.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Presentation of Findings**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

As identified in Chapter One, the purpose of the study was to investigate SGB members' perceptions of the nature of gender inequality within the structure and its impact on effective school governance and decision-making. The study aimed to address the questions:

1. What are the SGB members' perceptions of gender equality?
2. What are SGB's perceptions of gender inequality and school governance?
3. Does the SGB experience the problem of gender inequality on decision-making in the school?
4. What can be done to transform the gender dynamics in the SGB so as to promote equality in decision-making?

To address the above questions a qualitative case study approach was utilised. Data from the study were analysed and organised according to the research questions. This chapter aims to present the findings from the study.

#### **4.2 Findings**

This section presents participants' responses in their respective groupings. The data is organised according to research questions and the three groups of respondents (that is parents, teachers and learners). It must be highlighted here that interviews were

conducted with parents and questionnaires administered to the teachers and learners, hence their findings will be presented separately.

#### **4.2.1 Perceptions of gender inequality in the SGB**

The first question posed to the three groupings of stakeholders in the SGB was: *What is your perception of gender inequality in the school in general?* First, parents' responses are presented. Generally, parents in the group were of the idea that the information on gender inequality is getting through to the community and they were all aware of it. To illustrate, according to Mr Hlengwa<sup>1</sup> the issue of gender equality is a national undertaking and as parents they do hear about it through the media and also in community discussions. Mrs Mngoma also agreed, relating the school to a home situation where there is a father and a mother. She says:

*At school there is a principal, teachers, learners and non-teaching staff of both sexes. All these components have female members who advise and give their opinions to the principal like a father taking advice from a mother (Interview on 08/04/2005 Translated from IsiZulu).*

Mr Mbhense, another parent member concurred by stating the role of women in attending to matters in the school. He concluded:

*The SGB of this school proves their understanding of gender equality by having both male and female members.*

Mr Mthanti, a co-opted member of the SGB stated:

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<sup>1</sup> All names of the participants have been changed to protect their identity.

*We do have the knowledge. Nationwide they do say that everybody has equal rights.*

*This goes up to SGBs that men and women are equal.*

Mrs Ntombela, the chairperson of the SGB added:

*We do understand gender equality because it has been explained previously that there must be equality between males and females, so we do understand it very well and everybody understand it.*

Furthermore, Mrs Chamane had this to say:

*We do understand this issue of gender equality, especially because if there is a problem amongst female learners, female members of the SGB do come to look into that problem likewise male members can also attend to male learners' problems.*

From the questionnaire, teachers' responses to this question also followed a similar pattern. To illustrate, Mrs Ntanda, wrote:

*The SGB of this school has the perception regarding gender equality as there are both male and female genders equally represented.*

Mr Mokoena, the teacher representative in the SGB, commented:

*They [the SGB] are trying to address it in principle, because it is an issue that has been addressed from the government to the community, work place etc. Presently they try to balance gender issue in the current SGB.*

From the questionnaire, the learner representatives in the SGB also added their voices to the responses. For example, in stating her opinion, Maureen commented that: *The SGB is*

*equal in terms of gender because it is composed of both males and females, while her male counterpart Sipho added:*

*We are aware of gender equity. It is very important because we find men and women together sharing constructive ideas, opinions and reaching same conclusions.*

#### **4.2.2 The impact of gender inequality on the SGB.**

The second question in the study asked: *What do you regard as the impact of gender inequality in the SGB?* First, the parents' responses suggested that they were aware of the negative impact of gender inequality. To illustrate, Mr Mthanti, the co-opted member of the SGB, stated:

*Gender inequality has a negative impact especially in the SGB itself. Some of the negative impacts are: diversity in seeing things, misunderstanding amongst the members that are caused by ignoring what a woman is saying.*

Mr Mbhense, the deputy chairperson commented:

*Gender inequality is a bad thing. It leads to the underachievement of a school and negative decisions taken which in turn leads to a drawback of the school's mission statement.*

Mrs Chamane, secretary of the SGB added:



*The most important impact is that all things will be unsuccessful without a female input because women are taken as inferior to men.*

