

**AN EVALUATIVE STUDY OF THE ROLE  
OF THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY  
PARENT COMPONENT IN DECISION-MAKING**

**BY**

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to the whole of the Ntshela family, both the late and those still alive, mainly the group from Vulindlela area in KwaQiko location. My special dedication goes to:

- My late mother, MaNxumalo, supposedly my grandmother. She brought me up, sacrificed everything for my education until I acquired my initial Teacher's Professional Certificate. May her soul rest in peace.
- All my late family members, especially MaNxumalo, MaNgidi, MaCele, Andrew, and their late children Maxwell, Clement, Christopher, Sydney, Sunday and Guster.
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- My wife Zanele and children. May this work inspire all in the Ntshela family, especially the youth, in all their educational endeavours.

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that:-

An Evaluative Study of the role of the School Governing Body Parent Component in decision-making is my own work, both in conception and execution. All sources used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F.C. Ntshele', written over a horizontal line.

F.C. NTSHELE

DURBAN, FEBRUARY 2003

## ABSTRACT

The objective to undertake this study determines whether and to what extent the parent component of the School Governing Body plays a role in decision-making in schools. The study conducted in Umzumbe Circuit schools, under the Port-Shepstone District in the Pietermaritzburg region of KwaZulu Natal Province.

The research brings to the fore a distinction and overlap between governance and decision-making. It highlights the nature and importance of the involvement of the parent component in decision-making on school issues. The study demonstrates that school governance and decision-making entail the application of conceptual, technical and human relation skills.

Based on findings emanating from the analysis and interpretation of data from the respondents, the study concludes that,

- ✓ • Some school principals do not effectively implement the directives portrayed in policy documents of the Department of Education. This situation hinders the participation of some parents in decision-making in schools;
- ✓ • Many parents do not have the necessary knowledge about school governance in general and lack the necessary expertise required to enable them to participate effectively in decision-making on school issues;

From the conclusions made, the study makes recommendations directed to school principals, schools, SGBs and district officials, SGBs and the Department of Education.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENT	PAGE
Acknowledgements .....	(i)
Dedication .....	(iii)
Declaration .....	(iv)

### CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION .....	1
1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Analyses and statement of the problem .....	5
1.3 Aims of the study .....	6
1.4 Assumptions (hypotheses) of the study .....	7
1.5 Questions the study seeks to answer .....	7
1.6 Definition of concepts .....	7
1.6.1 Decision-making .....	7
1.6.2 Parent .....	8
1.6.3 School governance body .....	9
1.7 Delimitation of the study .....	10
1.8 Limitation of the study .....	10
1.9 Design of study .....	10
1.10 Conclusion .....	10

## **CHAPTER TWO**

<b>LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	11
2.2 Decision-making and governance .....	13
2.3 Models of decision-making .....	15
2.3.1 The Classical Model .....	15
2.3.2 The Administrative Model .....	16
2.3.3 Incremental Model of Successive Limited Comparisons .....	19
2.3.4 Mixed Scanning Model : An Adaptive Strategy .....	21
2.3.5 The Garbage Can Model : The Non-rational decision-making strategy .....	24
2.3.6 Janis Mann Conflict Model: Stress and irrationality in decision-making .....	24
2.3.7 Hoy-Tarter Model of decision-making .....	25
2.3.8 Group decision-making Model .....	27
2.4 Conclusion .....	29

## **CHAPTER THREE**

<b>METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN .....</b>	<b>31</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	31
3.2 Permission to conduct the study .....	31
3.3 Population and sampling method .....	31
3.4 Research methodology .....	32
3.4.1 Survey .....	32
3.4.2 The research instruments .....	33



3.4.2.1	Documentary analysis .....	33
3.4.2.2	Interviews .....	33
3.4.2.3	Pilot study .....	35
3.4.2.4	Observation .....	35
3.5	Analysis of data .....	36
3.6	Validity and reliability of instruments used .....	36
3.6.1	Validity and reliability of documentary analysis .....	37
3.6.2	Validity and reliability of observation .....	37
3.7	Administration of instruments .....	38
3.8	Conclusion .....	38

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

<b>ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA .....</b>	<b>39</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	39
4.2 Analysis and interpretation of data .....	40
4.3 Question 1 : How does your SGB constitution cater for the involvement of the parent component in decision-making about school-related issues? .....	40
4.3.1 Theme one :Parents hold specific portfolios in the SGB.....	41
4.3.2 Theme two : The education law mandates the inclusion of parents in decision-making on school issues .....	41

4.3.3	Theme three : Specific functions and duties are assigned to parents by SASA .....	42
4.3.4	Theme four :SGB parent members chair committees and thus experience leadership roles .....	42
4.3.5	Theme five : SGBs hold meetings .....	42
4.4	Question 2 : What steps does your school take to ensure that parents do get involved in decision-making at school? .....	43
4.4.1	Theme one : Open invitation to parents .....	44
4.4.2	Theme two : Encouraging dialogue within meetings .....	44
4.4.3	Theme three : Steps followed when inviting parents to SGBs meetings .....	45
4.4.4	Theme four : Set convenient times for meetings .....	46
4.4.5	Theme five : Approaching individual SGB parents .....	47
4.5	Question three : What obstacles hinder parents from playing their roles in decision-making, and what weaknesses do they show as decision-makers? .....	47
4.5.1	Theme one : A non-stimulating environment .....	47
4.5.2	Theme two : Illiteracy .....	49
4.5.3	Theme three : Shyness and signs of inferiority complex .....	49
4.5.4	Theme four : Lack of training and induction workshops .....	49
4.5.5	Theme five : Lack of direction .....	49
4.5.6	Theme six : Poor attendance and regular frequent absenteeism .....	50
4.5.7	Theme seven : Punctuality .....	50
4.5.8	Theme eight : SGB agendas continue outside meetings .....	51
4.5.9	Theme nine : Female leadership in SGB .....	51

4.5.10 Theme ten : Bureaucracy in schools .....	51
4.6 Question four : In what way do you think parental involvement in decision-making of the SGB can be improved?.	52
4.6.1 Theme one : Capacity building .....	52
4.6.2 Theme two : Networking among neighbouring SGBs .....	53
4.6.3 Theme three : Inviting parents to school .....	53
4.6.4 Theme four : Making use of the competencies of the co-opted SGB members .....	54
4.6.5 Theme five : Regular review of organizational goals, aims and objectives .....	54
4.6.6 Theme six : Remuneration of SGB parent members .....	54
4.7 Question five : What strengths do parents show as decision-makers at school ? .....	55
4.7.1 Theme one : Positive attitude to school .....	55
4.7.2 Theme two : Interest in guiding learners, who as yet, are dependent on parents .....	56
4.7.3 Theme three : Parents' love for their children .....	56
4.7.4 Theme four : Efforts to attend meetings .....	56
4.8 Question 6 : How are SGB meetings planned at your school, and what role does the chairperson play in planning meetings? .....	57
4.8.1 Theme one : Consultation between the principal and the SGB chairperson .....	57
4.8.2 Theme two : Unsystematic planning of SGB meetings .....	59
4.9 Question seven : How often are SGB meetings held in a year? .....	59

4.9.1	Theme one : The SGB quarterly meetings .....	60
4.9.2	Theme two : The SGB impromptu meetings .....	60
4.9.3	Question eight : Does the school management team monitor the implementation of decisions taken by the SGB .....	61
4.10	Conclusion .....	62

## CHAPTER FIVE

<b>DISCUSSION OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>		<b>63</b>
5.1	Introduction .....	63
5.2	Conclusions and recommendations .....	63
5.2.1	Conclusions .....	63
5.2.1.1	Parents are structurally positioned to take decisions .....	63
5.2.1.2	The parent component of the SGB recognizes its legal rights as role incumbents in the SGB .....	64
5.2.1.3	SGB parent members are provided with opportunity to participate in decision-making .....	64
5.2.1.4	Parents are provided with adequate notice time for meetings .....	64
5.2.1.5	Poverty and superstitions have an adverse effect in governance .....	64
5.2.1.6	Illiteracy affects both school governance and management .....	65
5.2.1.7	There is lack of training and induction workshops in newly appointed SGB parent members .....	65
5.2.1.8	Lack of direction from the principals .....	66

5.2.1.9	Parent absenteeism and punctuality affect the process of decision-making .....	66
5.2.1.10	Women leaders are discriminated against in rural areas..	66
5.2.1.11	Some principals impose their status over the SGB parent members .....	66
5.3	Recommendations .....	67
5.3.1	Recommendations directed to principals .....	67
5.3.1.1	Principals must familiarize themselves with the South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996 and related policies .....	67
5.3.1.2	Principals must arrange sessions to promote relationships with parents .....	67
5.3.1.3	Principals need to establish an atmosphere conducive to parents to participate in decision-making on school issues .....	68
5.3.1.4	Regular review of organizational goals, aims and objectives .....	68
5.3.2	Recommendations directed to schools, district officials and SGB chairpersons .....	69
5.3.2.1	District officials, in consultation with principals and SGB chairpersons must arrange a wide range of workshops for SGBs .....	69
5.3.2.2	Schools need to have codes of conduct for their SGBs to alleviate problems of misbehaviour .....	69
5.3.3	Recommendations directed to parents .....	70
5.3.3.1	The parent component of the SGB must take initiative to	

5.3.3.2	The parent members of the SGB must exploit the competencies of the co-opted SGB members .....	70
5.3.3.3	Networking among school governing bodies of neighbouring schools .....	70
5.3.4	Recommendations directed to the Department of Education and Culture .....	71
5.3.4.1	Appointment of Circuit-Based School Governing Body Policy Officers .....	71
5.3.4.2	The Department of Education must discipline principals who disrupt governance .....	71
5.3.4.3	The Department of Education should use media broadcasts to advertise the importance of the role parents have in decision-making on school issues .....	72
5.3.4.4	Provision of incentives for the schools that excel in school governance .....	72
5.3.4.5	The Department of Education must create funding for school governance .....	72
5.4	Further research and conclusion .....	72
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>		<b>74</b>

## **APPENDICES**

<b>Appendix A :</b>	<b>Letter requesting permission from the District Manager .....</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Appendix B :</b>	<b>Letter from the District Manager granting Permission .....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Appendix C :</b>	<b>One sample test.</b>	

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Tremendous changes have taken place in the field of education in South Africa as a result of the current dispensation that took place in 1994. One of these is in the areas of school governance. The South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) introduced school governance by the governing body which comprises of teacher members, the principal, the parent members of the learners and the learners in secondary schools. The parent component forms the largest number of representatives in this body. The school governing body (SGB) may also co-opt members without voting rights. According to the South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) the governing bodies are juridical persons.

Prior to the introduction of the Act, school governance through parental involvement, was non-existent. What was called the school committee had very limited powers assigned to parents. SASA corrected this situation by giving enormous powers to the parent component in the governing body. The SGB has power to take major decisions over a variety of areas pertaining to the school. The Education Management Association of South Africa Fourth Annual International Conference (2001) points out that the democratic motivation for school governing bodies is at its most powerful and poignant position in South Africa. School governance is only one dimension of a commitment by the present government to democratise and centralise education.

One cannot always be certain that the parent component effectively utilizes its democratic right to share fully in school governance. It is for this reason that a research study is conducted on the role of the SGB parent component in decision- making.



SASA (1996) indicates that there is a dire need for participative decision-making by the school governing body members for the effective functioning of the school, as well as the achievement of educational goals. The Act suggests that the notion of group decision-making be based on the assumption that certain groups and individuals have an interest in the activities of an institution. Ngidi (1999) quotes Maclazan who asserts that a generation of experience in the workplace consistently demonstrated that, on the average, participative management strategies improve organization.

Karlsson, McPherson and Pampallis (2001) assert that South Africa's school reform has entailed a major redistribution of power to the new provinces and to schools. They further suggest that decentralisation of education has three categories. The first form is deconcentration, which involves a shift of responsibility by a central authority to regional or local offices. Although decisions can be made at local levels, they are made by officials who are directly responsible to the central authority and not to the local population. This may actually give greater control to the centre, but it may also help ensure that decisions are informed by, and are more suited to local conditions.

The second form of decentralization is delegation. This involves the transfer of decision-making power to regional or local bodies. The third form of decentralisation is devolution, whereby power is transferred to local bodies for example, provincial or local governments or even schools by means of legislation. Because these bodies have their power as a result of a constitution or an Act of Parliament, it can be withdrawn at the whim of central government officials. Withdrawal of devolved power can only be done through legislative change.

