

**SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES IN ADDRESSING ISSUES OF DEMOCRACY AND
SOCIAL JUSTICE: A CASE STUDY OF TWO RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN
KWAZULU-NATAL**

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2013

**SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES IN ADDRESSING ISSUES OF DEMOCRACY AND
SOCIAL JUSTICE: A CASE STUDY OF TWO RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN
KWAZULU-NATAL**

BY

SINDISIWE O. ZULU

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Education in Educational Leadership, Management and Policy in the School of Education**

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(EDGEWOOD CAMPUS)**

2013

SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT

This dissertation has been submitted with/without my approval

Mr Sipiwe Eric Mthiyane (Supervisor)

December 2013

(i)

DECLARATION

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Miss S.O. Zulu

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my only child Phakeme Charmaine Zulu.

You are the pillar of my strength. Thank you for always believing in me!

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the role played by School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in addressing issues of democracy and social justice in schools. A case study was conducted in two rural primary schools from Ugu district in KwaZulu-Natal. The intention of this study was to highlight the factors that hinder full participation of all SGB members in public state schools, including rural primary schools. It was also to gauge the policies and strategies employed by SGBs when addressing issues of democracy and social justice in their schools. My study is a qualitative research which has utilized a case study approach. I have opted for a qualitative methodology because I intended to explore phenomena, (SGBs), in their natural settings and I was able to use multi- data collecting methods, i.e. interviews, observations and document reviews, which enabled me to interpret, understand, explain and bring meaning to them (Anderson, 1998). I have opted for a case study approach because I was studying the particularity and complexity of two SGBs, coming to understand their activities within important circumstances, in this case, the SGB roles in addressing issues of democracy and social justice (Stake, 1995). The theories that underpin this study are democratic schooling and social justice. I have reviewed local and internal literature on parental involvement and social justice in this study. This project has afforded me with the opportunity to engage with SGBs through interviews and I have been able to gauge amongst other things, their understandings of the role that SGBs must play in addressing issues of democracy and social justice. I was also able to learn the frustrations experienced by SGBs when implementing the policies in schools. Some of these frustrations were due to the challenges that some educators and some parents pose for the SGBs in the day-to-day running of the SGBs.

Based on the findings I have made some recommendations such as that schools must introduce class or grade representatives which could serve in some committees. Female learners could also be involved in activities such as debates in order to enhance their self-confidence. Policies that the SGBs use when addressing democracy and social justice in the schools could be translated into isiZulu to make sure that all stakeholders understand these policies. The Department of Education could also assist the schools in ensuring that parents in rural areas have access to ABET classes, where they can learn to read and write as well as acquire relevant skills.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

SASA – South African Schools Act No 84 of 1996

SGB – School Governing Body

SMT – School Management Team

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

There are a host of researchers who argue for parental involvement in education and the benefits of this (Singh & Mbokodi, 2004; Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2007; Davies, Harber & Schweisfurth, 2002; Mbokodi & Msila, 2004). Further, the preamble of the South African Schools' Act no.84 of 1996 (SASA) speaks of, among other things, an attempt to redress past injustices in educational provision and advancement of the democratic transformation of society. In addition, the South African government, through SASA, expects the School Governing Bodies (SGBs) to play a pivotal role in addressing the issues of democracy and social justice. This study attempts to explore how SGBs could be used to address issues of democracy and social justice in schools.

The majority of the SGB members are supposed to be the parents, and the chairperson of the SGB must come from the parent representatives. Stein & Thorkildsen (1999) in Lemmer & van Wyk (2004), argue that the extent to which the school communicates with parents determines their involvement in school activities. Parents' active involvement appears to be associated with a range of positive outcomes for primary students, including fewer behavior problems and higher student achievement (Kyriakides, 2005).

The establishment of SASA therefore, was aimed at establishing a school governance structure that allows all the stakeholders to be active participants in education in order to address the issues of democracy, tolerance, rationale discussion and collective decision-making (Department of Education, 1996). Parents as members of the community understand the needs of their communities and therefore if they take part in school activities a lot could be achieved in addressing issues of democracy and social justice. It can be argued that the SGBs have the capacity of building trust as well as opening lines of communication among the stakeholders in education at the school level. According to Bush & Heystek (2003), SGBs have a good potential in enhancing local democracy and improving quality of education for all learners. A similar notion is shared by the Ministerial Review Committee (2004), which regards the SGBs as the unifying factor. However, not all scholars, such as Mncube (2008) are in agreement with this view. Previous research concludes that SGBs are burdened with many problems such as social tensions with regards to socio-economic

status (SES), where parents from a low socio-economic status experience rejection and domination as well as lack the confidence and expertise to participate in SGBs (Brown & Duku, 2008; Mncube, 2005).

This, it can be argued, counteracts the main aim of SGBs, which is to address issues of stake holder participation (democracy) and stakeholder inequality (social justice) in public state schools. The above claim is supported by research which shows that in some schools the SGBs are not performing as they are expected in school governance (Ngidi, 2004). The study conducted by Ngidi (2004), concludes that the school governing bodies are perceived to be moderately efficient by educators. This claim is echoed by the responses of educators in the study conducted by Van Wyk (2004), where 53% of educators who completed the questionnaires felt their governing bodies were slightly effective and 20% of educators felt their governing bodies were not effective in fulfilling their tasks. This, it can be argued, suggests that the SGBs have not yet reached the level in which they are able to address issues, of democracy and social justice. Therefore, this study seeks to explore how the role of SGBs is in addressing issues of democracy and social justice and how this affects school governance.

1.2 Rationale and motivation

As a practising educator I am concerned with the lack of participation of some SGB members in schools. My knowledge of school activities including school governance should make it possible for me to conduct and complete this study because I interact with the SGB members and understand the way these meetings are conducted. The schools intended for the study are located in the area that I know very well and some SGB members know me well as a person.

I was motivated to embark on this study by previous research findings which highlight shortfalls and inefficiency of SGBs in some schools. My interest and focus is to find reasons for lack of participation by some SGB members primarily in rural primary schools. From my experience as an educator, lack of parental involvement has been an issue for many years even before the implementation of democratic SGBs. I have worked in rural and urban schools and parental involvement seems to be the problem. The SGB members in my school are multi-racial, which, supposedly intimidates some parent representatives to play an active role in the SGB, as a result I am interested in probing the views of rural parents in SGBs in connection with their perceptions of their roles as school governors.

1.3 Focus and purpose of the study

This is a qualitative study that focuses on SGBs and how they address issues of democracy and social justice. The intention of this study is to highlight the factors that hinder full participation of all SGB members in public state schools, including rural primary schools. The findings of this study are intended for contribution to the Departments of Education nationally as well as internationally through revisiting the theories of democracy and parental involvement in schools. It can be assumed that the findings will be helpful in other less effective SGBs especially in rural primary schools. This study should arguably give a slightly different angle to previous studies such as Singh and Mbokodi (2004), Mncube (2008), which were conducted in Secondary/High schools. It would be interesting to establish whether similar trends would be traced when dealing with rural primary schools in particular. A similar approach to that used by Mncube (2008), i.e. interviews with all SGB members will be adopted which differs from the ethnographic approach which was used by Singh and Mbokodi (2004). This approach is arguably the most appropriate to do an in-depth study, since I will be working with only two SGBs.

1.4 Research questions

The project is underpinned by the following critical questions:

- What is the role of school governing bodies in addressing issues of democracy and social justice in schools?
- How do SGBs implement policies/strategies to address issues of democracy and social justice?
- In what ways and to what extent have parents been prepared for participation in school governance (especially in issues of democracy and social justice)?
- Why is it necessary for SGBs to address issues of democracy and social justice in schools?

1.5 Definition of terms

1.5.1 School Governing Body (SGB)

This term refers to the official constituency that comprises of the school principal in his or her official capacity, elected members who comprise parents of learners at the school, educators at the school, members of staff at the school who are not educators and learners in the eighth grade or higher at the school (South African Schools Act, 1996)

1.5.2 Democratic school governance

Van Wyk (2004) describes school governance as a democratic system that provides for participation of all stake holders with vested interest in education. According to the first white paper on Education and Training (1995, p.22) cited in Lemmer (1999), “The principle of democratic governance should be increasingly reflected in every level of the system, by the involvement in consultation and appropriate forms of decision making of elected representatives of the main stakeholders, interest groups and role players”.

1.5.3 Social justice

Martin (1999) states that theories of social justice suggest appropriate mechanisms for regulating or social arrangements in the fairest way for the benefit of all. It also refers to the equal treatment of all the citizens in a democratic society, irrespective of gender, race and socio-economical status.

1.5.4 The parent

Over and above the biological parent the term ‘parent’ includes a person who is the learner’s guardian, or is legally entitled to custody of the learner, or who undertakes to fulfill the obligations of a parent or guardian towards the learner’s education at the school (South African Schools Act, 1996).

1.6 Literature review

Literature review in this study will highlight the perceptions of different authors locally and internationally as far as the role of school governing bodies are concerned. It will also give the assumptions that different authors have about the effectiveness of SGBs in schools. Some literature will be used as reference to the findings of the studies that have been done in this area of study, i.e. the role of SGBs in addressing issues of democracy and social justice.

Literature will also be used to highlight the views of different authors in the ways that can be used by schools to enhance parental involvement in schools. It will also be used to suggest strategies that can be used to develop relationships between teachers and parents in schools.

1.7 Theoretical frameworks

The study is underpinned by the democratic schooling and social justice theories. Democratic schooling can take place in a school which creates a structure in which people could think aloud

together and jointly make decisions (Abrahams, 2002). This theory incorporates the principles of participation, rights, equity and informed choice (Davies, Harber & Schweisfurth, 2002). According to Fraser (2003), social injustices are a combination of economic and cultural injustices. Therefore, justice today requires an integration of both redistributive policies and a politics of recognition of difference (Fraser & Honneth, 2003).

1.8 Research design and methodology

1.8.1 Research design

According to Fraenkel (1990), research design involves identifying the research problem, formulating researchable questions that are feasible, clear, significant and ethical. It also involves reviewing relevant literature, choosing appropriate sampling methods and using relevant data collecting methods which will ensure validity and reliability.

1.8.2 Methodology

There are different methodologies that researchers use when conducting research, and they include qualitative, quantitative and mixed forms of inquiry. Qualitative research is a form of inquiry that explores phenomena in their natural settings and uses multi-methods to interpret, understand, explain and bring meaning to them (Anderson, 1998). It is different to quantitative research which is used by positivists, who use scientific methods to prove or disprove hypotheses in search for the “truth” (Anderson, 1998).

1.8.3 Paradigms in research

Guba & Lincoln (1989) describe a paradigm as basic set of beliefs, a set of assumptions we are willing to make, which serve as touchstones in guiding activities. According to Mertens (1998) there are three paradigms in which researchers can opt to position themselves, i.e. Positivism/Post – positivism, Constructivism and the Critical theory. Mason (2002) states that a researcher cannot be a neutral collector of information about the social world, and so, qualitative research speaks of data generation. It is thus imperative that a researcher opts for an appropriate method of data generation.

This is a qualitative study utilising a case study approach. Due to the nature of my question I will locate myself within the interpretivist paradigm which will be discussed in the following section. Within this paradigm, researchers use strategies that allow them to get the feeling, opinions and views of the participants, e.g. interviews, document reviews and observations (Mertens, 1998; Robson, 2002 and Denscombe, 1998).

I intend using a case study approach for this study. I opt to use this approach because it allows the researcher to study a specific case, collect data analyze and interpret findings within their context and report results (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The intention of this study is to study two specific cases (SGBs of two primary schools).

The case study is convenient for this study because I will be dealing with a small sample of participants, using methods that will produce rich and authentic data. It can be argued that interviewing two SGBs from two different schools will provide me with a wide range of responses which will provide a good understanding of the way SGB members perceive their role in addressing issues of democracy and social justice. Document analysis is another method of data collection used in case studies. I intend scrutinizing documents such as the SGB minute books and SGB registers from each school. This will give me an idea of general issues that are dealt with in SGB meetings as well as the attendance records of SGB members to these meetings.

I have opted to use SGBs from only two primary schools as participants in this study. A detailed description of the two schools intended for the study follows in chapter three of this study.

1.8.4 Sampling

The sample in this study will be selected using purposeful sampling. Gay and Airasian (2000) state that it is important for qualitative researchers to understand the setting studied, and therefore, qualitative researchers typically deal with small purposefully selected samples that can enrich the data. School governing bodies from the two schools will be used in the study. The sample, SGBs from the two case study schools, i.e. the principals, two teachers and four parents will provide me with data and ideas that will advance my understanding of the perceptions of SGB members about their roles in school governance (Mason, 2002). The educators and principals of the two case schools will be interviewed separately. The remaining SGB members (four parents from each school) will be interviewed as a focus group. As mentioned earlier, documents such as registers of SGBs and minute books of the SGB meetings will be perused. The two SGBs will also be observed separately while conducting their meetings. This will arguably provide a rich and authentic data that can be cross – checked, which will give the study reliability and trustworthiness.

1.8.5 Triangulation

According to De Vos (2002), triangulation of methods means mixing qualitative and quantitative styles of research and data because two methods or styles have different, complementary strengths. I intend using interviews, observations and documents analysis to ensure that data collected is reliable

and rich, as triangulation allows researchers to be more confident of their results (De Vos, 2002).

The advantages of using triangulation are that results from divergent results from multi-methods can lead to an enriched explanation of the research problem and may also serve as the critical test, by virtue of its comprehensiveness, for competing theories (De Vos, 2002).

1.8.6 Methods of generating data

I intend using three methods, namely: semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, observations and document reviews as methods of data generation.