Mrs Ntombela, the chairperson, added her views regarding the impact of gender inequality in the SGB as follows:

*The impact becomes obvious when men are discussing issues in the meeting and they just ignore what females are saying.*

Mr Hlengwa added:

*When decisions are taken, it does not go smoothly because there are those that still believe in the old order and there are those who have been modernised. As a result it is difficult sometimes to reach consensus.*

Mrs Mngoma, an SGB member, further commented:

*I think gender inequality will lead to diversity in seeing things. We must, of course, have different opinions but we should be able to reach consensus.*

From the questionnaires, the teachers' responses indicated they felt that gender inequality affects the school from the management down to the learners' performance in the class. The teachers also felt that gender inequality can lead to the underdevelopment of the school and the outdated behaviours of individuals in the school. According to them, even in the classroom female learners become more reserved compared to male learners as a result of gender inequality, while male learners usually become abusive to the female learners. For example, according to Miss Zulu, the SGB teacher representative:

*Gender inequality can lead to one-sided effect of the school where men would be regarded as having a strong and firm character compared to women. Women will always feel inferior in the presence of men.*

Mr Mokoena, another teacher in the SGB, added:

*They feel that all sectors of the community are represented; however, different opinions are not getting equal recognition.*

Mrs Ntanda, the HoD, commented:

*Gender inequality results from cultural behaviour of some SGB members, which leads to the underdevelopment of the school. Even in the classroom female learners become more reserved compared to male learners because of gender inequality and male learners become more abusive.*

From the learner questionnaire, the learner representatives in the SGB also felt that gender inequality has negative outcomes for the school. For example, Maureen stated that:

*Female learners will always be the victims where there is gender inequality. Male dominance in the school violates our rights as women in the school. We feel like strangers in our school.*

Sipho, the male learner in the SGB, in his comment agreed:

*Male members in the SGB are given certain positions because of their firmness and strong character.*

The above suggests that the SGB of this school is aware of gender equity and the negative outcomes of gender inequality. Gender inequality has a great impact on the SGB

and the school. Some of the impacts as stated by respondents are misunderstanding, diversity and one-sided decisions taken.

#### **4.2.3 Gender inequality in the community and in the SGB.**

The third question in the study was: *What are your views regarding gender inequality in your community as well as in the school's SGB?* In response, the parent members felt that the community plays a major role in bringing about gender inequality through its gender social practices. Specifically, Mr Hlengwa argued:

*Gender inequality emanate from the community. The community is still a men's world. Males are still dominant and are decision-makers.*

Mrs Ntombela, the chairperson, further added that:

*In the community other people like men were not trained, so they do not understand this issue, they think that this is just another way of putting women over men. I believe that gender equality is about working together and giving one another equal opportunities.*

Responding to this question Mrs Mngoma argued:

*There is gender inequality in the community like for instance in the Inkosi's kraal during tribal meetings, women are not allowed to speak while standing because it is said that they should show respect. Men are allowed to speak freely. This shows this gender inequality.*

Mrs Chamane, a member of the SGB, lamented:

*We are living in time where one should respect other peoples' point of views. I as woman must listen to what a man is saying vice versa then there will be a progress.*

Mr Mthanti, a co-opted member of the SGB agreed with the other respondents:

*There is inequality ranging from community to SGB. People are not well trained to see how this gender equality helps. This is the case with the SGB as well.*

Mr Mbhense, the deputy chairperson, in his argument says:

*There is a problem in the community with people who deny gender equity. There are still people who refute gender equity between men and women. However, this is one reason that might lead to lack of efficient governance of the school.*

From the questionnaires, the teachers' responses suggested that they felt the community plays a role in broadening gender inequality. Mr Mokoena, for example, argued:

*In the community this is a "Men's world". Male people are dominant and they are the decision makers and they are the heads of the families. This is the reason why we see such individuals occupying high positions in the SGB.*

Agreeing, Mrs Ntanda added:

*Equal opportunities must be given to both parties. Women feel that they cannot take decisions in the absence of men, because they feel very inferior.*

Miss Zulu commented:

*There are still few women appointed in senior positions in the community as well as in the school. This is proof that there is no equal treatment for both genders.*

The learners' responses indicated similar views. For example, Maureen argued:

*Women must be given courage so that they can lead in the community and in the SGB. We find a great deal of togetherness in the SGB because what women say is acknowledged in our SGB and that is what makes our school to progress.*

Sipho asserted that:

*Gender inequality in the community can lead to misunderstanding and confusion amongst the members of the SGB. This will be caused by unequal opportunities given to both genders.*

The above responses indicate that the community surrounding the school has a great influence on the learners and SGB members as they are coming from the community. The findings indicate that the community is traditional and believes in the superiority of men. Hence, the school as part of the community will inherit this influence.

#### **4.2.4 The impact of gender inequality on effective school governance**

The fourth question in the study was: *In your opinion, do unequal gender relations in the SGB have an impact on effective school governance? What is the impact?* Responses from participants indicated that parents view gender inequality as something that has an impact on the effective school governance. According to them, the school will underachieve as a result of a lack of cooperation between the two genders. Mr Mbhense, deputy chairperson, commented as follows:

*The impact will be that learners might not get fair education where there is gender inequality. Principal, whether female or male, must abide by the*

*constitution and respect the rights of all individuals. Learners, educators and SGB members must know their rights and responsibilities.*

Parents' responses indicated recognition of the fact that both genders are interdependent and one gender cannot do without the other. However, their understandings suggested an acceptance of gender stereotyping and the possibly the root cause of the gender inequality problem within the SGB. For example, according to them, there are things that males cannot be able to do that females can easily do and vice versa. Indicating these high levels of gender inequality and acceptance of gender stereotypes among the parent members, Mrs Chamane, Secretary of the SGB, argued:

*There will be an impact on school governance. For instance, we as women do understand what are the concerns of women e.g. we know what is good in a female uniform and males likewise can observe good things for boys.*

Mrs Mngoma further argued:

*There will be negative results. For instance men are not used to cleaning thoroughly. Women have the skill. Concerning school uniform, learners must appear very clean and wear uniformly. The people to observe that are women.*

Mr Mthanti, a co-opted member of the SGB, also agreed that there would be a negative influence:

*It has a negative influence. Both genders are interdependent. For instance where a female learner has a problem, a female member of the SGB will help. Other males will notice a troublesome boy. When a female learner is pregnant for instance, it will be difficult for male teachers to observe that learner.*

Mr Hlengwa further argued:

*It has a negative influence. The school consists of learners, teachers of both sexes. The non-recognition of gender equality might affect teaching and learning and this can lead to misunderstandings.*

Findings from the questionnaire indicate that teachers also agreed that unequal gender relations have a negative impact on the school governance. Commenting on this Mrs Ntanda wrote:

*The lesser part (women) will not be able to utter any words or give any opinions.*

*Males will overpower females. This will lead to the school's one-sidedness.*

Miss Zulu, another teacher, wrote that when discussing important issues women often feel inferior and hide their abilities and their intelligence. The school is then male-dominated and fails to achieve. She commented:

*Females will have a little knowledge concerning matters inside and outside of school governance.*

Mr Mokoena also agreed that men are dominating thus leading to governance rules being broken:

*Men dominate the SGB. This leads to rules being broken and somewhat no sympathy or empathy to the females' existence in the SGB.*

Both learners agreed that a male dominated SGB has a tendency to fail to adhere to the rules and regulations as stipulated by the Constitution. According to them, a female

dominated SGB likewise will experience a lot of sympathies and empathies from its members, which will also lead to the breaking of rules. To this effect, Siphon asserted:

*Gender inequality has an impact. There can be a negative impact like drawback of the school's achievement and destructive conclusions that can lead to misunderstanding amongst the members of the SGB.*

Maureen added:

*When important issues are discussed women feel inferior and hide their abilities.*

The above findings suggest that the existence of women in the school as well as in the SGB will mean nothing without their full recognition as co-decision-makers in the school. This suggests that women hide their potential where they are not given a free role to play and this has a negative outcome in the school.