Lynn Davies (1990) adds a fourth form of decentralisation which is privatisation, where power to make decisions is decentralised to the owners of educational institutions. However, although it has particularities of its own, privatisation could be considered as a variant of either delegation or devolution, depending on the legal arrangements by which it is allowed.

Winkler (1989:5) points out that in the education systems of some countries, decision-making is neither fully centralised nor fully decentralised. A country may operate one part of its education system according to a decentralised model while another part is more centralised. It is also conceivable that different forms of decentralisation could function side by side, with different sectors of the same national system of education.

Karlsson, Mcpherson and Pampallis (2001:142) maintain that decentralisation of power often means that power shifts from the higher authority, such as the district, to the lower authority like the school. Centralisation and decentralisation interact and may apply in interchangeable situations. The latter depends on the direction in which power is shifting, that is towards or away from central authority. An example of the above is the pre-1994 period whereby South Africa's multiple education departments constituted a form of decentralisation although ultimate power remained with the central government through its right to control norms and standards, curricular and finance.

The nature of decentralisation exemplified above did not benefit schools. Decisions which could have been taken at school level were imposed upon the education departments by the central government. The school committees of that time had very little to do in terms of decision-making about school-related issues. The new model of school governance empowers the school governing bodies to initiate structures that are in accordance with the vision, mission, goals, aims and objectives of a school.

SASA (1996) attempts to deal with the heterogeneity of the school system by allocating different powers and functions to the governing bodies, such as to:-

- Promote the best interest of the school and to strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school;
- Adopt a constitution;
- Develop a mission statement for the school;
- Adopt a code of conduct for the school;
- Support the principal and other staff of the school in the performance of the professional functions;
- Determine times of the school day consistent with any applicable conditions of employment of staff at the school.

In addition, governing bodies could apply to their provincial education department to be allocated additional functions consistent with the Act and provincial law. These include the right to:-

- Maintain and improve the school's property, buildings and grounds;
- Determine extra curricular activities;
- Choose the subject options offered at the school, within the parameters of provincial curriculum policy; and
- Purchase textbooks, equipment and other materials.

A 1997 amendment to the Act allows all public schools to employ teachers in addition to those allocated and paid for by the provincial department of education, as long as the school raises the funds for these additional teachers. The roles and responsibilities of the SGB thus entail intensive and extensive decision-making.

## **1.2 ANALYSES AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

As stated above, the South African Schools Act, Act 84 (1996) democratises the governance of schools down to school communities. The parents of children actually registered and attending that particular school, are entitled by legislation to be elected into the school governing body there. Like all other representative stakeholder groups in the SGB, the parent component has a right to be party to decisions taken about the school-related issues. In most cases the parent component comprises of the illiterate members which often are an easily manipulated group, especially by the elite group. It is for this reason that the researcher takes an initiative to evaluate the role played by the parent component in decision-making.

According to Christie (1998) the nature or relationships between management, teachers and parents is conflictual. This has a negative impact on schools. The lack of respect and co-operation among the different stakeholders, with each group complaining about the other's lack of motivation, commitment and discipline, depicts a notion of unwarranted stakeholderism in certain schools.

Decentralisation is often associated with greater democracy because it allows decisions to be taken together with the rest of the stakeholder representatives, or because power is more diffuse. Yet parents seem not to be fully capacitated to play their role as school governors. The educators tend to capitalize on parents' ignorance, and exploit them. Decisions implemented in schools tend to be dictated to parents instead of being negotiated. The effect of the above-mentioned state of relationships is turbulence both in the governing body and in the school as a whole. The ultimate result is the failure of the organisational goals.

### **1.3 AIMS OF THE STUDY**

- (i) To determine the extent to which the parent component of the SGB is involved in decision-making on school matters where indices of involvement will be constituted by:-
  - The existence or the non-existence of the parents' role in the rules or constitution of the SGB. The parents' involvement would further be indicated by the demarcation of issues or matters to be handled by the SGB vis-a-vis the school management team. In the drawing of the school governing body constitution there should be rules or principles that pertain to the involvement of the parent component in decision-making. Not all school-related issues should be handled by the SGB. There are those which require only the attention of the school management team. A line of demarcation needs to be drawn between the issues belonging to either the school governance or the school management.
- (ii) To examine the extent to which decisions taken by the parent component of the SGB impact on the teaching staff, learners and the school as a whole.
- (iii) To probe into the perceptions, attitudes and views held by the non-parent components of the SGB about the parent component of the SGB as joint decision-makers on school issues.
- (iv) To investigate factors that may help or hinder effective participation of the parent component of the SGB in decision-making on school matters.

## **1.4 ASSUMPTIONS (HYPOTHESIS) OF THE STUDY**

In this study the following assumptions are made.

- (i) the parents are not involved in decision-making activities of the school governing body;
- (ii) the parents are not empowered to exercise their participation in the SGB.

## **1.5 QUESTIONS THE STUDY SEEKS TO ANSWER**

- (i) To what extent are parents involved in decision-making sessions of the SGB?
- (ii) What capacity do parents have as governors?
- (iii) What strengths and weaknesses are reflected in the governance of schools?
- (iv) What models of decision-making are applicable to school governance?

## **1.6 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS**

For the purpose of this study the definition of terms below has relevance:-

### **1.6.1 Decision-making**

Musaazi (1982:75) considers the process of decision-making as "a cycle of events that includes the identification and diagnosis of a difficulty, the reflective development of a plan to alleviate the difficulty, the initiation of a plan and the evaluation of its success".

Adam Morton (1991:54) says "decision-making is always required where there is a dilemma. He describes a dilemma as a situation where it is very

hard to decide what to do". He further defines a good decision as one which leads to getting what one wants, or getting more of what one wants than he would have got if he had taken one of the other options open to him.

Mosage van der Westhuizen (1977) calls decision-making an action of taking decisions through which an organization is regulated, governed and managed. According to Arnold and Feldman (1996:396), decision-making is (or should be) a process whereby decision-makers seek out and choose the course of action that is most likely to maximize the attainment of their goals and objectives. The researcher regards decision-making as a process whereby partners or stakeholders, bound by mutual respect, shared goals and values, common vision, open communication, common interests and teamwork, deliberate with a view to arrive at the best possible solution.

#### **1.6.2 Parent**

The South African Schools Act, Act 84 (1996) defines the term "Parent" as a person serving on a committee or a governing body such as a chairperson, secretary or treasurer. It refers to a natural parent of a learner, or the guardian of a learner, or a person legally entitled to custody of a learner, and a person who undertakes to act as a parent of a learner for the purposes of a learner's education at school.

A document published by the Department of Education (31 August 1995 : xxii) says a parent is a biological parent, or one who, for the purposes of education, is acting as a guardian. In general, a parent may be seen as a biological father or mother of a child who attends that particular school at that particular period. In the absence of a parent as defined above, a guardian takes charge as a parent.

### **1.6.3 School governing - body**

According to a document published by the Department of Education, "Understanding the South African Schools Act (1997:23) a governing body is a statutory body of people who are elected to govern a school. This means that a governing body is set up by an Act of Parliament, in particular, the Schools Act. The school governors, that is the people serving in the governing body, represent the school community. The school governance of every public school is vested in its governing body.

An extract in the paper presented at the Education Management Association of South Africa, Fourth Annual International Conference (March 2001), quotes the Department of Education (1997, p2) when it says "just like the country has a government, the school that your child and other children in the community attend needs a government to serve the school and the school community. A departmental document, "Understanding the Schools Act (1997:130)" points out that the Act stipulates that the governing body must help and support the principal, educators and other staff at the school in the performance of their professional functions. The governing body can be defined as a structure entitled to take decisions for and about the school and other school related issues, on behalf of all stakeholders in that school.

### **1.6.4 School governance**

The South African School act, Act 84 of 1996 defines school governance as a means to determine the policy and rules by which the school is to be governed and controlled. The parents, being the majority in the governing body, will therefore always be part and parcel of the decisions taken.



## **1.7 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The study is limited to a sample of ten secondary schools, two from each of the five wards of Umzumbe circuit. The wards are Emabheleni, Highflats, St. Faiths, Turton and Umzumbe. According to the new dispensation, Umzumbe circuit falls within Port Shepstone district. All the above are subordinated to Umgungundlovu region in KwaZulu-Natal province. The sample population is limited to principals and SGB Chairpersons randomly selected.

## **1.8 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

Since the study is limited to Umzumbe circuit schools, the results thereof may not be generalised to other schools provincially in KwaZulu-Natal or nationally. However, this limitation will be curtailed by enhancing the validity and reliability of instruments.

## **1.9 DESIGN OR LAYOUT OF STUDY**

This study is designed as follows:-

- Chapter two focuses on literature review on decision-making in general and with reference to governance of schools in particular
- Chapter three is the research design / methodology.
- Chapter four : Analysis and interpretation.
- Chapter five : Conclusion and recommendations.

## **1.10 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has introduced the study and provided an orientation thereof. Chapter two reviews literature on decision-making in relation to school governance.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the researcher reviews, briefly, literature on school governance within South Africa. The chapter will also relate models of decision-making to school governance.

Karlsson et al (2001:139) point out that the history of school governance evolved from policies undertaken by various organizations, such as the National Education Policy Investigation Unit, the National Education Coordinating Committee, the National African Congress and the Centre for Education Policy Development. The Government of National Unity took over and built on the tradition laid by the fore-mentioned organizations. The related issues of governance and funding of schools were tied together through various white papers, committees and commission reports, culminating with the passage of the South African Schools Act, Act 84 in 1996. The entire process of the democratic movement aimed to redress past inequalities towards equity in education provision.

The new constitution of South Africa, which is the highest law in the country, has values and principles such as the human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights freedom. By recognising the parents as partners and stakeholders in the education of their children, the South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996, advances the human rights freedom. It also enables parents to participate in and account for the education of their children. SASA illustrates explicitly why parental

participation in school governance is important. Parents form the main client group of the school. Parents, according to SASA (1996), form the community to which the school is accountable. The Act further maintains that parents are shareholders in the school. This assertion is premised on the fact that the parents pay school fees which run the day-to-day activities of the school, and also that they are interested in what their children gain by attending school.

The constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 (1996) Chapter 2, in particular the Bill of Rights, the South African Schools Act, Act 84 (1996), the KwaZulu-Natal Schools Education Laws Amendment Act 53 (2000) and the Directives from the Department of Education and Culture, provide a congruent legislative framework. According to the legislation impacting on education, parents have a legitimate right to be partners and participants in school governance. This means that the state democratises education and that stakeholders like parents should be involved in decision-making about the activities planned for schools. The intention of the legislation is to provide the best possible education for all learners.

Among the core principles of the South African constitution is the principle of accountability. At a school level this principle is embodied in the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996. According to the Schools Act., parents of learners enrolled at a school are eligible for school governance. The Act prescribes a period of three years as a term of service by a parent member in the governing body of a school.

The principle of accountability proclaims that parents must see to it that a learner attends a school from the first school day of the year in which a learner reaches the age of seven years, until the last school day of the year in which a learner reaches the age of fifteen years or grade nine. Parents must further ensure that a high standard of education is provided by schools. Section 16(2) of the Schools Act places the SGB in a position of trust.

Parents must understand that they are accountable for carrying out all their duties and functions.

Section 23(2) of SASA enables the parents to form the majority on the governing body. It further points out that only a parent member may be the chairperson if he or she is not employed at the same school. Sections, 39(1), 39(2) (a) and 39(2) (b) respectively point out that the majority of parents, must decide the annual school fees to be charged at that school. In addition the school governing bodies must devise equitable rules and procedures on how parents who are unable to pay fees would be exempted partially or fully.

Section 39(3) proclaims that the governing body must carry out parents' decision. Section 27 denies payment for parent members for doing their job as school governing body members. Section 37(6) (c) allows that the travelling expenses of members of the governing body in doing their work be paid, such as travelling expenses after attending school meetings. Clearly SASA empowers parents to take major decisions. School governance as a form of stakeholder participation, is a feature of democracy in the country. Democratic participation in decision-making is, as Karlsson, McPherson and Pampallis (2001:143) argue, one of the main reforms in school governance. A brief outline of the history of school governance testifies to this point. Below is a cycle of decision-making in the context of school governance.

## **DECISION-MAKING AND GOVERNANCE**

Musaazi (1982:75) considers the process of decision-making as "a cycle of events that includes the identification and diagnosis of a difficulty, the reflective development of a plan to alleviate the difficulty, the initiation of a plan and the evaluation of its success". From this quotation it can be inferred that parents have a pertinent and ongoing role to participate in the process of decision-making, diagnosing, reflecting on and solving problems.