1.8.7 Data analysis

For this study data will be analysed according to Giorgi, *et al.* (1975) phenomenological steps. These steps include: to read each transcript to get an overall sense of the whole; the second step involves to re-read the transcripts and, identify transactions in the experience (each transition signifying separate unit of meaning.); the third step is to eliminate redundancies in the units of meaning and begin to relate the remaining units to one another; fourthly, transform the participants' language into the language of science; lastly, synthesize the insights into a description of the entire experience of leadership practices.

1.8.8 Ethical considerations

Most educational case data gathering involves at least a small invasion of personal privacy (Stake, 1998) and therefore researchers need permission to gain access to the site, i.e. two public state schools for this study. The study forms part of a bigger project done in conjunction with Professor Mncube and ethical clearance has already been granted by University of KwaZulu-Natal. The two case study schools intended for this study are public state school and I will need to seek permission from the school principals, as gate keepers, as well as the Department of Education to conduct the study. Neuman (2003) advises that informed consent to participate in the study must be sought. Consent forms will be explained to all the participants before they sign them.

1.9 Limitations of the study

The two case study schools are situated in two different areas. This might cause problems in terms of time constraints. Lots of travelling will be required which will cost money. Some participants might not honour the sessions which might mean travelling to the schools more than once which will become expensive. Other SGB members might feel intimidated to participate in the study which

will compromise the validity of the study, and they will require a lot of convincing to be done. One way of convincing them will be to assure them that the study is solely for my Masters degree and that the findings there of will be used only for that purpose.

1.10 Organisation of the study

Chapter One of this study will be the introduction to the study. Chapter Two interrogates the literature and theoretical frameworks relevant to this chapter. Chapter Three outlines the design and methodology that will be used in the study. Chapter Four focuses on the data presentation and discussion of the findings. Chapter Five is the conclusion and recommendations for the school governing bodies to be effective in addressing issues of democracy and social justice.

1.11 Chapter summary

This chapter has outlined a general background and overview of the key aspects of this study. The focus, purpose, motivation and rationale were presented. The key research questions were outlined as well as the research design and methodology. The chapter concludes with an overview of the chapters of this research study. The next chapter outlines the literature review and theoretical frameworks that underpin this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the background to the study. This chapter further focuses on the literature and theoretical frameworks relevant to this study. This chapter examines the role of SGBs in addressing issues of democracy and social justice and the theories that underpin this. Governing bodies, representing parents, educators, learners and the community, are expected to make important decisions to ensure that the school is governed properly (Deventer & Kruger (2003). For this to happen effectively, it is important that all SGB members have a clear understanding of their roles in school governance.

In the preamble of the SASA some of the governing bodies' roles are clearly spelled out, such as to redress the past injustices such as racism, sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination in educational provision as well as to advance the democratic transformation of society (South African Schools' Act, 1996). Chapter 3 of SASA also tables the functions of the SGB in public schools, and amongst other things, to encourage parents, learners, educators and other staff at the school to render voluntary services to the school. This function is aimed at maximizing stakeholder participation in matters that concern the school. Another function of the SGB is to recommend to the Head of Department the appointment of educators at school, which could address the issue of social injustice by making sure that no racist or sexist decisions are used when educators are employed. What should make the above functions of SGBs to be possible is the fact that the parents form the majority constituent on the board, and so have a significant influence on the decisions and effective functioning of the board (Clarke, 2007).

Similar trends can be seen in countries such as England where governing bodies are responsible for staff selection, and in Denmark where powers which were previously held by local authorities have been transferred to school boards (Wolhuter, Lemmer & de Wet, 2007). The functions of SGBs both locally and internationally show a clear mandate that parents through the constituents such as governing bodies or school boards have in addressing issues of democracy and social justice.

Literature reviewed in this study will be used to highlight what other authors have concluded with regards to parental involvement and SGBs and their role in school governance. Community

members should not simply wait for what the education system produce and hand down to them. Instead they should decide what kind of citizens are produced by the education system that trains their children by providing support, facilitation, assistance and criticism of the schooling system through SGBs.

Young (2004, cited in Glanz (2006) claims that, students do better in schools when their parents are involved. To echo this claim, Wolfendale (1992), argues that a whole-school approach to discipline policy would be rendered less effective without the inclusion of parents in the decision-making processes. This study could also put to test the claim made by Smit & Liebenberg (2003) which says that children from troubled backgrounds tend to leave school prematurely as a result of an unawareness and insensitivity to their needs and contexts on the part of their teachers. Although I do not fully agree with the above claim, learners from troubled backgrounds do have difficulties in their learning, such as frequent absenteeism, poor academic results and dropping out of school before matriculating.

Lemmer & van Wyk, (2004) suggest the concept of home-school communication as an example of parental involvement. They (Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2004) also argue that two way home-school communication strategies should be designed by schools in order to promote effective communication between the school and the home. It is this very concept that many schools in rural areas arguably lack because of the lack of resources on the part of the school. Communicating with all the parents is a mammoth task for a school which does not have technological resources such as photocopying machines to generate newsletters as well as a working school telephone to contact those parents whose learners experience difficulty in learning. Henry (1996) posits that inclusive governance means that school decisions and daily practices can be enhanced by the wider interest and investment in the school of parents and community. As much as the idea of inclusive governance, which the SGBs are an example of, is an ideal tool, success lies on the ability of the SGB members to fulfill their intended roles. It is for this reason why this study seeks to solicit the perceptions of SGB members regarding their roles in addressing issues of democracy and social justice.

SGBs should also play an effective role in ensuring that there is democratic participation in schools. According to Davies, Harber & Schweisfurth (2002) democracy makes it possible that decisions affecting the whole association are taken by all its members. For this to occur, four basic principles, i.e. participation, equity, rights and informed choice should govern democratic institutions such as

schools. SGBs are tasked by the government to make sure that participation by all stakeholders (parents, learners and teachers) are given a fair chance to participate in matters that affect school governance. It is also the duty of the SGBs to make sure that there is no unfair discrimination in terms of race or gender in employment of staff as well as representation in SGBs. All stakeholders whether in the schools or on SGBs, should be afforded opportunities to express their views on the matters concerning school governance without the fear of intimidation. Since the members of SGBs represent the other stakeholder groups, such as the parent body, it is very important that the parents make an informed choice when electing these individuals. Clarke (2007) maintains that it is important for the principal of a school to ensure that the calibre of the parents who stand for election is high. It could be suggested then that the potential parent representatives are introduced at parents' meetings for all the parents to meet them.

2.2 Parental Involvement

Parental participation, according to Singh & Mbokodi (2004), should involve decision-making and being critical of the information on educational issues. It could be argued that because of the lack of education, parents in some rural schools send their children to school and leave everything to the school and teachers. This is evident in situations where parents seem to be reluctant to seize opportunities to be representatives in SGBs. Some parents still lack interest in what their children are being taught at school. This study, seeks to establish the areas in which parents seem to be comfortable in between decision-making and being involved in wider educational issues. This, I believe, will be answered by the critical questions that I will use for the parent focus groups from both case study schools.

According to Chapter 1 of SASA, the term "parent" means the parent or guardian of a learner; the person legally entitled to custody of a learner; or the person who undertakes to fulfill the obligations of a parent or legal guardian of a learner (RSA, 1996). Wolhuter, Lemmer & de Wet (2007) quote what the SASA regards as the roles and responsibilities of parents, which amongst other things, is to ensure school attendance by the child from age 7 to age 15 and paying school fees unless the parent has been exempted from such payment. Anderson (2007) highlights the differences in definition by "parents" compared to teachers when it comes to parental involvement, where parents take a more community – centric view instead of parental presence at school. It is this same understanding of parental involvement that this study seeks to interrogate through establishing among other things, the role of parents in the education of their children as perceived by parent representatives in SGBs.

Democracy as a theory entails mechanisms of representative government which protect the human

rights and the rule of law and the regard of all people as having equal social and political rights as human beings (Lemmer, 1999). It can be argued though, that even though many people know their democratic rights, they fall short in exercising them because of factors such as lack of skills and necessary knowledge.

Previous research in school governance in South Africa concludes that not all SGBs are efficient (Ngidi, 2004) or effective (Van Wyk, 2004). The studies cited above suggest that more studies still need to be conducted in the area of SGBs being efficient as school governors (Ngidi, 2004) as well as being effective as school governors (Van Wyk, 2004). Kyriakides (2005) concluded that there is a lack of parental involvement in school, and therefore suggested that policy makers in Cyprus should develop programmes that encourage parental involvement. One example suggested for schools (parents in classrooms) in Cyprus seems to be a far - fetched idea for South African schools given the fact that educated parents need to work fulltime and semi-literate parents lack confidence and expertise to help in the classrooms. Anderson's (2007) study made an interesting finding where a parents' invitation to the school event can be interpreted as merely informing parents about the event as opposed to inviting them to be involved. The study conducted by Anderson (2007) concluded that there is a disparity between parents' and teachers' perceptions of parental involvement and suggested that parental involvement is an area for future exploration. I agree with this conclusion because in South African schools, particularly in disadvantaged areas, some parents seem to understand parental involvement as merely getting their children ready for school, paying school fees and making sure that children attend school regularly. Some of them see activities such as helping their children with homework or school projects as a way of teachers dumping their work on parents. This argument shows that such parents do not see themselves as important stakeholders in the education of their children. School authorities including teachers need to identify what issues cause satisfaction or dissatisfaction of parents in the schools of their children. To emphasise this point, Friedman, Bobrowski & Markow (2007) have identified communication and involvement of parents as one of the factors of school satisfaction. This point suggests that if schools communicate information to the parents as well as involve them in school activities, parents will be satisfied with what the schools offer to their children.

It can be argued then, that with more effort put on maximizing parental involvement in school related activities such as participating in SGBs, social injustices which may result in subordination or exclusion can be curbed (Martin, 1999). The SASA give the parents on SGBs a platform to do this where the SGBs are supposed to draw up a code of conduct for learners which reflects the democratic principles that emphasize human dignity, equality and freedom (Naidoo, Joubert, Mestry,

Mosoge, & Ngcobo (2008). This claim, it can be argued, suggest that if parents are involved in drawing up policies such as the code of conduct for learners, such policies could be effectively implemented because the parents would understand what the policy entails and communicate these at home. If parent representatives in SGBs are actively involved and fully understand their role in school governance, they can have a positive impact on the entire parent body by motivating them to be actively involved in other aspects of the school (Mncube, 2010). Anderson (2007) argues that parents with a high sense of efficacy for parental involvement believe that they can enact the behaviours that will result in positive outcomes. It is the intention of this study to establish the role of SGBs in ensuring that schools are run democratically and that the voices of all the stakeholders are heard and that there are no groups that are excluded or oppressed by the others. The findings should suggest practical strategies that the national or provincial education government could implement to assist the SGBs in addressing issues of democracy and social justice.

Research (Lemmer, 1999) shows that countries such as Australia and New Zealand have embarked on a process of transforming and restructuring the education in the 1980s in order to bring about decentralization. However, although decentralized school governance has existed for such a long time, it has been implemented with varying degrees because of factors such as power, expertise, workload as well as training and development (Lemmer, 1999). South Africa has since put in place democratic structures such as SGBs in order to decentralize school governance and enforce democracy and social justice (RSA, 1996a, sections 20 and 21). Research by Ngidi (2004) however, shows that the functioning of the SGBs has not been as effective and efficient as the SASA envisaged. This, according to researchers such as Tsoetsi, & Wyk and Lemmer, (2008) is caused by the lack of necessary training and expertise needed by the members in SGBs. To echo this claim, Ngidi (2004) suggests that training programmes for SGB members are needed in order to equip them with knowledge and skills where democracy and social justice can prevail. A similar suggestion was made by van Wyk (2004), when she says that many educators who participated in her study held a view that the workshops for the training of SGBs should be improved. Another factor noted by researchers which hinder SGBs from functioning effectively, is their lack of understanding regarding democratic principles. Some educators interviewed in Van Wyk (2004), suggested that SGB members should be educated on matters concerning their legal tasks or functions. It could be argued as well that some SGB members do not fully understand or exercise democratic principles such as freedom and equality because they do not make their voices heard or take initiatives in contributing to the school governance. The freedom of speech is one of the principles not evident in some SGBs and Mncube (2008) posits that, parents do not take the opportunity to make their voices heard which

could also be attributed to the level of education of some parents in multi-racial SGBs. This defeats the purpose of implementing SGBs as democratic structures that allow masses of people, irrespective of their racial divide or socio-economic status to have their voices heard in school governance (Brown & Duku, 2008).

Recent literature cited above shows that parents are important stakeholders in the education of their children. Local and international authors argue that if parents work together with schools, more positive results could be achieved (Anderson, 2007; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Kyriakides, 2007 and Smit & Liebenberg 2003). To ensure parent participation in school governance, democratic constituencies such as school governing bodies have been put in place by governments in many countries including South Africa. The South African schools Act 84 of 1996 places the SGB as the constituency responsible for governing the school (Ngidi, 2004). SGBs are the government's commitment to developing a democratic system that provides for participation of all stakeholders (Van Wyk, 2004) and they are a means of decentralization of power to school level (Tsoetsi, van Wyk & Lemmer, 2008). It is noted though that current literature both locally and internationally concludes that parent involvement, needs urgent attention in ensuring their efficiency and effectiveness in addressing social justice issues. Vincent (2003) mentions different facets of injustices, one of which is cultural injustice, where groups that suffer from cultural injustices are subordinated by sexist or racist practices. South African women have experienced this kind of injustice in the past, where they were not allowed to participate in some environments, such as holding leadership positions just because of their gender. One could argue that, in the current dispensation where things are done democratically, some female citizens of this country are still unable to compete successfully with their male counterparts because they believe that the men should take leadership positions. It is for this concern that one of my questions for the focus groups gauges the perceptions of the participants regarding the gender representation as well as the positions held by female SGB members of their schools. It can be anticipated that the responses from such questions will spark an important debate that will help the authorities to review the composition of the SGBs in terms of gender balances / imbalances.

