

**EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF
LEARNER REPRESENTATIVES IN SCHOOL
GOVERNING BODIES**

by

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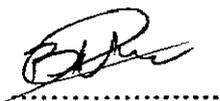
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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation *Educators' perceptions of the role of learner representatives in school governing bodies* represents my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



B A Ngcobo
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May 2003

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to:

- My wife Makhosazane
- My children Thandoluhle, Njabule, Sibusisiwe and Fakazi.

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SUMMARY

The aim of this study was to pursue an investigation into educators' perceptions of the role of learner representatives on school governing bodies.

From the literature study it became clear that educators perceive the effectiveness of learner representation on school governing bodies in various ways. Some educators regard it as a mechanism that forms a link between learners and the governance of the school. Others perceive learner governors as playing the role of an "ambassador" by making the reporting of learners' problems and suggestions to the governing body possible.

The literature review revealed that the successes of school governing bodies depend on the willingness, the sense of responsibility and full commitment of all the members. Where there is co-operation among all the members of the school governing body, educators perceive the school governing body as an creative organization. Lack of knowledge in meeting procedures and governing responsibilities, together with their minor status, can be seen as the main obstacles in the effective participation of learner governors in school governance. The effectiveness of learner representatives on the governing body is influenced largely by the latitude that adult governors allow learner governors in meaningful discussion and decision-making.

For the purpose of the empirical investigation a self-structured questionnaire, to be completed by secondary school educators, was utilised. The completed questionnaires were analysed by means of descriptive statistical methods.

In conclusion a summary was presented on the findings of the literature and empirical study and the following are some of the recommendations that were made:

- Workshops must be organised for the training of governing body members in the necessary governance skills.
- Support personnel must be made available to governing body members to assist them in acquiring relevant governing skills.
- Further research should be conducted concerning the role of learner representatives in school governing bodies.

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Democratization is a key characteristic of constitutional reform in South Africa; an important aspect of the reform process is the need for community involvement in the governance of schools (Bhengu, 1996:11). Education in the past was a legacy of the apartheid system; new legislation is being implemented to transform it in accordance with democratic values, practices and the requirements of the new constitution to promote equity, equality and democracy for all South African citizens (Lazarus, 1998:31). Democracy encompasses the rights of every citizen and this includes learners as well (Ngcobo, 1999:1). Terms like transparency, equity, stakeholder, involvement, negotiations and consultation have been introduced to ensure that every member of the society is not deprived of his rights and also to ensure that every person receives fair treatment in all social structures (O'Donnell, 1994:297). It is therefore obligatory for schools to protect, promote and fulfil the rights of all learners, for all learners have a democratic right to due process and to participate in decision-making in matters affecting them. Learners also have a right to have their views heard about matters concerning them (ELRC, 1999:2b). Education has been included in the process of democratic reform to a level where even school governance demands a high degree of inclusivity (Dimmock, 1995:23).

The South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 provides for a uniform system for the governance of schools, which requires the active and innovative participation of learners, educators, parents and other members of the community (Bhengu, 1996:1). Although different components of the school governing body have been allocated specific responsibilities, they have to function collaboratively (Zulu, 2000:33). It is also stipulated in the Act that learners from grade eight and higher should form representative councils and should be represented on school governing bodies (Lazarus, 1998:106). With learners taking part in school governance, the school's order and discipline is maintained, while learners acquire leadership skills (Thwala, 2001:6). The inclusion of learners in the governing councils fulfils the objective of the education department to expose learners to the responsibilities associated with self-government and management (Lazarus, 1998:1).

1.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

Despite legislation that mandates learner participation in school governing bodies, it is evident that some learners are still ignorant or uninformed of their rights and roles (Ngcobo, 1999:1). According to Davis (2002:22) the less sophisticated members of the school governing body lack the skills to follow the correct procedures laid down in the schools act. Lebona (2002:23) argues that decisions are made without bothering to consider the views of learners. The policies are just imposed as non-negotiable. Cole (1993:159) contends that change in education faces problems such as resistance, ignorance and arrogance. According to Ngcobo (1999:26), the relatively new stakeholders in the school governance, especially learners, do

not have adequate information concerning the role that they are expected to play as members of the school governing body. Chetty (1998:5) points out that learners are incapacitated, ill informed of their rights, and non-participative, while schools are still autocratically run. According to Phahlane (1999:2) some school governing bodies have yet to transform from their apartheid mentality to become democratic governance structures.

School governing bodies are often beleaguered with problems. Pather (1999:9) maintains that some of the problems experienced by schools since the inception of the new education dispensation can be attributed to the governance of the school. They lack either the capacity or skills to govern the schools and transform education. In many schools the functions and responsibilities of the governing body are not adequately executed by its members and they therefore fail to fulfil the important task of school governance.

Zulu (2000:4) maintains that school governing bodies often can not make decisions in an "unbiased and objective" manner. It is often difficult to prove the "subjectivity, bias and prejudice" of their decisions since the "real reasons" for the decisions are often unspoken. The functions and responsibilities are not adequately executed by the members of the school governing body due to a variety of reasons. School governors may have different perceptions and expectations of their functions and powers in school governance. These differences are often intensified by the uncertainties of members with regard to their functions and powers and their inexperience in the adequate fulfilling of their roles (Cole, 1999:4).

According to Mpungose (1999:4) school governing bodies often experience difficulties in drawing a clear-cut distinction between the domain of school management and that of school governance. Lotter (Bissety, 1997:3) says it is not always or only failure on the part of the school governing body members to understand their roles and responsibilities in school governance, but also the functional demands are sometimes beyond their capacity. Some of the functions may be so demanding that they call for a higher level of competency and skills from the members, with a higher degree of literacy, numeracy or specific training. This lack of capacity on the part of school governing bodies severely affects rural schools where people are educationally deprived in terms of formal western standards of education and some school governing body members are completely illiterate (Pillay & Yoganathan, 2000:9).

According to Zulu (2000:3) the following are, *inter alia*, some of the reasons that may contribute to the inadequate functioning of school governing bodies:

- Members have no experience of duties that are allocated to them.
- Governors' lack of experience in serving on a committee.
- Lack of adequate training to perform duties effectively.
- Frustration of members because of their inability to manage their responsibilities.

- Manipulation of members by principals or “senior” members.
- Uncertainty of members about their duties.

Thwala (2001:17) attributes the inefficiency of the learner constituent, among other things, to the following:

- Learners are not playing an active role in school governance.
- Some schools still rely on a prefect system rather than Representative Council of Learners (RCLs).
- Learners lack adequate knowledge to perform their duties.
- Learners, as minors in school governance, are manipulated by adults.
- Minors’ views are not considered seriously as they are dominated by adult constituents.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In essence, the problem that will be investigated in this study pertains to educators’ perceptions of the learners’ role in school governing bodies. Some of the questions that will be explored are:

- How do educators perceive the role of learner participation in school governance?

- What are the advantages of learner participation in school governance?
- Are there obstacles to effective learner representation on school governing bodies?

1.4 ELUCIDATION OF CONCEPTS

To clarify and effect a better understanding of the topic under investigation, the following concepts need to be elucidated:

1.4.1 Gender issue

In this study all references to any gender include references to the other gender.

1.4.2 Educator

An educator is any person that teaches, educates or trains other persons, or who provides professional therapy and educational psychological services at a school. Any person who exclusively performs extracurricular duties is not defined as an educator; for example a soccer coach who does not offer any other lesson at school (Lotter, Waddy, Naicker & Goolam, 2001:36).

An educator refers to any person who teaches, educates or trains other persons or provides professional educational therapy and education psychological services at any public school, further education and training institution, a departmental office or adult basic education centre and who is

appointed in a post on any educator establishment under the Employment of Educators Act, Act No. 27, 1996 (ELRC, 1999:12).

Lazarus (1998:vi) defines “educator” as a person whose work involves educating others at all levels of education, in any type of education and training context, including formal and informal, e.g. teachers, lecturers, parent, a youth counselor etc.

1.4.3 Learner

Learner means any person receiving education or obliged to receive education in terms of the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996. The term *learner* refers to all learners ranging from early childhood education through to adult education. The term “learner” replaces the term “pupil” or “student” at school and higher education level (Lazarus, 1998:vii).

1.4.4 Perception

Du Toit & Kruger (1994:33) say perception refers to the universal phenomenon whereby a person attributes meaning to the information which one receives from the world via the senses. Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:167) describe perception as the act of receiving information through the senses (sight, sound, touch and smell). It is an activity which involves the organizing and interpreting of information received through the senses.

Perception is each individual's personal theory of reality, a kind of knowledge gathering process by which we select, organize and interpret external and internal stimuli. The external stimuli are the sensations that bombard us almost constantly, sensations that come to us through sight, smell, touch, hearing and taste (Blake, 1990:19). The internal stimuli can be either physiological (nervous system) or psychological (motivation, interest and desire).

Halonen and Sontrack (1996:95) define perception as the brain's process of organizing and interpreting sensory information to give meaning. The retinas in our eyes record a fast-moving silver object in the sky, but they do not "see" a passenger jet; our eardrum vibrates in a particular way, but it does not "hear" a Beethoven Symphony. Organizing and interpreting what is sensed, that is "seeing" and "hearing" meaningful patterns in sensory information is perception.

Vrey (1990:19) describes perception as a unitary process in which sensation hinges on meaning and meaning on sensation, and therefore sensing and meaning finding occur simultaneously. Crain (1992:59, 79) emphasizes that perception does not end in awareness, but extends further to interpretation and giving meaning to sense impressions of a particular object or event.

1.4.5 Representative Council of Learners (RCLs)

According to Lotter, Waddy, Naicker and Goolam (2001:43) a representative council of learners is the body that represents learners on matters concerning them. It is established in schools that have learners who are in grade eight

or higher. It is from this body that two learners are elected to the school governing body. This body is the link between the learners and the school governing body together with the school management. The RCL is required to build unity among the learners, and keep the learners informed about the events taking place in the school as well as in the community. The RCL is also tasked with the responsibility of encouraging good relationships between learners, educators and non-educators.

1.4.6 School governing body

A school governing body is a statutory body of people who are democratically elected to govern a school. This means that a school governing body is set up by an Act of a parliament, in particular the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996. The school governors, that is, the people serving on the school governing body, represents the school and the community. The governance of every public school is vested in its governing body (Bhengu, 1996:28).

1.4.7 Secondary school learner

The secondary school spans grade eight to grade twelve. The majority of learners fall in the age group thirteen to seventeen years although an extra year or two may be added on, especially at the upper end of the scale (Vrey, 1990:165). The learner enters secondary school as a child, a pre-pubescent, and leaves it as a youth. Physical growth has been phenomenal, sexual maturity attained, cognitive development has included the dimension

of abstract thought and a self-concept is arrived at (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1990:205). The total development during the secondary school years is described by the term adolescence which means developing to adulthood.

1.5 AIMS OF THIS STUDY

The aims of this study are:

- To report on relevant existing literature pertaining to educators' perceptions of learner representatives in the school governing body.
- To undertake an empirical investigation into educators' perceptions of the learner representatives' role in governing bodies of their schools.
- To provide certain recommendations and guidelines so that accountable developmental courses may be instituted in order to meet the possible needs of the learner representatives on the school governing body.

1.6 METHOD OF RESEARCH

The research with regard to this study will be conducted as follows:

- The available literature relevant to the topic will be studied.

- An empirical survey comprising a self structured questionnaire to be completed by educators will be conducted.
- Informal interviews with other school governing body constituents will be done.

1.7 FURTHER COURSE FOR THE STUDY

Chapter two will focus on the role of learner representatives in school governing bodies

The research methodology will be explained in chapter three.

In chapter four the research data will be analyzed and comments made thereof.

Chapter five will comprise a summary, findings and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW ON SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Parliamentary legislation has given rise to the existence of the present school governing bodies and they thus are qualified as statutory bodies, which means they are legal structures (Gumbi, 2000:4; Mc Gregor, Lee & Frost, 1998:14). The school governing body is charged with powers as determined by parliamentary law.

The general purpose of a school governing body is to perform its functions efficiently in terms of the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 (DoE, 1997:14), on behalf of the school and for the benefit of the community. Ndelu (1999:10) says a school governing body is therefore placed in a position of trust towards a school. In other words, a school governing body is expected to act in good faith, to carry out all its duties and functions on behalf of the school and to be accountable for all its functions.