By engaging themselves in school governance, and consequently decision-making about school-related issues, parents enter into a cycle of events that should ultimately lead to solving their problems. The parent component as part of the SGB should, as an initial step seek to identify a problem or difficulty. In a way to find clarity of the problem some form of diagnosis need to be carried out. A problem has to be looked into from different angles. All the members Of the SGB should have a common understanding, thus avoiding any misconception by any member.

In order to initiate a plan of action, a brainstorming session must be reached where individual members propose possible alternatives. Parents, as governors, have an obligation to make decisions that regulate and govern schools so that these meet their goals. Arnold and Fieldman (1986) assert that the course of action selected should be likely to maximize the attainment of goals and objectives.

The route to finding the best suitable alternative is by comparing the different alternatives. This can be done by evaluating the success of each alternative. Effective decision-making should lead the SGB to get what it wants or get even more of what it wants than it would have got had it used any of the other options open to it.

The implementation of decisions in the manner described by Musaazi would help the school to identify the wishes of parents about the education of their children. Decisions taken collectively and collaboratively help the SGB to be part of goals, aims and objectives of the school. They may further enable those involved to determine the best options. It can thus be inferred that decision-making is a central tool in the governance of schools.

## **2.3 MODELS OF DECISION-MAKING**

### **2.3.1 The Classical Model**

This is an optimizing model in the sense that it applies an optimizing strategy by seeking the best possible alternative to maximise the achievement of goals and objectives. The classical model of decision-making is both ideal and normative rather than descriptive.

Wilkinson and Cave (1987) identify this as a rational decision-making model. The analysis includes three steps of the rational decision-making model, namely the pre-choice activity, the choice activity and the post-choice activity. In the first step the decision maker prepares a variety of alternative responses to a problem. The choice activity involves deciding which best alternative to choose and implement. The post-choice activity involves communication of a decision finally made. For school governors it is necessary that resolutions taken at SGB level be communicated to all parents at a meeting convened for parents. Parents should be informed how the decision would benefit them and their children. The monitoring mechanisms should further be explained to confirm how the effectiveness of the alternative decided upon would be ascertained. If the decision taken is likely to have different outcomes from the desired standards, these should be discussed before the implementation.

The implication of the classical model for school governance is that the SGB needs to first identify the problem. All the SGB stakeholder representative members should know and fully understand the established goals and objectives of the school they govern. As a brainstorming activity the members of the SGB should generate all the possible alternatives towards solving the problem in question. According to this model the consequences of each alternative need to be considered and evaluated in terms of the goals

and objectives held by the school. The SGB should then select the best possible alternative that maximizes the goals and objectives. Finally the decision is implemented and evaluated for effectiveness.

The classical model seems to be very theoretical since it requires that the consequences of each alternative be considered. It may not be possible to prejudge the exact consequences. The SGB members, as decision-makers, virtually do not have access to all the relevant information required before taking decisions. Furthermore, there is no yardstick to determine which alternative would be the best suitable to solve the problem. This model may hinder schools in that in each school problems are unique. No standard set of steps can apply in taking decisions.

However the model has some strengths. It fosters a culture of reflection and problem analysis to the users. In using it governing bodies may be focussed on generating options to solve problems.

### **2.3.2 The Administrative Model**

According to Hoy and Miskel (1996) the administrative model was first introduced by Simon in 1947. It is described as a satisficing model in that it seeks to find a satisfactory solution rather than the best. It differs from the classical model in that it is normative. The administrative model has some basic assumptions such as the following:-

- It claims that a decision-making process is a cycle of events that includes the identification and diagnosis of a difficulty, the development of a plan to alleviate the difficulty, the initiation of the plan and the appraisal of its success. Blau and Scott (1962:250-251) maintain that the process of solving problems tends to give rise to new problems. The implication here is that during the implementation of a solution, a new problem may

arise. The solution would not result in final decisions. The SGBs should expect the same in their attempts to arrive at decisions. This model has similarities with the classical model.

According to Simon (1947) the second assumption of this model is that individual or group decision-making exhibits a number of important attributes. He points out that the administration may press for specific decisions with the intention to either perpetuate or protect itself, seek to survive, progress and grow. The inclination is that the administrators try to decide in ways that maintain internal integrity, enhance their position in relation to competing interests. The latter statement suggests that school principals or SGB chairpersons may influence decisions taken in SGB meetings away from the whole team's way of seeing things to the way that suits them.


As a third assumption, Simon (1947) argues that complete rationality in decision-making is impossible, therefore administrators seek to satisfice because they may not have the ability and cognitive capacity to maximise the decision-making process. Contrary to the latter statement, Gversky (1969), Payne, Betiman and Johnson (1988) assume that decision-making must be rational by being appropriate for accomplishing specific goals. However, Hoy and Miskel (1996:269) assert that decision-making is extremely complex and its rationality is limited.

This is understandable as firstly, not all options come to the mind. Secondly, all the probable consequences for each alternative cannot be anticipated because future events are exceedingly difficult to predict accurately and to evaluate realistically. Finally, Simon (1947, 1991) says rationality is further limited by an individual's information processing capacity and his unconscious skills. The combination of the limitations mentioned above illustrates the fact that decision-makers need to satisfice than optimize. The latter, according to Simon (1947), can be achieved by making choices.



The adoption of this model poses a lot of challenges for school governors. School governors have varied cognitive skills. To engage naturally in decision-making may be difficult. Under these circumstances it would be hard to try to maximize the decision-making process. For some members it would be confusing to talk about imagined consequences of certain alternative solutions which are more abstract for their level of intellectual development.

The fourth assumption is that the subordinates in decision-making should be provided with an internal environment of decision so that each person's behaviour is rational from both individual and organizational perspectives. This calls for clear description of the organization's vision, mission, goals and objectives, something which the SGB's may or may not be aware of.

 According to Simon (1947) rational behaviour consists of a means-ends chain. Given the ends, appropriate means are selected. Once those ends are achieved they in turn become means for further ends, and so on. Put differently this assumption highlights a fact that success breeds success and the sky is the limit. When a problem arises, a decision has to be taken. After solving the difficulty a particular outcome is achieved. Ahead of the achieved outcome other avenues come to the fore. This is how growth is achieved. The ends achieved give rise to new means to achieve ends that were latent.

Assumption five states that the administrative model of decision-making is a general pattern of action found in the rational administration of all major functional and task areas. Lichifield (1956) identifies three broad functional areas of administration, that is policy, resources and execution. It is true that policy formulation is an act of decision-making. Resources are the vehicle of the policy implementation. The execution of policies definitely leads to the realization of goals. However, the application of this model is limited in organizations where policy is difficult to implement and resources inadequate.

The sixth final assumption of the administrative model of decision-making is that the decision-making process occurs in substantially the same generalized form in most complex organizations.

Litchified (1956) assumes that every organization develops a strategy of making decisions, implement them and appraise the results. However, to follow the process as indicated, requires clarity of strategy, resources, both human and capital to back it and appropriate values. In most South African schools, where these factors are scarce, the model may be difficult to employ.

### **2.3.3 Incremental Model of Successive Limited Comparisons**

Grandori (1984) points to this model as a good substitute when relevant alternatives are difficult to discern, or the consequences of each alternative are so complicated as to elude prediction and when even satisficing does not work well. Lindblom (1959, 1965, 1980) describes the incremental model as the science of muddling through. He argues that it may be the only feasible approach to systematic decision-making when the issues are complex, uncertain and riddled with conflict. This means that the SGB would not need to worry about the consequences of alternatives. Instead the SGB would list the alternatives as brainstormed and implement one at a time.

It seems this model would be time consuming and financially expensive. The process of the incremental model adopts a method of successive limited comparisons. Lindblom (1959, 1965, 1968) denies that deciding requires objectives, exhaustive analysis of alternatives and consequences, or a priori determination of either optimum or satisfactory outcomes. He recommends, instead, that only a small and limited set of alternatives, similar to the existing situation, be considered. This should be done by comparing the

consequences of the alternative until decision-makers come to some agreement on a course of action.

The advantage of the incremental model is that it reduces the number of alternatives by focussing on the situation, thus consequently saving time and expenses.

Lindblom (1959) argues that this simplification of analysis achieved by concentrating on alternatives that differ only slightly, is not capricious. He reckons that simplifying by limiting the focus to small variations from existing situations merely makes the most of available knowledge.

Experienced decision-makers can make accurate predictions with confidence by limiting themselves to a reasonable set of alternatives. Also the narrow focus on outcomes avoids possible paralysis caused by attempts to predict and analyse all possible outcomes of a specific course of action. Decision-makers need to predict within a limited number of alternatives in order to save time and energy. If all of the generated alternatives are evaluated in a similar pattern, the process would lead to redundancy and procrastination. Lindblom (1959) suggests that successive comparison of alternatives be employed due to inadequacies of theories to guide deciding. This model yields more progress if decision-makers successively compare practical alternatives rather than engage in abstract and theoretical analysis.

The strategy of the incremental model combines the setting of objectives and the generation of alternatives. Goals are not established prior to decision analysis. The alternatives and their probable consequences are explored first, then a feasible course of action emerges. The complexity of the problems is likely to effect a change in the objectives as the decision evolves. The marginal differences in value among alternative courses of action serve as the basis for deciding. This model has relevance to governance

especially in an environment of certainty. However, it limits long term visioning by not encouraging generation of objectives ahead.

#### **2.3.4. Mixed Scanning Model: An adoptive strategy**

Etzioni (1967, 1986, 1989) offers a mixed-scanning model or adaptive model. Thomas (1984) and Wiseman (1974 a, 1979 b) claim that the mixed scanning model is a synthesis of the administrative model and incremental model. The mixed-scanning model seeks to use partial information which involves the organization's mission and policy, as well as the decisions that will move the organization towards its mission and policy.

Etzioni (1989:124) describes the adaptive model as a mixture of shallow and deep examination of data. It generally considers a broad range of facts and choices, followed by detailed examination of focussed subset of facts and choices. The mixed scanning model is described as uniting the rationalism and comprehensiveness of the administrative model with the flexibility and utility of the incremental model.

Etzioni (1989) compares the mixed scanning model with a medical practitioner in that its principles are fixed and straightforward. A doctor surveys the symptoms of a patient, analyses the difficulty, initiates a tentative treatment, and if it fails, tries something else.

The mixed scanning model is ideal in that it is adaptive to the nature of the problem. By first seeking to know the mission and policy, as well as the decisions of the organization, the decision-maker has a direction. The adaptive model is integrative in nature by uniting both the administrative and incremental models. The adaptive model is scientific in nature in that it applies diagnostic, analytic and initiation approaches.

The mixed scanning model seems to be more ideal for adoption by the SGB rather than the incremental model. Like the classical model this model collects first a number of ideas, scans them in a way that reduces the number of alternatives. Then follows a step whereby the SGB examines in detail the focussed few facts, which Etzioni (1984) calls a subset. The mere fact that the mixed scanning model combines the effectiveness of the administrative model and that of the incremental model, makes it more valuable.

Etzioni (1989) advances seven basic principles for a mixed scanning strategy. He recommends the use of trial and error. This begins by searching for reasonable alternatives, then select, implement and test them. Finally, the user should adjust and modify as the outcomes become clear. The trial and error idea assumes that inspite of the important information missing, the administrator acts. Decisions are therefore made with partial information, then carefully monitored and modified in the light of the new data.

As a second step the strategy suggests being tentative, proceeding with caution. Administrators need to view each decision as experimental, expecting to revise it. Administrators, therefore, need to be ready to modify a course of action as situations demand. A third step suggests that if uncertain, prcrastinate. This point alerts the decision-makers of a danger of proceeding in a state of ambiguity. This delay would help to collect more information and analyze it before action. Hence, complexity and uncertainty frequently justify delay.

As a fourth step, one needs to stagger his decisions. This calls for committing oneself to decision-making in stages, evaluating the outcomes of each phase before proceeding to the next phase. Step five says if uncertain, fractionalize decisions. This would allow for testing in parts instead of investing all one's resources to implement a decision. Etzioni (1989) uses a figurative speech in step six as he says "Hedge your bets". By this he means

that one should implement alternatives provided that each has satisfactory results. Adjustment would then be made based on outcomes. Finally, in step seven, the decision-maker is advised to be prepared to reverse his decision. This could be done by employing an idea of keeping ideas tentative and experimental. This attitude enables one to avoid over-commitment to a course of action when only partial information is available.