Comment [u1]:

2.2.1 Factors hindering parental involvement

According to Henry (1996), there is another factor that inhibits effective participation of some parents in schools. Social class plays an integral part in parental involvement or lack thereof by some parents. In her argument, Henry (1996), claims that working class and some middle class families may prefer to leave school work and school business to school professionals. This

perception can arguably hinder maximum participation by all parents in the education of their children which impedes the democratic running of schools. This might be true for some parents who are not educated, but as I have claimed somewhere in this study, some well-educated parents see teaching as merely for the teachers and that parents should not be burdened with their own children's problems at school. This, it could be contended, is one of the factors that impede decentralization of power to the school level through SGBs which Tsotetsi, Van Wyk & Lemmer (2008) have mentioned as the government's commitment in the preceding paragraph. Coetzee, van Niekerk & Wydeman (2011), cite the following factors as examples of parent resistance in classroom management, lack of time, feeling that they have nothing to contribute, not knowing how to become involved, lack of childcare, feeling intimidated and not feeling welcome at school.

Froyen (1998), cited in Coetzee, van Niekerk & Wydeman (2011) mentions factors such as fear of divulging conflicts at home, guilt about lack of parenting skills and belief that the educator is trying to shift responsibility, as contributors to parent resistance in becoming involved in their children's education. The reasons for lack of parental involvement cited above as well as in the preceding paragraphs, suggest amongst other things that some parents are not equipped enough to play an effective role in their children's education. Some of them, it can be argued are not able to exercise their democratic rights such as stakeholder participation because of the lack of necessary knowledge and skills. Davies, Harber & Schweisfurth (2002) argue that skills, knowledge and values make a person to be able to contribute to society. This is so, they argue, because abilities and competences allow the person to act in the way they want. They possess the understanding of how the social and physical world works. They have appropriate values which shape their attitudes and opinions. To echo this claim, Arko-Cobbath (2011) mentions intellectual skills such as reading, communicating and thinking as the skills that empower and enable citizens to identify, describe and explain information and ideas crucial to public issues and to make and defend decisions on these issues. These skills are important for SGB representatives so as to be able to address the issues of democracy and social justice. Communication and thinking skills would enable the SGB members to raise opinions as well as defend them accordingly during SGB meetings. They would also enable SGB members to identify injustices in the school environment and act upon correcting them as school governors. Parents who lack the above mentioned characteristics will not be able to function successfully in a democratic institution such as the school. It is these characteristics that members of SGBs should possess in order to be able to fulfill their roles as school governors.

Another factor that contributes to the exclusion of parents from school is cited by van Deventer & Kruger (2003) where they state that some educators hold a belief that parents and other members of

the community are infringing on their professional terrain by becoming involved in school activities. This can be experienced in schools where there are strict rules that govern the teacher – parent interaction. One example of such rules could be where the parents do not have the right to make appointments to see the class teachers of their children. Barring parents to participate as sports coaches, for instance, could also be seen as another form of excluding parents from school activities. This study will hopefully be able to identify whether any of these above mentioned factors are the cause of the lack of parental involvement in rural primary schools. Observing the two SGBs conducting their meetings should give me a clear understanding of how these meetings are conducted in terms of language used.

2.2.2 Possible ways for improving parental involvement

If parental involvement is still a concern in South African schools, then something should be done in correcting the situation. Authors such as Naidoo, *et al.* (2008) suggest ways in which the school could be of service to the community e.g. supporting families during bereavement, cleaning campaigns by learners, assisting in old age homes to name but a few. As much as these ideas might seem daunting and requiring a lot of time to organize on the part of the school / teachers, positive results could emerge from them where the wider community can see that schools are actually part of the larger community. These community collaborations could, arguably, encourage parents to come up with further initiatives that could help schools and other sectors (business) in the community to join partnerships and create mutual assistance to the community and the school. While schools, through learners and or staff, render services to the community, benefits could be enjoyed by the schools in the form of financial assistance or educational equipment from businesses. Some community members, e.g. the unemployed youth, could benefit from acquiring practical skills through such initiatives, which could remove them off the streets, if they have something constructive to do in their communities. It is important though, to acknowledge the challenges that come with community based activities, such as lack of sustainability, which might hinder the success of such initiatives in the long run.

SGB members should not only be interested on the functions stipulated by the SASA, but should take initiatives to learn more about the other aspects of the school life. Wragg & Partington (1980) suggest a few areas that school governors in London could make themselves familiar with in order to be effective governors. These include reading the curriculum statements, talking to teachers, parents and children and interacting with the other governors. Taking into account the level of education, demanding jobs and the expertise of some SGB members in South African schools, one wonders

whether this could be a possible suggestion for SGBs in schools. Time constraints would arguably make it hard for SGB members to meet and interview the suggested groups of stakeholders since most SGB members have fulltime employment.

Smit & Liebenberg (2003) highlight the fact that parents have a desire to be actively involved in their children's education, but that they experience the schooling system as intimidating and inaccessible. Smit & Liebenberg (2003) further argue that this could be achieved if the teachers have a greater understanding of the communities in which they work as well as being able to provide emotional support to the parents. This sounds possible in an ideal schooling environment, where teachers have enough resources, such as transportation, to do home visits. However, given the harsh realities that most schools in South Africa, particularly in informal settlements as well as rural areas, whether this is a feasible idea remains to be a big question. As for providing emotional support that Smit & Liebenberg (2003) suggest, one has to remember the mammoth task that teachers in South Africa are faced with, which includes teaching large classes, parents that do not attend parents' meetings as well as homes that cannot be easily reached because of their geographical location.

Another factor is that of homes situated in places that are labeled "high risk areas" because of the crime rate in those places. One parent, who was interviewed in Smit & Liebenberg (2003), suggested that teachers should visit the parents and look where they live and sleep. The reality here is that people who visit such places expose themselves to crime and the possibility of being hijacked which bars teachers from doing home visits. The best possible strategy remains to be getting all parents to school during occasions such as parents' mornings and sports days, where their stories could be listened to, and possible solutions implemented by the schools and the wider community to help those parents from poverty stricken areas.

Kyriakides (2007) an international author suggest a strategy of partnerships, where parents work with their children in school. This policy of active partnerships, which was implemented by a primary school in Cyprus, proved to be effective because the children in the experimental school had higher attainment in each core subject and showed fewer behavior problems (Kyriakides, 2007). This was possible, Kyriakides (2007) claims, because through the process, the parents had access to information about the school practices. It is cautioned though, in the same article that although home-school communications were made possible through this policy, connecting the home to the school should be seen as a long-term project. Some aspects of this policy seem possible to be used in a South African school setting, where parents from different professions could come in and address learners about their specific jobs. Glanz (2006) suggests the same idea by stating that community

members may serve as teacher aides, guest lecturers and tutor, and such participation may result in extended expertise and additional resources for the school. What seems to concern me is the idea of parents as teacher aides and having to take part in group tasks that their children had to complete in classrooms (Kyriakides, 2007). Time constraints and necessary expertise would hinder the schools from implementing such a policy. Reason being that those parents who are experts in various jobs would not have enough time to spend in school. On the other hand, the parents who are not employed do not have the appropriate expertise and courage to be in the classroom and work with their children.

Henry (1996) raises a similar concern when she states that working class parents may be unable to collaborate with schools because of time, money and work constraints. She (Henry, 1996) further suggests ways of balancing participation by parents from all social backgrounds, where the state could provide monetary and time resources to release working parents to allow for school participation. This sounds as a far fetched idea for South African public schools because most schools, particularly from rural areas do not even have proper school facilities. The South African government cannot at this stage afford to provide such resources to working class parents. To most working class parents in South Africa, visiting schools is at the bottom of their priority list since keeping their jobs is the main thing they need to do in order to provide for their families.

One possible suggestion for a South African rural school is the involvement of parents in literacy, which is given by Wolfendale (1992). Retired ex-teachers could be used by schools to listen to children read, either in their home language or in the language of teaching and learning of the school. These well experienced professionals could possibly volunteer their time to the schools and help the teachers by taking groups of learners for reading while the teacher works with rest of the class. Story telling is another idea which could be used by older members of the community to teach the learners more about the history of their country or specific nation, where cultural information would be imparted to the younger generation.

Goldberg (2006) mentions “conducting workshops for parents” as another strategy that schools could use to bring parents and other community members to the schools. In his example he invited parents to a two-evening participatory workshop on the National Writing Project where there was an interaction between parents, children and teachers. I think this could be an ideal workshop for South African schools to introduce the parents to the new curriculum since the apartheid system. Conducting similar workshops where children and teachers would inform parents about the “new subjects” that some parents are not familiar with could arguably help the parents to get a better understanding of what their children are learning at school, as well as what role they (parents), could play in helping their children with homework activities.

2.3 Theoretical frameworks

The study is underpinned by the theories of democratic schooling and social justice theories.

2.3.1 Democratic schooling theory

Democracy is a political system which includes protecting human rights, allows for freedom and puts emphasis on tolerance of diversity and mutual respect. Encyclopaedia Britannica defines democracy as a form of government in which supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation. This can be defined as stakeholder participation in institutions such as schools. Lemmer, (1999) describes a democratic education as one that allows for stakeholder, (parents', students' and teachers') involvement in some way in school management. It is for this stance that the democratic government in South Africa implemented structures such as SGBs which are intended for all stakeholders to participate in school governance. Mncube (2009) states that democratic school governance refers to the transfer and sharing of power between the state and the school since the schools are in the best position to know and understand their own needs and therefore should be fundamentally self-determining. He further argues that democratic school governance implies that all stakeholders, including parents, decide on school policies which affect the education of their children (Mncube, 2009).

Democracy as a theory has elements or principles that guide the citizens in the way they behave as individuals or interact with fellow citizens. The citizens should be able to contribute to the growth of the country through being effective citizens who are able to assume leadership positions as well as contribute to the economic growth of the country. Hyslop-Margison & Thayer (2009) echo this claim when they illustrate the three educational goals, i.e. democratic equality, schools should focus on preparing citizens, social efficiency, they should focus on training workers, social mobility, they should prepare individuals to compete for social positions. An interesting belief held by the so called communitarians is that a healthy society must achieve an appropriate balance between autonomy and social cohesion (Hyslop-Margison & Thayer (2009). This belief in a way confirms the need for the education to produce social efficient as well as social mobile citizens which were discussed in the above paragraph. A similar claim is made by Lynch (1992) when he states that learning is part of an ongoing social process and context, which can facilitate or inhibit children's learning, wherever it occurs.

This claim suggests that SGBs as stakeholders in education should play an active role in addressing issues of democracy in schools by ensuring that they form part of crucial decision-making in matters that affect the

education of their children. This could serve as unifying factor between the school and the community, where children will be able to see that their parents are partners in education and that they (children) could learn from their parents. Parents should also be able to trust that the SGB members are their reliable representatives who are able to be their voices where decision-making is concerned. Not all the parents can be on the SGB at the same time and so those who represent them should play an effective role. It is for these goals that democracy emphasizes maximum participation by all stakeholders as well as freedom of choice. SGB members should then, be able to make their voices heard by fulfilling their duties such as making the policy on issues related to the governance of the school as expected by the SASA (van Deventer & Kruger, 2003). Their participation in SGBs should also be seen by all stakeholders, including the learners by taking an effective role in the drawing of policies such as the code of conduct for learners. Such policies will be arguably effective if they are drawn and implemented by all school governors including SGB members. If the SGB members are not effective citizens who are prepared to work hard and are prepared to compete for social positions, it could be argued that they will not be able to address issues of democracy and social justice in their schools.

To echo the claims made in the preceding paragraphs, (Knight & Pearl, 2000) assert that democratic education addresses the inability of students to use logic and evidence to address asymmetrical power relations by creating democratic classrooms. These authors further discuss the role of education in preparing students for the working world and teaching them how to change it, lastly they favour democratic education because it leads to a democratic school culture, which can counter “divisive and falsely empowering popular culture” through the creation of “a center to which all feel a positive sense of attachment,” and which “cannot be imposed” but “must be negotiated” (Knight & Pearl, 2000, pp. 204-205). This argument suggests that if students are exposed to democratic schooling or education, they will grow up to be effective citizens who are able to exercise the democratic principles that are needed in a democratic country. One can positively assume that the students who understand and exercise democracy would eventually become effective citizens who would be able to address issues of democracy and social justice in their country.

Since democracy involves the informed consent of people, a democratic curriculum emphasizes access to a wide range of information and the right of those of varied opinion to have their viewpoints heard. Educators in a democratic society have an obligation to help young people seek out a range of ideas and to voice their own (Cate, 2008). This claims emphasizes the need for learners to be exposed to democratic education, where from a young age, they learn to express their opinions and stand up for what they believe. It also encourages teachers to allow their learners to explore a wide range of information, criticise it and also suggest their own ideas. One could argue

that if schools adopt a democratic way of teaching and dealing with learners, the education system will produce citizens who are able to make informed choices and decisions. This view, echoes with previous views that have been stated earlier in this study, which maintain that democratic education enables students to use logic to address asymmetric power relations (Knight & Pearl, 2000).