Skhosana (1999:10) states that all school governors must know what their duties and functions are and how these fit in with the duties of the principal. The same applies to learners serving on the school governing body. According to section 24 of the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996, learners are official members of school governing bodies (DoE, 1996:16). This practice is new and as such problems are being experienced as the process is in its initial stages. In the former white schools, a rather

legislation pertaining to their roles and to provide proper guidance which does not conflict with the current legislation.

A clear distinction has to be made between the professional domain issues and the school governance issues in order to avert confusion of roles at all cost (Sayed & Carrim, 1997:92). The principal features in both domains. In school governance he advises the school governing body members on whatever decisions are made and how to implement such decisions relevant to the prescriptions of the legislation (DoE, 1998:12). In the professional domain, the principal leads the professional cadre of the school. The membership of the principal in the school governing body is not voluntary as is the case with the rest of the members. If he is not prepared to be part of the school's governance, he may even forfeit his position (Mc Gregor, Lee & Frost, 1998:57). It is clear from this statement made above that the principal does not have to spearhead or take the responsibility for others other than empowering them by mentoring, and sometimes giving advice and support. For this reason the principal or any other member of the school governing body does not have to dictate to or impose on learners but be involved in decision-making, especially on those issues that affect them directly, in order to be fair and transparent and to avoid violent confrontation. Heystek (2001:207) states that in terms of the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996, learners in secondary schools are officially represented on school governing bodies. As part of the democratization process in South African society, decision-making power has been decentralized to the local level, where all role players in the school and the community can contribute to its management.

Lock (1999:67) says the important role of learners in the school governing body must be seen against the background of the learners' involvement since 1997 in the anti government struggle to improve the conditions in black schools. Over the past few years, the learners contributions to positive school management have been limited. They are seen as representing their fellow learners, and thus the relationship between adults and learners in the school governing body have created some problems. The fact that learner representatives have been excluded from certain meetings or parts of meetings may have serious implications for the legal status of those meetings and for the decisions of the school governing bodies (Heystek, 2001:207).

In this chapter the composition, legislative and allocated duties as well as the functions of the school governing body will be discussed. The importance of a sound relationship between the learner governors and their schoolmates, as well as the factors that influence their relationship, will be looked at.

2.2 COMPOSITION OF THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

A governing body is a statutory body of persons who are elected to govern a school. The school governor, that is, the person mandated to serve on the school governing body, represents the school community and the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body. The governing body of an ordinary public school is made up of three groups of people (DoE, 1997:15):

- Members who are elected.

- The school principal.
- Members who are co-opted but not elected. They are people from the community who are invited by the school governing body to assist in fulfilling its functions.

The members who are elected consist of:

- Parents of learners at the school, excluding parents employed at the school.
- Educators at the school.
- Members of the staff at the school who are not educators (such as the secretarial staff and those who work in the school garden).
- Learners at the school who are in grade eight or higher grade.

In addition to members who are elected or voted onto the governing body, the school governing body may also ask people of the community to become members. Such members are called co-opted members and they are there to assist the governing body in its functions, but they do not have the right to vote. Co-opted members may not be more than five.

According to the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 (DoE, 1997:15) there must be one more parent in the school governing body than the combined total of the other members with voting rights. A member of the school governing body cannot be a chairperson at the school governing

body where he is employed, as only a parent member can serve as the chairperson.

A person cannot be elected as a governing body member if he:

- has been convicted of an offence and sentenced to more than twelve months imprisonment without the option of a fine either inside or outside South Africa. If he served the sentence more than five years ago, this restriction does not apply;
- is of unsound mind and has been declared so by a competent court. This means that a court has said that he has a mental problem which makes it impossible for him to make decisions on behalf of other people or about finances; and
- is not a South African resident, unless he has permission in writing from the Head of the Department (DoE,2002:11).

Lotter, Waddy, Naicker & Goolam (2002:2) distinguish between three categories of schools, that is:

- new schools;
- older schools that do not have a governing body;
- and schools that already have a governing body.

When a new school is opened, a governing body has to be elected. The election must be held within sixty days of a date decided by a Member of the Executive Council (MEC). Schools that already have a governing body must hold elections immediately after the previous governing body's term of office has expired. The election may not be held more than thirty days after the expiry date. The old school governing body whose term of office has expired, must remain in office until the new governing body is elected. Previous members who are still eligible to be elected, may offer themselves for re-election for another term of three years (Lotter, Waddy, Naicker & Goolam, 2002:6-7).

2.3 FUNCTIONS OF THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

The powers, functions and duties of school governing bodies are grouped according to the governance duties that have to be carried out by all governing bodies, and a list of tasks that may be allocated to governing bodies that have the ability or means to fulfil the tasks. The list of compulsory tasks is furnished in section 20 of the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 (DoE, 1997:14). The Act stipulates that the school governing body must:

- Promote the best interest of the school and ensure its development.
- Adopt a constitution.
- Adopt a mission statement for the school, which is a brief document that sets out goals for the school based on shared values and beliefs.

- Adopt a code of conduct for learners at the school.
- Help the principal, educators and other staff to perform their professional functions.
- Decide on school terms, which must be consistent with the conditions or employment of their staff.
- Administer and control the school's property, buildings and grounds, including school hostels.
- Encourage parents, learners, educators and other staff at the school to offer voluntary services to the school.
- Make recommendations on the appointment of educators.
- Make recommendations on the appointment of non-educators.
- Allow the school facilities to be used for educational programmes not offered by the school.
- Carry out all other functions given to school governing body members by the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996.
- Carry out functions that are set out by the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) in a provincial gazette.

2.4 ROLES OF THE DIFFERENT COMPONENTS

The South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 speaks of the need for all role players to be involved in school governance and the need for co-operation between all stakeholders to ensure education for all. This thinking comes from the constitution of South Africa which among other things enshrines the rights of all people, particularly the rights of equality and the right to education. The constitution is based on democratic principles that include the promotion of fair representation for all members of our diverse society. Therefore it becomes desirable for all governing bodies of schools to be fully representative of the communities that they represent (Jones, 2002:8).

Each component of the school governing body has its own special role to play within the governance structure because it represents a certain constituency with its own needs and characteristics.

2.4.1 The principal

According to Jones (1987:64) the school principal has a duty to advise and assist the school governing body members in performing their functions. She mentions that new members on school governing bodies are appreciative of the help they receive from principals. However, she criticizes the practice by some other principals to keep their school governing bodies at arms length. Cole (1999:4) believes that the principal and the governing body need to work in a close and well-balanced partnership.

Squelch (1994:51) sees the principal as the key role player in the school governance for he is the custodian of all accessible information from the education department. In the adoption of the school policy, the principal can guide the members of the school governing body and protect them against policies that might be in contravention with the Bill of Rights and the Educators Employment Act, Act No. 27 of 1996 (DoE, 1993:43). The principal is an instrumental figure in the governance of a school.

2.4.2 The parent component

Parent governors form a link between the school and the community. Jones (1987:59) states that because of their position in the local community, parents may be more powerful advocates of the school and its needs than the principal himself, hence it pays to promote a good relationship and support system between the school and the community. Involvement of every community member in the functioning of the school is essential for successful teaching and learning.

Dekker and Lemmer (1993:166) agree with Jones (1987:59) on the importance of parent governors' liaison function between the school and the wider parent society. It is the role of the parent on the school governing body to serve as the "sounding board" for the school in the community (Steyn, 1998:135). Although the parent governors represent the interest of the parents, they also promote the interest of the school (Wolfendale, 1989:126). According to Pillay (1995:124) the parent members of the school governing body are elected to deal with the interests of a specific parent community and to convey their opinion to the school, thereby dovetailing both a school and a community camp.

Dekker and Lemmer (1993:167) maintain that quite often parents are hesitant to intervene in the form of help in school matters for they are uncertain as to how educators are going to perceive their help. Parents sometime presume that the school might look at them as meddlers. However, the presence of the parent component in the school governing body tends to eliminate such uncertainties and generate active parental participation in school activities. Component parent governors may foster and improve relationships between parents and educators (Sallis, 1998:42). Parent governors may even be active in the betterment of mutual understanding between educators and learners because of their closer ties with learners as parents. Harilal (1998:7) maintains that parents play an invaluable role in developing confidence in their children by instilling in them the desire to succeed in school.

2.4.3 The educator component

Educators that are elected as members of the school governing body are the representatives of the other educators in the school (DoE, 1998:13). The educator governors liaise between the school governing body and educators on matters concerning the educating staff. It must be noted that educators on the school governing body do not represent any of the educator unions or organizations because the Schools Act does not permit such representation (Doom, 1999:2).

All educators at the school can stand for elections. This includes governing body appointed educators. Non-South African residents may not stand for elections without the written permission of the Head of Department (Chief Executive Officer for the Department of Education). If five or fewer educators

are employed at the school, one educator is elected to the governing body. If there are more than five, two educators must be elected (DoE, 2002:7).

2.4.4 The non-educator component

The role of the non-educator members of the school governing body is to see to it that the interests of the non-teaching staff are catered for (DoE, 1997:14). This component of the school governing body is elected from the cleaners, clerical staff, kitchen staff and other non-educating personnel (DoE, 1997:14).

2.4.5 The learner component

A comprehensive discussion on how elections for the Representative Council of Learners' (RCLs) are conducted is of utmost importance as it is from this body that the learner component of the school governing body is elected. Learners on the school governing body should also liaise constantly with the RCL.

In any school that has learners in grade eight and higher, the Representative Council of Learners must be established to represent the learners in the school governing body. Lotter et al. (2002:1) states that according to section 11 of the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996, as amended, a Representative Council of Learners must be established at every public school enrolling learners in the eighth grade or higher and such council is the only recognized and legitimate representative learner body at the school. Heystek (2001:211) attributes the aforementioned to decentralization of decision-making. Management, governance and decision-making have been decentralized to local school governing structures instead

of to national or provincial education departments. One of the main reasons for decentralization is that schools know their own needs and therefore can make the best decisions (DoE, 1996:10; Brown 1998:4-6; Murphy & Beck 1995:59). According to Chinsamy (Heystek, 2001:211), learners are important role players and ought to be part of the decision-making process. They wish to articulate their feelings and concerns in a forum with the power to act. They also want to contribute to decisions that may affect them. Mpungose (1999:40) contends that the learner component of the school governing body links all the learners in the school to the governing body and thereby makes it possible for learners to have a say in the governance of the school.

Minors have no role to play in the conclusion of contracts on behalf of the school and cannot vote on decisions that involve legal obligation or liability (DoE, 1997:14). According to Sallis (1998:19) learners are excluded from certain governing body meetings and functions because they are minors; hence their rights and duties are limited.

The purpose of instituting a Representative Council of Learners (RCL) is to awaken in the learners a sense of responsibility for the organization and maintenance of discipline and order in the school. It is also an attempt to create the opportunity to identify and create leaders. An RCL creates an opportunity for learners to be exposed to the responsibilities associated with self-government and management. One of the functions of an RCL should be to establish a channel of communication among the learners, the educators, the principal, the school governing body and the parents (DoE, 1998:2).

Considering the aforesaid statements, reasons for the establishment of the RCL can therefore be summarized as follows:

- Creation of a sense of responsibility in learners.
- Preparation of learners for leadership roles.
- Creation of a channel of communication between learners, educators and parents.
- Opening of a channel for the airing of grievances.
- Exposing RCL members to the principles of democracy and transparency in government.

According to the current regulations, as stated in the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 a RCL (Representative Council of Learners) is elected on the basis of two representatives per class group, commonly referred to as a register class. The election of class representatives to the RCL must be done strictly in accordance with the procedures as mentioned below:

- As a school election officer, the principal must appoint in writing assistant electoral officers to officiate at each class election.
- The electoral officer gives fourteen days written notice of the date of the first class election.

- Nominations from the class group is called for in each class election and these are recorded.
- After the assistant electoral officer has approved the nominations, he conducts the election using a secret ballot form and is entitled to vote for a minimum of two learners nominated.
- Ballot forms are placed in a box in the presence of all voters, and the assistant electoral officer in the presence of the class does the counting.
- Successful candidates are informed in writing of their election to the RCL after the completion of elections in all the grades.
- All the documentation pertaining to each grade election is kept in safe keeping by the electoral officer for a period of at least three months. Office bearers such as the chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary and other office holders, as determined by the RCL, are elected by a show of hands. The meeting to conduct these elections is convened by the electoral officer or his assistant.
- When the RCL is constituted, it then, under the supervision of the electoral officer or his assistant, elect two representatives to the school governing body. The electoral officer must be familiar with aspects of legislation, regulations, departmental circulars and procedures relating to school elections (DoE, 2002:44). Elections take place by means of secret voting. The term of office for the learners elected to the RCL is one year.

