

**THE ROLE OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES  
IN RURAL SECTION 21 SCHOOLS IN SISONKE DISTRICT**

**BY**

**BONGUMUSA EDMUND DUMA**

**2016**

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**BONGUMUSA EDMUND DUMA  
JSTC (Adams College), BA, BA (Hons) (UDW)**

**Submitted to the Faculty of Education in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Education  
in the Department of Social Science  
at the University of Zululand**

**Supervisor: Prof M.A.N Duma**

**Co-Supervisor: Dr B.T. Gamede**

**Date Submitted: March 2016**

## DECLARATION

I Bongumusa Edmund Duma, the undersigned, hereby declare that ***The Role of School Governing Bodies in Rural Section 21 Schools in Sisonke District*** is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been properly acknowledged and referenced.

Signed by -----

on the ----- day of -----2016

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

In writing this dissertation I have drawn from my experience of teaching and learning in the schools in KwaZulu-Natal and I am grateful for all the opportunities over a number of years for learning and reflection with learners and colleagues. In particular, I wish to extend my gratitude to the Library Staff of the University of Zululand and Scottsburg Public Library.

Finally, I wish to thank Prof MAN Duma for the invaluable role he played as the supervisor of this study. I also wish to thank Dr EJ Mkhathshwa for the significant role he played as an editor of the manuscript. May God reward all of them immensely!

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my late parents Mhlukaniselwa Franciscus and Petronella Sontiwe Duma for initiating me into Christianity and education. I also dedicate this dissertation to my spouse Elizabeth Nomaledi and our children, Jabulisile, Thobile, Ntombizodwa, Zanele and Mtuseni for their sacrifice and understanding during the time I was committed to this study.

## ABSTRACT

In the *Manual: Guidelines for capacity building of school governing body members, South Africa* (2015:12), “research indicates that most of the newly elected SGB members do not have the necessary capabilities to govern schools at the required level”. This view is corroborated by Pamillis (2005:23)’s assertion that “a common obstacle to democratic functioning of schools governing bodies in South Africa is the lack of capacity among many SGB members who may have not only insufficient knowledge of the legal requirements and rights of SGBs, but also lack the necessary education and skills to manage the school’s finances and business dealings and over above these deficiencies the SGB members may lack adequate support systems from the educational bureaucracy. Arguably, it is in light of these possible deficiencies that the South African Schools Act requires provincial departments of education to provide capacity-building programmes for governing bodies. Thus, as a consequence of this lack of the requisite capabilities, “experiences with decentralisation in education are somewhat mixed and often disappointing” (Azfar *et al.*, 2001:8). This prevailing situation in respect of the lack of requisite governance skills is accounted for by the fact that “in South Africa a form of decentralisation has evolved that is strong in terms of devolution, but weak in terms of managing the disparate and often discriminatory proclivities and tendencies within local sites” (Azfar *et al.*, 2001:8). What transpires from this is that “decentralisation South Africa’s not necessarily promote allocative efficiency [...]” (Azfar *et al.*, 2001:8). Thus, Azfar *et al.*, (2001:8) view in this regard is that “whether decentralisation in fact improves or harms public sector performance appears to depend on formal institutional arrangements, as well as their interaction with social practices which influence the implementation of decentralised governance.” It is against this backdrop, therefore, that van Wyk (2007:137) argues that “in ceding power to the local site, the model in use in South Africa has failed to take account of diversity at the local level.” It is worth noting though that despite the failure cited by van Wyk, decentralisation as a pragmatic governance strategy is not dismissed willy-nilly. This view is corroborated by van Wyk’s

(2007:137) argument that “the shift to decentralised school governance and management requires SGB members to develop a wide range of skills and capacity to deal with the complex issues and tasks they are expected to fulfil”. Thus, as a response to this predicament, “teachers often mentioned the necessity of providing appropriate training for school governors, particularly the parent representatives” (Van Wyk, 2007:137). Arguably, “skills deficit among SGB members weaken the effective functioning of SGBs (Van Wyk, 2007:135).