#### **4.2.5 Equality of opportunity to participate in school activities**

The fifth question in the study was: *In your opinion, do women and men have equal opportunities to participate in the activities of the school and the SGB?* Among the parents, views were that both males and females have equal opportunities in the affairs of the school. Mrs Ntombela commented:

*Yes, both men and women have equal opportunities because everyone is allowed to state his or her opinion. If a male comes with something, it is well noted and if a female comes with her view, it is welcomed.*

Mr Mthanti concurred, saying that in the SGB they are all equal:



*When electing positions, anyone can be elected. For every activity-taking place in the SGB, we all have equal opportunities. No one will undermine another one's point of view.*

Mr Hlengwa added:

*They do have equal opportunities. Whoever wants to say something in the SGB meeting, s/he is free to do that. Anyone who is talented to do something in the school is free to do that without any problem.*

Mrs Mngoma further asserted that:

*Yes they have equal opportunity. It is like for instance at home a father and mother are equal. So in the SGB too all members are equal. For instance if the principal is away, a Deputy principal takes over. It doesn't matter whether the deputy is a she or he.*

Mr Mbhense also agreed:

*From my point of view, men and women have equal opportunities. It is only that we are still new in this way of life and most of us are not used to it. But as time goes on we shall be used to it and we will then be able to support one another.*

Mrs Chamane added:

*We do have equal opportunities. We all respect one another and everybody has a right to do and say what he/she feels.*

From the questionnaires, it became obvious that the teachers tend to look at the issue differently. Whilst they did acknowledge the fact that the SGB has both men and females in its composition, they felt that parents as members of the community were still

dominated by the culture of this community and that men were still very powerful. Mrs Ntanda's comment illustrates:

*The school is in the deep rural area where the community is still clinging in their culture and women are not allowed to participate in the school activities so they do not have equal opportunities.*

Responding to this question Mr Mokoena wrote:

*To some extent they do not have equal opportunities. This is because in this community which is rural, culture still dominates and males are decision-makers.*

Both learners agreed with each other that the SGB is well balanced in as far as gender equality is concerned. Commenting on this Maureen wrote:

*Yes both men and women have equal opportunities because the SGB is composed of both parties and they are working hand in hand and understand one another and that is the reason why my school is progressing.*

Sipho agreed:

*Yes, togetherness is the strength of our SGB in taking constructive decisions and doing the school's tasks. We have equal opportunities.*

The findings in this section suggest that the SGB of this school is aware of gender equality in as far as activities in the school are concerned. They do give each other equal opportunity to achieve their roles.

#### **4.2.5 Challenges faced by women in the SGB**

The sixth sub-question in the study was: *What challenges do you think women face in the SGB? How can these be addressed?* According to Mr Mbhense the most common problem with women is fear:

*As men we need to support, motivate them so that they will be free to express themselves*

Mr Mthanti added:

*Women commonly have a problem of quarrelling with one another. When discussing constructive things, they seem to undermine one another and they do not regard themselves as independent members of the SGB.*

Mrs Mngoma agreed:

*When a woman reports or says something other members look down upon that woman's point of view. It is a problem when a woman wants to suggest something and it ends up not being taken seriously. This should be changed.*

Mrs Ntombela agreed but thought there was a solution to the problem:

*Yes women do have problems but these can be resolved by coming together, discuss, unite and share opinions.*

To address this problem the parents suggested amongst other things, discussing problems together, motivating one another and giving support as action that could help.

Findings from questionnaires suggest that teachers were similar. To illustrate, Mrs Ntanda, the HOD, commented:

*Women have a challenge to overcome male dominance. They are more reserved and lack the power to initiate.*

To address this problem, she suggested that women should be developed and transformed so that they will be able to volunteer in whatever activities in the school and in the meetings.