Sub-summed within democratic schooling is the notion of parental involvement in schools. The concept, parental involvement refers to the active participation taken by the parents in the daily activities of the school (Dempster, 1973). Hill & Taylor (2004) argue that parental involvement promotes positive academic experiences and has positive effects on parents' self-development and parenting skills. They also claim that parental involvement promotes social control which ensures appropriate behavior in children. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003), cited in Glanz (2006), states that if parents and teachers share close observations of children at home and school, these conversations have the potential to create holistic views of individual students and better address their learning needs. It is noted with concern though in the same study, Glanz (2006), that parents from low socioeconomic groups, for instance, feel powerless when it comes to parental involvement. This puts an emphasis on the need for empowering all the parents in terms of taking active participation in the education of their children. An idea for reaching out to parents is outlined in Glanz (2006), where stakeholders at a certain school planned a comprehensive training programme for community parents. The same stance is taken by Wolfendale (1992) when she highlights the need of quality training and support systems to all governors to enable them to carry out their duties. Henry (1996) claims that it makes good sense for schools to partner with parents by focusing on children's needs and by figuring out how parents can be an integral part of the educational conversation. This, Henry (1996) claims could correct the notion that was held by education authorities in the past, which viewed parental involvement as an "intrusion" from the community. Anderson, (2007) argues that different stakeholders define parental involvement differently. This means that teachers have a different understanding of the theory of parental involvement compared to the parents. Because of these different understandings of parental involvement, Lawson (2003) claims, miscommunications can arise which can lead to teachers blaming parents for children difficulties and parents feeling unappreciated for the efforts that they make. To curb this misunderstanding, Wolfendale (1996) claims, that if parents are exposed to school they become progressively informed and knowledgeable about education and the teachers will understand more about what is involved in parenting from the theoretical standpoints as well from first-hand practical experience. This study leans heavily on parental involvement as a component of SGBS. The importance of this is the fact that the study seeks to establish the perceptions of parent representatives in SGBs of their roles in school

governance. It aims to sought parent and educator understandings of parental involvement and the role they can play in addressing issues of democracy and social justice.

According to Lemmer, (1999), parental involvement to education is nothing new and the fact that it can lead to more effective learning has been apparent for some time. This is corroborated by Anderson, (2007), who claims that parental involvement in education is associated with positive outcomes for students. It is argued in the same article that parents with a high sense of efficacy for parental involvement do not only believe that their involvement will have positive effect in their children's schooling, but will also ensure appropriate behavior in children. Epstein, (1992), attributes positive behaviours such as better academic work and positive school attitudes among other things to knowledgeable, encouraging and involved parents. This notion is shared by social-capital theorists who claim that social capital is associated with increased achievement and less deviant behavior (McNeal, 1999). Vincent (2003) shares the same idea when she posits that a society with high levels of social capital is a cohesive, well-functioning society, with socially desirable outcomes and fewer negative ones, such as crime and social exclusion. The above claim suggests that relationships between parents, children and teachers with adequate resources available to the parents to utilize, academic achievements increase and inappropriate behavior decreases. This is possible because, Coleman, (1987) argues, parent participation in school activities and interaction with parents positively influence children's behavior. Parents' socio-economic status is cited by some researchers, (Singh & Mbokodi, 2004) as one of the factors hindering parental involvement. This claim maintains that wealthier parents get more recognition as compared to parents from the working class. Brown & Duku (2008) support this claim when they argue that parental involvement in SGBs carries a middle-class identity. It can be argued then, that if schools as institutions of education are not welcoming to parents of all levels of education and socio-economical status, some parents might feel intimidated to participate in school related activities.

2.3.2 Social justice theory

To define social injustices, Fraser & Honneth (2003), cited in Brown (2011) state that most types of social injustices are a combination of economic and cultural injustices, which encompass mal-distribution of economic resources as well misrecognition of certain groups in society because of race, gender and religious beliefs. Cribb & Gerwitz (2003) give a similar definition when they posit

that social justice has a variety of facets which concern the distribution of goods and resources as well as the valorization of a range of social collectivities and cultural identities. Some researchers (Bogotch, 2005; Brown, 2006; Mncube, 2007; Tyler, 2000) assert that social justice has no one specific meaning. Fraser (1996) adds to this definition of social justice by stating that social justice seems to divide into two types, i.e. redistributive claims which seek more just redistribution of resources and goods as well as the politics of recognition where assimilation to majority or dominant cultural norms is no longer the price of equal respect. It is these combinations or facets that SGB members are supposed to identify and address in schools as school governors. A similar stance to the above definition is taken by Harber & Trafford (1999) who claim that the apartheid state in South Africa excluded the majority of citizens from equal participation. This, it can be claimed, exacerbated the oppression of the majority citizens by the powerful minority groups. The legacy of such exclusion of some citizens from participation can still be seen in the South African society where most citizens seem to be reluctant to take effective participation in matters that concern them. Mncube (2008) mentions the fact that theories of social justice propose adequate mechanisms used to regulate social arrangements in the fairest way for the benefit of all. It could be suggested that “social arrangements” refer to economic and cultural injustices that should be identified and addressed. It is from this angle that this study intends to gauge the extent to which SGBs identify and address social injustices in schools. The important aspect of economic injustice in the South African schools’ context is the fair distribution of resources to all public schools to correct the mistakes made by the apartheid schooling system. Examples of cultural injustices in the South African context could be the oppression of women because of their gender and the oppression of certain racial groups because of their skin colour (Mncube, 2008).

Pendlebury & Enslin (2004) conclude that social injustice in South African education persists despite an impressive suit of policies for a more just education system. They further state that social justice is generally understood as largely about distributive justice, which, from an educational perspective, raises questions about distribution and redistribution of educational goods and access to them by all South African learners (Pendlebury & Enslin, 2004). This view coincides with Fraser (1996)’s definition of social justice as redistributive and as political recognition which has been discussed above.

According to Msila (2007), in the South African context, the Revised National curriculum Statement (RNCS) represents a pedagogy that has committed itself to reinventing education by emphasising

democracy. Further, Msila (2007) argues that democratic education also enables people to participate in public life, think critically and act in a responsible manner. Participating in public life as well as being able to think critically characterise a democratic citizen. A democratic citizen will be able to function effectively in society and that is how members of SGBs should function in their roles as school governors in order to be able to address issues of democracy and social justice.

From the American perspective, Glasgow (2001) states that social justice education has the potential to prepare citizens who are sophisticated in their understanding of diversity and group interaction, able to critically evaluate social institutions, and committed to working democratically with diverse others. For this to happen, she argues, America must create for students democratic and critical spaces that foster meaningful and transformative learning (Glasgow, 2001). The above argument, according to (Glasgow, 2001) will answer the question of how the prizing of differences in race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation and language might be nurtured. If students learn in democratic institutions that foster meaningful and transformative learning, they would grow up to be critical thinkers who can play an effective role in the society they live in. Secondly, they could become citizens who will be able to demonstrate tolerance in terms of race, ethnicity, gender and other social issues. If education is able to produce citizens who are able to behave in the manner that is discussed above, they would arguably be able to identify as well as address issues of democracy and social justice in the society and in institutions that they found themselves in.

According to Mncube (2007) social justice theory has two major dimensions, i.e. distributional (the way in which goods are distributed in society), and relational (the nature of relationships that structure society and deals with the issues of power and how individuals treat one another both in micro and macro social and economic institutions. He, (Mncube, 2007), further argues that theories of social justice propose adequate mechanisms that should be used to regulate social arrangements in the fairest way for the benefit of all. It was claimed earlier in this study that social arrangements refer to the economic and cultural resources. The social injustices that emanate from the unjust apartheid system of education require a lot to be done by authorities in the education system today. The issue of distributional theory of social justice has been a problem for some South African school for a long time. It can be argued that even in this democratic education system, some learners, particularly from rural area and informal settlements, still experience poor resources in the schools that they attend. The relational aspect of social justice in South Africa refers to the oppression of subordinate groups by powerful groups in society, e.g. gender and racial oppression. As mentioned

earlier in this study, women in the South African context have suffered a great deal of oppression, which, unfortunately, makes some women to view themselves as inferior as well as not well equipped to assume leadership roles in society. It is for this view that this study attempts to gauge what SGBs do to improve the situation mentioned above.

Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the literature and theoretical frameworks relevant for this study. Local and international literature was reviewed to highlight what different authors have concluded with regards to parental involvement and their role in addressing issues of democracy and social justice. Factors hindering parental involvement as well as possible ways for improving parental involvement were also discussed. The next chapter discusses the research design and methodology that will be used in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the literature and theoretical frameworks relevant to this study. This chapter discusses the research design and methodology that is used in this study. It further discusses paradigms in research and states the paradigm in which this study is located in. Data generating instruments, procedures and data analysis methods are also discussed. Finally, this chapter discusses the issues of trustworthiness, ethical issues as well as the limitations of this study.

3.2 Research design and Methodology

3.2.1 Research design

According to Fraenkel (1990), research design involves identifying the research problem, formulating researchable questions that are feasible, clear, significant and ethical. It also involves reviewing relevant literature, choosing appropriate sampling methods and using relevant data collecting methods which will ensure validity and reliability. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007), state that the purposes of the research determine the methodology and design of the research. This statement means that, depending on the purpose of the research, a researcher might opt to use a survey, case study or action research as an approach (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) On the other hand Slavin (2007) describes research design as a plan for collecting and analyzing data to try to answer a research question. To explain this point further, Slavin (2007) states that research begins with a question that is worth asking, followed by the hypothesis of the researcher and then data is collected. Depending on the nature of the research, a researcher may use quantitative (statistics) or qualitative (description) methods to collect data and finally, conclusions are formed by the researcher to try to show that their explanations for the findings are supported by the data (Slavin, 2007).

3.2.2 Methodology

There are different methodologies that researchers use when conducting research, and they include qualitative, quantitative and mixed forms of inquiry Anderson (1998). Qualitative research is a form of inquiry that explores phenomena in their natural settings and uses multi-methods to interpret,

understand, explain and bring meaning to them (Anderson, 1998). It is different to quantitative research which is used by positivists, who use scientific methods to prove or disprove hypotheses in search for the “truth” (Anderson, 1998). Mertens & McLaughlin (2004) echo this claim when stating that quantitative research is rooted in the positivist/post-positivist paradigm which holds that the purpose of research is to develop our confidence that a claim about a phenomenon is true or false by collection evidence in the form of objective observation of relevant phenomena. Qualitative research on the other hand is an approach to research that uses methodologies designed to provide rich, contextualised picture of a social phenomenon (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). According to Slavin (2007), in quantitative research numeric data are collected and statistically analysed, whereas qualitative research emphasizes elaborate description of social or instructional settings.

My study is a qualitative research which utilizes a case study approach. I have opted for a qualitative methodology because I intend to explore phenomena, (SGBs), in their natural settings and I will be able to use multi-methods, i.e. interviews, observations and document reviews, which will enable me to interpret, understand, explain and bring meaning to them (Anderson, 1998). I have opted for a case study approach because I will be studying the particularity and complexity of two SGBs, coming to understand their activities within important circumstances, in this case, the SGB roles in addressing issues of democracy and social justice (Stake,1995). According to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007), a case study provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand how ideas and abstract principles can fit together. In this study I will be working with real people, SGB members, trying to understand how they address issues of democracy and social justice. I will use what Slavin (2007) calls an observational case study which focuses on particular people in the organization (SGBs) of the two schools, which will provide the most useful data about the role of SGBs in addressing issues of democracy and social justice in schools. A case study is appropriate for this study because it will provide me an opportunity to study the two SGBs in some depth (Bell, 2005). Bell (2005) however notes the disadvantage of a case study for the fact that it studies a single event, which makes it difficult for the researcher to cross-check information. One challenge of case studies is determining which data from the case will be most representative (Slavin, 2007). To elaborate on this point, the challenge could be that the documents that I will review may not reveal the most essential information as well as that the most talkative members of the SGBs during focus groups or observations may not have the essential knowledge that I need (Slavin, 2007). This challenge will be overcome by the use of more than one methods of data collection.

3.3 Paradigms in research

Guba and Lincoln (1989) describes a paradigm as a basic set of beliefs, a set of assumptions we are willing to make, which serve as touchstones in guiding activities. According to Mertens (1998) there are three paradigms in which researchers can opt to position themselves, i.e. Positivism/Post – positivism, Constructivism and the Critical theory. Mason (2002), states that a researcher cannot be a neutral collector of information about the social world, and so, qualitative research speaks of data generation. It is thus imperative that a researcher opts for an appropriate method of data generation. For this purpose, I have positioned myself within the interpretive/constructive paradigm. Each of the three research paradigms listed above will be discussed briefly in the following paragraph before a detailed discussion of research paradigm I have chosen.

Within the Positivism/Post-positivism paradigm researchers believe that the social world can be studied in the same way as the natural world. As opposed to the Constructivists, who believe that values which influence the researcher should be made explicit, positivists believe that the methods of studying the social world should be value-free (Mertens, 1998).

This is a qualitative study utilising a case study approach. Due to the nature of my questions I will locate myself within the interpretivist paradigm which will be discussed in the following section. Within this paradigm, researchers use strategies that allow them to get the feeling, opinions and views of the participants, e.g. interviews, document reviews and observations.

3.3.1 Ontology, Epistemology and Methodology

Ontology, Researchers within this paradigm believe that reality is socially constructed and as a result there are many ways of viewing the world, i.e. there are multiple realities that are there.

Epistemology: They hold the assumption that knowledge is socially constructed by those in the research process and that it is the duty of the researcher to understand the complex experiences from the point of view of the participants (Mertens, 1998).

Methodology: Constructivists use qualitative methods in order to gauge perceptions of participants. Methods widely used in constructivism are observations, interviews and document analysis (Mertens, 1998, Robson, 2002, Denscombe, 1988). Mertens (1998) argues that these methods are

applied in correspondence with an assumption about social constructions of reality in that research can be conducted only through interaction between and among investigators and respondents. Constructivists use flexible questions in order to change them according to the nature of the interview. Constructivism is relevant for this study because I interacted with the interviewees, which allowed me the opportunity to probe further and or rephrase the questions where it was deemed necessary.