The seven steps discussed above imply that the SGB should approach decision-making systematically and steadily. The action should start by trial and error whereby reasonable alternatives are chosen. The SGB should discern the outcomes of each alternative and evaluate them. As a following step, the SGB should view each decision experimentally. In other words the decisions are weighed and compared. In comparing them, the SGB modifies by filling in the gaps, by supplementing and combining factors from various alternatives.

Step four recommends committing the decision in stages in order that the SGB, while moving forward, checks and evaluates its actions. Where the SGB becomes uncertain, step five suggests breaking the decision into fractions. As in the incremental model, the earlier stages of the problem, and, hence those of a decision, are treated. The SGB should always ascertain that it checks the results of an alternative before using it. This would allow room for adjustments. No decision may be regarded as final and irreversible. The SGB should thus be ready to take a different option if the problem does not get solved after implementing a particular decision.

Hoy and Tarter (1995) argue that although the mixed-scanning model is widely used, muddling through has its own limitations in that it is conservative and aimless.

### **2.3.5 The Garbage Can Model : The non-rational decision-making strategy**

Cohen, Olsen and March (1972), call the users of this model the organised anarchies. These people are said to be characterised by uncertainty, problematic preferences, unclear technology and fluid participation. The garbage can model does not begin with the identification of a problem. It also does not end with a solution. This model, instead, believes in the accumulation of a set of choices from which a decision may be selected to be tried on independent streams of problems. In other words, decisions are created to await problems of any kind. Daft (1989) states that in this decision-making process many problems are not solved, they simply persist. The garbage can model, hence its name, is characterised by randomness and uncertainty. It is not the best decision-making model for governance as the latter requires clarity in decision-making.

### **2.3.6 Janis Mann Conflict Model : Stress and irrationality in decision-making**

While the conflict model does not necessarily propose how decisions should be taken, it brings to surface a factor, namely conflict, which may hinder the process of decision-making. The conflict theory believes that errors in decision-making are a result of many causes such as poor analysis, ignorance, bias, impulsiveness, time constraint and organizational policies. Janis (1985) stresses that decision-makers' anxiety, shame and guilt rise under problematic situations in their organizations. He further points out that attempts to arrive at the correct choice of a decision result to stress. The consequences of the stress retard the motivation, consequently impeding the efficiency of the decision-making process.

The implication of the above for school governance is that once stress develops the process of decision-making is hindered or stops. The meeting, once adjourned, takes time to reassemble because the members are scattered and have other commitments. The members of the SGB should be kept motivated and eager to find a solution to a problem. If the first session proves to be a failure, some of the members may decide not to attend the following session because the process is not exciting. Trying to cope with the stress deviates the attention from being concentrated on finding a solution to finding means to alleviate stress.

### **2.3.7 Hoy-Tarter Model of decision-making**

This model, according to Barnard (1938):167) involves a zone of indifference, which Simon (1947) prefers to call a zone of acceptance. The two terms work interchangeably.

In this zone orders are accepted without conscious questioning of their authority. Barnard (1938), Simon (1947), Chase (1952) and Bridges (1967) agree that in shared decision making all subordinates will participate to a lesser extent if decision-making is located within their zone of acceptance. Alternatively if decision-making has to take place outside the zone of acceptance of other members, the opposite of the above occurs. Participation becomes both intensive and extensive. This is because each member wants to defend his/her opinion. Discussions would be characterised by more debate and argument.

The implication this model has for governance is that the degree of argument for or against an alternative raised depends more on the zone in which it is located. If, for example, a scenario exists that more learners withdraw from school A to school B due to high school fees charged, and one alternative suggested is that fees be brought down to a minimum charge, there would be



less debate from the parents' side. The reason would be that they feel comfortable if they pay less. On the other hand, if a suggestion is that fees be increased, there would be more argument as the proposal would be outside the parents' zone of acceptance. In governance the SGB would require more training in order to acquire the ability to weigh the advantages and the disadvantages of an alternative. This is done by predicting the outcomes and comparing them against the goals, aims and objectives of their organization.

Bridges (1967) suggests that a test of relevance and a test of expertise need to be conducted to determine which decisions fall inside and which are outside the zone. If there is neither expertise nor a personal stake, then the decision is inside the zone. Two marginal conditions exist, each with different decisional constraints. When subordinates have expertise but no personal stake, or have a personal stake but no particular expertise, the conditions are more problematic.

For school governance the suggestion by Bridges has relevance. If the SGB members have no expertise in the field under discussion, there is likelihood that they would have no contribution. Similarly, if they have no personal stake in what is discussed, they would again play a neutral role. Their neutrality would automatically be symbolizing acceptance, hence silence means consent. What requires to be inculcated in the minds of SGB members is that they need not personalise the school issues, but they should seek to fulfil the organizational goals. School issues should be treated objectively than subjectively. If this is not the case, some issues of the school would be left to a few individuals for attention.

Hoy and Tarter (1995) propose that if subordinates have marginal expertise, their participation will be marginally effective. If, on the other hand, subordinates have marginal interests, their participation will be marginally

effective as well. The limitation of either expertise or interest will marginalise the effectiveness of the decision-making process. If, in a governance situation, members' participation in discussions is marginalised, the decision taken would have little or no usefulness.

The Hoy-Tarter model further suggests that the issue of personal commitment in decision-making is imperative. They warn against delegating decisions to subordinates whose personal commitments or goals conflict with organizational ones because of the high risk to the school if decisions are made on personal biases. The issue of commitment need not be overemphasized for members of the SGB. It is self-explanatory that members who have no commitment to the school would sacrifice the goals of an organization in order to effect theirs.

As a test of commitment, Hoy and Tarter (1995) propose that the commitment of subordinates to the missions of the organization should be ascertained. Also, the issue of trust in making decisions in the best interest of the organization needs to be inspected. Although these two characteristics have major relevance for school governance membership, nevertheless, both trust and commitment are not easy to measure.

For a parent member of the SGB there is always a personal stake in the education of his/her child. With some parents there may be no particular expertise, however, their involvement is necessary. As Hoy and Tarter (1995) point out, their participation in decision-making would be limited to a certain extent, as explained in a stakeholder situation.

### **2.3.8 Group Decision-making Model**

Hoy and Miskel (1996) recommend that group decision-making has greater possibility of success. Nevertheless they point certain dangers attached to it.

This model requires more time than individual decisions. Participation involves discussions, debate and often conflict. Co-ordination becomes more difficult if the number of members is big. Depending on the size of the school, the number of SGB members in secondary school is seldom below seven. Group decision-making requires that the members move steadily in their tackling of a problem in question. This would allow for everyone in the group to go along with others, understanding every step of the discussion. Every point requires to be satisfactorily agreed upon before proceeding to the following one.

Group decision-making is recommended for its ability to produce cohesiveness especially among the members. This should often be the case with the SGB members. As they regularly meet and hold discussions, they tend to become more familiar with one another. The members also tend to understand one another's way of thinking. Cohesiveness among the group members depends, of course, on the relationship that exists. While conflict prevents action, strong cohesiveness promotes uniformity within the group. Uniformity can produce like-mindedness and teamwork. However, group decision-making may also suffer from groupthink.

Janis and Mann (1982) point out symptoms of groupthink that characterize decision-making fiascoes. When the group functions cohesively and uniformly, members ignore the obvious danger of being vulnerable. They take extreme risks and become overly optimistic. This is done to achieve the common goals shared about an organization. However, groups can agree when it is best to disagree. In this way groupthink develops.

Groupthink is characterised by excessive stereotyping. The group constructs negative stereotypes of rivals outside the group. In SGBs, for example one would find one group competing with the SGB of another school, or other external bodies outside the SGB. A negatively cohesive group is further

characterized by pressure for conformity. This would be observed when members apply pressure on any group member who expresses arguments against the stereotypes of the groups. The members view such a person's actions as disloyal. Members tend to withhold their dissenting views and counter arguments. The solidarity of the group and its vulnerability, make the members perceive falsely that everyone agrees with the groups' decision. This is a danger to be avoided by the SGB.

## **2.4 CONCLUSION**

School governance involves various stakeholder representative groups. It is a widely diverse group when considering the fact that the school governing body comprises the headmaster, the educator representatives, the parent component, the non-educator employees in the school and the learner representatives in secondary schools. The diversity of the different groups emanates from a variety of factors, among which are social backgrounds, the level of education, exposure to educational matters, economic and political status as well as intellectual capabilities and the level of growth. Some of the factors mentioned above present challenges in decision-making within a school governance context. Swannepoel (1990) however, contends that parents, educators and principals function as equal partners. Within this environment all models of decision-making will require skilful use.

The South African Schools Act, Act 84 (1996) is an act legislated by the South African democratic constitution which is the highest court in the country. The inclusion of parents in school governance is no longer a debatable issue. Whether the parent component effectively plays its role in decision-making sessions of the SGB or not, the parents remain accountable for decisions like all other SGB members. The decision-making models and strategies discussed in this chapter need to be part of capacity building for the parent component. This would enable the parents to participate effectively

parent component. This would enable the parents to participate effectively when they know and understand the strengths and weaknesses of each of the models.

The following chapter focuses on methods used in the study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses research design of the study. It describes in particular, how data was collected and analysed.

#### **3.2 PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE STUDY**

The researcher had to administer the investigation in schools within the Umzumbe Circuit. Since the area is under the jurisdiction of a circuit manager, circumstances necessitated that permission be sought. A letter was written to request this from him.

#### **3.3 POPULATION AND SAMPLING METHOD**

Best (1977:267) asserts that a population is a group of individuals who have one or more common characteristics that are of interest to the researcher. For this purpose the researcher selected Umzumbe circuit school principals and SGB chairpersons as his population. This is a wide circuit consisting of one hundred and sixty schools. The researcher had to select a sample which would be a representative group of the entire population. Since Umzumbe circuit is divided into five wards, the researcher intended to ensure the representativeness of the entire circuit. For this purpose the researcher chose ten secondary schools from the entire circuit. This is equivalent to 25% of the whole population. A simple random sampling method was adopted in the selection of a sample.

Since Umzumbe circuit consists of five wards, each ward represents a cluster. The simple random selection method of schools employed a lottery technique. This was done to enable every member of the population to stand a chance of being selected for the sample. In each ward the Junior Secondary Schools and the Senior Secondary Schools were each assigned a number respectively. The members for each section were put in a container, shuffled, and one member picked from each container. At the end one Junior Secondary School from each ward was selected, and the same applied with the Senior Secondary Schools. A total of ten schools formed a sample.

The size of the sample portrayed above was designed considering a point Cohen and Manion (1989:104) recommend about the acceptable size of a sample. They say the onus rests with the researcher to obtain the minimum sample size that would accurately represent the population under investigation. The above depends on the researcher's purpose of study and the nature of the population under scrutiny.

The researcher acted in accordance with Helmstalter (1970) who asserts that the researcher's intention should be to ascertain that the analysis made on sample elements produce results equivalent to those that would be obtained if the entire population were used.

### **3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.4.1 Survey**

The researcher conducted a survey to collect data, the purpose of which is to examine and evaluate the role of the parent component of the SGB in decision-making in schools. Different research instruments were used. These are discussed below.

### **3.4.2 The research instruments**

Among the many varied methods of gathering data, the researcher decided to concentrate on the following:-

- Documentary analysis
- Interviews and
- Observation

The above have been chosen for their suitability to achieve the desired results.

#### **3.4.2.1 Documentary analysis**

As indicated earlier, ten schools were sampled. From each of the ten schools a sample of two sets of minutes of the meetings of the SGB were studied. One set of minutes from the first and the third terms was picked.

The aims of undertaking the analysis of minutes as documents were to:-

- Establish the extent to which the parent component of the SGB is involved in decision-making about school-related issues.
- Examine the extent to which proposals made by parents are accepted by other non-parent components of the SGB.

An analysis of the minutes was made to respond to the aims given above.

#### **3.4.2.2 Interviews**

To enhance the study the researcher also used interviews as one of the instruments. In doing so he was mindful of the principles of employing



interviews effectively. Humphries (1984) suggests that the researcher should make an interview checklist, be friendly and reassuring, be clear, show interest and use questions flexibly and imaginatively. Baily (1987) agrees with Humphries (1984) in that the researcher need not talk too much nor interrupt. He should avoid imposing his views or contradict and argue. The researcher has no need to rush away as soon as the interview is over.