Mr Mokoena, the teacher representative in SGB stated:

*Challenges facing women are to overcome male dominance in the SGB. They need to convince them that both genders are equal. To address this problem we need workshops.*

Another, Miss Zulu, added:

*Women's challenges are lack of basic information on gender issues. More training on gender is needed.*

According to the two learners, the challenges most commonly affecting women include accepting the man's decision as final, hiding their capabilities and their constructive ideas because of fear. For example, Maureen commented:

*Women are feeling very inferior in taking decisions. They hide their abilities and depend on men. They must be given equal opportunities.*

Sipho's comment was:

*Women have a great challenge because at the moment a man's voice is final and women therefore hide their intelligence and their good ideas.*

The findings indicate that women have a great challenge. They still have to battle with the stigma that puts them as inferior to men. They must develop confidence to challenge issues and see themselves as equal to men.

#### **4.2.6 Can gender inequality in the SGB be transformed?**

The sixth question posed to the participants was: *What can be done to transform gender relations within the SGB?* In response, first, the parents indicated that they were aware of the gender imbalance between males and females and its effects. They believed that gender inequality should not be addressed in the SGB only but it should start from the community itself. To this, the chairperson of SGB Mrs Ntombela stated:

*This is a very important issue. Women should be helped and be empowered to have confidence in themselves.*

Mr Hlengwa commented:

*I think the problem is with decision-making. Women must be helped to know that they have the right too to participate in decision-making. I think if this issue could be addressed in the community as it is the case with HIV/AIDS which I think nobody is unaware of now, and then this issue of gender inequality should be treated likewise.*

Mrs Chamane added:

*Men need to be convinced that gender equality does not mean that women will dominate them but it will mean cooperation between the two.*

Lastly, Mr Mbhense suggested that:

*The principal whether she or he and chairperson of the SGB need to come together with the SMT and establish a plan which will also include learners. Then a way forward would be established.*

Findings from the questionnaire indicate that teachers felt that the SGB was still dominated and controlled by males. For example, Mrs Ntanda argued that:

*There is still a lot to be done to transform the SGB. Workshops, courses and educational documents such as “The School Governance Starter Pack, a resource for school governing Body members.” All these can help to educate members of the SGB to learn about their rights and responsibilities.*

This was confirmed by Miss Zulu, another teacher representative in the SGB, who charged:

*Almost all the members of the SGB were ignorant about transformation and current issues taking place in the education department.*

Mr Mokoena thought that:

*Transforming unequal gender should start with the SMT of the school whereby work must be shared equally and decision-making must not come from certain angles of gender.*

The learner representatives on the SGB believed that there is a need for transformation in the SGB so that women can be fully involved. For example, Maureen argued that

“women must be given equal opportunities to be able to air their views”, while her male counterpart stated that “gender equity is a must for solving challenges facing women”.

### **4.3 Summary of the Findings**

This chapter presented an analysis of the findings from the study. From these responses it appears that they are agreeing that gender inequality is rife in the SGB and that women face a lot of challenges and need support. It became clear also that although both male and female are equally represented in the SGB of Zanemfundo High School, women’s participation in decision-making is negatively affected by gender stereotypes and inequalities. The participants identified several causes and reasons for these inequalities. For instance the community was cited as one of the causes of inequality because of its traditional nature. Lack of confidence among women was also mentioned as a reason for inequality as women fail to challenge issues. Respondents also mentioned lack of information on gender issues as another reason for inequality.

The following chapter will focus on the discussion of the findings and identifies some implications for further research, intervention at the school level as well as at the policy level.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Analysis and Discussion**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The study reported in this dissertation examined the perceptions of stakeholders in the School Governing Body of Zanemfundo High school (parents, educators and learners) regarding gender inequality in the body and its impact on the effective governance of the school and the quality of teaching and learning. The reason for focusing on the SGB was as part of the new structure of the school governance, SGBs potentially wield a lot of power in governance matters. According to the South African School's Act of 1996, every SGB must promote the best interests of the school and try to ensure its development by providing quality education for all learners.