Within this paradigm researchers use strategies that allow them to get the feeling, opinions and views of the participants, e.g. interviews, document reviews and observations. These methods allowed me to engage the participants in the manner that allowed for asking follow-up questions where necessary. Mertens (1998:14), argues that these strategies are applied in correspondence with the assumption about social construction of reality in that research can be conducted only through interaction between and among investigators and respondents. The study was conducted in two particular primary schools where an in-depth approach was used to get the perceptions of different SGB members regarding the role of SGBs in addressing issues of democracy and social justice. Interviews are appropriate for this study since it requires face-to-face discussions with participants in order to get their views and feelings on the subject.

I used a case study approach for this study. I opted to use this approach because it allows the researcher to study a specific case, collect data analyze and interpret findings within their context and report results (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The intention of this study is to study two specific cases (SGBs of two primary schools).

The case study is convenient for this study because I was dealing with a small sample of participants, using methods that produced rich and authentic data. It can be argued that interviewing two SGBs from two different schools provided me with a wide range of responses which provided a good understanding of the way SGB members perceive their role in addressing issues of democracy and social justice. Document analysis is another method of data collection used in case studies. With the permission from the principals of the two schools, I scrutinised documents such as the SGB minute books and SGB registers from each school. This gave me an idea of general issues that are discussed in SGB meetings.

3.4 Data generating instruments

For this study I used three methods, namely: semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, observations and document reviews as methods of data generation.

3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews give researchers the opportunity to follow up ideas and probe responses which provides more detailed information (Taylor, 2006). Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to use a list of prompts she or he wishes to explore (Taylor, 2006). In this study, semi-structured interviews were used with the principals of the two schools. The purpose of using interviews is to find out what is in the mind of a person, in other words, the perspectives of a person are being gauged. Robson (2002 p. 272) outlines the advantages and disadvantages of interviews by stating that face to face interviews enables the researcher to change his or her way of asking questions in order to probe deeper when necessary. Interviews also provide a high quality data and non-verbal cues help the researcher in understanding verbal responses (Robson, 2002). On the other hand, Robson (2002) argues that interviews are time-consuming and because they lack standardization it is not easy to rule out bias.

3.4.2 Focus groups

De Vos (2002), states that participants for focus groups are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the focus group. A focus group is relevant for this study because I intended to find out what the participants really thought and felt regarding the role of SGBs in addressing issues of democracy and social justice (De Vos, (2002). The advantage of using group interviews is that group interviews can develop rich discussions, often generating a wider range of responses than interviews (Taylor, 2006). According to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007), focus groups are contrived settings, bringing together a specifically chosen sector of the population, in this case the two SGBs, to discuss a particular theme or topic. The topic that was discussed in the case of this study was, “The role of SGBs in addressing issues of democracy and social justice”. The interaction of the group, i.e. SGB members, led to intended data or outcomes (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

3.4.3 Observations

Certain kinds of research questions can be best answered by observing how people act or how things look (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990). My participant observation was overt, (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990), since the SGB members already knew who I was and the intentions of me being there. Apart from the interviews, I was able to observe the SGBs from the two case study schools while they conducted their meetings. In this case I was a non-participant observer and observed how the SGB meetings were conducted and observed the members' behaviours during these meetings (Fraenkel & Wallen,

(1990). While observing during these meetings I kept my research questions in mind in order to link them to the observations I was able to make (Mason, 2000). Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007) state that observations enable researchers to understand the context of programmes, see things that might be unconsciously missed and discover things that participants might not freely talk about in interview situations. As much as this method can arguably be easy to use, Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007) caution that problems might arise when the researcher has to decide how much to record and in what form. During the SGB meetings, the observations will helped me to observe the SGB members interacting without me asking them any questions. This gave me a clear indication of who the active participants were, in SGB meetings and those who were passive.

3.4.4 Document reviews

Bell (1999), states that most educational projects will require amongst other things, analysis of school documentation such as minutes from meetings, policies, attendance registers, etc. Slavin (2007), states that, documents, e.g. minute books, produced by key participants in the events being studied, form an important form of data in a qualitative research. With the permission of the school principals, I perused documents such as the SGB minute book and the SGB register from each school. This gave me an idea of which topics get discussed and the input made by the parent representatives in these meetings as well as to track their attendance record. The documentary review in this study was used to supplement information obtained by other methods, i.e. interviews and observation (Bell 2005). Reviewing such documents helped me to check the reliability of evidence obtained by interviews because some information that might not have be revealed in interviews was obtained when I reviewed the SGB minute books and registers (Bell, 2005). To echo this point Stake (1995) states that, when reviewing documents a researcher needs to have an organized and open mind for unexpected clues. The documents that I reviewed were not older than five years in order to capture the perceptions of the current SGB members.

3.5 Sampling

The sample in this study was selected using purposeful/purposive sampling because the two schools that were used in this study are rural primary schools, and therefore build up a sample that is satisfactory to the needs of this study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The two schools also represent typical cases in the programme, i.e. SGBs of two rural primary schools (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). Gay & Airasian (2000) state that it is important for qualitative researchers to understand the setting studied, and therefore, qualitative researchers typically deal with small purposefully selected samples that can enrich the data. School governing bodies from the two

schools were used in the study. The sample, SGBs from the two case study schools, i.e. the principals, four teachers and four parents provided me with data and ideas that advanced my understanding of the perceptions of SGB members about their roles in school governance (Mason, 2002). The educators and principals of the two case schools were interviewed separately. The remaining SGB members (four parents from each school) were interviewed as a focus group. As mentioned earlier, documents such as registers of SGBs and minute books of the SGB meetings were perused. The two SGBs were also observed separately while conducting their meetings. This provided me with a rich and authentic data that can be cross – checked, which gave the study reliability and trustworthiness.

3.6 Triangulation

According to De Vos (2002), triangulation of methods means mixing qualitative and quantitative styles of research and data because two methods or styles have different, complementary strengths. I used interviews, (semi-structured interviews and focus groups), observations and documents analysis to ensure that data generated is reliable and rich, as triangulation allows researchers to be more confident of their results (De Vos, 2002). The advantages of using triangulation are that results from divergent results from multi-methods can lead to an enriched explanation of the research problem and may also serve as the critical test, by virtue of its comprehensiveness, for competing theories (De Vos, 2002).

3.7 Data analysis

For this study data was analysed according to Giorgi, *et al.* (1975) phenomenological steps. These steps include: to read each transcript to get an overall sense of the whole; the second step involves to re-read the transcripts and, identify transactions in the experience (each transition signifying separate unit of meaning.); the third step is to eliminate redundancies in the units of meaning and begin to relate the remaining units to one another; fourthly, transform the participants' language into the language of science; lastly, synthesize the insights into a description of the entire experience of leadership practices. Suggestions from Bell (2005) were utilised to analyse data. The following steps were followed: all data was recorded as soon as they were available; similarities were identified; codes were used for data and data was then interpreted (Bell, 2005). Mertens &

McLaughlin (2004) suggest the following steps in analysing data: study all data seeking for similarities, differences, correspondence and themes; transcribe data from field notes or audiotapes, divide data into small meaningful units, identify emerging themes. Freeman (1998) in Taylor, Wilkie & Baser (2000) identifies four activities that are necessary to data analysis, i.e. naming, grouping, finding relationships, interpreting and displaying data.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Most educational case data gathering involves at least a small invasion of personal privacy (Stake, 1998) and therefore researchers need permission to gain access to the site, i.e. two public state schools for this study. Ethical clearance has already been granted by University of KwaZulu-Natal for me to conduct the study. The two case study schools used in this study are public state schools and I sought permission from the school principals, as gate keepers, as well as the Department of Education to conduct the study. Neuman (2003) advises that informed consent to participate in the study must be sought. Finally I sought permission from the other SGB members to participate in the study. Consent forms were explained to all the participants before they signed them.

3.9 Issues of trustworthiness

Bassey (1999) mentions that trustworthiness is an alternative to validity and reliability in checking the authenticity of the data collected. One of the questions a researcher needs to answer according to (Bassey 1999), is whether data have been adequately checked with the sources. Since some data was translated from isiZulu to English, I ensured that the quality of translation was accurate and meaningful by sending each interviewee a copy of the translation for verification (Maxwell, 2005). This gave the interviewees a chance to decide whether there were some parts of the interview they feel should not be used in the study. According to La Banca (2010), trustworthiness of a qualitative study can be increased by maintaining high credibility and objectivity. Further, La Banca defines trustworthiness as a demonstration that evidence for results reported is sound and when the argument made based on the result is strong. Mauthner & Doucet (2003), cited in La Banca (2010) argue that trustworthiness of interpretations and findings are dependent on being able to demonstrate how they were reached. The arguments cited above emphasise the importance of the quality of the data

obtained and the reliability of the instruments used in collecting the data. The arguments also emphasise the importance of verifying the data with the participants or sources before using them in the study.

3.10 Limitations of the study

The two case study schools are situated in two different areas. This caused problems in terms of time constraints. Lots of travelling was required which made the whole exercise to be quite expensive. Some participants did not honour the sessions which meant travelling to the schools more than once which again became expensive. I used the funds that I had received from the NRF to overcome the issue expenses related to this study. Other SGB members seemed reluctant to participate in the study which could compromise the validity of the study, should I have failed to convince them. One way of convincing them was that of assuring them that the study is solely for my Masters degree and that the findings thereof will be used only for that purpose.

3.11 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the research design and methodology that will be used in this study. It further discussed the research paradigms, data collection instruments and procedures. Finally, it discussed sampling, issues of validity, reliability, trustworthiness as well as limitations to this study. The next chapter will present and discuss the data collected for this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the research design and methodology in this study. This chapter intends to present data and discuss the findings. The data presented and discussed in this chapter was generated through interacting with the participants from Crocodile River Primary School and Black Forest Primary School. The names of schools as well as the participants are all pseudonyms. Methods that were used to generate data were interviews, document analysis as well as observations. The participants included parents from the SGBs in the two schools, the teachers serving on the SGBs as well the principals of the two schools. In addition, I wanted to ensure that the voices of the participants were not lost and therefore I include verbatim quotations in the data presentation. The themes that emerge from the presented data are then discussed in terms of the research questions outlined in Chapter One and the literature and theoretical frameworks outlined in Chapter Two.

4.2 Discussion of findings

4.2.1 The SGBs understandings in promoting democracy and social justice in the school

Most participants have a fair understanding of their role as SGB members in promoting democracy and social justice in their schools. It emerged from the participants that the role of the SGB in promoting democracy and social justice is to ensure maximum participation by all stakeholders as well as to enable freedom of choice and freedom of speech for all stakeholders. Mr Nduku principal of Crocodile River Primary School said the following:

The SGB must play a major role in school governance. By that I mean that according to the South African constitution, all institutions, including schools, must uphold democratic principles like ensuring maximum participation by all.

The same stance was taken by Mr Nhlabi, the chairperson of Crocodile River Primary School, who had this to say:

As the chairperson of the SGB I must work together with the parents. I must make sure that the parents work hand in hand with the teachers and the principal. This is important because the school belongs to the community, parents of the learners and the staff. In the past parents just left everything to the principal and teachers to do all the job, but today we must work together to see schools going forward and raising the future leaders of South Africa.

Mrs Mdluli, an educator at Black Forest Primary School, said the following:

The SGB must play a major role in ensuring that everybody's rights are respected in the school. If this happens the parents will feel that they are important stakeholders in their children's education. The SGB must make sure that there is harmony between the parents, teachers and the learners.

The participants also emphasised the need for the SGBs to encourage parents to attend parents' meetings as well as volunteer their services to the school. This is in line with the expectation stated in the South African Schools' Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) as one of the SGB duties which is "to encourage parents, learners, educators and other staff at the school to render voluntary services to the school". A similar stance is taken by Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009) when they mention volunteering by parents in a variety of activities aimed at meeting the needs of the school. The participants also accentuated the fact that the SGB must play an important role in ensuring that parents do not only attend meetings, but participate during meetings by raising their opinions on school related matters. To support this claim, Mr Bika an educator at Crocodile River Primary School said:

As the SGB we give parents and teachers a chance to voice their opinions and views. Parents are not only encouraged to attend meetings but to be active participants in these

meetings because after all these are their own children, so they must play an important role in the running of the school.

All the participants also maintain that the mistakes of the past regime which resulted in social injustices such as sexism and unequal opportunities have to be addressed by the SGBs through the promotion of social justice in schools. The examples of such social injustices that were used by some participants were unfair discrimination of some groups of people because of their gender. Mr Mdunge, chairperson of Black Forest Primary School had this to add:

The SGBs must make sure that women are given a fair chance to participate in different school related activities these days. They must be given a chance to perform important roles such as to be school principals, chairpersons of SGBs and so forth. This will correct the unfair procedures that we had in the past.

The issue of ownership of schools by communities in which they exist was also mentioned as one of the roles of the SGB in promoting democracy. This they maintain is important because public schools belong to the communities in which they exist. Therefore, SGBs should make sure that the wider community gets involved in the school, whether they have learners in that school or not. There are many benefits of schools collaborating with the communities. Through such collaborations teachers become aware of the many hidden resources in the community, which can be used to enhance their teaching task (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009).

Mr Ndlovu, parent at Crocodile River Primary School said the following:

The community must understand that the school is theirs. It is the duty of the SGB to encourage the members of the community to be part of the school. The neighbours of the school must keep an eye on the school premises. If, for instance they see that the gates were

left open, they must tell the member of the SGB closest to them.

Stakeholder involvement was emphasized by most participants as a crucial factor in promoting democracy in schools. According to Mr Nhlaba, SGB chairperson of Crocodile Rive Primary School this is important because:

Today we must work together to see schools going forward and raising the future leaders of South Africa. So, everybody, women, men and the youth must be involved.