The RCL member may be re-elected for a further term by following the correct procedure. Representative Councils of Learners are expected to draw up their own constitution and standing orders as soon as they are constituted. Representative Councils of Learners have responsibilities such as to work in co-operation with the management of the school towards inculcating an ethos of order and harmony, foster loyalty to the school, foster loyalty among learners with a spirit of mutual respect, good manners and good standards of civilized behavior; foster academic excellence and commitment to work, promote the well-being of other learners, be alert and sensitive to the needs and problems of fellow learners and be fully involved in drawing up of a code of conduct for the learners at the school (Jenkins, 1999:428).

Lotter *et al.* (2002:43) state that the RCL is a constituted body whose powers are decided by the school governing body in consultation with the learners. The RCL's constitution sets out the following details:

- The composition of the RCL.
- The election of members for the RCL.
- The election of a chairperson, vice-chairperson and a secretary.
- The term of office of members.
- Meetings to be held by the RCL.
- Voting procedures to be followed at meetings.
- Keeping of minutes.

- The functions and duties of office bearers.

The following are the responsibilities, duties and functions of learner representatives elected to the school governing body (DoE, 1998:3):

- Arrange for learners to make inputs into the agenda of the meetings of the school governing body.
- Keep learners informed of what is happening in school governance.
- Report to the learners, either directly or via the RCL members, on what took place on school governing body meetings.
- Use the officially prescribed channels to present the learners' ideas.
- Convey grievances, contributions, etc. to the school governing body.
- Attend promptly to matters referred to them.
- Report to the learners who elected them on decisions made by the school governing body.
- Keep all learners informed of the democratic processes, their rights, responsibilities, exercising of voting rights in elections, responsibility to support those that they have elected and their duty to serve those who elected them.

At least two meetings per quarter must be held by the RCL, prior to a school governing body meeting where a chance for input to the school governing body is open, and again after the school governing body meeting for feedback purposes.

The learner representative is a full member of the governing body. As in the case of any other member of the school governing body, the learner governor recuse himself if what is discussed compromises his personal interests. He remains absent until the decision is finalized. A learner representative is a minor on the school governing body, hence he may not contract on behalf of a public school, may not vote on resolutions of a school governing body which impose liability on a third party or on the school. He incurs no personal liability for any consequences of his membership of the school governing body (Jenkins, 1999:37).

2.5 LEARNER REPRESENTATION IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

2.5.1 Background to learner participation in school governance

The elections of 1994 and the adoption of the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 contribute to learner-participation in school governance. Prior to the formation of a new educational dispensation it was a tradition in most white schools for learners to be part of the leader's corps. The structures varied from school to school and from area to area, but most schools had some form of learner representation, and special attention was paid to the development of learner leadership (Du Plessis, 1994:45). Class leaders or prefects were elected by fellow learners or appointed by staff.

There were also prefects or learner councils normally consisting of senior learners, and primarily representing learner participation in school governance. Other structures such as standard (grade) councils and representative learners' councils were also part of the learner representative structures at schools. Cole (1999:3) states that besides the fact that democratic principles were followed in electing learner representatives, the extent to which learners were actually involved in school governance is open to criticism on the grounds of the major role played by educators and principals in the election of such representatives (prefects). The implication is that representatives were not really elected by learners, but appointed by principals and educators.

Heystek (2001:211,214) argues that the principle of involving learners in the governance of schools may be challenged. Is it really the function of learners to help govern the school? Research in white schools indicates that learners are not really interested and do not have the time to participate in school governance.

Each school determined the duties and roles of their own learner representative structures. These rules included learner discipline, organizing social activities and representing the learners. Representation could take the form of discussions with register educators, the prefect tutor (member of the staff) or any other staff member (Du Plessis, 1994:24-26). The learner representative structures participated, to a greater extent, in the management and control of schools. However, school governing bodies and professional management (the principal and top management) were not under any obligation to consult learners or even to take their advice into consideration (McPherson, 1998:12).

The fact that black learners did not have official recognition or representation was understandably criticized by the representative of the black communities and schools during the struggle against the previous government (Mader & Mader, 1998:72). Black learners played a leading role in schools during the struggle until 1994, while white learners played no role in the management of schools and did not attempt to change the government or the school system. White learners were not politically involved and consequently were not particularly interested in taking part in school governance (Mwamwenda, 1994:90). The representative learner structures fulfilled the needs of white learners.

The involvement of black learners in the management and governance of schools was in essence politically motivated, rather than educational (Cobbett & Cohen, 1998:185). The emergence and popularity of the Black Consciousness movement and the various student organizations provided the political and cultural background while the increase in the number of black secondary learners, without related economic growth or employment opportunities, were the main economic reasons for the involvement of black learners in the governance of schools (Heystek, 2001:185).

Changes in the curriculum and structures of black education resulted in overcrowded secondary schools (Cobbett & Cohen, 1998:185). To this extent the involvement of black learners in the management and governance of schools was justified from their perspective. It is possible that white learners may in future also become politically and culturally motivated to be more involved in the governance and management of schools due to current changes.

Generally speaking, in previously black schools there were no prefects or official representative learner councils. Ngcobo (1998:23) indicates that the majority of learners were not involved in school activities and did not have any influence on their own situation. He believes that learner involvement in school activities exerts a positive effect on discipline, teaching and learning.

According to Sayed and Carrim (1997:95) black communities regarded prefect structures as apartheid structures, as their perception was that prefects were appointed by the educators. This was why black learners did not want to organize or accept the prefect system. Therefore, other means of giving learners representation in the governance and management of schools had to be found. It was important that the new representation be given official recognition and be structured in such a way that the school management had no choice about consulting representatives (Heystek, 2001:213).

2.5.2 Principles for election of learner governors

According to Dlomo (1999:1) democratic principles may be regarded as the most important reasons for learners to participate in the governance of schools. These principles became more important after the change in government in 1994. In general, the concept of democracy implies that every person has the right to be involved in matters that directly involve him. The vision stated above already formed part of the struggle against the previous education system (Cobbett & Cohen 1988:159).

The presence of parents, learners and community members on school governing bodies may be seen as resulting from the struggle. In the past it

was not possible for everybody to be involved in the democratic process in the country. According to Bischoff and Pakhoa (1999:19) there is now more emphasis on including all role players in decision-making procedures at work and in residential areas. This democratic principle is consequently also put into practice in schools where all role players are official structures such as the department of education, the staff members, the parents, the learners, the community members and the institutions. Everyone is assured of being represented in decision-making procedures. Learners are supposed to be the main focus and the most important persons in schools and therefore are included.

One of the first demands emanating in 1984 from the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) was that the government recognize Student Representative Councils (SRCs) and the popularly drafted student constitutions. The SRCs represented learners, and those at black schools were among the leading groups in the struggle against the apartheid education system (Cobbett & Cohen 1988:156). Thus SRCs played an important role in changing the political and educational systems of the country. Learners were rewarded for their struggle against apartheid by being included on school governing bodies. Through the SRCs, learners controlled schools to a significant extent and they were granted representation in school governing bodies to acknowledge this role (Ngaso, 1990:80). The concepts of power and control are thus crucial in such situations.

Under the previous government learners did not only feel that they did not have any control over their situations, but were also powerless. According to Furtwengler (1996:36) people can be motivated if they feel that they have

control over their own lives and have the power to make or influence the decisions that affect them.

Learner maturity is also one of the principles whereby learners in a matric class (the exit class in a senior secondary school) are elected on the school governing body. One of the aims of education is to educate learners to be well balanced and skilled adults (Bischoff & Pakhoa, 1999:89). Shortly after leaving school, learners will have to make independent decisions regarding their income, residence, partners in marriage as well as to maintain successful relationships with those they live and work with. If such criteria are set for learners as young adults, they should also be able to participate in decision-making at school.

Chinsamy (1995:14-20) cites many authors indicating that the cognitive and moral development of learners in secondary schools is well advanced and that they are able to make sound decisions based on facts and on the morals and values of their communities. Outcomes Based Education is designed for learners to acquire skills, and participation in school governance will enable them to learn management and other skills.

According to Maile (2002:326) decentralization of decision-making may also be considered as a principle for electing learners to a school governing body. Management, governance and decision-making have been decentralized to local school governing structures instead of national or provincial education departments.

One of the main reasons for decentralization is that schools know their own needs and therefore can make the best decisions (DoE, 1996:10). According

to Murphey and Beck (1995:59) learners are important role players and ought to be part of the decision-making processes. They wish to articulate their feelings and concerns in a forum with the power to act. They also want to contribute towards decisions that may affect them. They do not want the educators or parents to make such decisions for them (Chinsamy, 1995:55-56).

2.5.3 Advantages of learner representation in school governance

Heystek (2001:217) mentions the following as advantages of learner representation on school governing bodies:

- Learners are represented in school governance.
- There is a link between learners and the governing body.
- Contributions by learners can influence decisions.
- It contributes to the improvement and maintenance of discipline and orientation of new learners.
- Learners' can offer their opinions regarding school management.
- Adults are made aware of learner thinking regarding school governance.
- Learners have the opportunity to serve on committees and the right to vote.

- There is an expediting of feedback to learners.
- Learners and educators get a chance to solve their problems.

2.5.4 Problems experienced with learner governors

Section 32 of the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 indicates that the age of most learners excludes them from legally entering into contracts as a member of the school governing body, or taking part in decisions which have contractual obligations (DoE, 1996:23). However, this does not mean that they have to be excluded from discussions on these matters (Heystek, 2001:221). Regulations exclude learners from activities such as the appointment of staff.

It is understandable that learner governors as minors cannot be involved in official decisions on appointments because contracts are involved. Bischoff and Phakoa (1999:92) however, are of the opinion that learners who are in contact with educators on daily bases might well be able to contribute meaningfully to discussions concerning appointments. It is acceptable that, together with the extra time demanded of learners to exercise better judgment than other parties or parents. Cave and Wilconson (1991:201) say that the learner governors' youth, lack of knowledge and insufficient skills are seen as causes for their inability to make a meaningful contribution to school governance. The latter together with the extra time demanded of them as learners, will make it difficult for them to contribute significantly.

Njozela (1998:74) warns that principals and school governing bodies should not underestimate the contributions of learners, especially if they are given opportunities to develop their skills and their level of maturity. The factors

mentioned above cast doubt on learners' potential, positive contribution to, and participation in the activities of the school governing body. The finding by researchers that learner governors do not actively take part in discussions during school governing body meetings, might be because adult governors tend to dominate them as minors (Ngobo, 1999:26).

Sallis (1998:67) and Heystek (2001:220) state, *inter alia*, the following problems experienced with learner representatives in school governing bodies:

- Learners are too young.
- They have insufficient knowledge to make a contribution concerning certain matters, especially finances.
- Trust concerning discussions at the meetings is not as desired, especially when it comes to sensitive issues.
- Learners seldom make any comments or ask questions. There is no active participation.
- Learners are inhibited by adults.
- They are not interested in the daily management of the school.
- Owing to full academic and sports programmes they can seldom attend meetings.

- Learners raise problems that can be addressed in other places.
- They talk about school matters that do not directly concern learners.
- Learners want to take over.
- Late night meetings are problematic at times, especially during tests and examinations.
- The term of duty is one year and that period is very short.
- There are transport problems, especially when meetings are to be held after school hours.

2.6 SUMMARY

School governing bodies have been introduced in 1997 by the new South African government, and is a direct result of the policy of democracy. The primary aim of a school governing body system was to effect a shift from non-democratic to democratic governance, which advocates the involvement of all stakeholders in education institutions.

All members of the school governing body must know what their duties and functions are and how these fit in with the duties of the principal as educational manager of the school. The same applies to learners serving on the school governing body as they are official members of school governing bodies. The practice of learner governors is new and as such

problems are being experienced as the process is in its initial stages. In this context it stands to reason that it is the duty of the principal to acquaint the learner component in the school governance with current legislation pertaining to their roles and to provide proper guidance which does not conflict with the current legislation.

In any school that has learners in grade eight and higher, the RLC (Representative Council of Learners) must be established to represent the learners in the school governing body. Learners are important role players in school and ought to be part of decision-making processes concerning the school. They wish to articulate their feelings and concerns in a forum with the power to act. They also want to contribute to decisions that may affect them. The learner component of the school governing body links all the learners in the school to the governing body and thereby makes it possible for learners to have a say in the governance of the school.