Since open-ended questions were asked, there was no need for the researcher to follow a pre-arranged set of questions rigidly. This allowed the interviewee to move backwards and forwards to provide data, in the meantime the researcher watched for any gaps, hesitations or avoidance of any certain topics in the conversation. Hence the interview was a qualitative type, the researcher used a tape-recorder to store data and subsequently transcribed.

The interview method was selected for its flexibility to close the gaps not covered in documents. Its spontaneity allowed for more information flow and a quick response rate. The researcher had a better control over the environment than anywhere else. Interviews are more relevant for qualitative surveys, thus allowing for a varied question order. Although interviews involve time, cost and bias, if well planned these can be minimized. The fact that interviews do not allow for consultation of records is advantageous in that the interviewee responds spontaneously.

A number of aims of the study were achieved through the application of the interview instrument. Among these aims were to:-

- Determine the role of the SGB parent component in decision-making in schools;
- Assess the impact of decision-making by the SGB on school administration;

- Investigate factors that may help and / or hinder effective participation of the parent component of the SGB in decision-making on school matters.

#### **3.4.2.3 Pilot study**

Before undertaking an interview survey on the selected sample, the researcher employed a pilot study on one school extracted from the selected population. This school was not part of the researcher's sample. This exercise was to serve several functions. According to Plug, Meyer, Louw and Gouws (1991:49-60) a pilot study serves to permit a thorough check of the research instruments and the planned statistical and analytical procedures. In this way the researcher is provided with a feedback leading to improvement in the main study. A pilot study helped the researcher to approximate the time required to complete each interview.

#### **3.4.2.4 Observation**

In addition to documentary analysis and interviews the researcher used participant observation. The behaviour of SGB members was observed as they interacted during a few meetings. The observer noted the extent of parent component's involvement and participation in decision-making sessions.

The observational method is useful when one desires a comprehensive indepth picture of behaviour and non-verbal behaviour in a particular setting over a long period of time. This method is the most relevant to acquire data reflecting emotions.

The observation study was conducted in four schools. The reason for this is that most schools had exhausted the meetings planned for the year. It was also examination time.

Depending on the recommendation by the host school, observation may be covert or overt. If covert subjects are kept unaware that they are being observed. If overt the observation appears before the subjects and they become aware that they are being observed. The disadvantage with the latter type of observation is that it becomes reactive as the subjects may act differently than they would if they were not observed.

Before the researcher engaged in any observation of the SGB decision-making sessions for the sample chosen, he had to seek permission in order to gain entry. The researcher met the subjects and strove to gain rapport with them. The researcher immediately analysed data thematically.

### **3.5 ANALYSIS OF DATA**

All data was qualitative in nature. The researcher thematically analysed the data and triangulated, the responses obtained from interviews, documentary analysis and observation.

### **3.6 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF INSTRUMENTS USED**

Validity of an instrument indicates the extent to which it measures effectively in a given situation. On the other hand, an instrument would be reliable if its utility value produces consistent quality performance. Mulder (1989:209) Ridder and Gudd (1986:45) suggest that fluctuations be checked in the mood or alertness of respondents due to factors like illness or fatigue, and good or bad experiences. The researcher should further check the variations in the condition of administration between groups. These range from various distractions such as unusual outside noise to inconsistency in the administration of the measuring instruments. This may include omissions in verbal instructions. Differences in scoring or interpretation of results, chance

differences in what the observer notices and errors in computing scores need to be observed. The researcher considered the above suggestions in an attempt to enhance the validity and reliability of instruments.

### **3.6.1 Validity and reliability of documentary analysis**

The researcher considered the minutes of the SGB as primary source of data and thus valid. The minutes studied in various schools were vigorously checked to determine the role of SGBs and to secure a sense of process in meetings.

The researcher made an analysis of minutes using themes.

With regard to the reliability of documentary analysis, the researcher conducted an analyst reliability test by comparing the results obtained from the various minutes studied. The SGB minutes are reliable in that they are written during the discussion session and no new additional information may be written after the session is over. The documents are kept at school.

### **3.6.2 Validity and reliability of observation**

The observational study allowed the researcher with face validity as he directly observed the act. From each scene the researcher gathered data by taking notes and tape-recording. The scenes could be replayed during the analysis, while the notes taken could be referred to as well. The researcher, while taking notes, commented in writing on non-verbal behaviour observed. This could nowhere else be discerned except in observational studies. The reliability of observational studies as an instrument cannot be over-emphasised.

### **3.7 ADMINISTRATION OF INSTRUMENT**

The researcher telephonically arranged an appointment with the respective school principals for interviews. Each principal was further requested to convey the same to the SGB chairperson. The minutes of the SGB were read on the day of the interview with principals at each school. The chairperson of each school was interviewed on the same day like the principal. A date to attend SGB meeting was negotiated with the principals and SGB chairpersons.

### **3.8 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the researcher discussed the planning and design of the empirical study. The researcher indicated the population and the sample from which data was collected. The rationale for the choice of the research method as well as instruments used was also given. The following chapter focuses on analysis and interpretation of data.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter analyses and interprets data collected from interviews, participant observation and documentary analysis. As indicated in the previous chapter, ten schools were identified as a sample. Ten school principals and ten SGB chairpersons formed the sample.

In chapter one, the aims of this research work were pointed out. The research itself focuses on the evaluation of the role of the SGB parent component in decision-making about school related matters. The subordinate aims are to determine:-

- The existence or non-existence of the parents' role in the implementation of the constitution of the SGB.
- The extent to which decisions taken by parent component of the SGB impact on the teaching staff, learners and the school as a whole;
- Perceptions, attitudes and views held by the non-parent component about the parent component of the SGB as joint decision-makers on school issues;
- Factors that may help and/or hinder effective participation of the parent component of the SGB in decision-makers on school matters.

The discussion below is an analysis and interpretation of data collected. The data have been qualitatively analysed by organizing the information into themes.

## **4.2 ANALYSIS AND INTREPRETATION OF DATA**

From the interview responses, from both principals and SGB chairpersons a number of themes emerged. The listing of these themes indicates the frequency of their occurrence, starting with the one mentioned most and ending with the theme mentioned the least number of times.

### **QUESTION 1**

**How does your SGB constitution cater for the involvement of the parent component in decision-making about school-related issues?**

The themes emerging from this question are:

- Parents hold specific portfolios in the SGB;
- The education law mandates the inclusion of parents in decision-making on school issues;
- Specific functions and duties are assigned to parents by SASA;
- SGB parent members chair committees and thus experience leadership roles.
- The SGBs hold meetings.

## **Discussion of themes**

### **4.3.1 Theme 1 : Parents hold specific portfolios in the SGB**

The responses from the interviewees indicated different portfolios which the parent component of the SGB hold. All the respondents insist that the constitution points out the portfolios that may be allocated to the parent component. Among these are chairperson, treasurer and the secretary. The respondents further maintain that the office functions which the parent members hold, automatically allow them room for involvement in taking decisions. So, structurally, parents are positioned to take decisions as SGB members.

### **4.3.2 Theme 2 : The education law mandates the inclusion of parents in decision-making on school issues**

Eight of the ten schools assert that the Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996, caters for the involvement of the parent component in decision-making on school issues. The involvement of parents is, according to the data collected, justified by the existence of a parent's child in the school. This condition mandates his or her eligibility for appointment for SGB membership.

From this discussion, schools understand that the inclusion of parent component in SGB is mandated by law. Thus, in terms of law, parents are involved in decision-making. Whether they actually take decisions, and whether the decisions they make are at the heart of governance, still remains to be established.



#### **4.3.3. Theme 3 : Specific functions and duties are assigned to parents by SASA**

Six schools claim that it is in the rules of the Act that specific functions be delegated solely to parents. This calls for greater involvement of parents since they need to decide on these issues as a parent component. Among these functions are school finance, method of payment, budget for the school, bursary allocation, school posts, floor space, procedures of religion, fourth term planning and official opening of the school. Deciding for the parents on the above issues would be tantamount to dictatorship. It deprives parents of their right as decision-makers at school.

#### **4.3.4 Theme 4 : SGB parent members chair committees and thus experience leadership roles**

The chairperson and principal respondents from six schools highlighted the important role played by the SGB parent members who chair the committees . These committees are differentiated into building, school development, discipline, security and safety. On these committees the parents take major decisions on school issues. The committees are constitutionally established in accordance with the Schools Act. From the observation the researcher engaged into, the parents who chair committees made reports. The same was also noted in some of the documents analysed. This type of evidence confirms that participative decision-making, involving parents, does really take place in some schools.

#### **4.3.5 Theme 5 : SGBs hold meetings**

In four schools the chairpersons and principals argued that at least four SGB meetings exist every year as is the stipulation of the law. This is one of the ways to involve parents in decision-making on school issues. The argument

was that whether parents engage in discussions or not, the school plays its role by inviting parents to attend the scheduled SGB meetings. In some schools, as the researcher went through the documents, copies of invitation letters were filed. The documents further revealed which members attended each meeting.

With regard to leadership by the parent component of the SGB, three schools claimed that the appointment of a parent member as a chairperson of the SGB strengthens the position of parents in the SGB. The respondents point out that the chairperson has sufficient capacity to steer the discussions and lead. His responsibility enables him to see to it that the members are motivated to engage in discussion until the conclusion is reached.

In a few SGB meetings which the researcher observed, SGB chairpersons facilitated the process. Some of the SGB chairpersons skillfully manoeuvred the discussions towards making a decision.

The minutes of the schools studied, however, reflected that most of the inputs to the meetings were made by either the principal or the SGB chairperson. The role played by other parent members of the SGB was not clear from the documents studied. Nevertheless, the execution of the role of the parent members in the SGB is evident from the above discussion.

#### **4.4 QUESTION 2**

**What steps does your school take to ensure that parents do get involved in decision making at school?**

The themes emerging from this question are :-

- Open invitation to parents.

- Encouraging of dialogue and debate within meetings.
- Steps followed when inviting parents to SGB meetings.
- Set convenient times for SGB meetings.
- Approaching SGB individual parents.

## **Discussion of themes**

### **4.4.1 Theme 1 : Open invitation to parents**

Responses in this theme indicate that some principals do not issue these invitations to parents to visit their schools. One principal pointed out that his school allows parents access to the school. He engages parents in a variety of school activities. This includes inviting them to come and watch extra-curricular activities or ceremonies. Parents are further given access to some resources. Another principal said he regularly socialises with the SGB parent members. Some principals claim that they invite parents to schools to discuss the learners' progress with the teachers.

The principals further comment that the schools ensure that parents are always represented in all school occasions, whether enjoyable or sad. By doing all the above, the principals facilitate parents' ownership of the schools. The above is relevant to create and improve sound relationships between the school and the parents. If the parents feel that they are accepted by the school, there is more likelihood that they participate and involve themselves in taking decisions about any school-related issues.

### **4.4.2 Theme 2 : Encouraging dialogue and debate within meetings**

From the interview responses, all the respondents claim that their SGB decision-making sessions are characterised by both debate and dialogue.

However, as shown in theme1, in some cases, debates are dominated by principals or SGB chairpersons. Both the SGB chairpersons and school principals emphasize that their arguments sometimes involve conflict. The above occurs as the SGB members argue for the best alternative.

Hoy and Miskel (1996) argue that all the alternatives brought forward need to be evaluated in terms of the goals and objectives at hand. Since the SGB members comprise different interest groups and individuals with unique capabilities, members do not always see eye to eye. According to the administrative model, Simon (1947) concludes that it is by deliberating and selecting the course of action that a final phase of developing a strategy for action is reached. This phase involves a reflective analysis of the alternatives and consequences. Debate and dialogue arise as the members differently assign meaning to the proposed alternatives and their consequences against the goals and objectives of an organization.

The conditions highlighted in theme two were identified when the researcher went through the SGB minutes. Rarely were decisions reached smoothly without the SGB members engaging in intensive and extensive debate and dialogue. Similarly, the researcher noticed the same during his participant observation. By encouraging debate and dialogue the members generated more ideas which assisted the development of a well evaluated decision.

#### **4.4.3 Theme 3 : Steps followed when inviting parents to SGB meetings**

Nine schools indicated that it is important to follow specific channels when inviting parents to SGB meetings. Principals and SGB chairpersons say they write invitations to parents early before the meeting date. According to the Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996, this should be done two weeks (14 days), before the meeting date. The invitations need to include the agenda. The intention

here is to enable the member to prepare about the items to be discussed. The agenda further motivates the invited persons to attend the meeting because they are aware what the meeting is about. The parent members may also share ideas on the subject prior the meeting. The invitations appear in a form of a letter in order that there is uniformity of information reaching all the parents. Verbally communicated information through learners often leads to diversity of meanings.