A similar view was held by Miss Ncama an educator at Black Forest Primary School who said:

If parents of our learners are involved in the day-to-day running of the school, problems such as bad behavior, absenteeism and truancy would be curbed. Learners need to see that their parents are part of the school and communicate with the principal and educators. So, the SGB must make sure that educators and parents work as a team.

These views coincide with Singh and Mbokodi (2004) who posit that “Parents as part of a larger society constitute a significant section of the community pertaining to educational matters” and therefore should be involved in school matters. The same stance was taken by Mr Nhlaba, the chairperson of Crocodile River Primary School, who had this to say:

As the chairperson of the SGB I must work together with the parents. I must make sure that the parents work hand in hand with the teachers and the principal. This is important because the school belongs to the community, parents of the learners and the staff.

The above responses relate to what is stated in the preamble of South African Schools’ Act (SASA), which is that SGBs must redress the past injustices such as sexism and other forms of unfair discrimination in educational provision as well as to advance the democratic transformation of society (South African Schools’ Act, 1996). It can be argued then, that if injustices such as sexism are eliminated, social oppression where one group, whether knowingly or unconsciously, exploits

another group will be a thing of the past (Adams, Bell and Griffin (1997). Mr Nduku of Crocodile River Primary School maintains the same view when he says the following:

The SGB must change the mistakes of the past regime where some people were viewed to be inferior to the others, for example the women in the past were not allowed to hold certain positions or do certain jobs, we must correct that now.

The participants from Crocodile River Primary School all mentioned the fact that both HoDs at their school are females. They also mentioned that in the past two SGBs the chairpersons were females. Sports were another factor that the participants mentioned as a way of discouraging gender discrimination. According to the participants from Crocodile River Primary School, learners at their school are allowed to participate in any sports code they would like to engage in, e.g. the school has a girls' soccer team.

The participants' responses were in agreement with the evidence that I established from the documents that I reviewed. The minute books of both schools presented among other things, issues that dealt with involvement of the local councilor in the safety and security of the school. The local Health Department officials were also involved in the life of Crocodile River Primary School where they visited the school to give talks to the children and left samples of toothpaste and tooth brushes for all the learners. This is in line with the stance taken by authors such as Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009) who say that in collaborating with the community, the school identifies and integrates resources and services from the community to strengthen the school programmes, which may include making use of community expertise in matters such as health, culture, business and recreation.

My take to the participants' responses was that most of them have a fair understanding of the role that the SGBs should play in promoting democracy and social justice in schools. As mentioned earlier, most participants mentioned that the SGB must ensure maximum participation by all

stakeholders. They also suggested that the wider community needs to take ownership of the schools. Injustices such as gender discrimination were also mentioned by the participants. What stands out from their responses is that they are aware of democratic principles and they also understand that in a democratic society people should be guided by these principles when interacting with their fellow citizens. I also noted that the participants understand that injustices such as sexism, which is a form of unfair discrimination have no place in a democratic society. They seem to agree with the fact that people should be considered for positions because of their expertise and not because of their gender. In a nut shell, the participants seemed to understand that the SGB should function as an instrument of change in schools bringing into being the kind of society that is envisaged in the SASA.

4.2.2 How the SGBs ensure that democratic principles are upheld in the schools

The majority of the participants were confident that democracy and democratic principles in general were upheld in their schools. Mr Landa, principal of Black Forest Primary School implied that it is the duty of the principal to “keep his / her finger on the pulse” when it comes to ensuring that democratic principles are upheld in the school. This is what he said:

I exercise an open door policy to everyone, staff, learners and parents. They all understand that they form the important components of the school. This has taught the SGBs, current and past that they must uphold democratic principles. The important stakeholders who, are the parents, are encouraged to volunteer their services in the SGB, also to be actively involved in the education of their children. To ask questions when they do not understand things, I mean we speak isiZulu at this school so they must not be intimidated.

His response claims that the other SGB members need to follow his democratic leadership style in

order to ensure that democratic principles are upheld in the school. His response shows that he is not intimidated by parents who ask questions with regards to the running of the school. It could be argued as well that by encouraging parents to participate in school related activities, such as volunteering their services and serving on the SGB, parents acquire various skills as well as gain self-development.

Mr Nhlaba the chairperson of Crocodile River Primary School claims to have *‘‘grown as a person in areas of conducting meetings as well as speaking to people’’*. Although he raised the fact that he would be happy to receive more training as a school governor, he claims to have learnt a lot in treating other citizens with fairness as well as to understand the importance of respecting other peoples’ rights. This understanding coincides with the fact that democracy has elements or principles that guide the citizens in the way they behave as individuals or interact with fellow citizens.

Mrs Ntuli, an educator at Crocodile River Primary School was confident that democracy was used at her school when decisions were made. This is what she said:

We have educator representatives who sit in the SGB. These representatives act as a liaison between the staff and the SGB. Issues are first discussed at staff level and then taken to the SGB.

The minute books showed that during the SGB meetings, each SGB member gets a fair chance to raise issues as well as give his or her opinion during decision making. The minute book of Crocodile River Primary School had records of various members’ views or opinions, such as the idea of creating and maintaining the vegetable garden in order to help those learners from poor backgrounds. I also observed an SGB session at Crocodile River Primary School. The meeting was attended by representatives of all stakeholder groups, i.e. parents, educators and the principal as ex officio member. All the SGB members had copies of a written agenda. The chairperson allowed

the members to peruse the agenda and add any items they would wish to add before the commencement of the meeting. This was quite different from what I observed at Black Forest Primary School where only the principal had the copy of the agenda. He then read out the items as they appeared in the agenda. No invitation was made to the SGB members to approve the agenda before the commencement of the meeting. The agenda was divided into three slots, i.e. items to be presented by the chairperson, the principal and the senior clerk of the school. There was not a slot allocated to the educator representatives. In my interview with the principal of Black Forest Primary School, he mentioned that the educator representatives can raise issues under “general” in each meeting.

The above quotes put emphasis on what Mr Bika and Mr Landa believe when they argue that as SGB members they afford parents an active role in the running of the school through encouraging them to attend meetings as well as encourage parents to render their services in SGBs as well and become actively involved in the education of their children. Mr Landa, principal of Black Forest Primary School suggested that:

The important stakeholders, who are the parents, are encouraged to volunteer their services in the SGB, also to be actively involved in the education of their children.

Miss Zuma an educator at Black Forest Primary School maintains that:

Learners whose parents are actively involved in the school tend to do well academically. If the parents do not come to school to speak to teachers, learners misbehave because they know that there is no communication between the school and the home.

Based on the participants’ responses, I was able to make a conclusion that the SGBs enforce democratic principles in the day- to- day running of the schools by maximizing participation by all stakeholders as well as making the parents to see themselves as the important component of the

school. The participants seemed to understand that involving parents in the schools could have a positive impact on the life of the school. Mr Bika an educator at Crocodile River Primary School said that *“as the SGB we give the parents a chance to voice their views and opinions”*

The SGB members who were interviewed do not seem to be shy to interact with the parents. They claim to be willing to engage parents at all levels in order to identify those parents who might have relevant expertise and experiences which might be useful to them as governors when running the schools. Mr Landa principal of Black Forest Primary School emphasized that *“parents must ask questions when they do not understand”*

Recent literature such as Mncube (2010) suggest that if parent representatives in SGBs are actively involved and fully understand their role in school governance, they can have a positive impact on the entire parent body by motivating them to be actively involved in other aspects of the school. Further, Hill and Taylor (2004) argue that parental involvement promotes positive academic experiences and has positive effects on parents’ self-development and parenting skills. The similar view is held by Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009) who suggest that schools and families share responsibilities for the socialization of the child.

4.2.3 The social justice issues that the SGB address in the schools

The participants’ responses on the social justice issues the SGB addresses ranged from ensuring the well-being of the learners, especially those from poor backgrounds to ensuring that all social groups are treated with respect and dignity. These learners, the participants felt, are SGBs responsibility and educators need to make their plight known to the SGB so that they can receive help where possible. Mr Ndlovu, a parent representative in the Crocodile River Primary School’s response on

this issue was:

The SGB in our school has to ensure the well-being of the all the children in the school. Children must not come to school hungry or dirty. If that happens the teachers must inform us and we will deal with that issue.

SGB members must also make sure that all social groups are treated with respect and dignity in the school and that no group oppresses the other. Reference was made to the way learners are treated when it comes to performing chores or duties in the school. Mr Bika, an educator from Crocodile River Primary School mentioned the importance of treating all social groups with respect and fairness. This is what he had to say:

We ensure that the learners in this school are treated the same, boys and girls. When it comes to things like cleaning the school, any learner does that job, it's not a girls' job at all.

Mr Bika further mentioned the issue of affirming female staff members as an important factor in addressing issues of social justice in schools when he added that:

When it comes to affirming female teachers, only the principal holds a management position in this school. His HoDs are both females.

The educators maintained that posts in their school are not allocated according to gender. Also the matter of promoting educators to higher positions is done according to the skills that people have not according to gender. In addition, Mr Bika also said:

Even when it comes to class allocation we don't consider gender, we identify the expertise each educator has to offer and place him or her in the relevant grade

Mr Ndlovu's perception shows an understanding of the SGB as a constituency that needs to address the socio-economic imbalances of the past that were caused by the apartheid system. This is clear

when he posits that learners from poor backgrounds need help from the school through the SGB. In our focus group interview he mentioned that the previous School Committees, which were not democratically elected, were mainly concerned with disciplining the learners instead of helping them. Most learners, in rural areas come from poverty stricken backgrounds because the parents are either unemployed or they earn very meager salaries because of lack of necessary skills or education, which is the bad legacy of the apartheid system in South Africa. He understands that it is the duty of the SGB to “contribute to the eradication of poverty” in the school as stated in the preamble of the SASA (South African Schools’ Act No 84, 1996).

A claim was made by Mr Nhlaba, the chairperson of Crocodile River Primary School, that all social groups are considered when elections for SGB members are done. According to him “*women, young members as well as people living disabilities*” have been given a chance to serve in the SGB. His exact words were that “*the two past SGB chairpersons have been ladies and his deputy in the current SGB is a woman.*” He also mentioned that they make sure that a “*wide range of age groups are considered for SGB members.*” This, according to Mr Nhlaba, helps to strengthen the SGB because the younger generation is more educated and the older generation brings in experience. Mr Nhlaba himself is living with a physical disability and this shows that the SGB of this school does not ignore people living with disabilities. Martin (1999) corroborates the above quotes, when he says that it can be argued then, that with more effort put on maximising parental involvement in school related activities such as participating in SGBs, social injustices which may result in subordination or exclusion can be curbed. It can be argued then that what Martin (2009) means here, is that maximum participation by all stakeholders will eliminate the problem of some social groups such as women, being sidelined by their male counterparts. Adams, Bell and Griffin (1997) claim that, social justice, includes a vision of society in which individuals are self-determining and interdependent. One of the participants, Mr Nhlaba, also made a similar claim when he mentioned

that serving on SGBs has helped him to grow as a person in areas of conducting meetings as well as speaking to people.

My conclusion on the participants' responses cited above is that most of them seem to have a good understanding of social injustices of the past as well as the role they need to play in correcting these mistakes. Their views show an understanding that social justice is not limited to gender discrimination but also involves catering for disadvantaged social groups such as learners from poverty stricken backgrounds. They seem to be in accordance with Martin's (1999) notion of distributing more resources of human need to those who deserve more because of their socio-economic background.

4.2.4 Policies and strategies used to address democracy and social justice in the schools

The principals and teachers of both schools were confident that they have proper policies in place which assist the SGBs to address issues of democracy and social justice. Their claim was that things in their schools are done democratically, and that educators are involved in drafting some policies. These policies, whether from the Department of Education or internally drawn, are used to address issues of democracy and social justice. Mr Nduku the principal of Crocodile River Primary School's claim was that:

We have policies that were drawn with the input from teachers and parents which are used by the SGB to execute their duties in addressing the issues of democracy and social justice. These policies help a lot when there are disagreements because the teachers signed them, and so they cannot dispute them in future.

A similar stance was taken by Mr Landa, principal of Black Forest Primary School when he said that:

Luckily we have policies in place which the SGB use when addressing issues of democracy

and social justice. This makes things easier for the SGB to perform their duties because we get guidance from the policies.

This view was supported by Mr Bika of Crocodile River Primary School who claimed that:

We have policies. These policies start with the principal who invites views from the teaching staff, the policy then is taken to the SGB and from there it is presented to the parents in the parents' meeting. We are confident that our policies are democratically adopted.

However, a contrasting view was noted from the parents' responses as well as from the documents reviewed. There were few negative cases which will be discussed later under this theme. Parent representatives from both schools were not aware of such policies though. To support this claim, when Mrs Nkukhu of Crocodile River Primary School was asked about her knowledge of any policies that the SGB use she said:

We work as a team with the principal, there is nothing written down. The principal knows better in the running of the SGB and we trust him. We all understand that the SGB meetings are led by the chairperson and the principal. I was also told that if the chairperson is absent I will act as the chairperson.

Miss Zuma a parent representative in Black Forest Primary School agreed with above claim when she said:

The only written document that I know is the minute book. I have not seen any other document, we follow the agenda for that day and brainstorm ideas to solve problems that might be brought to the meeting. We look at each issue or problem as it comes and make decisions there and then.