One of the problems experienced by learner representatives on the school governing body is their minority status, which means that the age of most learners excludes them from legally entering into contracts as a member of the school governing body, or taking part in decisions which have contractual. However, this does not mean that they have to be excluded from discussions on these matters. Regulations exclude learners from activities such as the appointment of staff.

In the next chapter the planning of the empirical research will be explained.

CHAPTER 3

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CHAPTER 3

PLANNING OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter educators' perceptions of the role of learner representatives in school governing bodies were described by means of literature research. The literature study has revealed that learner participation in school governance is still in its initial stages and beleaguered with problems. As relatively new stakeholders in school governance learners often lack adequate knowledge and skills to effectively fulfil their task.

This chapter will focus on the planning of the research.

3.2 PREPARATION FOR THE RESEARCH

3.2.1 Permission

With the aim of administering the questionnaire to educators serving on school governing bodies it was required to first request permission from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture (KZNDEC). A letter to ask the necessary permission was drafted (Appendix B) and directed to the Port Shepstone District Manager being the area where the research sample would be selected from. A copy of the questionnaire (Appendix A) was sent with the letter for approval by the department. After permission was granted

by the Senior Education Manager (SEM) for the intended research to be undertaken (Appendix C) the researcher visited the principals of the randomly selected schools with the letter of approval in order to ask their permission to administer the questionnaire to the educators of the school.

3.2.2 Selection of respondents

Schools were selected from the list of schools in the Port Shepstone District on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast. The district comprises predominantly semi-urban areas. This provided the researcher with a randomly selected sample of 100 educators as respondents which can be considered an adequate sample for reliable data analysis by means of descriptive statistics.

3.3 THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

3.3.1 Quantitative research

The purpose of a research design is to provide the most valid and accurate answers possible to research questions. McMillan and Schumacher (1997:34) say that since there are many types of research questions and many types of designs, it is important to match the design with the questions. Quantitative research methods collect data to be translated into a statistical format. The responses of respondents to the questions in a questionnaire are recorded in coded format, presented in frequency tables, graphs and/or chart formats, analysed and interpreted (De Vos, 2001:208). The simplest form of data analysis is univariate analysis, which means that one variable is analysed, mainly with the view to describing that variable (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:100). It can thus be stated that where information is required

by a first time researcher, quantitative data collection and analysis seem to be the most suitable method. The researcher selected the quantitative approach because:

- it is more formalised;
- is better controlled;
- has a range that is more exactly defined; and
- uses methods relatively close to the physical sciences.

3.3.2 The questionnaire as research instrument

According to Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:504) a questionnaire is a set of questions dealing with some topic or related group of topics, given to a selected group of individuals for the purpose of gathering data on a problem under consideration. Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:190) say the questionnaire is a prepared question form submitted to certain persons (respondents) with a view to obtaining information.

Churchill and Peter (Schnetler, 1993:77) have shown that the measuring instrument has the greatest influence on the reliability of research data. The characteristics of measurement are best controlled by the careful construction of the instrument. There is, however, insufficient appreciation for the fact that a questionnaire should be constructed according to certain principles (De Vos, 2001:89).

A well-designed questionnaire is the culmination of a long process of planning the research objective, formulating the problem, generating the hypothesis, etc. A questionnaire is not simply thrown together. A poorly designed questionnaire can invalidate any research results, notwithstanding the merits of the sample, the field workers and the statistical techniques (Huysamen, 1989:2). In their criticism of questionnaires Berchie and Anderson (Schnetler, 1993:61) object to poor design rather than to questionnaires as such. A well-designed questionnaire can boost the reliability and validity of the data to acceptable tolerances (Schumacher & Meillon, 1993:42).

It therefore stands to reason that questionnaire design does not take place in a vacuum. According to Dane (1990:315-319) the length of individual questions, the number of response options, as well as the format and wording of questions are determined by the following:

- The choice of the subject to be researched.
- The aim of the research.
- The size of the research sample.
- The method of data collection.
- The analysis of the data.

Against this background the researcher can now look at the principles that determine whether a questionnaire is well-designed. It is thus necessary to draw a distinction between questionnaire content, question format, question order, type of questions, formulation of questions and validity and reliability of questions.

3.3.3 Construction of the questionnaire

Questionnaire design is an activity that should not take place in isolation. The researcher should consult and seek advice from specialists and colleagues at all times during the construction of the questionnaire (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1990:198). Questions to be taken up in the questionnaire should be tested on people to eliminate possible errors. A question may appear correct to the researcher when written down but can be interpreted differently when asked to another person. There should be no hesitation in changing questions several times before the final formulation whilst keeping the original purpose in mind. The most important point to be taken into account in questionnaire design is that it takes time and effort and that the questionnaire will be re-drafted a number of times before being finalised. A researcher must therefore ensure that adequate time is budgeted for in the construction and preliminary testing of the questionnaire. All these were taken into consideration by the researcher during the designing of the questionnaire for this investigation.

An important aim in the construction of the questionnaire for this investigation was to present the questions as simple and straightforward as possible. Reasons for this were that not all members of the target population under investigation might be adequately literate to interpret questions correctly or be familiar with the completion of questionnaires. The researcher further aimed to avoid ambiguity, vagueness, bias, prejudice and technical language in the questions.

The aim of the questionnaire (Appendix A) was to obtain information regarding educators' perceptions about the role of learner representatives in school

governing bodies. The questions were formulated to establish educators' responses with regard to the following:

- Advantages of learner participation in school governance.
- Obstacles to effective learner representation on school governing bodies.

The questionnaire was sub-divided into the following sections:

- Section one, which dealt with the biographical information of the respondents, namely secondary school educators, and consisted of questions 1 to 8.
- Sections two and three of the questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions. The respondents were requested to indicate their responses to the statements pertaining to educators' perceptions of the role of learner representatives in school governing bodies. The educators had to state their views concerning the latter in three ways, namely agree, disagree and uncertain. The questions were grouped as follows:
 - Section two contained questions on the advantages of learner participation in school governance.
 - Section three consisted of questions relating to obstacles to effective learner representation on school governing bodies.

3.3.4 Characteristics of a good questionnaire

Throughout the construction of the questionnaire the researcher had to consider the characteristics of a good questionnaire in order to meet the requirements necessary for the research instrument to be reliable. The characteristics of a good questionnaire that were considered by the researcher are, according to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1988:190), Mahlangu (1987:84-85) and Norval (1990:60), *inter alia*, the following:

- It has to deal with a significant topic, one the respondent will recognize as important enough to warrant spending his or her time on. The significance should be clearly and carefully stated on the questionnaire and in the accompanying letter.
- It must seek only that information which cannot be obtained from other sources.
- It must be as short as possible, but long enough to get the essential data. Long questionnaires frequently find their way into the wastepaper basket.
- Questionnaires should be attractive in appearance, neatly arranged and clearly duplicated or printed.
- Directions for a good questionnaire must be clear and complete and important terms clearly defined.

- Each question has to deal with a single concept and should be worded as simply and straightforwardly as possible.
- Different categories should provide an opportunity for easy, accurate and unambiguous responses.
- Objectively formulated questions with no leading suggestions should render the desired responses. Leading questions are just as inappropriate in a questionnaire as they are in a court of law.

Questions should be presented in a proper psychological order, proceeding from general to more specific and sensitive responses. An orderly grouping helps respondents to organise their own thinking so that their answers are logical and objective. It is preferable to present questions that create a favourable attitude before proceeding to those that are more intimate or delicate in nature. Annoying and/or embarrassing questions should be avoided if possible.

3.3.5 Advantages and disadvantages of the questionnaire

Data can be gathered by means of a structured questionnaire in, *inter alia*, the following ways: a written questionnaire that is mailed, delivered or handed out personally; personal interviews or telephone interviews (Kidder & Judd, 1986: 221). Each mode has specific advantages and disadvantages which the researcher need to evaluate for their suitability to the research question and the specific target population being studied, as well as relative cost.

The researcher used the written questionnaire as research instrument taking into consideration the following advantages:

(1) Advantages of the written questionnaire

The written questionnaire as a research instrument to obtain information, has the following advantages (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:110; Cooper, 1989:01):

- Affordability is the primary advantage of written questionnaires because it is the least expensive means of data gathering.
- Written questionnaires preclude possible interviewer bias. The way the interviewer asks questions and even the interviewer's general appearance or interaction may influence respondent's answers. Such biases can be completely eliminated with a written questionnaire.
- A questionnaire permits anonymity. If it is arranged such that responses are given anonymously, this will increase the researcher's chances of receiving responses which genuinely represent a person's beliefs, feelings, opinions or perceptions.
- They permit a respondent a sufficient amount of time to consider answers before responding.
- Questionnaires can be given to many people simultaneously, that is to say a large sample of a target population can be reached.

- They provide greater uniformity across measurement situations than do interviews. Each person responds to exactly the same questions because standard instructions are given to the respondents.
- Generally the data provided by questionnaires can be more easily analysed and interpreted than the data obtained from verbal responses.
- A respondent may answer questions of a personal or embarrassing nature more willingly and frankly on a questionnaire than in a face to face situation with an interviewer who may be a complete stranger. In some cases it may happen that respondents report less than expected and make more critical comments in a mail questionnaire.
- Questions requiring considered answers rather than immediate answers could enable respondents to consult documents in the case of the mail questionnaire approach.
- Respondents can complete questionnaires in their own time and in a more relaxed atmosphere.
- Questionnaire design is relatively easy if the set guidelines are followed.
- The administering of questionnaires and the coding, analysis and interpretation of data can be done without any special training.

(2) Disadvantages of the questionnaire

The researcher is also aware of the fact that the written questionnaire has important disadvantages. According to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:190) and Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:112) the disadvantages of the questionnaire are, *inter alia*, the following:

- Questionnaires do not provide the flexibility of interviews. In an interview an idea or comment can be explored. This makes it possible to gauge how people are interpreting the question. If questions asked are interpreted differently by respondents the validity of the information obtained is jeopardized.
- People are generally better able to express their views verbally than in writing.
- Questions can be answered only when they are sufficiently easy and straightforward to be understood with the given instructions and definitions.
- The mail questionnaire does not make provision for obtaining the views of more than one person at a time. It requires uninfluenced views of one person only.
- Answers to written questionnaires must be seen as final. Re-checking of responses cannot be done. There is no chance of investigating beyond the given answer for a clarification of ambiguous answers. If respondents are unwilling to answer certain questions nothing can be done about it because the mail questionnaire is essentially inflexible.

- In a written questionnaire the respondent examines all the questions at the same time before answering them and the answers to the different questions can therefore not be treated as "independent".
- Researchers are unable to control the context of question answering, and specifically, the presence of other people. Respondents may ask friends or family members to examine the questionnaire or comment on their answers, causing bias if the respondent's own private opinions are desired.
- Written questionnaires do not allow the researcher to correct misunderstandings or answer questions that the respondents may have. Respondents might answer questions incorrectly or not at all due to confusion or misinterpretation.

3.3.6 Validity and reliability of the questionnaire

There are two concepts that are of critical importance in understanding issues of measurement in social science research, namely validity and reliability (Huysamen, 1989:1-3). All too rarely do questionnaire designers deal consciously with the degree of validity and reliability of their instrument. This is one of the reasons why so many questionnaires are lacking in these two qualities (Cooper, 1989:15). Questionnaires have a very limited purpose. In fact, they are often one-time data gathering devices with a very short life, administered to a limited population. There are ways to improve both the validity and reliability of questionnaires. Basic to the validity of a questionnaire is asking the right questions phrased in the least ambiguous

way. In other words, do the items sample a significant aspect of the purpose of the investigation? Terms must therefore be clearly defined so that they have the same meaning to all respondents (Cohen & Manion, 1989: 111-112).

Kidder and Judd (1989:53-54) mention the fact that although reliability and validity are two different characteristics of measurement, they "shade into each other". They are two ends of a continuum but at points in the middle it is difficult to distinguish between them. Validity and reliability are especially important in educational research because most of the measurements attempted in this area are obtained indirectly. Researchers can never guarantee that an educational or psychological measuring instrument measures precisely and dependably what it is intended to measure (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1990:198). It is essential, therefore, to assess the validity and reliability of these instruments. Researchers must have a general knowledge as to what validity and reliability are and how one goes about validating a research instrument and establishing its reliability.

(1) Validity of the questionnaire

Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:560) define validity as the extent to which a measuring instrument satisfies the purpose for which it was constructed. It also refers to the extent to which it correlates with some criterion external to the instrument itself. Validity is that quality of a data-gathering instrument or procedure that enables it to determine what it was designed to determine. In general terms validity refers to the degree to which an instrument succeeds in measuring what it has set out to measure.

Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:237), Mouton (1996:85-87) and Dane (1990:257-258) distinguish between three types of validity:

- Content validity, where content and cognitive processes included can be measured. Topics, skills and abilities should be prepared and items from each category randomly drawn.
- Criterion validity, which refers to the relationship between scores on a measuring instrument and an independent variable (criterion) believed to measure directly the behaviour or characteristic in question. The criterion should be relevant, reliable and free from bias and contamination.
- Construct validity, where the extent to which the test measures a specific trait or construct is concerned, for example, intelligence, reasoning ability, attitudes, etc.

The validity of the questionnaire indicates how worthwhile a measure is likely to be in a given situation. Validity shows whether the instrument is reflecting the true story, or at least something approximating the truth. A valid research instrument is one that has demonstrated that it detects some "real" ability, attitude or prevailing situation that the researcher can identify and characterize (Schnetler, 1993:71). If the ability or attitude is itself stable, and if a respondent's answers to the items are not affected by other unpredictable factors, then each administration of the instrument should yield essentially the same results (Dane, 1990:158).

The validity of the questionnaire as a research instrument reflects the sureness with which conclusions can be drawn. It refers to the extent to which interpretations of the instrument's results, other than the ones the researcher wishes to make, can be ruled out. Establishing validity requires that the researcher anticipates the potential arguments that sceptics might use to dismiss the research results (Cooper, 1989:120).

The researcher employed the questionnaire as an indirect method to measure educators' perceptions of the role of learner representatives in school governing bodies. Because of the complexity of the respondents' attributes one is never sure that the questionnaire devised will actually measure what it purports to measure. Items in the questionnaire cannot be measured like height, mass, length or size. From the interpretation of the results obtained in this investigation and the sureness with which conclusions could be drawn, the researcher is convinced that the questionnaire, to a great extent, did measure that which it was designed for.

(2) Reliability of the questionnaire

According to Mulder (1989:209) and Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994: 512) reliability is a statistical concept and relates to consistency and dependability; that is consistency of obtaining the same relative answer when measuring phenomena that have not changed. A reliable measuring instrument is one that, if repeated under similar conditions, would present the same result or a near approximation of the initial result.

Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:194) and Kidder and Judd (1986: 47-48) distinguish between the following types of reliability:

- Test-retest reliability (coefficient of stability) - consistency estimated by comparing two or more repeated administrations of the measuring instrument. This gives an indication of the dependability of the results on one occasion and on another occasion.
- Internal consistency reliability - this indicates how well the test items measure the same thing.
- Split-half reliability - by correlating the results obtained from two halves of the same measuring instrument, one can calculate the split-half reliability.

In essence, reliability refers to consistency, but consistency does not guarantee truthfulness. The reliability of the question is no proof that the answers given reflect the respondent's true feelings (Dane, 1990: 256). A demonstration of reliability is necessary but not conclusive evidence that an instrument is valid. Reliability refers to the extent to which measurement results are free of unpredictable kinds of error. Sources of error that effect reliability are, *inter alia*, the following (Mulder, 1989: 209; Kidder & Judd, 1986:45):

- Fluctuations in the mood or alertness of respondents because of illness, fatigue, recent good or bad experiences, or temporary differences amongst members of the group being measured.

- Variations in the conditions of administration between groups. These range from various distractions, such as unusual outside noise to inconsistencies in the administration of the measuring instrument such as omissions in verbal instructions.
- Differences in scoring or interpretation of results, chance differences in what the observer notices and errors in computing scores.
- Random effects by respondents who guess or check off attitude alternatives without trying to understand them.

When the questionnaire is used as an empirical research instrument there is no specific method, for example the "test-retest" method, to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. Therefore, it will be difficult to establish to what extent the answers of the respondents were reliable. The researcher, however, believes that the questionnaires in this investigation were completed with the necessary honesty and sincerity required to render the maximum possible reliability. Frankness in responding to questions was made possible by the anonymity of the questionnaire. In the coding of the responses to the questions it was evident that questionnaires were completed with the necessary dedication.

3.4 PILOT STUDY

A pilot study is an abbreviated version of a research project in which the researcher practises or tests the procedures to be used in the subsequent full-scale project (De Vos, 2001:178). For the purpose of the pilot study in this research project ten educators were selected from amongst the

researcher's colleagues and educator friends. The pilot study is a preliminary or "trial run" investigation using similar questions and similar subjects as in the final survey. Kidder and Judd (1986:211-212) say the basic purpose of a pilot study is to determine how the design of the subsequent study can be improved and to identify flaws in the measuring instrument. A pilot study gives the researcher an idea of what the method will actually look like in operation and what effects (intended or not) it is likely to have. In other words, by generating many of the practical problems that will ultimately arise, a pilot study enables the researcher to avert these problems by changing procedures, instructions and questions.

The number of participants in the pilot study or group is normally smaller than the number scheduled to take part in the final survey. Participants in the pilot study and the sample for the final study must be selected from the same target population. For the purpose of this study the researcher conducted a pilot run on his colleagues.

According to Plug, Meyer, Louw and Gouws (1991: 49-66) the following are the purposes of a pilot study, and these were also the aim of the researcher in this survey:

- It provided the researcher with the opportunity of refining the wording and ordering the layout, which helped to prune the questionnaire to a manageable size.
- It permitted a thorough check of the planned statistical and analytical procedures, thus allowing an appraisal of their adequacy in treating the data.

- It greatly reduced the number of treatment errors because unforeseen problems revealed in the pilot study resulted in redesigning the main study.
- It saved the researcher major expenditures in time and money on aspects of the research which would have been unnecessary.
- Feedback from other persons involved were made possible and led to important improvements in the main study.
- The approximate time required to complete the questionnaire was established in the pilot study.
- Questions and/or instructions that were misinterpreted were reformulated.

Through the use of the pilot study as "pre-test" the researcher was satisfied that the questions asked complied adequately with the requirements of the study.

3.5 ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

If properly administered the questionnaire is the best available instrument for obtaining information from widespread sources or large groups simultaneously (Cooper, 1989:39). The researcher personally delivered questionnaires to the selected schools in the Port Shepstone District and collected them again after completion. This method of administration

facilitated the process and the response rate. An excellent return rate of 100% was obtained with all 100 questionnaires completed and collected.

3.6 THE PROCESSING OF THE DATA

Once data was collected, it had to be captured in a format which would permit analysis and interpretation. This involved the careful coding of the 100 questionnaires completed by the randomly selected educators. The coded data was subsequently transferred onto a computer spreadsheet using the Quattro Pro 6.0 programme. The coded data was analysed using the same programme in order to interpret the results by means of descriptive statistics.

(1) Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics serve to describe and summarise observations (Van Rensburg, Landman & Bodenstein, 1994:355). Frequency tables, histograms and polygons are useful in forming impressions about the distribution of data.

According to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:65) frequency distribution is a method to organize data obtained from questionnaires to simplify statistical analysis. A frequency table provides the following information:

- It indicates how many times a particular response appears on the completed questionnaires.

- It provides percentages that reflect the number of responses to a certain question in relation to the total number of responses.
- The arithmetic mean (average) can be calculated by adding all the scores and dividing it by the number of scores.

3.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATION

This investigation was constrained by a number of factors. The following are likely factors that might have influenced the reliability and validity of the questionnaire:

- Although anonymity was required in the questionnaire the possibility exists that, because of the educators' cautiousness, they might not have been frank and truthful in their responses.
- The sensitive nature of items in the questionnaire might have elicited false or misleading responses and influenced the reliability of the results.
- The formulation of the questions in English, which is not the mother-tongue of most of the respondents, might have resulted in the misinterpretation of questions which could have elicited incorrect responses.
- To restrict the investigation to manageable proportions, the researcher limited the study to educators of schools which are easily accessible.

3.8 SUMMARY

In this chapter the planning and design of the empirical research was discussed and a comprehensive description of the questionnaire as research instrument was given.

In the following chapter the data obtained from the completed questionnaires will be analysed.

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CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the data which was collected from the completed questionnaires will be analysed, findings will be interpreted and some comments will be presented. The data comprises biographical information, the advantages of learner governors participation in school governance and obstacles to effective learner presentation in school governing bodies. One hundred questionnaires were completed by secondary school educators.

4.2 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:42) state that the purpose of research is to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community or person. Descriptive research is one of the methods of research used to study a person or persons scientifically in the educational situation. It attempts to describe the situation as it is, thus there is no intervention on the part of the researcher and therefore no control. Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:355) maintain that descriptive studies do not set out with the idea of testing hypotheses about relationships, but want to find the distribution of variables. In this study nomothetic descriptive research was employed with the aim of describing educators' perceptions pertaining to accountable parental involvement. The researcher was primarily concerned with the nature and degree of existing situations in schools.

4.2.1 Gender of respondents

Table 1 Frequency distribution according to the gender of educators

	Gender	Frequency	%
1	Male	67	67%
2	Female	33	33%
	TOTAL	100	100%

Table 1 shows that the majority of educators (67%) in the research sample are males. This finding is contradicting the fact that in general most educators are females. Possible reasons for this phenomenon are the following:

- The research sample only involved secondary schools which tend to appoint more male than female educators.
- A male educator was in the past perceived by authorities as the most suitable role models for the young adolescent learners of a secondary school.
- The statistics of training facilities for educators show that males opt for secondary school education qualifications while most females go for a primary school qualification (Cherlin, 1996:477).

4.2.2 Age of respondents

Table 2 Frequency distribution according to the age group of the educators

	Age group	Frequency	%
1	20 - 25 years	4	4%
2	26 - 30 years	12	12%
3	31 - 35 years	30	30%
4	36 - 40 years	20	20%
5	41 - 45 years	21	21%
6	46 - 50 years	10	10%
7	51 - 55 years	2	2%
8	56 - 60 years	1	1%
	TOTAL	100	100%

Half of the educators (50%) in the research sample are in the age group of 31 to 40 years (Table 2). The table further reveals that (68%) of the educators are younger than 40 years which means that they have more to offer in terms of energy and productivity. The possibility also exists that younger educators may stay in the education profession for a longer period of time to gain more experience with the aim of possible promotion.

4.2.3 Qualifications

Table 3 Frequency distribution according to the qualifications of educators

	Qualifications	Frequency	%
1	Degree and diploma or certificate	48	48%
2	Diplomas and certificates	52	52%
	TOTAL	100	100%

From Table 3 it emerges that the percentages of educators that possess academic and professional qualifications (48%) only differ with three percent from the educators with diplomas and certificates (52%). This finding might be because secondary schools prefer to appoint educators with academic qualifications. In order to be an effective educator a person should have obtained the most suitable qualifications. Dimmock (1995:23) says that adequately qualified educators do not experience as many difficulties to meet the demands made on them.

4.2.4 Years of service as an educator

Table 4 Frequency distribution according to educators' years of completed service as educators

	Completed years of service	Frequency	%
1	1 - 5 years	21	21%
2	6 - 10 years	34	34%
3	11 - 15 years	15	15%
4	16 - 20 years	20	20%
5	21 - 25 years	7	7%
6	26 - 30 years	3	3%
	TOTAL	100	100%

Table 4 reveals that more than half (55%) of the educators in the research sample have more than 10 years teaching experience. Experience together with adequate training is needed for the responsibilities and the demands imposed on educators (Milton, 1991:20). The more experience and training an educator have the more confidence and expertise he will have acquired to be an effective educator. Experienced educators are expected to expend more energy on honing tools to be used in correcting disruptive behaviour of learners in the class or school. White (1999:23) says continuous professional development and experience are prerequisites for educators to keep up with the rapid pace of change in knowledge, advancement of technology and increasing demands imposed upon educators.

4.2.5 Type of school

Table 5 Frequency distribution according to the classification of respondents' schools

	School	Frequency	%
1	Junior secondary	27	27%
2	Senior secondary	69	69%
2	Combined schools	4	4%
	TOTAL	100	100%

In accordance with the focus of the research the schools where the questionnaire was administered comprise secondary schools (Table 5). The South African Schools Act. Act no. 84 of 1996 stipulates that only learners in grades 10,11 and 12 can be elected as members of the school governing body. According to Chinsamy (1995:14) research has shown that learners in these grades have reached the level of cognitive development which is necessary for inclusion in the decision-making of school governance

4.2.6 Post level of respondents

Table 6 Frequency distribution according to the post level of the respondents

	Post level	Frequency	%
1	Principal	32	32%
2	Deputy principal	12	12%
3	HOD	7	7%
4	Educator (Post level 1)	49	49%
	TOTAL	100%	100 %

The finding in Table 6, that close to a third (32%) of the respondents are principals, is due to the fact that the principal is an ex-officio member in his official capacity of the school governing body (cf. 2.2) and the aim of the researcher was to administer the questionnaire to governing body members.