As pointed out previously, some schools keep school governance files. In these are also copies of all invitations sent to parents. These were shown to the researcher as part of documents of the SGB. It was further observed by the researcher that this practice helps increase attendance. Some of parents who fail to attend meetings often send letters or messages of apology. However, attendance of meetings still poses a problem, as 4.4.1, theme five indicates.

#### **4.4.4 Theme 4 : Set convenient times for meetings**

Eight schools state that successful school governing bodies select convenient times for holding SGB meetings. Also, their meetings do not drag too long. It is wise to choose times for meetings which are convenient to both parents and schools. Nevertheless principals argue that it is hard to find suitable times convenient to all SGB members due commitments on the part of the learner and educator members. During the participant observation by the researcher it was noted that the educators had to suspend their classroom duties and the learners had to sacrifice some of the learning periods, to attend meetings during the day.

#### **4.4.5 Theme 5 : Approaching individual SGB parents**

It should be mentioned that it was not in all schools visited that the above was found obtaining. One principal claimed that he first consults with the chairperson in order that he convinces him. He then approaches individual parent members and try to get each one's opinion about the subject requiring a decision. After this process he convenes the whole SGB for collective discussion. This approach to decision-making is closer to a Hoy-Tarter model with regard to identifying the nature of decisions. When the principal approaches the parents on individual basis, he wants to determine which decision falls outside and which inside the zone of acceptance. The approach the principal adopts helps determine which decisions need to be made by principals and which by SGB.

#### **4.5 QUESTION 3**

**What obstacles hinder parents from playing their roles in decision-making, and what weaknesses do they show as decision-makers?**

The following themes emerged from the above questions:-

- Non-stimulating environment ;
- Illiteracy ;
- Shyness and signs of inferiority complex;
- Lack of training and of induction workshops;
- Lack of direction;
- Poor attendance and frequent absenteeism;
- Punctuality;
- SGB agenda continue outside meetings;
- Female leadership in the SGB;
- Bureaucracy in schools.

- Domination by the educated group.

## **Discussion of themes**

### **4.5.1 Theme 1 : A non-stimulating environment**

It has been previously pointed out that Umzumbe circuit is situated in deep rural location. Resources are scarce and the environment is not stimulating to teaching and learning. Umzumbe location is characterised by poverty, ignorance, superstitions and traditions. These factors impact negatively on decisions taken to improve the educational settings in schools. Some decisions taken require that monies be paid in order to effect certain deliberations. Learners and parents tend to have difficulty with decisions which require finance for implementation.

Furthermore, resistance to change seems to be a problem. The elders in the community accept the existing cultural system in life as normal. They therefore see no reasons for change as they attended the same schools they govern.

One incident illustrates the point. A second security had to be employed. The parent members were of the opinion that the school could go ahead only if no increase would be changed in school fees. Although parents were aware of the recurring burglary but they could not agree to sacrifice extra few rands and protect the school material resources. Some parents argued that in the past they did not employ security guards. They did not understand why they needed any, let alone two.

During the participant observation in one SGB meeting, the educator members presented a sports-budget for 2004. A parent member complained that money could not be wasted on non-educational issues. It took time for

him to be convinced that extra-curricular activities form part of the school curriculum. However, other parent members in the same school had a positive attitude towards sports in the school.

The Hoy-Tarter model of decision-making clarifies that subordinates accept some decisions without questions while others are questioned. Hoy and Tarter (1995) argue that if subordinates are involved in making decisions for which they have marginal expertise, their participation will be marginally effective. Both interest and expertise are imperative for decision-making.

#### **4.5.2 Theme 2 : Illiteracy**

Nine schools indicated that issues pertaining to illiteracy, ignorance about the educational issues, lack of knowledge and understanding, all impact negatively to a positive self-esteem. Since Umzumbe location is a rural place, the level of education among older parents is, at the average, generally very low. Because of their low self-esteem, it is easy for them to be controlled by the educators. This affects their contribution as decision-makers.

#### **4.5.3 Theme 3 : Shyness and signs of inferiority complex**

Eight principals indicated that parents are shy and show signs of inferiority complex. This feeling emanates from a variety of factors. Whatever the factors, such an attitude creates a barrier to parents participating actively in decision-making.

#### **4.5.4 Theme 4 : Lack of training and induction workshops**

In six schools both the principals and the SGB chairpersons complain that the responsible officials delay to organize training sessions for the newly elected SGB members. Once the new members assume office, their functioning



starts. The parents function in a state of confusion because they have no expertise. The respondents further indicated that other parents who are from other SGBs implement the practices of those schools.

#### **4.5.5 Theme 5 : Lack of direction**

The chairpersons of six schools were worried that their schools do not give direction pertaining to the mission, vision, goals, aims and objectives. This leaves the parents in a state of dilemma. Parents complain that school principals plan alone and, consequently parents fail to participate in decision-making. This by-passing of chairpersons by principals is tantamount to dictatorship. If the school principals do not involve parents in decision-making, the schools fail to function effectively.

#### **4.5.6 Theme 6 : Poor attendance and regular absenteeism**

The other obstacles pointed by various respondents are frequent absenteeism.

The issue of absenteeism discredits the image of the parent component in the SGB. According to the respondents some members get terminated due to this malpractice. The impact absenteeism has on school governance is serious. The parent members who attend regularly lose the necessary support which they should be receiving from their co-partners. Although the majority of parents attend SGB meetings, nevertheless, the few who do not attend destabilize the strength of parents as a component.

#### **4.5.7 Theme 7 : Punctuality**

Punctuality to meetings also seems to be a problem. In the meetings of the SGB the researcher attended, the starting time had to be shifted to allow

more time for parent members to arrive at meetings. Principals and chairpersons from six schools express this problem as an obstacle to parents' participation in decision-making on school issues.

Absenteeism and being late for meetings affect stability of parent members as decision-makers.

#### **4.5.8 Theme 8 : SGB agendas continue outside meetings**

Respondents from five of the ten schools complain about SGB parent members who, it is reported, do not express their views within meetings, then engage outside in open discussions about the agenda of the meetings. It is not clear why this happens. Nevertheless, the practice robs the parent component of an inclusive decision-making process within the SGB.

#### **4.5.9 Theme 9 : Female leadership in SGB**

Another "weakness" perceived by the respondents concerns the preponderance of female leadership or membership. Some schools see this as promoting female dominance over males. Furthermore, females are perceived as unable to engage in vigorous decision-making.

#### **4.5.10 Theme 10 : Dictatorship in schools**

Two SGB chairpersons pointed out that the bureaucracy in schools, where principals dominate and misuse their status, become an obstacle to parents participating in SGB decision-making sessions. The concern is that principals do not take opinions of parents, instead they impose theirs on parents. They further argue that at times the principals do not implement the agreed decisions. Consequently the chairpersons feel the parents retaliate by refraining from participation.

In conclusion, it is encouraging to note that the school governing bodies function despite so many obstacles and weaknesses being experienced.

#### **4.6 QUESTION 4**

**In what way do you think parental involvement in decision-making of the SGB can be improved?**

The emergent themes from the responses of SGB chairpersons and principals are:-

- Capacity building;
- Networking;
- Inviting parents to school;
- Making use of the competencies of the co-opted SGB members;
- Regular review of organizational goals and objectives;
- Remuneration of SGB parent members.

#### **Discussion of themes**

##### **4.6.1 Theme 1 : Capacity building**

School governance is a skill acquired through empowerment and practice. No SGB parent members would be found ready and perfect to take part in making decisions about school-related issues without being workshopped. The principal and SGB chairperson respondents from all the ten schools agree that parents require capacity building early after they are elected into SGB membership.

As pointed out above in themes analysing the obstacles and weaknesses hindering the parent members of the SGB from effectively playing role as decision-makers on school issues, most of the problems emanate from ignorance. The parents need to be trained in specific functions and portfolios allocated to them.

Hoy and Tarter (1995) assert that when subordinates are involved in making decisions for which they have marginal expertise, their participation becomes marginally effective. If parents have little or no capacity to engage in decision-making of the SGB, this influences the effectiveness of their participation in decision-making. Capacity building is indispensable for any leadership role like parent membership in school governance.

#### **4.6.2 Theme 2 : Networking among neighbouring SGBs**

Familiar to the above theme is the suggestion by the respondents that schools need to interact and network. The suggestion by some respondents is that schools should invite personnel from either the regional level, district level, circuit level or even at ward level to give clarity on how effective school governing body parent members succeed to participate fully in decision-making of the SGB. It is also the new of most schools researched that focus in workshops should be given to developing relationships between SGBs and schools.

#### **4.6.3 Theme 3 : Inviting parents to school**

Principal respondents from seven schools suggested the idea of regularly inviting parents to schools to different occasions. The respondents state that parents like watching their children play. In secondary schools, particularly, learners are more organized. If parents are invited to watch games against

other schools, they get entertained. This opens opportunities for socialisation among parents and teachers.

#### **4.6.4 Theme 4 : Making use of the competencies of the co-opted SGB members**

Principals of five schools suggested the point of utilizing the co-opted SGB members. The suggestion is that the schools need to exploit the expertise of these members to the best of their availability. The co-opted members are selectively appointed into school governance for the outstanding expertise they have in particular specialization fields. These members normally do not have children attending schools where they are serving. Important about them is that they need not favour any side in the SGB. They only assist by giving guidance in accordance with the rules and procedures. The utilization of these members is, to a larger extent, ignored.

#### **4.6.5 Theme 5 : Regular review of organizational goals, aims and objectives**

A number of principals believe that it is important for the SGB to regularly review the goals, aims and objectives of the school. Accompanying this suggestion is the need for yearly review of the school governing body constitution. Restructuring of goals and constitution is likely to activate new ideas and consequently new decisions. The idea brought forward is that decision-making in school governing bodies is characterized by monotony and boredom if the yearly routines do not change. Even good traditions and cultures need continuous and regular review in order to allow for growth and improvement. If this is not done decision-making stagnates.

#### **4.6.6. Theme 6: Remuneration of SGB parent members**

The SGB chairpersons feel that parents would be more motivated and consequently dedicated in their duty if they would be remunerated. They say parents often complain that after all the burden they shoulder as SGB members, they are not compensated. One chairlady of a particular school remarked that while other women were busy in their fields and hoping to earn some income, she was preparing herself to attend the SGB meeting, a role from which she is not compensated financially. The issue of the remuneration of SGB parent members has been raised several times.

### **4.7 QUESTION 5**

**What strengths do parents show as decision-makers at schools?**

Among the strengths listed in order of frequency were the following:-

- Positive attitude to school;
- Interest in guiding learners who are dependent on parents;
- Love for their children;
- Efforts to attend meetings.

### **Discussion of themes**

#### **4.7.1 Theme 1 : Positive attitude to school**

Respondents from all the ten schools agree that the parent component members have some strengths. They point out that the average number of parent members show support for improvements in their schools. The problems parents show relate to poverty ignorance, superstitions and

traditions as pointed out in 4.5.1. Some parents, although positive towards participation in decision-making, suffer from ignorance.

The respondents maintain that in general parents show the ability to enquire about the school issues. However, some feel inferior to educated parents. The effect of some parents continuing to discuss the SGB issues outside official meetings demotivates those parents with a positive attitude. Nevertheless, the SGB chairpersons maintain that they have great confidence in their schools and that they want these to grow and become self-reliant.

#### **4.7.2 Theme 2 : Interest in guiding learners, who as yet, are dependent on parents**

Respondents from seven schools pointed out that some SGB parent members are interested in guiding learners. These parents participate in decision-making.

Some chairpersons say they take it upon themselves as parent members to exemplify carrying out of decisions taken. Even when school fees are increased, they are the first to pay. In this way they influence the other parents positively. The chairpersons further say that the positively motivated SGB parent members assist the school management in collecting funds and addressing the problems of learners who do not pay. However, the good efforts of the few committed parents are hindered by fear to take decisions which are seen to put their peers into disadvantage.

#### **4.7.3 Theme 3 : Parents' love for their children**

Some of the school principals and the SGB chairpersons indicated that some SGB parent members, persevere under uncomfortable circumstances for the sake of their children. Challenges such as, for example, dilapidated schools

poor sanitary conditions and poverty hinder their effective participation in decision-making.