As discussed in the preceding chapters, amongst its functions, the SGB must adopt a constitution, mission statement of the school, a code of conduct for learners and help the principal, educators and other staff to perform their professional functions. The SGB working with educators and School Management Team can play a pivotal role in building a culture of the school and in changing attitudes within the school regarding sexual harassment. The SGB is a formal, school and community based organisation that is well-suited to facilitate education on gender inequality, including sexual harassment. The basic idea behind the creation of SGBs is that they liaise between the school and the community and that they are the only body that really knows what the community and the



school need, their problems and how to tackle them. It is for this reason that Holland-Mutter writes:

SGBs are a locus of democracy in our country and hold the key to transforming our public education system in general and schools in particular. They create a platform for those who have been marginalized for decades to finally have a say in how they want schools to be run (2004, p. 5).

One major task of the SGB is to ensure that the school curriculum is responsive to and values the diversity of its population. It is well known that curricula and teaching processes can disadvantage girls in the educational process. A well-formulated curriculum should address issues related to abuse, sexual violence and harassment. It is a fact that many educational institutions are still unable to provide a safe and secure learning environment for girls (Wolpe, 1997, p.93). Research has proved that women are still more vulnerable to rape and sexual abuse, they are more likely to contract HIV/AIDS and they are more sexually exploited (Mabelane, 2001, p. 105). It is only through education that these social adversities will be addressed. SGBs and schools should be encouraged to develop their school policies on HIV/AIDS consistent with the constitution and national policy. They should be working closely with local community leaders to provide information and support to the surrounding community.

It is for this reason that I decided to focus on the SGB as a cornerstone of the school, when considering the under-representation of women in the organisational structures, as well as their poor participation in decision-making even when they are represented in the

SGB. A lot of research has paid more attention to management structures when dealing with gender equality. However, very little of this research has focused on the importance of School Governing Bodies and their perceptions of gender equality. Thus, this study aimed to fill this gap.

## **5.2 Summary of findings and analysis**

This study has revealed that while the SGB of Zanemfundo High School is generally well informed about the gender inequality issues, their perceptions are still riddled with stereotypes that perpetuate the very inequalities they argue against. All the participants also acknowledged the fact that gender inequality, whether deliberate or unintentional, still pervades the SGB, the school and the surrounding community. Processes in all these still tend to be male dominated. Furthermore, while the SGB of this school has tried by all means to transform in as far as gender representation is concerned, with a 50% representation of women, the respondents raised their concerns about SGB portfolios e.g. the position of chairperson which continues to be occupied by males, confirming and perpetuating existing gender stereotypes.

This research also suggests that the community plays a major role in influencing the gender dynamics in the school and the SGB. To illustrate, the respondents argued that because of the rural nature of the community, understandings of culture that promote gender inequality and stereotypes still dominate, and males remain the decision-makers. Holland-Mutter states that “in some communities the present governance system has inherited the social and economic backlogs, civil attitude characterised by race and

gender. It is therefore inconceivable to believe that policies of our democratic government are implemented without any hassles” (2004, p. 7).

Caroline Kihote (1998) argues that in poorer schools governing bodies not only face financial constraints but logistical ones as well. “In rural areas particularly, members are often unable to attend meetings because of the distance and costs involved, because they are unable to get time off, or for safety reasons. Factors such as illiteracy, lack of knowledge of government policies and poor organisation also create a barrier to establishing strong governing structures” (Kihote, 1998, p. 36). This basically is part of the problems the SGB of Zanemfundo High school faces.

From what I have observed in various meetings of the SGB, particularly during this study, women still seem to be ruled by fear, uneasiness and inferiority complex in the presence of men and tend to refer to them for important decision-making. Through my observations in the meetings of the SGB, I have found that women tend to be more reserved and more passive. They do not initiate decisions and do not challenge issues under discussion. Whenever meetings are held, women tend to contribute little to the discussions. They seem afraid to talk and leave everything to the men to decide. As the participants in the study noted, this situation is due to the fact that rural communities are still under the control of chiefs and headmen who happen to be males. These community leaders also have larger influences on the formation of development projects as well as community structures. They even decide who should form or be part of these community structures. One will often find some gender- segregated committees where women are

excluded from many of the decision-making committees. “Where men and women attend the same meetings, men sit on chairs or stools in an inner circle, while women sit on the ground in an outer circle and very few women speak in these mixed meetings” (Bundler, 1998, p.36)

So, what do the findings tell us? The findings are discussed in the next section.