The finding that most of the questionnaires (49%) were completed by post level-1 educators, can be explained by the composition of the educating staff of a school which usually consists of more post level one staff than promotion posts. Another possible reason is that two educators have to serve on the school governing body compared to one principal.

4.2.7 Area in which the schools are situated

Table 7 Frequency distribution according to the area in Which the respondents' schools are situated

	Area	Frequency	%
1	Urban area	9	9%
2	Semi-urban area	10	10%
3	Rural area	81	81%
	TOTAL	100	100%

The majority of schools selected (cf. 3.2.2) selected for the administration of the questionnaire are situated in rural areas hence the findings in Table 7.

4.2.8 Members of the school governing body

Table 8 Frequency distribution according to respondents who are governing body members

	Membership	Frequency	%
1	Members	60%	60
2	Non-members	40%	40
	TOTAL	100	100%

Educators who are members of the school governing body will be more knowledgeable about the role of learner governors. Therefore the aim of the researcher was to have the questionnaire completed by as many as possible educator governors. This explains the findings in Table 8.

4.2.9 Advantages of learner participation in school governance

Table 9 Frequency distribution according to educators' perceptions of learner participation in school governance

	N = 100	Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	TOTAL
	Learner representatives on the school governing body:				
2.1	Practice democracy in the management of schools	80%	8%	12%	100%
2.2	Make reporting of learners' problems to the governing body possible.	86%	8%	6%	100%
2.3	Serve as a link between learners and the school governing body	92%	4%	4%	100%
2.4	Help to improve and maintain discipline in school	80%	9%	11%	100%
2.5	Make learner contributions possible that can influence decision making by the governing body	76%	15%	9%	100%
2.6	Can assist in the orientation of new learners	73%	11%	16%	100%
2.7	Make it possible for learners' suggestions to be conveyed at governing body meetings	83%	6%	11%	100%
2.8	Contribute to the improvement of the standard of teaching (e.g. complaining about bad teaching)	66%	21%	13%	100%
2.9	Contribute to the culture of learning (e.g. motivation of learners and being role models)	74%	11%	15%	100%
2.10	Expedite the feedback of governing body decisions to learners	78%	15%	7%	100%
2.11	Can help in solving problems between learners and educators	77%	13%	10%	100%
2.12	Serve the interest of learners	80%	9%	11%	100%
2.13	Facilitate in drawing up and implementing a code of conduct for learners	77%	16%	7%	100%
2.14	Convey learners' grievances/problems to the governing body	83%	11%	6%	100%

According to the findings in Table 9, most educators consider participation of learners in school governance advantageous.

Davidoff & Lazarus (1997:165) state that given the extremely important role and function that school governing bodies must perform in schools, it is of vital importance that these bodies have the capacity to provide leadership and management for the school and its community. An effective governing body will ensure that the school is fulfilling its particular purpose, and provides an important mechanism for accountability and transparency. One of the reasons for the learner unrest of the 1970s was that they did not have any influence or representation in the governance of schools, and hence on their own situation (Cobbett & Cohen, 1988:184). The school governing body provides a structure for such representation. The adults must be sure to use it for the benefit of learners, the school and the community. They must not exclude learners just because they think they cannot make a contribution. Learners must use the official structure to their own advantage and for the school's benefit (Heystek, 2001:225).

The findings that learner participation in school governance are advantageous are substantiated by the responses to the questions in Table 9 which are as follows:

Democracy in the management of schools (2.1)

The finding that the majority of respondents (80%) agreed with the statement that learner representatives on the school governing body contribute to the practice of democracy in the management of schools is a possible indication that a paradigm shift from the old school committee system is taking place and that the new democratic policies are being ushered in.

Asmal (2000:5) says that after 1994, South Africa stepped out of isolation and adopted a new democratic constitution that guarantees the right to dignity, equality, freedom and security for all citizens. These principles are in line with the objectives of school governing bodies.

Reporting of learners' problems to the governing body (2.2; 2.3, 2.7)

Lotter (1999:16) states that the members of the school governing body, or a committee of them, will have to make their time and skills available. They will have to be committed to their task and listen to the views of others with patience and with open minds. Members who consult with parents, educators and learners must be able to communicate effectively. They must also have the skills and attitudes required for meaningful negotiation and consultation (DoE, 1999:17). The aforementioned concurs with the responses of the educators of which the larger number (86%) agree that learner representatives on the school governing body make reporting of learners' problems possible. It is important that learners should have the opportunity to report problems concerning their education to the governing body. If the discussion continues in their absence, they should receive feedback on the outcomes thereof. It must be borne in mind that some learners, especially in pre-democratic South African schools, were accustomed to being involved in curricular activities which only might have a detrimental effect on teaching and learning (Cobbett & Cohen, 1988:192). The aim of learner participation in school governing bodies should be the allaying of their fears through explanation, education, acceptance and understanding of their views (Bischoff & Phakoa, 1999:93).

The importance of effective communication is further confirmed by the majority of respondents (92%) who agreed that learner representatives can

serve as a link between learners and the school governing body (2.3). Bhengu (1996:7) maintains that for any social structure to be successful, the viewpoints of all persons have to be listened to. The preceding statement is supported by most respondents (83%) who agreed that learner representation in school governance makes it possible for learners' suggestions to be conveyed at governing body meetings(2.7).

Improvement and maintenance of discipline (2.4; 2.13)

Discipline is a part of the daily life of learners and educators, and is a complex issue. Effective discipline demands a great deal of time, creativity, commitment and resources (DoE, 2000:11). Learners attempt to keep and defend school rules if they have been part of the discussion and agreement thereof. Discipline is necessary to maintain a certain standard of social conformity so that the community can function in an orderly and fearless manner (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1990:62). The of a majority of respondents (80%) agreed that learner participation in school governing bodies helps to improve and maintain discipline in schools. Democratic discipline places emphasis on the process which is based on participation and involvement. Procedures could include allowing learners to explore their own ideas and feelings about behaviour by involving them in the development of a code of conduct for learners, agreeing on the consequences of good and bad behavior, ensuring that the code fits in with other school processes, involving parents and revisiting the process, evaluating it and changing things if necessary (DoE, 2000:15). The latter is confirmed by the finding that more than three quarter of the respondents (77%) agreed that learner participation in the school governing bodies facilitate in drawing up and implementation of the code of conduct. A code should be agreed upon by all role-players and may in no way contravene provisions made in the constitution for the freedom of expression (DoE, 2000:23).

Contribution of learners (2.5)

Ngaso (1999:72) argues that the contribution of learners can be rendered more effective if the process of participative decision-making is legitimate to ensure the co-operation of all role players. The word “legitimate” emphasizes the fact that there should be transparency and learner empowerment. The majority of respondents (76%) indicated that learner contribution that can influence decisions made by the school governing body is made possible by their participation in school governance. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:92) state that if we want to build a democratic school then we have to build democratic decision-making structures and procedures of all those affected by decisions in the decision making-processes. It is the ideal and should be striven for on both moral and efficiency grounds.

Orientation of new learners (2.6)

Seventy three percent (73%) of the educators responded positively to the statement that learner governors can assist in the orientation of new learners. New learners can be orientated and have their interests served by including them in the structures of the school.

Improvement of teaching (2.8; 2.9)

A healthy parent-educator-partnership is essential to support learners in their school performance and thus promote a culture of teaching and learning (Njozela, 1998:17). One of the most effective structures for the achievement of such a partnership is the school governing body. Two thirds (66%) of the respondents agreed that learner representation on the school governing body contributes to the improvement of the standard of teaching. The percentage should have been higher as the issue concerns the core responsibility of the

school, namely, teaching and learning. The participation of learners in school governance should promote better teaching and learning. Seventy four percent (74%) of the respondents agreed that learner participation in school governance contributes to the improvement of a culture of learning. A culture of learning goes hand in hand with motivation, suitable role models as well as alleviation of complaints about bad teaching. Fewer complaints are experienced in schools if proper teaching and learning and full commitment from the side of all involved is evident (Maphumulo & Vakalisa, 2000:330). The aim of the school should be to educate learners to an acceptable standard to maintain these standards and to produce responsible adults who will contribute positively to their communities (Heystek, 2001:209).

Solving problems between learners and educators (2.11; 2.14)

Chinsamy (1995:55-56) points out that learners wish to articulate their feelings and concerns in a forum with the power to act. They also want to contribute towards decisions that may affect them. They do not want parents or educators to make such decisions for them. This is confirmed by most of the respondents (77%) who agreed that learner participation in school governance can help in solving problems between learners and educators by conveying learners' grievances to the governing body. Some communities, especially blacks regarded prefect structures as apartheid structures, where prefects were appointed by educators (Ngcobo, 1998:22). This might be one of the reasons why most black learners still do not want to recognize or accept the prefect system. Therefore, other means of giving learners' representation in the governance and management of schools had to be found. It was important that the new representation be given official recognition and be structured in such a way that the school management would have no choice about consulting learner representatives on the governing body.

Feedback of governing body decisions (2.10)

Arrangement for the learners to make inputs into the agenda of the meetings of the school governing body is one of the responsibilities of the learner representatives elected to the school governing body (cf. 2.2). Seventy eight percent (78)% of the respondents agreed that learner participation in school governance expedites the feedback of governing body decisions to learners. One of their responsibilities, of learner representatives elected to the school governance is to report to learners about decisions made by the school governing body members concerning them (DoE, 1998:3).

4.2.10 Obstacles to effective learner representation on school governing bodies

Table 10 Frequency distribution according to educators' perceptions of learner participation in school governance

		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	TOTAL
	Effective learner participation in school governance is hampered by:				
3.1	The minor status of the learner governors that prohibit them from, for instance, entering into contracts	61%	21%	18%	100%
3.2	Regulations excluding them from certain governing body activities (e.g. the appointment of educators)	67%	27%	6%	100%
3.3	Lack of knowledge of governance matters (e.g. finances)	74%	17%	9%	100%
3.4	Insufficient skills to make meaningful contributions to governing body meetings	77%	18%	5%	100%
3.5	Inadequate experience of serving on a governing body (e.g. raising of irrelevant matters at meetings)	79%	16%	5%	100%
3.6	Times meetings are held (e.g. during tests and examinations)	60%	32%	8%	100%
3.7	The lack of adequate training to serve in a governing body	76%	15%	9%	100%
3.8	The domination of adult governors in meetings	66%	27%	7%	100%
3.9	Learner governors that can only participate in matters that affect learners directly	67%	20%	13%	100%
3.10	Adults' lack of trust in learner governors that they will keep sensitive matters confidential	68%	21%	11%	100%
3.11	Exclusion of learners (as minors) in voting	65%	25%	10%	100%
3.12	The term of duty which is too short (one year)	66%	26%	9%	100%
3.13	Lack of confidence to actively participate in meetings (e.g. no questions asked)	76%	22%	2%	100%
3.14	Them not attending meetings owing to full academic and sport programmes	56%	31%	13%	100%

The findings in table 10 indicate that insufficient skills to make meaningful contributions to school governing body meetings, hamper effective learner representation in school governance. A prerequisite for effective school governance is that every member on the school governing body should understand what is expected of him in school governance, and that he must have direction and inspiration to fulfil his duties effectively (Milton, 1991:41). Research has found that appropriate skills are necessary to perform specific functions, to improve performance, enhance self-esteem and thus result in empowerment (Loosony, 1995:5). The following discussion will be based on the findings relating to matters that hamper effective learner participation in school governance. The findings from Table 10 will be individually analysed, interpreted and commented upon.

Minor status of the learner governors (3.1; 3.11)

Most of the respondents (61%) agreed that the minor status of the learner governors that prohibit them from entering into official contracts is one of the obstacles to affective learner participation in school governance. The reason for the above restriction is that some learners are minors in terms of their age and that would necessarily restrict their participation due to their legal status as minors (RSA, 1996:12). According to the South African Schools Act, Act No.84 of 1996, a member of a school governing body who is a minor incurs no personal liability for any consequence of his membership on the school governing body, and that may render the contract invalid.