#### **4.7.4 Theme 4 : Efforts to attend meetings**

The respondents from four schools pointed out that the efforts to attend meetings by the committed SGB parents is considered as an additional strength. It was pointed out earlier on, (4.5.6) that regular absenteeism of parent members from SGB meetings is an obstacle to parents' participation in SGB decision-making. Nevertheless, it is heartening to note that some parents are highly committed.

Related to the above is the issue of regular punctuality by a few SGB parent component members. According to the respondents the few parents who attend punctually in SGB meetings play a major role.

The above indicates that although parents have weaknesses that create obstacles for their effective participation in SGB decision-making, nevertheless some parents have certain strengths that maintain the parent component's position in the SGB. These strengths must be enhanced.

#### **4.8 QUESTION 6 : HOW ARE SGB MEETINGS PLANNED AT YOUR SCHOOL, AND WHAT ROLE DOES THE CHAIRPERSON PLAY IN PLANNING MEETINGS?**

The themes emerging from the responses to this question are the following:-

- Consultation between the principal and the SGB chairperson;
- Unsystematic planning of SGB meetings.



## **Discussion of themes**

### **4.8.1 Theme 1 : Consultation between the principal and the SGB chairperson**

The principal and SGB chairperson respondents from seven of the ten schools pointed out that the principals and the SGB chairpersons consult each other in order to prepare for the SGB meeting. The two leaders discuss the issues pertaining to school problems and draw an agenda. They fix an agreeable date on which the meeting should be held. This is a relevant criterion for planning meetings. It combines the management and governance roles of the principal and the SGB chairperson as stipulated by *ŚASA*. The sharing of the platform by the SGB chairpersons and school principals, as witnessed by the researcher during the participant observation, indicated a collaborative arrangement. According to the respondents from the seven schools mentioned above, the SGB chairpersons submit the concerns of parents. During the preliminary consultation between the principal and SGB chairperson, the preparation of the SGB meeting can be handled thoroughly. The secretary further ensures that the invitations are distributed to all members concerned. In schools where the copies of invitation are filed, these were seen by the researcher while going through the documents.

The SGB chairpersons and school principals say they allow seven days notice to parents after sending them letters of invitation. The Schools Act suggests fourteen days' notice. The fourteen days notice applies in meetings that are non-urgent. For emergency purposes the period of notice may even be a day. However, while most chairpersons interviewed prepare meetings with principals, one chairperson pointed out that he plays no role in planning the SGB meetings. He says he receives invitations like all other members. In

this case the school principal plans the SGB meetings alone and chairs them. Three principals pointed out that some of the chairpersons disengage themselves and fail to come to school when invited. It is under these circumstances where the principal finds himself compelled to plan alone. The chairperson's version above indicates a practice which is contrary to the dictates of SASA.

The same principals also claim that some of the chairpersons lack the expertise to participate in planning the meetings. Principals say these SGB chairpersons merely respond to principals' suggestions.

The SGB chairperson quoted above points out that some principals talk badly about the chairpersons, saying they are illiterate and know nothing about running the schools. He further concludes that this situation makes it difficult for himself to work closely with the principals in their schools.

#### **4.8.7 Theme 2 : Unsystematic planning of SGB meetings**

One chairperson respondent indicated that in his school there is no system followed in planning the SGB meetings. Instead the principal and the SGB chairperson visit parent members to arrange a possible date convenient for the SGB meeting. This is the case mostly when meetings are urgent and in school where electronic forms of communication are not available.

The discussion about the planning of the SGB meetings and the role the SGB chairpersons play in this regard, point out that most chairpersons interviewed participate in decision-making.

## **4.9 QUESTION 7**

### **How often are SGB meetings held in a year?**

The themes that emerged from the above question are the following:-

- The SGB quarterly meetings;
- The SGB impromptu meetings;

### **Discussion of themes**

#### **4.9.1 Theme 1 : The SGB quarterly meetings**

All the respondents from both the principals and the chairpersons indicated that their year plans allow for four SGB meetings held on quarterly basis. These meetings are planned prior the beginning of the year. According to the Schools Act the year plan of the SGB meetings allows for all members to have an idea of the following year's plan.

The strategic plan of the various schools to hold SGB meetings once every quarter of the year is in accordance with the Schools Act. It is imperative that the SGB checks how the school functions. The principal as a manager of the school has a duty to report to the SGB how the school progresses and seek its intervention where irregularities occur. By ensuring that the school abides to SASA, parents are enabled to have an opportunity to participate in SGB decision-making.

#### **4.9.2 Theme 2 : The SGB impromptu meetings**

All the respondents admitted that impromptu meetings of the SGB take place at anytime the need arises. The minutes of the SGB read indicated that meetings were frequently held both on a quarterly basis as well as when

emergencies arose. Even during the researcher's participant observation in different schools, regular reference was made to impromptu meetings as well as previously scheduled SGB meetings.

#### **4.9 QUESTION 8**

**Does the school management team monitor the implementation of decisions taken by the SGB?**

From the responses received from the SGB chairpersons and school principals, the following themes emerged:-

- Dissemination of information and implementation thereof.

#### **Discussion of the themes**

All the respondents from the ten schools indicated that the school principals, once the decisions are taken, first disseminate the information to all levels of school management, educators, non-teaching staff as well as learners. The latter takes various forms which include school management team meetings, staff meetings, circulars to all staff members as well as announcements at the assembly.

All the school principals and the SGB chairpersons pointed out that the management teams monitor the implementation of decisions taken by the SGBs. The above is done often after the SGB decisions have been approved by the parents at a parents' meeting. Monitoring of the implementation, according to the principals, takes different forms such as reports, announcements or evaluation of action where this is required. Whatever form, it is clear that parents, to a certain degree, do participate in decision-making at schools.

#### **4.10 QUESTION 9**

**To what extent are parents' proposals in decision-making of the SGB accepted by the non-parent components?**

The following theme emerged from the responses to the above question.

- Objective scrutiny of a point made;

#### **Discussion of the theme**

All the principals pointed out that it is immaterial which component of the SGB raises a point. The point made by anyone often needs to be scrutinized. In doing the latter, the first step is to take all the proposals and brainstorm. The next step concerns the close examination of a proposal against the problem in question. Its effect is discussed, the advantages and disadvantages are compared and contrasted. The criterion employed towards the selection of the best alternative is fairly objective, in some cases.

#### **4.11 CONCLUSION**

This chapter analysed and interpreted the data collected through interviews, documentary analysis and participant observation. The chapter has indicated the role which the parent component of the SGB plays in decision-making at school. The following chapter identifies the conclusions based on the analysis and interpretation of data. It also provides recommendations which emanate from the whole study.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The empirical investigation for this study primarily focused on the evaluation of the role of the parent component of the SGB in decision-making on school issues. This chapter provides a summary of the findings that emanated from the empirical investigation and the conclusions that are drawn from the findings.

#### **5.2 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### **5.2.1 Conclusions**

##### **Parents are structurally positioned to take decisions**

From the principals' and SGB chairpersons' responses it is concluded that parents hold important positions in the SGB. These include the chairperson, the vice-chairperson and the treasurer. There are also sub-committees subordinate to the SGB. These are further chaired by the SGB parent members. The respondents conclude that the office positions held by some of the parent members spontaneously involve them in structures which should constitutionally be involved in decision-making.

**5.2.1.2      The parent component of the SGB recognizes its legal rights as role incumbents in the SGB**

In 4.3.2 the respondents assert that the SGB parent members have a legitimate right accorded to them by the Education Act of Parliament, the South African Schools' Act (SASA), Act 84 of 1996, to participate in decision-making on school issues.

**5.2.1.3      SGB parent members are provided with opportunity to participate in decision-making**

In theme 4.3.5 above the SGB chairpersons and the school principals, responding to the item on how the SGB constitution caters for the involvement of parents in decision-making, argued that there are four compulsory SGB meetings, scheduled by SASA on quarterly basis. The assertion here is that parents are provided with opportunities to participate in decision-making when SGB meetings are held.

**5.2.1.4      Parents are provided with adequate notice time for meetings**

Most principals and SGB chairpersons interviewed, point out that it is necessary to follow a specific sequence of events when inviting parents to SGB meetings. The study indicates that proper procedures are followed in arranging for meetings.

**5.2.1.5      Poverty and superstitions have an adverse effect in governance**

Issues like poverty, ignorance, superstitions and traditions discussed in 4.5.1 above, prevent parents from realising some decisions.

#### **5.2.1.6 Illiteracy affects both school governance and management**

The issue of illiteracy is both an obstacle and a weakness obstructing parents from participating in decision-making on school issues. According to the analysis and interpretation as detailed in theme 4.5.2 many parents cannot read information pertaining to their role. The problem of illiteracy creates low self-esteem among some parents. In some cases this renders illiterate parents vulnerable to manipulation by teachers who are controlling. If parents are well informed about their roles as decision-makers, parents would strive to exercise their rights.

#### **5.2.1.7 There is lack of training and induction workshops in newly appointed SGB parent members**

The research findings reveal that the lack of training and induction workshops for the newly elected members of the SGB, makes parents to function under a state of confusion. Ignorant parents do not understand their role nor make decisions required. They may not see why and how a particular problem under discussion affects the school. Such parents can hardly contribute towards finding a solution.

#### **5.2.1.8 Lack of direction from the principals**

Some chairpersons are not exposed to the mission, vision, goals aims and objectives of their schools. If principals plan alone (Theme 18 (4.5.5), the parents fail to contribute to decision-making because they do not know how a particular problem affects the school. Also parents fail to think of a solution when they do not know what is desired to be achieved.



#### **5.2.1.9 Parent absenteeism and punctuality affect the process of decision-making**

The issue of parents not attending the SGB meetings regularly is viewed negatively by both the principals and SGB chairpersons. This malpractice by some parent members impacts negatively on the stability of the SGB, and in particular the parent component. This condition ultimately leads to the parent component not fully and effectively participating in decision-making on school issues.

Related to poor attendance of parents in SGB meetings is the concern principals and chairpersons have about the parent members failing to keep time in meetings. This is revealed in theme 4.5.7 where the starting times of meetings of the SGB had to shift due to lateness of parents. Arriving late at a meeting after walking a long distance, coupled by fatigue, automatically make it hard for parents to fully participate in decision-making. It takes time for one to cope with what is being discussed if one arrives late.

#### **5.2.1.10 Women leaders are discriminated against in rural areas**

Based on theme 4.5.9 it appears that women in leadership positions, such as school governance, are discriminated against. The perception and fear that women as leaders may dominate men, supports this conclusion.

#### **5.2.1.11 Some principals impose their status over the SGB parent members**

From the chairpersons' responses it can be concluded that certain school principals adopt a dominant position over parent members in the SGB. The major concern is that such principals have a misperception that illiterate parents cannot participate in decision-making on educational matters. As a

result such principals do not take the opinions of parent members. Parents ultimately feel unimportant and therefore withdraw from participation in decision-making on school issues.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.3.1 Recommendations directed to principals**

##### **5.3.1.1 Principals must familiarize themselves with the South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996 and related policies**

Principals of schools need to familiarize themselves with relevant policy documents and hold regular discussion about policy documents at SGB meetings. The knowledge of the above would provide insight into policies to school governance. It is further suggested that regular reference to school governance policy be made when drawing up the SGB constitution. The involvement of the parent component in decision-making should be guided by policy document. As a further recommendation, principals should expose the SGB parent members to the Departmental policy documents and regulations. If both principals and parents are familiar with policy documents, this would enhance governance and management.

##### **5.3.1.2 Principals must arrange sessions to promote relationships with parents**

Although parent members of the SGB seem to be structurally positioned to take decisions on school issues but they still need to grow as decision-makers. For this reason they need to be positively motivated. This may be done through formal and informal discussions involving parents and principals. The school principals are well positioned to influence good relationships between the parents and the schools. Among other things, the

school may create opportunities for regular visits by parents, allocate some of the school resources for use by the community during week-ends and holidays, invite parents to various school functions and ceremonies, allow parents to come to school to discuss the learners' progress with teachers, etc.

#### **5.3.1.3 Principals need to establish an atmosphere conducive to parents to participate in decision-making on school issues**

The departmental policies may stipulate all the democratic rights for parents on school governance, but if the principals are not positive towards the implementation of the democratic practices, parents may remain distanced from taking decisions on school issues. The attitudes required of principals include for example, trust, respect, collaboration, collegiality, cooperation, tolerance, and consultation. When the above conditions exist between the principal and the SGB parent members, there is greater opportunity that parents participate in decision-making at school. Whether the law mandates the inclusion of parents in decision-making or not, depends partly on the attitude adopted by the principal.