The situation under discussion is exacerbated by and large by the fact that “there is a lack of accountability and possible participation problems in the relationship between schools and their governing bodies” (Transparency, 31). In the context of this study it is noted that “although the South African schools Act envisioned a system where schools would be community owned and controlled [...]”, it is regrettable that “communities still perceive schools as belonging to government and teachers” (Transparency,31). Thus, in light of the numerous challenges cited above as being contributory factors on the seeming ineffectiveness of decentralisation in the education sector, this study sought to establish how best decentralised governance in schools could be harnessed notwithstanding its attendant constraining factors.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

According to Motala (2005: 37), education reform in South Africa, just like in many other developed and developing countries, “has been shaped by global influences and local needs”. Thus, since by the time South Africa attained its newly democratic status education reform had become more of a norm than new trend, it is conceivable how South Africa with its newly attained status as a democratic country could have disregarded this increasing trend of education reform which many a country worldwide had already embraced. Thus, in the context of this study, the ‘local needs’ alluded to in Motala’s (2005) assertion relate to the aspirations of the nascent democratic government to embrace not only in theory but also in more pragmatic terms the values exemplifying democratic governance such as participatory democracy. It thus becomes a rebuttable presumption to argue that by so doing, the democratic government seeks to “ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness” (South Africa of 1996a ). In light of this, therefore, it is worth underlining the fact that on the local level such reforms in education as typified by the introduction of SGBs (School Governing Bodies) have, to all intents and purposes, been informed by the fact that education worldwide has become increasingly accountable to the public.

Again, in the context of this study, the education reform under consideration is what has become known as education decentralisation which essentially entails devolving governance authority to the local levels of government. It is against this backdrop, therefore, that soon after the emergence of the democratic dispensation in South Africa in 1994, the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 was enacted and when it came into operation it “set about rearranging education in line with two central concepts: democratic governance and equity (Motala and Pampallis, 2005:3).

Without necessarily downplaying the government's commitment to upholding the constitutional values of accountability, responsiveness and openness, it needs to be conceded that to some degree consideration of the devolution of authority and its ultimate devolution was politically motivated. This argument derives from the realisation that although the ANC-led government had initially envisioned, upon coming to power, "an open access education" would be adopted implemented, this could not materialise since, as argued by Motala (2005:47), "the voice of the economy has made clear the difficulties of an open access education system. It is for this reason, therefore, that this has called for a strategic partnership between the government and the people taking responsibility for what happens in schools. It is thus argued by Motala (2005:47) that "within this process, government has adopted that it can provide the basic minimum, and that anything beyond this is the responsibility of parents (Motala, 2005:47). Hence, the establishment of SGBs through the South African Schools Act of 1996 to serve as subordinate structures in educational management.

In the *Manual: Guidelines for capacity building of school governing body members (South Africa 2015 )* reference is made to the fact that "over the years the Department has received complaints that newly appointed SGB members receive little guidance regarding their roles and responsibilities" and that "most of the governors only begin to understand their mandates towards the end of their three-year terms" (South Africa, 2015:5). It is against this backdrop, therefore, that "these guidelines are aimed at assisting Provincial Education Departments to support SGBs in a more meaningful way" (South Africa 201:5). To this end, "they guide what Provincial Education Departments should do to motivate and support governing bodies immediately after the elections" (South Africa, 2015:5).

In asserting the mandatory nature of capacity-building of schools governing bodies, section 19 of the South African Schools Act which provides that the Head of the Department and the provincial legislature should allocate funds for the capacity building

of SGBs is evoked as a peremptory injunction (*South Africa,2015*). Thus, it can be inferred from the explication above that in terms of SASA’s peremptory injunction it is critical at the induction stage of SGBs that the district sets not only the tone for the functioning of SGBs but should also give direction, clarify general SGB issues and dispel misunderstandings South Africa, 2015:12). What transpires from the discussion above is that induction is critical in capacitating SGBs with the requisite competencies to fulfil their functions by creating an inclusive environment that is conducive to effective teaching and learning. It is thus contended that the capacity building of SGBs cannot be dispensed with since SGBs “have the prime obligation not only to shape but also to influence what is offered to children in schools.” In light of this prime obligation to shape and influence what is offered to children in schools, “the training offered to SGB members should be designed to equip them with the requisite knowledge, skills and values” (South Africa, 2015:5).