### **5.3 Discussion**

The findings of the Education Management development Audit in 1996 suggested that women were under-represented on most school governing bodies (Operational Policy Framework, 2001 p.22). While it is true that the Department of Education has committed itself to taking action to transform relations between men and women, it is also true that women are still having less access to decision-making and other structures of power and authority in the system (for example SGB).

As mentioned in Chapter One, SGBs in rural communities are still facing the problem of masculinity and patriarchy. Referring to black masculinities, Morrell points out that historically, tradition in the rural areas of South Africa was “located within the unquestioned dominance of men over women” (2001**1**(b,) p.141). The power structure and the running of School Governing Bodies is a replication of the structures that exist in societies despite legislations passed by government to address gender inequality. In addition SGBs in rural schools still lack basic facilities and skills necessary for the new structure. In this regard, Holland-Muter argues:

Another hindrance would be inequality and inaccessibility to resources of some communities. For instance poor communities tend to lack access, resources, information or organisational skills to appropriately influence decision about education or other services (2004, p. 9).

The issue of gender is a complex one. To tackle this problem, we cannot target one specific area. We need to introduce transformation programmes that will permeate the broader community. It is only when the broader community realises that gender inequality is a problem, that we can expect changes in schools as supported by parents and other stakeholders. Connell states that the “family is still a major sphere in which the domination of men is secured at the expense of women.” (1998, p. 23).

There is a lot of disparity between rural women and urban women, educated women and uneducated women. Research indicates that there are 61 percent of the uneducated women population mostly from the more rural and poorer provinces of the country (Kabali-Kagwa, 2000, p.7). Women-headed households still make a large proportion in the poorer provinces. Education will be the only vehicle that will be able to combat the problem of poverty, race discrimination and gender inequality. The government should work out programmes to deal with the problems of rural uneducated women.

## **5.2 Implications**

It has emerged from this study that lack of awareness of gender inequality and its implications in communities is a major influence on the school and the SGB. The SGB

members are also members of the community, and if the community is characterised by gender inequality, chances are that this will permeate the activities and relations within schools and SGBs. No matter what policies and legislations are formulated by the school with regard to gender, if the community remains unchanged, the well-intentioned policy framework will not be implemented properly. As such, it is important that the issue of gender equality should be treated at community level first. For example, programmes could be introduced in communities to help women to improve their self-esteem. Likewise, there should be programmes to help men to remove the existing stereotypes they have against women. It has become clear from this research that women still lack confidence. Capacity building for women in SGB is highly needed. However, all these can be null and void if men are left out in these programmes. Men should be taught to involve women in all activities. For example, community projects that will include both men and women are to be established in the community. Community leaders have to be taught about gender equality so that they in turn will be able to address gender to their subjects. They are the right people to spearhead this project. The issue of gender equality needs to be taken seriously and it should be given the same exposure as HIV/AIDS. I think that today even a young child can tell something about HIV/AIDS and how to prevent it. Gender likewise should be addressed to all sectors of the community.

Another problem identified in this study is that an SGB that does not tackle gender issues seriously will find it difficult to improve the governance and the management of the school. One-sided negative ideas will always dominate the school and this will lead to misunderstanding and dissatisfaction. Certain individuals in the school, females in

particular, will always feel disregarded. Even learners in the school will think that there is no equality between male and female learners. Female learners will always play second fiddle to the male learners. Female teachers, even those in the management, will have no confidence in dealing with matters pertaining to male teachers and male learners as well. To address this issue, the SGB of the school should take an active role in addressing gender issues. The school should formulate a policy on gender and the committee to spearhead this policy should be formed.