The age of most learners in schools excludes them from entering into contracts as members of the school governing body (DoE, 1996:23). Because of their legal status, minors would be restricted from participating in the financial management of governing bodies of secondary schools

(Republic of South Africa, 1996:12). Being of minor status learners may perceive their restricted participation negatively, which may in turn cause them half-heartedly to participate in the governing process of public schools hampering not only the successful implementation but also the smooth functioning of all governing bodies of public secondary schools (Bischoff & Phakoa, 1999:89).

Exclusion from governing body activities (3.2)

More than two thirds of the respondents (67%) agreed that regulations excluding learners from certain governing body activities (e.g. the appointment of educators) might pose a hindrance to effective learner representation on school governing bodies. Exclusion from certain governance activities may be regarded by learner governors as a lack of trust in their abilities because of their minor status (cf. 3.1).

Lack of knowledge of governance matters (3.3)

Most respondents (74%) agreed that lack of knowledge of governance matters is an obstacle to effective learner participation in school governing bodies. Possible reasons for learner governors' lack of adequate knowledge in school governance are:

- The research sample comprises 81% rural schools where the support systems (e.g. workshops) presented in urban areas are not as readily available (cf. 4.2.7).
- Learner representation on school governing bodies is a new practice and is experiencing the problems to be expected in its initial stages.

Insufficient skills (3.4; 3.7)

The majority of respondents (77%) agreed that insufficient skills to make meaningful contribution hamper effective learner participation in school governance. Possible reasons for the lack of the desired governance can be attributed to learners' lack of relevant training or experience and knowledge to contribute positively towards school governance. Learners sometimes tend to take over or do not want to co-operate during training and as a result, they fail to acquire proper skills and knowledge of school governance. Their youth and lack of knowledge and sufficient skills are perhaps the most possible cause of their inability to make a meaningful contribution to school governance (Heystek, 2001:221).

Inadequate experience (3.5)

Nearly eighty percent of the respondents (79%) agreed that effective learner participation in school governance is hampered by inadequate experience of serving on a school governing body. The one year duration of learner participation in school governance is not enough to gain sufficient experience to contribute effectively to school governance. According to Heystek (2001:222) the brevity of the term of duty of learners has been mentioned as having a limiting effect on their influence.

Times of meetings (3.6; 3.14)

Most respondents (60%) agreed that some meetings are held at times that are awkward for learners to attend and that has an effect on accountable learner participation in school governance. Heystek (2001:221) says that together with the extra time demanded of learners, it is difficult for them to contribute significantly to school governance.

Lack of adequate training (3.7)

More than three quarters of the respondents (76%) agreed that the lack of adequate training to serve on a school governing body is also an obstacle to effective learner participation in school governance. A possible reason for this is that, prior to 1996, learners were never involved in school governance, hence no training took place to prepare them for school governance. If learners were trained over several years to take part in, for example, the financial activities of the school, they would indeed be able to contribute to most of the activities of the school governing body (Heystek, 2001:220).

Adult dominance (3.8)

Two thirds of the respondents (66%) agreed that the domination of adult governors in meetings is an obstacle to effective learner representation on school governing bodies. Possible reasons for the dominance in school governance are:

- Cultural views about learners. As children they are viewed as juniors with no status.
- Governing bodies have not yet transformed from the old practice of school committees that excluded learners.

The adage that the children (learners) should be seen and not be heard reflects the attitude of most adults on school governing bodies in South African society (Phahlane, 1999:2). The aforementioned attitude has a negative effect on learners and it can hinder their positive participation in school governance.

Participation in matters that affect learners directly (3.9)

More than two thirds of the respondents (67%) agreed that an obstacle to effective learner representation on school governing bodies is that learners are allowed to only participate in matters that affect them directly. If learners perceive the attitude of adults on the school governing body as positive towards them and really looking after their interests, they would like to attend their meetings. They do not think that the adults want to hide anything from them and they therefore trust them (Phahlane, 1999:2).

Confidentiality (3.10)

At all meetings matters are discussed that have to be treated with confidence. Sixty eight percent (68%) of the respondents agreed that adults' lack of trust that learner governors will keep sensitive matters confidential contribute to ineffective learner participation in school governance. Possible reasons for the lack of trust on the side of adults are that, adults perceive learners as too young to be involved in confidential matters that pertain to school governance and that they are more open to gossip.

Active participation (3.13)

Seventy six percent (76%) of respondents agreed that lack of confidence by learners to participate actively in meetings hampers their active participation. A possible reason may be that, learners feel underrated due their status as minors. Lack of confidence makes learners participate half-heartedly in the governance of secondary schools (Bischoff & Phakoa, 1999:89)

4.3 SUMMARY

In this chapter the researcher's aim was to give some order to the range of information provided by the educators in their answers to the questions in the questionnaire. Some of the data collected were of a demographic nature which enabled the researcher to construct a broad profile of the sample selected for the investigation. The data collected that dealt with educators' perceptions of the role of learner representatives in school governance were organized in frequency tables to simplify the statistical analysis thereof. The frequency of the responses to the questions were interpreted and commented on.

The last chapter of the study will consist of a summary of the literature study and empirical investigation with findings from both on which certain recommendations will be made.

CHAPTER 5

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CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter a summary of the previous chapters will be given. This will be followed by findings from the empirical research, recommendations, criticism that emanates from the study, and a final remark.

5.2 SUMMARY

5.2.1 Statement of the problem

In essence the problem, as stated in 1.3, concerned educators' perceptions of the role of learner representatives on the school governing body. Although it was found that educators view learner participation in school governance as beneficial in many aspects, they also identified certain obstacles to effective learner participation in school governance. In the literature study and in the empirical research, it was established that among other things, lack of experience and sufficient skills to make meaningful contribution to governing body meetings, are obstacles to effective learner representation on school governing bodies. The lack of adequate training to serve on a school governing body can also be perceived as one of the factors that hamper effective learner participation in school governance.

5.2.2 Literature review school governance

Central to the demand for democracy and participation in South African education were two key ideas :

- That decision-making in schools and school governance structures should include all sectors, role players and stakeholders.
- That greater representation would ensure educational accountability, legitimacy and democracy.

Full learner involvement in school governing bodies without contravening legislation will increase their understanding of their roles as members of the school governing body and that will in turn boost their self-confidence.

The successes of governing bodies depend on the willingness, the sense of responsibility and full commitment of all the constituents involved to serve their school for its betterment. Learners must be trained and capacitated to understand their roles and functions to fulfill their responsibilities. The responsibility of training and empowering of school governors including learners lies with the Department of Education. Educators perceived the effectiveness of learner representatives in school governing bodies in various ways. Some regarded it as a mechanism that forms a link between learners and the school governing body.⁴² Others perceive learner governors as playing the role of an “ambassador” by making the reporting of learners’ problems and suggestions to the school governing body possible.

The effectiveness of the learner representative in the school governing body is influenced largely by the latitude that the adult governors allow learner governors in meaningful discussion and decision-making. Where there is co-operation among all the members of the governing body, educators perceive the school governing body as a creative organization. However, where there is adult domination the learner participation becomes ineffective. These findings demonstrate adults' lack of trust in learner governors that they will keep sensitive issues confidential. The findings also demonstrate the negative effect the minor status of the learner governors have on their participation in school governance. Part of the problem is created by the regulations in the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 that exclude learners from certain activities of the school governing body.

The introduction of the new education system was primarily to improve the standard and quality of education of the learner and to give a sense of ownership of their school by involving them in decision-makings of the school. Learner involvement in school governance has a positive influence on the other learners. For the successful implementation of the new education policies, there must be preparedness and acceptance of change by all the stakeholders directly involved in education.

There are weaknesses in the composition and functions of governance that contribute to the perception that school governing bodies are not effective. Some of the factors are :

- The composition of the school governing body is imbalanced as parents make up the majority. A parental majority may have the potential of hindering an equal participatory democracy. Some

members take advantage of this situation and dominate learners.

- The attendance of school governing body meetings by learner governors is poor and inconsistent due to the fact that some meetings are held during examinations and sporting activities.
- Learners' inadequate experience and training to serve on a school governing body.
- Lack of knowledge of governance matters due to the lack of adequate training and support material to serve on the school governing body.
- Insufficient or inadequate factual information from the education department to provide enough personnel to develop learner governors to make meaningful contributions at meetings.
- The learner governors are not representatives of the gender composition since there is no legislation which enforces gender equity in school governance, hence there is a lack of equal representation of both male and female learners. This can result in gender bias and misrepresentation.

Democratizing school governance does not necessarily result in restructuring of education and ensure proper equity and redress in educational provisioning. It is possible that they may promote privilege, rather than

democratize the educational system or empower the disadvantaged. Learner representatives in the school governing council are not versed with the acceptable meeting procedures due to their lack of experience.

Deficiencies of training in meeting procedures, functions, responsibilities and their powers leave learners vulnerable to unscrupulous adult governors who exploit their ignorance to satisfy their own personal needs for their own benefit. Learner governors are often used merely to rubber-stamp rather than participate in decision-making.

5.2.3 Planning of the empirical research

This study utilized a questionnaire, constructed by the researcher, as a data base. The questionnaire was aimed at secondary school educators elected as members of the school governing body. The information sought for this investigation was not available from any other source and had to be acquired directly from the respondents. When this situation exists, the most appropriate source of data is the questionnaire, as it can be easily adapted to a variety of situations.

The aim of the questionnaire was to obtain information regarding educators' perceptions of the role of learner representatives in the governing bodies of schools. The questions were formulated to establish educators' perceptions of the advantages of learner participation in school governance, and obstacles to their effective representation on school governing bodies.

5.2.4 Presentation and analysis of research data

The purpose of chapter 4 was to discuss the data collected from the questionnaires completed by 100 secondary school educators and to offer comments and interpretations of the findings. At the outset, an explanation and description was provided as to the methods employed in the categorisation of the responses and the analysis of the data. This was followed by calculating the data in percentages, known as relative frequency distribution. This was done in order to clarify the presentation of data in that it indicates the proportion of the total number of cases which were observed for a particular question. The findings from the frequency distribution were analysed.

5.2.6 Aim of the study

The researcher formulated specific aims (cf. 1.5) to determine the course of the study. These aims were realised through the literature study, together with an empirical survey consisting of a structured questionnaire. On this basis certain recommendations are now offered.

5.3 FINDINGS FROM THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

- It was found that the majority of educators (67%) in the research sample are males. This finding contradicts the fact that in general most educators are females. The most probable explanation for this findings is that the research sample only involved secondary schools which tend to appoint more male than female educators.

- According to the responses of the majority of educators they perceive participation of learners in school governance beneficial.
- Eighty percent (80%) of the educators in the research sample perceived learner representation on the school governing body to contribute to the practice of democracy in the management of schools. It is a possible indication that a paradigm shift from the old school committee system is taking place and the new democratic policies are being ushered in.
- The majority (86%) agreed that learner representatives in the school governing body make reporting of learners' problems possible. Learner representatives can serve as a link between learners and the school governing body. It is important that learners should have the opportunity to report problems concerning their education to the governing body.
- It was found that most of the respondents (80%) perceive learner participation in school governance as a possibility to help improve and maintain effective discipline in schools. Learner representation on school governing bodies can facilitate in drawing up and implementing a code of conduct.
- Seventy three percent (73%) of the educators said that learner-governors can assist in the orientation of new learners. New learners can be orientated and have their interests served by including them in the structures of the school.

- Most of the respondents (77%) agreed that learner participation in school governance can help in solving problems between learners and educators by conveying learners' grievances to the governing body. Learner participation in school governance expedites the feedback of governing body decisions to learners.
- More than sixty percent (61%) of the respondents perceive the minor status of the learner governors which prohibit them from entering into official contracts as an obstacle to effective learner participation in school governance. Most learners are minors in terms of their age and that would necessarily restrict their participation due to their legal status as minors.
- Nearly three quarters of the educators (74%) see the lack of knowledge of governance matters as an obstacle to effective learner participation in school governing bodies. Learner representation on school governing bodies is a new practice which is experiencing the problems to be expected in its initial stages.
- The majority of respondents (77%) agreed that insufficient skills to make a meaningful contribution hamper effective learner participation in school governance. A possible reason for the lack of the desired governance skills can be attributed to learners' lack of relevant training, experience and knowledge of serving on a committee.
- Educators do not see the one year duration of learner participation in school governance as enough to gain sufficient experience to contribute effectively to school governance.