Although some participants did not seem to be aware of any written policy documents, it was evident that all stakeholders, teachers and parents in the SGBs had a full understanding of how

different groups were supposed to be treated in schools, which addresses the issue of democracy in the schools. All participants agreed that females are treated with respect and they are also considered for higher positions in the schools as well the positions they hold in the SGBs. It can be argued that if schools treat females with respect as well as hold significant positions, social justices of the past are being addressed. This shows that the schools have policies that they use when dealing with social justice issues. This, it can be argued, curbs the existence of institutional and the societal/cultural levels of social oppression cited by Adams, Bell and Griffin (1997). In their argument, Adams *et al* (1997), mention that application of institutional policies and procedures in an oppressive society produces oppressive consequences.

4.2.5 How SGBs promote democratic and social justice principles in the schools

There was a fair agreement by all the participants in the ways they employ to promote democracy and social justice in the SGB and the school. This was supported by my findings from the documents reviewed as well as my observations from the SGB sessions. What emerged here was the fair treatment of all stakeholders, maximum participation by all and the ability to exercise freedom of choice and freedom of speech by all stakeholders.

Mr Ndlovu and Miss Moya of Crocodile River Primary School both supported each other claiming that:

We try to balance the number of male and female members on the SGB. Females are given important roles in the SGB, for example Miss Moya is the deputy chairperson in this SGB. In the past we have had ladies chairing the SGB and they did a great job. We also have a girls' soccer team at this school. All the learners are free to participate in any sport they like, unlike in the past.

Mr Ndlovu had this to say in connection with social justice in terms of educators in the school.

Everything is on the table in this school. When it comes to the employment of new staff, everybody is free to apply, irrespective of gender. They all go through interviews and the best person gets the job. Promotions are also not automatically given to male teachers, like this year, the two HoDs are females and only the principal is a male.

A similar view was held by educators from Black Forest Primary School when it comes to promoting democracy in the school. According to Mr Mdluli, although this is a primary school, the learners are taught to participate in the running of the school by voicing out their opinions through the Grade 7 monitors. Mr Mdluli's comment was:

Learners must begin to act like responsible citizens from the primary school level. In this school we teach them to democratically elect the monitors by nominating their best grade 7 representatives. As the staff we make sure that the nominations are fairly balanced between boys and girls. These monitors form small committees where views are passed on from the learners to management.

Freedom of choice as democratic principle was used by Mrs Nkukhu of Crocodile River Primary School when she commented on the issue of the educators' dress code. It was mentioned in the interview session that since this is a rural primary school, some parents were not happy with female educators wearing pants at school, but the matter was amicably resolved in the end. Mrs Nkukhu's comment supported by Mr Bika was:

There was one issue of wearing trousers by female staff members. Some members of the community and some parents were not happy with this. The matter was first discussed by the staff and the staff representative on the SGB was mandated to raise the issue in the SGB session. Luckily they listened to our view and the SGB presented the issue to the whole parent body

This is in line with the fact that democracy as a theory has elements or principles that guide the citizens in the way they behave as individuals or interact with fellow citizens (South African Schools' Act 84 of 1996). From the above quote we can see a classic example of a certain group of people being taught that in a democratic environment they need to behave in a way that does not interfere with their fellow citizens rights which is stipulated by SASA. It is also addressing the issue of social injustice of the past where women were dictated to by the society as to how they are supposed to behave or carry themselves in communities.

4.2.6 The role played by SGB members in ensuring that parents have a valued say in the decisions made by the SGBs

All the participants mentioned parental involvement activities such as serving on the SGB as well as forming committees as major tools of ensuring that parents have a valued say in decision-making. However, the common concern from the majority of the participants was that it is difficult to involve all the parents in decision-making. This is what Mr Ndlovu the parent of Crocodile River Primary School said:

We encourage parents to take part in meetings and talk. They are the owners of the school. It's their voice that should count, this is their children's education. But they don't want to participate.

His view was reiterated by Mr Nhlaba chairperson of the SGB at Crocodile River Primary School who said that *"Sometimes parents send older children to these meetings and children are not able to give opinions or ask important questions, they are just there to listen "In such cases it becomes hard to make decisions.*

In addition, Miss Ncama the educator at Black Forest Primary School felt that some parents lack the interest to participate in school related activities when she said, *"you will find that they are not*

interested in attending meetings”, which eventually becomes a problem for the SGB.

Hall and Engelbrecht (1999) assert that parents need to be involved in their children’s education and this involvement must include insight into their children’s progress, decision – making and being critical of information on educational issues. It is for this notion that the SASA put in place a constituency in the form of SGBs as a tool to launch democratic transformation in South African schools. The SGB as a representative of parents must assume the responsibility to ensure that parents have a say in decisions made by the school governors and that their views are taken into account. The common response from all participants in this regard was parental involvement through parents’ meetings. Most participants emphasized that parents need not only attend parent meetings, but they should be there to be active participants and give their opinions. Although all participants raised concerns that some parents do not attend meetings, they claimed to be the positive influence in encouraging parents to attend meetings and take part in decision-making. Almost all participants mentioned parental involvement as a major challenge for SGB in executing their duties. This claim was supported by numerous records of lack of parental involvement in meetings as an agenda item in the minute book of Crocodile River primary School. Nevertheless, ideas like speaking with parents in a decent manner were mentioned as one of the ways that could maximize parental involvement in parent meetings. Singh and Mbokodi (2004) imply that lack of parental involvement is a due to the fact that parents from the working class lack the required literacy levels in order to assume an active role in decision-making.

From the above responses it can be deduced that not all the parents have a valued say in decisions made by these SGBs because of the lack of parental involvement. The SGBs therefore end up making all the decisions and the parents play a role of rubber stamping the SGB’s decisions. This counteracts what Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009) suggest when they say that all parents need to be

included in decision-making through participation of parent representatives on school's governing bodies as well as the involvement of all parents in decisions that involve parents or children.

My conclusion on this matter is that the SGBs of the two schools have been placed in schools to ensure that parents in this dispensation are able to be active participants in their children's education. The SGBs seem to be playing an important role in ensuring that the parents have a valued say in the decisions made by the SGB. However, the lack of parental involvement through attending meetings has made this impossible for the SGBs of the two schools to ensure that all the parents have a valued say in decision-making in the schools (Mncube, 2010).

4.2.7 The challenges SGBs face when implementing their duties

4.2.7.1 Lack of parental involvement in school related activities

As mentioned earlier in this study, it was evident from the educators and principals of the two schools that lack of parental involvement in school related activities such as meetings, is one of the challenges that they face when they carry out their duties as SGBs. They further mentioned the fact that parents do not want to volunteer to serve on the SGBs. Mr Ndlovu of Crocodile River Primary School noted that he has been on this schools' SGB for twelve years just because people do not want to be SGB members.

4.2.7.2 Lack of discipline among educators

Another challenge that emerged from the participants' responses was lack of discipline in some learners and some educators. To support this claim this is what Miss Moya supported by the other parent representatives of Crocodile River Primary School said:

Some teachers are giving us problems, like there is a teacher at this school who does not want to work. She is always absent or late for school. This affects the teachers' work

because they must look after her class. Also when her class move up to the next grade, they are not ready, which creates problems for the next teacher. We have tried to report her to the department of education, but because of these unions nothing has been done. That's why she is still here.

I could sense great frustrations from the participants when they were talking about this educator. They were very upset and made it clear that they feel that their authority as school governors gets compromised by such educators. The main problem in this case is that learners are deprived of their right to education because they do not receive adequate teaching learning because one staff member does not want to do her job efficiently.

Mr Nduku principal of Crocodile River Primary School, echoed this claim mentioning the following:

There is a teacher who is not cooperative at all. She arrives late at school and she is frequently absent. Reporting her to the department has not helped because the unions interfere.

This claim was supported by what I learnt from document reviews when I perused the minute book of this school. The issue of educator absenteeism appeared in a couple of minutes and the feedback from the principal was that the letter has been forwarded to the Department but he has not received any positive reply, so his hands are tied.

4.2.7.3 Lack of discipline among some learners

According to some participants, not only educators or staff causes problems for the SGB, but some parents of learners do create challenges for the SGB. This emanates from the lack of interest in attending parents' meetings where important decisions are taken. Parents who are not abreast with all the policies of the school end up defying these policies because they are not aware of them. This point was made by Miss Ncama, an educator at Black Forest Primary School when she said:

When the school implements what the SGB has suggested they have a problem. I can give

you one example of a boy who does not listen to anybody. It came to the point where he was suspended for his bad behaviour. The parent of this boy came to the school complaining that his child was treated unfairly. But the point is he does not understand the code of conduct because he is not interested in his schools' education.

Some participants mentioned that there are educators who tend to be a law unto themselves in the school and show no respect for authority. In such instances the principal takes the matter to the SGB to resolve it. Most SGB members mentioned that it becomes almost impossible for them to discipline such educators because the unions interfere with their work.

Mr Nduku, principal of Crocodile River Primary School agreed with the fact that some educators are problematic at times. He used an example that he was faced with at that stage, i.e. appointing a new HoD as the previous one had resigned. According to him there were subtle contestations for the post, but some educators who felt they were the appropriate candidates were did not have the necessary expertise. He also claimed that when it comes to new appointments problems arise because:

People come with their own agendas, e.g. a particular person has been recruited and some people do not like him or her. What helps in that regard is that we have policies in place. To resolve such matters we stick to the relevant policy because staff was involved in their development and so they can't dispute them.

I noted a negative case in the participants' responses to this question because Mr Nhlaba, the SGB person claimed there were no challenges faced by the SGB when executing their duties. His comment was that "*there are no challenges so far, parents usually accept the decisions made by the SGB*".

There was quite a difference between the two schools in this matter. Mr Landa, principal of Black Forest Primary School, claimed that he does not experience the problems that some principals

experience in terms of insubordination by staff members. According to him no major challenges were experienced by the SGB when they carried out their duties. On this matter he claimed that:

When it comes to issues that concern staff the matter is discussed in the staff meeting. Sometimes matters need to be resolved by a vote. The suggestions that are made in these meetings are taken to the SGB by the educator representative. This eliminates problems because the staff gets an opportunity to have a say in a relaxed non-threatening forum. The SGB discusses the issue and made a final decision.

4.2.7.4 Problems faced by the SGB when implementing policies

As mentioned earlier in this study Miss Ncama the educator at this school however had an opposing view on the matter. She was concerned with the parents of learners with behavior problems who do not want to conform to the school rules. According to her claim, the parents of such learners are the ones who do not attend meetings. Because of that they are not aware of the resolutions that are taken by the SGB, e.g. forms of punishment to be administered by the teaching staff to learners with behavior problems. She further maintained that such parents disadvantage themselves as stakeholders because they are left out in decision making and do not know enough about how their children's school functions. This is what she claimed in her response:

The SGB is faced with major challenges when it comes to implementing things or carry-out their duties. For instance you will find that they are not interested in attending meetings. When the school implements what the SGB has suggested they have a problem.

This claim showed that there is lack of communication between the SGB, school and some parents. The SGB faces a huge challenge first in communicating with all the parents as well as in carrying out their duties. This works against what Lemmer (2000) describes as a democratic education,

where stakeholders, parents, students and teachers are allowed involvement in some way in the school management. Parents such as the one used in the quote above make it almost impossible for the SGB to execute their duties effectively. Such parents also counteract the implication made by Mncube (2009), which is the fact that all stakeholders decide on school policies which affect the education of their children. The behavior of these parents also impede what Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) put forward as a benefit of involving parents when they claim that parent leaders can provide input into school policies on both local and national levels. The parent used in the above quote does not even know the code of conduct of his child's school, and in that way he behaves inappropriately when aspects of the schools' code of conduct are implemented to discipline his son. This poses a huge challenge for the SGB because their decision gets disputed by a parent who does not attend parent meetings. Further it hinders the SGB from carrying out one of their duties which is to adopt a code of conduct for the learners at the school. By this I mean that even though the code of conduct has been drawn by the SGB, if some parents are going to dispute it or aspects of it, it becomes null and void.

Some of the functions of the SGB in public schools are to promote the best interest of the school and strive for its development through quality education as well as to support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions (SASA, 1996). Quality education can be possible if all the stakeholders in the education system perform their duties efficiently. If educators do not fulfill their role it can be argued that schools will not provide an education of high quality that is envisaged by SASA.

SGBs therefore have to play a pivotal in ensuring that all stakeholders in schools work harmoniously to make sure that the schools as institutions are run professionally and that teamwork is maintained. It is the duty of the SGBs to act as a unifying agent between the important constituents of the school, i.e. parents, educators and learners.

My take on this theme is that the SGBs are faced with challenges when carrying out their duties. Some of these challenges are created by some educators and some by parents. The challenges are a result of lack of awareness of school policies and some are due to some stakeholders being insubordinate to the authority of the school. The data presented above shows that the challenges vary from issues that could be easily resolved through policies to issues that compromise the SGB's authority as a constituency placed in schools by the SASA to ensure a democratic society within the schools. I also noted that some participants were down playing the fact that they do face challenges as SGBs when implementing their duties. This was due to the contrasting views between some participants. This was evident when Mr Landa acknowledged no challenges but his sentiments were not shared by one of the educators in the same school. Mr Nhlaba's response was another negative case when he said there were no challenges so far. This is a direct contrast to what the principal of the same school and another parents said. Mr Ndlovu, Miss Moya and Mr Nduku all mentioned insubordinate educator(s) and staff members who try to dispute decisions that have been made by the SGB. Their claim was validated by the records in the minute book of items referring to a teacher who tended to be insubordinate in the school.

Parental involvement in the form of SGBs was put in place to strengthen partnerships between schools, homes and the community at large. These partnerships were intended to ensure good relationships as well as maximum participation by all stakeholders in education. Griffiths (2003) claim that policy makers often give the impression that partnerships can be made to work easily, which is not entirely true because partnerships do not always work well. The challenges cited above seem to justify this claim because not all parents work cooperatively with schools. Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) take the same stance when they claim that unfortunately most parent involvement in schools takes place haphazardly and is not sustained. The above view coincides with what some participants (Mr Ndlovu, parent in Crocodile River Primary School) said when they claimed that most parents do not want to volunteer their services to serve on SGBs.