A further finding of this study was that women are still faced with many challenges, including being marginalised by their own community members. Whatever they say or they would like to say, tends to be looked down upon by other (male) members. Moreover, most women are still suffering from inferiority complex and even undermining of one another. To solve this problem, a lot of encouragement is needed to boost their confidence. They must be given opportunities to convene and address meetings and be motivated in taking initiatives in decision-making. They must be involved in discussions. Through motivation, empowerment, power sharing with men, women can be helped to have confidence and be free to express themselves. Concurrently, men should also be taught to acknowledge the role of women in the community. They should learn to share equally with women. It is time now that the government should embark on programmes to improve the status of rural women in particular. Whilst they are facing the problem of poverty and the majority of them are breadwinners for their families, women in rural community are slowly becoming aware of gender inequality. Even those who are fully aware, they are not given an opportunity

to participate in the men's world. For instance in this study it appears that women are aware of gender equality but gender inequality still persists. May be this is due to the fact that they come from the community that does not take the issue of gender seriously. They still bear with conditions of exploitation and victimisation by men. Women should be taught how to challenge these issues.

Education is the mother of all successes. If projects such as ABET (Adult Basic Education and Training) should be introduced in communities in order to wipe out illiteracy which is a major problem with rural women. Illiteracy, poverty and gender inequality can be solved through education.

Through this research I have found that women representation in community structures is improving, however, women are falling behind in attaining high and demanding positions for example SGB chairperson. This is because communities do not trust women. They still believe in the leadership of men. We need to appoint women in such positions so that they will get the challenges and be used to solving problems. The government must also help to improve funding for programmes aimed at addressing gender issues. It became clear from this research that SGBs in rural communities are still lacking skills and resources to be able to deal with gender related issues.

The Department of education has done enough to introduce various policies to be cascaded to various establishments. However, SGBs have not been trained enough about how to formulate and implement their own policies. Policy and practice still remain a big



question. The SGBs will need a lot of support to be able to deal with transformation and unless SGBs are transformed themselves, nothing will change.

Lastly, I believe that if gender equality can be part of the school curriculum and be taught as a subject, a lot of improvement can be seen. However, it must be highlighted that this study was done within the borders of one school. All the findings of this study were based on the research done in this school. The researcher feels that there is a need to extend this study to other schools to enlarge what he has come up with in this study.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The issue of gender as it unfolds in schools is very wide. One would have to look at it in various angles that emanate from personal, organisational, community and through social norms and values. School Governing Bodies are a major part of the school as well as community link between the school and the community. They can play a major role in tackling problems related to gender and sexual harassment. They can address such problems through the curriculum and through making reasonable and fair policies that would protect both females and males in the school. For SGB to be able to achieve this, they will need full support of the department and more training on governance.

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## Appendix A

### Interviews with parents

1. What are your perceptions regarding gender equality in general and gender equality within the SGB?
2. What do you regard as the impact of gender inequality in the SGB?
3. What can be done to transform unequal gender relations within the SGB?
4. Can you tell me a little about your views regarding gender inequality in your community as well as in the school's SGB?
5. In your opinion, do unequal gender relations in the SGB have an impact on effective school governance?
6. In your opinion, do women and men in the SGB have equal opportunities to participate in the activities of the school and the SGB?
7. What challenges do you think women face in the SGB? How can these be addressed?
8. What do you think can be done to transform unequal gender relations in the school/SGB?
9. What can be done to promote equality for both male and female in decision-making?
10. What do you think about the composition of the SGB in terms of gender/sex?
11. What influence can an SGB which does not take the issue of gender seriously have on the school as a whole?

12. What are the consequences of the male domination for the functioning of the SGB?

13. Do you think there is a difference between male and female leaders? If there is what makes them differ?

1. What are your perceptions regarding gender equality in general and gender equality within the

SGB?.....  
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2. What do you regard as the impact of gender inequality in the

SGB?.....  
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3. What can be done to transform unequal gender relations within the SGB?

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4. Can you tell me a little about your views regarding gender inequality in your community as well as in the school's SGB?

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5. In your opinion, do unequal gender relations in the SGB have an impact on effective school governance?

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6. In your opinion, do women and men in the SGB have equal opportunities to participate in the activities of the school and the SGB?

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7 What challenges do you think women face in the SGB? How can these be addressed?

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8. What do you think can be done to transform unequal gender relations in the school/SGB?

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13. Do you think there is a difference between male and female leaders? If there is what makes them differ?

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