#### **5.3.1.4 Regular review of organisational goals, aims and objectives**

Most chairperson respondents pointed out as indicated in 5.2.1.9 that the parent component has no direction in terms of organizational goals, aims and objectives. It is suggested that these be regularly reviewed in the SGB meeting. In order that the principal gains the cooperation of the parent component members, he must set and define goals, aims and objectives for the school in collaboration with the parents. Parents have their own goals as beneficiaries in education and these need to be incorporated in the organizational goals. Articulating goals, aims and objectives at SGB meetings is likely to attract the participation of parents in decision-making.

The above needs to be done during the planning sessions together with the parent members of the SGB.

**5.3.2 Recommendations directed to schools, district officials and SGBs**

**5.3.2.1 District officials, in consultation with principals and SGB chairpersons, must arrange a wide range of workshops for SGBs**

In addition to workshops on financial management , there is a need for SGBs to have exposure to additional workshops to enhance their capacity. Such workshops could include interpersonal and decision-making skills.

**5.3.2.2 Schools need to have codes of conduct for their SGBs to alleviate problems of misbehaviour**

In order to establish and maintain the culture of regular attendance and punctuality in SGB meetings, it is suggested that each school develops a code of conduct for its SGB. Punitive measures may be put in place for transgressors. A register of attendance and punctuality may also be kept for motivation and record purposes. Incentives of some kind may be awarded to those who excel in complying with the set standards.

### **5.3.3 Recommendations directed to parents**

#### **5.3.3.1 The parent component of the SGB must take initiative to be informed about school policies**

It is not enough for the SGB parent component to wait for the principal to communicate what he wishes to. Instead it is recommended that SGBs be given guidelines by district officials on policies which inform governance.

#### **5.3.3.2 The parent members of the SGB must exploit the competencies of the co-opted SGB members**

The practice of employing the services of the co-opted members into the SGB has benefits for inexperienced, newly elected members. Principal respondents from five schools, as portrayed in theme 4.6.4, indicate that much can be acquired from exploiting the competencies of the co-opted SGB members.

The same can be done with the parent members who are re-appointed into the SGB. Their experiences would serve as reference for use by the new members.

#### **5.3.3.3 Networking among school governing bodies of neighbouring schools**

As a response to a question relating to suggested ways of improving parental involvement in decision-making, research findings in Theme 4.6.2 indicate that the SGB parent members of neighbouring schools need to interact and network in order to share ideas pertaining to their school governance roles. The dissemination of information in this fashion may be a solution to lack of organized training sessions, workshops and induction service.

### **5.3.4 Recommendations to the Department of Education and Culture**

#### **5.3.4.1 Appointment of circuit-based school governing body policy officers**

It is recommended that the department appoints SGB policy officers who would be circuit-based. These should be specialist in school governance. One appointee would be sufficient in a circuit. This person would, inter-alia, look into:-

- Organizing training sessions, workshops and other developmental programmes;
- Monitoring of the implementation of policies and new developments;
- Liaise between the circuit schools and the School Governance section/directorate;
- Communication of SGBs' concerns and grievances to the higher bodies;
- Supply of school governance resources;
- Clarification of school governance policies;
- Evaluation of SGB performance in the circuit schools on yearly basis.

#### **5.3.4.2 The Department of Education must discipline principals who disrupt governance**

The findings from the empirical investigation indicate that some of the principals engage in a variety of malpractices, which culminate to some of the SGB parent members not participating in decision-making sessions of the SGB. The researcher feels that the Department of Education should stipulate measures that would be taken against transgressors of this kind.

**5.3.4.3      The Department of Education should use media broadcasts to advertise the importance of the role parents have in decision-making on school issues**

As a step to alleviate some of the obstacles and weaknesses hindering parents from participating in SGB decision-making sessions, it is recommended that the Department of Education and Culture uses radio broadcast advertisements to sensitize the society about how they can overcome some of the barriers discussed in this study.

**5.3.4.4      Provision of incentives for the schools that excel in school governance**

The Department of Education should recognize good governance of schools. This may be done by providing incentives in the form of merit certificates. The SGB parent members may also be awarded certificates of excellence in particular fields after undergoing training.

**5.3.4.5      The Department of Education must create funding for school governance**

The Department of Education needs to make financial contribution to schools for feeding the SGB parent members on meeting days, and to provide for parents' transport claims.

**5.4            CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

This study focused on the evaluation of the role of the parent component of the School Governing Body in decision-making. The roles and responsibilities of parents in school governance in general and in decision-

making in particular, were reviewed. It is recommended that further research based on policies related to governance be undertaken in order to find ways of improving the participation of parents in decision-making on school issues.

The role of governance is a central one in schools. Ongoing attention to it, through, among other mechanisms, research, is essential to inform relevant policy formulation and implementation.



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**ANNEXURE A**

Bhanoyi Secondary School  
P.O. Box 425286  
HIGHFLATS  
3306

04 February 2003

The District Manager  
Dept. of Education and Culture  
P.O. Box 133  
HIGHFLATS  
3306

Dear Sir

**REQUEST FOR AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT A SURVEY IN THE IXOPO DISTRICT**

I am a registered student for a master's degree in education at the University of Zululand (Durban-Umlazi Campus). I am undertaking research for a dissertation entitled *"An evaluative study of the role of parents in school governing body decision-making"*. My supervisor in this project is Professor Ngcongco.

I therefore request your authority to conduct this research in the Ixopo District. I shall be glad if my request receives your positive attitude, and I hope that the results of this research project will be of great value in the education field as a whole.

I thank you in anticipation of good.

Yours faithfully



F.C. NTSHELE

# ANNEXURE B

## ISIFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION & CULTURE UMNYANGO WEMFUNDO NAMASIKO DEPARTMENT VAN ONDERWYS & KULTUUR

PROVINCE OF  
KWAZULU-NATAL

IXOBHO  
IXOPO  
IXOPO



ELIMANTENTE  
DISTRICT  
DISTRICK

PROVINSIE  
KWAZULU-NATAL

*Drink from the fountain*

*Phuzu emthonjeni*

*Drink uit die fontein*

Telephone  
Ucingo  
Telefoon

039 - 8350309

Facsimile

039 - 8350233

Usuku  
Date  
Datum

07.02.03

H N H  
J  
CIRCUITS

Isikhwama Seposi  
Private Bag  
Privaatsak

Imibuzo  
Enquiries  
Navrae

Inkomba  
Reference  
Verwysing

P O Box 133  
Highflats 3306

SS Maphumulo

Mr. F.C. Ntshela  
Bhanoyi Secondary School  
P.O. Box 425286  
**HIGHFLATS**  
3306

Dear Sir

### RE: REQUEST FOR AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT A SURVEY AT IXOPO DISTRICT

The above stated matter has reference.

It pleases me to inform you that your request for authority to conduct a survey at Ixopo District has been approved. Please try by all means to avoid any disturbance of teaching and learning that may occur in schools during the survey.

Please accept my apology for the delay to respond to your letter dated 31 July 2001. Your letter must have been misplaced somewhere somehow in an office. The inconvenience is regretted. I wish you good luck and all the success in your study. May God bless you.

Yours faithfully

  
**S.S. MAPHUMULO**  
**DISTRICT MANAGER**

**ANNEXURE C**

Bhanoyi Secondary School  
P.O. Box 425286  
HIGHFLATS  
3306

21 October 2003

Circuit Manager  
Umzumbe Circuit Office  
P.O. Box 133  
HIGHFLATS  
4640

Dear Sir/Madam

**REQUEST FOR AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT A SURVEY IN THE IXOPO DISTRICT**

I am a registered student for a master's degree in education at the University of Zululand (Durban-Umlazi Campus). I am undertaking research for a dissertation entitled *"An evaluative study of the role of parents in school governing body decision-making"*. My supervisor in this project is Professor Ngcongco.

I therefore request your authority to conduct this research in the Ixopo District. I shall be glad if my request receives your positive attitude, and I hope that the results of this research project will be of great value in the education field as a whole.

I thank you in anticipation.

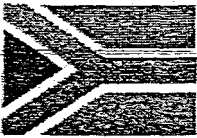
Yours faithfully



F.C. NTSHELE



## ANNEXURE D



PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL  
ISIFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU-NATAL  
PROVINSIE KWAZULU-NATAL



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

### UMZUMBE CIRCUIT

### ISEKETHE LASEMZUMBE

### UMZUMBE CIRCUIT

Address: Next to Phungashe Magistrate Court.  
Ikheli: Eluphepheni, St Faiths Rd. Highflats  
Address: 3306

Enquiries:  
Imibuzo: BS Mkhize  
Navrae:

Post Box: P O Box 133  
Ibhokisi leposi: HIGHFLATS  
Pos Boks: 3306

Reference:  
Inkomba: Principal's Meeting  
Verwysing

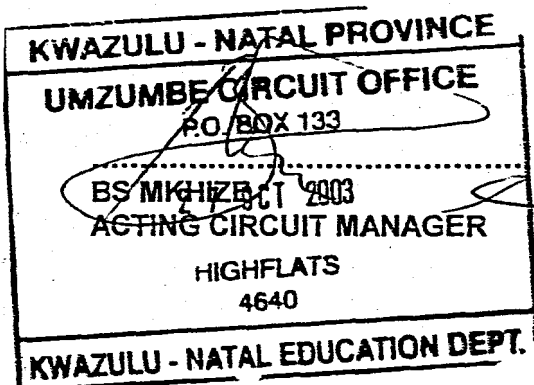
Telephone: [039] 835-0309  
Ucingo:  
Telephoon:  
Fax: [039] 835-0233

Date:  
Usuku: 27 October 2003  
Datum:

To Whom It May Concern:

Permission is hereby granted to Mr FC Ntshale to conduct research in the Umzumbe Circuit as required by his Master's Degree studies.

Should he need any extra assistance from you or your school, please be kind enough to offer it.



**ANNEXURE E**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND SGB CHAIRPERSONS**

1. How does your SGB Constitution cater for the involvement of the parent component in decision-making about school related matters?

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2. What steps does your school take to ensure that parents do get involved in decision-making at school?

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3. What obstacles hinder parents from playing their roles in decision-making and what weaknesses do they show as decision-makers?

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4. In what way do you think parental involvement in decision-making of the SGB can be improved?

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5. What strengths do parents show as decision-makers at school?

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6. How are the SGB Meetings planned at your school and what roles does the chairperson play in planning meetings?

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7. How often are the SGB Meetings held in a year?

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8. Does the School Management Team monitor the implementation of decisions taken by the SGB?

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9. To what extent are parents' proposal in decision-making sessions of the SGB accepted by the non-parent components?

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**IMIBUZO EHLELELWE UCWANINGO MAYELANA NEQHAZA LABAZALI  
EKUTHATHWENI KWEZINQUMO KWI-SGB**

1. Umthethosisekelo weSGB yesikole senu ukuhlelele kanjani ukuba abazali kwi-SGB babambe iqhaza ngokugcwele ekuthathweni kwezinqumo?

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2. Iziphi izinyathelo ezithathwa isikole senu ukuqiniseka ukuthi abazali bayangenela ekuthathweni kwezinqumo ezindabeni zesikole?

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3. Zintozini ezivimba abazali ekubeni yingxenye eqhazeni lokuthathwa kwezinqumo ezindabeni zesikole, futhi buthakathaka buni ababukhombisayo abazali uma kuthathwa izinqumo ezindabeni zesikole?

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4. Yiziphi izindlela ocabanga ukuthi kungenziwa ngcono ngazo ukuba abazali babambe iqhaza labo ekuthathweni kwezinqumo esikoleni?

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5. Bakhombisa maphi amandla abazali ekuthathweni kwezinqumo esikoleni?

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6. Imihlangano ye-SGB ihlelwa kanjani esikoleni senu, futhi ubamba qhaza lini usihlalo we-SGB ekuhlelweni kwemihlangano?

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7. Imihlangano ye-SGB ibanjwa kangaki ngonyaka esikoleni senu?

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8. Ngabe ithimba elibhekele ukuphatheka kwesikole liyaqikelela yini ukuthi izinqumo ezithathwe umkhandlu wokuphatha isikole ziyafezwa?

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9. Izingxenye ezingesibo abamele abazali kwi-SGB zizamukela kangakanani iziphakamiso zabazali uma kuthathwa izinqumo ngesikole?

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