- Most respondents (60%) agreed that some meetings are held at times that are awkward for learners to attend and that has an effect on accountable learner participation in school governance.
- More than three quarters of the respondents (76%) perceive a lack of adequate training to serve on a school governing body as an obstacle to effective learner participation in school governance.
- Two thirds of the educators (66%) indicated that the domination of adult governors in meetings is an obstacle to effective learner representation.
- Sixty eight percent (68%) of the responses showed that adults' lack of trust that learner governors will keep sensitive matters confidential contribute to ineffective learner participation in school governance. Adults perceive learners as too young to be involved in confidential matters that pertain to school governance and that they are more open to gossip.
- Lack of confidence by learners to participate actively in meetings hampers their active participation. They feel underrated due their status as minors. This was the perception of 76% of the educators in the research sample.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.4.1 Workshops

(1) Motivation

The majority of educators perceive effective learner participation in school governance being hindered by a variety of factors (cf. 4.2.10). The obstacles to effective participation of learners in school governance neglects the areas crucial to the improvement of the interrelationship between the adult stakeholders and the learners in that particular school. All school governors must know what their duties and functions are and how these fit into the school community. To improve the effectiveness of governing bodies it is vital that regular training and capacity building workshops are held.

Effective governance with the emphasis on acquiring relevant expertise and skills should become available to governors of schools experiencing problems. In studying the role of learner representatives in the school governing body, it became evident that they serve as both representatives of the learners in the governing body and as “mouth piece” for the Representative Council of Learners (RCL). Frequently roles clash between the adult and learner governors because the latter feel inadequate and overshadowed due to their status as minors. Adult governors dominate meetings and they do not trust that learner governors will keep sensitive matters confidential. This renders learner participation in school governance ineffective and has an adverse effect on the relationship between the learner governors and the learners they represent.

At governing body meetings adult governors discuss matters in which learners have not much interest. Learner representatives end up being negative due to their lack of confidence to participate actively in meetings (cf. 3.13). Consequently they merely endorse the decisions agreed upon by adult governors. The educators' perceptions are that learner governors lack the necessary skills, knowledge and expertise to provide effective representation of learners in school governance.

(2) Recommendation

The recommendation is that in order to improve the knowledge and skills of learner governors the Department of Education and Culture must organized workshops. The following aspects should form part of the workshop programmes:

- The general functions and responsibilities of the school governing body.
- Principles for co-operative school governance.
- Effective communication skills.
- Relevant approaches to educators, parents, learners and other school staff.
- Effective school governing strategies.
- Crisis and conflict resolution strategies.

- Regulations pertaining to school governance.
- Guidelines for adult governors to assist learner governors in governance matters.

5.4.2 Support personnel

(1) Motivation

According to the findings in Table 9 (cf. 4.2.9) educators indicated that learner participation in school governance can be advantageous. It must, however, be pointed out that these findings merely represent the perceptions of educators and not proven facts concerning the advantages of learner participation in school governance. From the perceptions of the educators involved in the research sample it is not quite clear whether learners actually make a positive difference to the effectiveness of school governance.

From the literature review it emerged that the principle of involving learners in the governance of schools may be challenged (cf. 2.5.4). The questions to be asked are:

- Is it really the function of learners to govern the school?
- Are learners particularly interested in governing the school?
- Do learners have the time to participate in governing activities?
- Can learners really contribute to the improvement of the standard of teaching and learning?

- Do learners have the necessary skills and experience to serve on a governing body?

Lack of skills and experience are possible reasons why learners cannot always be expected to have radical new ideas or contribute greatly to effective school governance. Adult members do not generally esteem the suggestions made by learner governors. Consequently learners have learnt that their ideas are not taken seriously and are thus unwilling to suggest anything new.

Although provincial education departments have established a division for school governance, there is a need for training materials for the development of school governing body members and for support personnel to be deployed at regional, district and circuit level to ensure effective school governance. The senior education managers of education, who presently supervise governing bodies, are unable to give due attention to the needs of learners and educators on the school governing body because of their academic programmes and the parent governors are not easily accessible due to work commitments and/or their tight schedules.

(2) Recommendation

The recommendation is that in order to promote effective learner participation in school governance the Department of Education and Culture must:

- Identify suitable persons (e.g. ex educators) in a circuit as support officers to assist in training and providing support to governing body members within their circuits. The responsibilities of these support officers should be, *inter alia*, the following:

- To assist in the democratic election of members of the school governing body.
- To provide information, advice and clarity on governing body meeting procedures.
- Publish regular brochures on interpretation and implementation of national and provincial education policies, including circulars.
- Structure the accountability of governing bodies to the provincial education department and all stakeholders.
- Liaise between the governing body and the department of education.
- Arbitrate in disputes between the various stakeholders in the governing body.

5.4.3 Further research

The research has shown that accountable parental involvement, improved academic achievement and effective teaching go hand in hand and that co-operation between parents and educators is vital for effective teaching and learning to take place at schools. The parents and the educators each has a special and important role to play in the effective education of the child by becoming partners in the formal education of the child. Parental involvement

in the acceptance of responsibility for their children's education is still unsatisfactory. In the interest of the education of the child, the contact and co-operation between parents and educators should denote a sound partnership.

However, the researcher is of the view that government, educators and parents are equally responsible for accountable parental involvement and this matter needs to be addressed urgently.

(2) Recommendation

The recommendation is that further research of a quantitative and qualitative nature must be undertaken pertaining to the role of learner representatives on school governing bodies. Due to the problems experienced by school governing bodies, it seems necessary that research studies be conducted to find suitable solutions to optimise effective school governance by all members on the school governing body with special attention to learner governors.

Many areas of school governance still need to be investigated. The differences between the perception of educators in urban, suburban and rural schools should be explored.

5.5 CRITICISM

Criticism that emanates from this study includes the following:

- It can be presumed that some of the educators who completed the questionnaires formed their perceptions regarding the advantages of learner participation in school governance from the media. The probability therefore exists that these educators indicated what should be the role of learner representatives in making positive contributions at governing body meetings and not what is really happening in their participation in school governance.
- Only half (50%) of the respondents did serve on a school governing body which implies that not all the respondents might have authentic knowledge.
- The research sample comprised only secondary school educators of schools from the former black department of education. Dissimilar responses might have been elicited from schools from the former white, coloured and Indian education departments.
- The research mainly focussed on schools in rural areas. Different findings might have materialized from schools in semi-urban and urban areas.

5.6 FINAL REMARK

The aim of this study was to provide governing body members, education authorities and other stakeholders with an evaluation of educators perceptions of learner participation in school governance. Certain recommendations to improve the effectiveness of learner representation on school governing bodies were offered. It is trusted that the results of this

research will be of value to persons involved in school governance and the recommendations given will be considered for possible implementation to enhance the credibility of learner participation in school governance.

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ANNEXURE A

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

QUESTIONNAIRE

*Educators' perceptions of learner
representatives in
school governing bodies*

B A Ngcobo
November 2002

Dear Educator

QUESTIONNAIRE: EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNER REPRESENTATIVES IN SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

At present I am engaged in a research project towards my MEd (Master in Education) degree at the University of Zululand under the guidance of Proff. G. Urbani and M S Vos. The research is concerned with *Educators' perceptions of learner representatives in the school governing body.*

I have taken the liberty of writing to you, as one of the selected respondents, in order to seek your assistance in acquiring information about your experiences relating to the research.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information will be regarded as **CONFIDENTIAL**, and no personal details of any educator/respondent will be mentioned in the findings, nor will any of the results be related to any particular educator or school.

We deeply appreciate your co-operation.

Yours sincerely



B A Ngcobo

17.07.2002.....

Date

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE RESPONDENT

1. Please read through each statement carefully **before** giving your opinion.
2. Please make sure that you do not **omit** a question, or skip any page.
3. Please be totally **frank** when giving your opinion.
4. Please **do not** discuss statements with anyone.
5. Please **return** the questionnaire after completion.

Kindly answer **all the questions** by supplying the requested information in writing, or by making a cross (X) in the appropriate block.

SECTION ONE: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**1.1 Gender of respondent?**

Male

Female

1.2 Age of respondent in completed years as at 2002-12-31**1.3 Qualifications of respondent?**

Academic qualification(s) (e.g. BA, MEd, etc.)

Professional qualification(s) (e.g. HDE, FDE, PTC, etc.)

**1.4 Total number of completed years in the teaching profession
as at 2002-12-31****1.5 Classification of respondent's school (e.g. JS, SS, etc.)****1.6 Post level of respondent**

Principal

Deputy Principal

HOD

Educator

1.7 The school is situated in:

Urban area

Semi-urban area

Rural area

1.8 Are you a member of the school governing body?

Yes

No

SECTION TWO: ADVANTAGES OF LEARNER PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain
	Learner representatives in the school governing body:			
2.1	Practice democracy in the management of schools			
2.2	Make reporting of learners' problems to the governing body possible.			
2.3	Serve as a link between learners and the school governing body			
2.4	Help to improve and maintain discipline in school			
2.5	Make learner contributions possible that can influence decision making by the governing body			
2.6	Can assist in the orientation of new learners			
2.7	Make it possible for learners' suggestions to be conveyed at governing body meetings			
2.8	Contribute to the improvement of the standard of teaching (e.g. complaining about bad teaching)			
2.9	Contribute to the culture of learning (e.g. motivation of learners and being role models)			
2.10	Expedite the feedback of governing body decisions to learners			
2.11	Can help in solving problems between learners and educators			
2.12	Serve the interest of learners			
2.13	Facilitate in drawing up and implementing a code of conduct for learners			
2.14	Convey learners' grievances/problems to the governing body			

SECTION THREE: OBSTACLES TO EFFECTIVE LEARNER REPRESENTATION ON SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain
	Effective learner participation in school governance is hampered by:			
3.1	The minor status of the learner governors that prohibit them from instance, entering into contracts			
3.2	Regulations excluding them from certain governing body activities (e.g. the appointment of educators)			
3.3	Lack of knowledge of governance matters (e.g. finances)			
3.4	Insufficient skills to make meaningful contributions to governing body meetings			
3.5	Inadequate experience of serving on a governing body (e.g. raising of irrelevant matters at meetings)			
3.6	Times meetings are held (e.g. during tests and examinations)			
3.7	The lack of adequate training to serve in a governing body			
3.8	The domination of adult governors in meetings			
3.9	Learner governors that can only participate in matters that affect learners directly			
3.10	Adults' lack of trust in learner governors that they will keep sensitive matters confidential			
3.11	Exclusion of learners (as minors) in voting			
3.12	The term of duty which is too short (one year)			
3.13	Lack of confidence to actively participate in meetings (e.g. no questions asked)			
3.14	Them not attending meetings owing to full academic and sport programmes			

ANNEXURE B

P O Box 482
HIBBERDENE
4220

17 July 2002

Mr E Zungu
Manager: Scottburgh District
Private Bag X0515
Umzinto
4220

Dear Mr Zungu

At present I am engaged in a research project towards my MEd (Masters in Education) degree at the University of Zululand under the guidance of Proff G Urbani and M S Vos. The research is concerned with *Educators' perceptions of the role of learner representatives in school governing bodies.*

For the purpose of the research a questionnaire was developed which I will need to administer to educators in secondary schools. A copy of the is enclosed for your inspection. The questionnaire should not take more than 15-20 minutes to administer. All information obtained from the questionnaires would be dealt with in the strictest confidence and anonymity is assured.

I request your kind written permission to administer the questionnaire to secondary schools in the Scottburgh District.

Yours sincerely



B A Ngcobo

P O Box 482
HIBBERDENE
4220

17 July 2002

Mr E Zungu
Manager, Scottburgh District
Private Bag X0515
Umzinto
4220

Dear Mr Zungu

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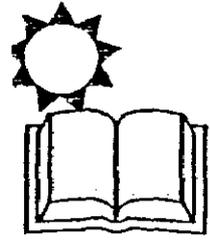
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I request your kind written permission to administer the questionnaire to secondary schools in the Scottburgh District.

Yours sincerely



B A Ngcobo



KWAZULU-NATAL
UMNYANGO WEMFUNDO NAMASIKO
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE
DEPARTEMENT VAN ONDERWYS EN KULTUUR

SCOTTBURGH DISTRICT

Address/Kheli/Adres: Private Bag X0515, Umzinto, 4200
 Telephone/Ucingo/Telefoon: 039/9740149

Fax/Isikhalilamezi/Faks: (039) 9740461
 Enquiries/Imibuzo/Navrae: Mrs Z.P. Mthuli

30.04.02

Proff. Urbani and M S Vos

Permission has been granted to Bhekisisa Aubrey Ngcobo to conduct resarch in the
 Scottburgh District towards a ME.d. degree at the University of Zululand.

E Zungu
 SEM