4.3 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented and discussed the data generated from the two schools. It also presented the voices of participants through verbatim quotations. The participants' understanding of the role of SGBs in promoting democracy and social justice were scrutinized. The findings made in this study suggest that the Department has succeeded in establishing democratic structures in the form of SGBs, whose mandate is to represent all stakeholders in schools. However, more still needs to be done to ensure that SGBs become effective structures in addressing issues of democracy and social justice in schools. It could be suggested as well that all SGB members get adequate training on the areas of identifying social injustices in schools and possible ways of addressing them. Democratic participation seems to have been well handled in schools through SGBs, however some SGB members still need to exercise their democratic rights more.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter presented and discussed the data generated from the participants. The data generating methods were interviews, document analysis and observations. Triangulation was used to ensure the authenticity of the findings presented in this study. The themes that emerged from the presented data were then discussed in terms of the research questions outlined in Chapter One and the literature and theoretical frameworks outlined in Chapter Two. This chapter intends to present the summary and conclusions to the study as well as make relevant recommendations.

5.2 Summary of the study

Chapter One provided an introduction to the study. It also outlined a general background and overview of the key aspects of this study. The focus, purpose, motivation and rationale were presented. The key research questions were outlined as well as the research design and methodology.

Chapter Two focused on the literature and theoretical frameworks relevant to this study. This chapter examined the role of SGBs in addressing issues of democracy and social justice and the theories that underpin this study. Issues of democracy and social justice in schools both locally and internationally were discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Three discussed the research design and methodology used in this study. It further discussed paradigms in research and stated the paradigm in which this study is located. Data generating instruments, procedures and data analysis methods were also discussed. Finally, the chapter discussed the issues of trustworthiness, ethical issues as well as the limitations of this study.

Chapter Four presented data and discussed the findings. The data was generated from the participants from two primary schools. The methods used to generate data were interviews, document analysis as well as observations. The participants included parents from the SGBs in the two schools, the teachers serving on the SGBs as well the principals of the two schools. In addition, verbatim quotations were included in the data presentation. The themes that emerged from the

presented data were then discussed in terms of the research questions outlined in Chapter One and the literature and theoretical frameworks outlined in Chapter Two.

Chapter Five intends to present the summary of the study as well as the conclusions made based on the findings. Some recommendations that will assist SGBs in addressing issues of democracy and social justice in schools are also provided.

5.3 Conclusions

The following conclusions were made based on the findings:

All the SGB members have a similar understanding of the role that must be played by SGBs in addressing issues of democracy and social justice in schools. It emerged from the participants that the role of the SGB in promoting democracy and social justice is to ensure maximum participation by all stakeholders as well as to enable freedom of choice and freedom of speech for all stakeholders. These responses were talking to my first research question tabled in Chapter 1. The participants emphasised the need for the SGBs to encourage parents to attend parents' meetings as well as volunteer their services to the school which is in line with the expectation stated in the South African Schools' Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) as one of the SGB duties. However, not all parents are willing to be actively involved in school related activities, which inhibits maximum participation by all stakeholders.

The majority of participants understood and believed that democratic principles must be upheld in the schools. The principals, for example claimed that they are the key people who need to lead by example in ensuring that democratic principles are upheld in schools. All stakeholders, it was maintained by all participants, are given opportunities to participate in school related activities as well as make their voices heard by the SGBs as well as school management teams.

Another conclusion that was arrived at was the fact that the SGBs must ensure that the social injustices of the past such as, gender equity and unfair distribution of resources are addressed. Some participants felt that the plight of children from poor backgrounds is the responsibility of the SGBs. One parent representative was of the opinion that if teachers see that a particular learner comes from a poor background his or her issue must be reported to the SGB. Also the idea of the vegetable garden was the initiative of the SGB. The vegetable garden was established in order to help the learners from poor backgrounds with nourishment. It was also emphasized by the majority of the participants that no social groups must oppress other groups because of gender, race or class. They claimed that in their schools female learners as well as female members are treated with respect and

fairness. This emphasized the need for SGBs to address issues of democracy and social justice. The participants seemed convinced that it is the duty of the SGBs to address issues of democracy and social justice since they represent the other stakeholders, (children and parents). It was mentioned by one parent representative that if parent representatives played a visible and effective role in SGBs, both children and other parents would be encouraged to comply with the policies implemented by SGBs.

Both school principals claimed that their schools were guided by internally drawn policies as well as policies from the Department of education. However, it was noted that the parent representatives were not aware of some policies. They, (parents), were confident that the school principals were the key people to guide the SGBs in their activities and meetings. There was evidence of policy implementation by the two schools used in the study. Internally policies as well as policies from the Department of Education were referred to when for, example, new staff members were appointed for particular positions. This, it was argued, is one of the ways used by the two schools to curb social injustices such as discrimination.

As much as the SGBs are up and running in schools, they are still faced with challenges when they implement some policies and when they execute their duties. The challenges ranged from teacher related to parent related challenges. Teacher related challenges include insubordination by some teachers, whereas parent related challenges include lack of knowledge by parents who do not attend parents' meeting, and thus lose out on important information.

In relation to my third research question, it was evident that SGB members had had some form of training to prepare them for their expected roles. The main areas where all participants seemed to be confident in, was democratic participation. I felt that SGB members understand and have been well prepared to be active participants in school governance. However, some participants raised the point of training in some areas of school governance.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the above findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

5.4.1 Suggestions for maximum parental involvement in schools

Schools must introduce class or grade representatives which could serve in some committees. The parents from each grade could elect two representatives who are not serving on the existing SGB. These parents could assume a liaison role between the SGB and the entire parent body. This could

afford parents an opportunity to raise their opinions in a small and unthreatening environment. They could also exchange contact details where the grade representatives could cascade important information from the SGB to the parents in their grade. In this way, all parents would be more involved in school related activities. ABET classes could also be introduced in all schools to eliminate the problem of parents who lack the necessary skills that they need to serve on some school related activities such as SGBs. It can be argued that some parents, particularly in rural areas do not want to avail themselves for positions in SGBs because they are illiterate. Teaching parents to read and write could help them gain more self-confidence as well as acquire necessary skills that they need.

5.4.2 Gender equity as a social injustice issue

Some females still feel that they are inferior to their male counterparts. This is due to the socialization in some societies. This inhibits some women from competing with their male counterparts for jobs. This is sometimes evident in situations where interviews are conducted, and some females fail to “sell themselves” even if they are qualified for the job and have the necessary skills. Schools could address this issue by involving young female learners in activities such as debating and oral presentations. Female learners could also be made leaders in small committees where they will be vested with the opportunity to report back on various issues that they are involved in. This could arguably create more confident females who could serve in constituencies such as SGBs.

5.4.3 School policies

Schools must involve SGB members when drawing up internal school policies. This could be done by first giving the SGB members questionnaires with relevant information to complete. This could give the principal and SMTs the idea as to what the parents in the SGBs think in connection with various policies. The parents’ ideas could therefore be incorporated in the final policy. Policies could also be translated into isiZulu to make it easy for all the stakeholders to understand what each policy entails. Policies such as the code of conduct for learners must also be reviewed yearly and sent to each learner’s home for the parent and the learner to read and sign. This could ensure that all parents have read the policies that affect them as parents as well as their children.

5.4.5 Curbing SGB challenges

Dealing with impossible teachers in public schools is quite difficult since the process to be followed

is very long and complicated. It was mentioned earlier in this study that insubordinate teachers sometimes get away without being disciplined because they involve their unions. The Department for Education needs to assist the school managers by ensuring that problematic teachers are dealt with accordingly. This could ensure the smooth running of the school and democratic principles could be easily upheld and maintained. Parents should also help the SGBs in dealing impossible learners. If the parents are hands on in disciplining their own children, less behavior problem would be experienced in school.

5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has provided a summary of this study. It has also presented the conclusions made based on the findings and conclusions. It has further suggested recommendations which could assist the schools in making the SGBs more effective in addressing issues of democracy and social justice.

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Appendix C

**PERMISSION LETTER TO THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN
HIS/HER SCHOOL**

P.O.Box 457

Hibberdene

4220

15 September 2011

Attention: The Principal

Dear Sir / Madam

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

I am Sindisiwe Zulu, a Master in Education student in the School of Education and Development at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). As part of my study, I am conducting research on the role of school governing bodies in addressing issues of democracy and social justice. I request permission to conduct research in your school. Please be informal that I have already sought and are awaiting necessary permission from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Basic Education to conduct this research (See copy attached).

The title of my research project is: *School governing bodies in addressing issues of democracy and social justice: A case study of two rural primary schools in KwaZulu-Natal.*

This study aims to explore the perceptions of school governing body members about their roles as governors. The study will use semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, observations and documents review to generate data. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 30-40 minutes at the time and place convenient to them.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:

There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project.

Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance/s during and after the reporting process.

All your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Fictitious names will be used to respect your names.

Participation is voluntary; therefore, you are free to withdraw at any time you so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/penalty on your part.

The interview shall be voice –recorded to assist me in concentrating on the actual interview.

You will be contacted in time about the interviews.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact me using the following details: Miss S. Zulu, Tel. 031 701 5603 (W), Cell: 083 7353 334, E-mail: thandizulu09@gmail.com

The interview schedule is attached herewith for your perusal.

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance

Yours Sincerely

Miss Sindisiwe Zulu

Appendix E

REQUEST FOR YOU TO BE A PARTICIPANT IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

P.O.Box 457

Hibberdene

4220

15 September 2011

Attention: Potential participant

Dear Sir / Madam

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

I am Sindisiwe Zulu, a Master in Education student in the School of Education and Development at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). As part of my study, I am conducting research on the role of school governing bodies in addressing issues of democracy and social justice. I request permission to conduct research in your school. Please be informal that I have already sought and are awaiting necessary permission from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Basic Education to conduct this research (See copy attached).

The title of my research project is: *School governing bodies in addressing issues of democracy and social justice: A case study of two rural primary schools in KwaZulu-Natal.*

This study aims to explore the perceptions of school governing body members about their roles as governors. The study will use semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, observations and documents review to generate data. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 30-40 minutes at the time and place convenient to them.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:

There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project.

Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance/s during and after the reporting process.

All your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Fictitious names will be used to respect your names.

Participation is voluntary; therefore, you are free to withdraw at any time you so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/penalty on your part.

The interview shall be voice –recorded to assist me in concentrating on the actual interview.

You will be contacted in time about the interviews.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact me using the following details: Miss S. Zulu, Tel. 031 701 5603 (W), Cell: 083 7353 334, E-mail: thandizulu09@gmail.com

The interview schedule is attached herewith for your perusal.

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance

Yours Sincerely

Miss Sindisiwe Zulu

Appendix F

Declaration

I..... (Full name of participant)
herby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study:
School governing bodies in addressing issues of democracy and social justice: A case study of two rural primary schools in KwaZulu-Natal.

I have received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily to take part in the study.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project at any time should I so desire.

Signature of participant:.....Date.....

Signature of Witness/research Assistant.....Date.....

Thanking you in advance

Miss Sindisiwe Zulu

Appendix I

Semi – structured Interview Schedule for parent representatives on the SGB

A. Participants' biographical details

1. Gender _____
2. Age group ____ 20 – 40 _____
40 _ 60 _____
60 _ 70 _____
3. Academic qualifications _____
4. Experience in School Governance _____

B

1. How many males and females do you have in the SGB _____
2. What do you understand to be the role of the SGB in promoting democracy and social justice in the school?
3. (a) How does the SGB ensure that the democratic principles are upheld in the school?
(b) What are the social justice issues that the SGB should address?
4. What policies/strategies are there in the SGB to address issues of democracy and social justice?
5. How do you promote democracy and social justice principles in the SGB and the school?
6. What role do you as the principal representative play in ensuring that parents have a valued say in the decisions made by the SGB?
7. What are the challenges that the SGB faces as it implements/carries out its duties at the school in terms of democracy and social justice?

Thank you for your participation

Appendix J

Documents Review Schedule

The documents that will be reviewed will not be older than two years and will include:

1. Written sources such as the minute books and registers for the SGB.

The aim of reviewing the minute books of the two SGBs will be to identify the issues dealt with in SGB meetings as well as the contributions made by the parent representatives in these meetings.

2. The aim of perusing the register will be to establish the frequency of attendance or absenteeism of the parent representatives in these meetings.
3. The documents mentioned above will be used to establish the corroboration of lack of corroboration with the interviews and observations which will ensure trustworthiness of the findings. Some issues that were not mentioned in the interview sessions could be noted in these documents, thus helping me with the understanding of how these SGB meetings are conducted and whether all the SGB members are full participants.

Appendix K

Observation schedule of SGB meetings

This observation schedule is aimed at observing the formal meetings of the school governing bodies in the two case study schools. When attending the formal meetings of the SGBs I will focus on the following:

1. Which members hold significant positions, e.g. chairperson, treasurer and secretary in the SGB?
2. Is there a balance between male and female SGB members in terms of numbers?
3. The seating plan of the members in the SGB.
4. The role played by the chairperson of the SGB.
5. The speaking turns, i.e. contribution by each member of the SGB.
6. The role played by the school principals, e.g. do they tend to dominate and conduct the meeting instead of the chairperson?
7. The issues raised by the different members (particularly the parents) in the meetings.
8. The amount of time spent on issues discussed.
9. How do the SGB members arrive at conclusions on matters discussed in these meetings?
10. Are parent representatives brave to challenge issues and give their own opinions and suggestions?