In Diamond’s (2015:iii) study titled: *The Role of Parent Members of School Governing Bodies in School Financial Management*, the major themes that emerged were *Financial Documents and processes, Training and Skills, Attitude and the Role of the Principal*. In this study by Diamonds the findings revealed that parent governing body members lack capacity to manage the funds allocated to the schools for operational purposes. This lack of capacity was attributed to a number of factors such as literacy levels, competency, context, work demand, willingness to assist and time. In this study by Diamond it was also revealed that parents are “heavily reliant on educators and the principal in performing the required role” (Diamond, 2015:iii). Diamond’s (2015) study concluded though that the lack of capacity on the part of the parents notwithstanding, the parents have a positive attitude towards financial management. Thus, it needs to be emphasised that the failure of the parents to fulfil their functions as required is a result of the fact that they were not skilled. Notably, their situation was exacerbated by the fact that in addition to them not being skilled, there was no initiative taken by the schools to empower these parents. As noted by Diamond (2015:iii), “there is no

significant difference in parental involvement in financial management between a Section 21 and a Section 20 school within and between Quintiles”.

It bears repeating, therefore, that since education worldwide is becoming increasingly accountable to the public, parents should play a meaningful role in school governance to help steer education in the direct direction. Notably, mechanisms to involve parents in the governance of schools are employed globally as a form of democratising education (Mncube, 2009). In South Africa, through the establishment of the South African Schools Act in 1996, the school committees which existed at the time were scrapped and replaced with democratically elected school governing bodies (Nyambi, 2005). This establishment of school governing bodies was hailed as a significant milestone towards improving school governance and was also perceived as an important step in the improvement of quality education (Duma, Khanyile and Kapueja, 2011).

A significant number of studies have revealed that many states have recognised the need for legislation to ensure that parents are extensively involved in school governance (Monadjem, 2003). This recognition is based on the realisation that parents have a right to play an active role in their children’s education and that parent governors may help alleviate some of the problems faced by the learners. Duma (2013) argues that it becomes difficult to dispute the benefits that parent participation in school governance can have towards the enhancement of the experiences of school children.

Regrettably, parents and school principals often hold each other at arm’s length. Duma (2013) argues that school principals and parents often have uncertainties about the role that each should play in school governance. Notably, some principals like the idea of having parents involved in the governance of their schools, while others feel that too much parent participation violates their sense of professionalism.

## 1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

During the apartheid era, parent involvement in school governance was arranged according to racial distinctions. The legitimate role of black parents was not only undermined but was also questioned (Seroto, 2004). In 1996 the South African Schools Act (Act No. 84 of 1996) established two broad categories of schools, namely, public schools and independent schools. The public schools category consists of all schools that had previously been known as community schools, state schools and state-aided church schools (Mncube, 2009).

In terms of the Act, every public school is a juristic person, with legal capacity to perform its functions. The governance and professional management of every school is vested in its governing body, which stands in a position of trust towards the school. The functioning of these bodies is regulated by sections 20 and 21 of the Act. Section 20 stipulates the compulsory functions which include (among other things) the following:

- (a) promoting the best interests of the school and striving to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners;
- (b) adopting a school constitution;
- (c) developing the mission statement of the school;
- (d) adopting a code of conduct for learners at the school;
- (e) supporting the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional duties;

- (f) determining times of the school day consistent with applicable conditions of employment of staff at the school;
- (g) encouraging parents, learners, educators and other staff to render voluntary services at the school;
- (h) recommending to the Head of Department the appointment of educators at the school, subject to the Educators Employment Act, 1994 (Proclamation No. 103 of 1994) and the Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act No. 66 of 1995);
- (i) recommending to the Head of Department the appointment of non-educator staff at the school, subject to the Public Service Act, 1994 (Proclamation No. 138 of 1994) and the Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act No. 66 of 1995) ( South Africa, 1996b).

Section 21 lists all the functions that governing bodies can apply to the HOD to be given, if they feel they have the capacity and experience to fulfil them. The awarding of section 21 status is seen as part of the democratisation of education in South Africa (Nyambi, 2005).

These special functions are:

- (a) Maintaining and improving the school's property, buildings and grounds including school hostels, if applicable;
- (b) Determining the extra-mural curriculum of the school and the choice of subject options in terms of provincial curriculum policy;
- (c) Purchasing text books, educational material or equipment for the school;
- (d) Paying for services to the school. (South Africa, 1996b);

Schools that have attained these functions are known as section 21, or self-managing schools. The Head of Department may refuse an application for the rewarding of this status only if the governing body concerned South Africa's not have the capacity to perform such functions effectively.

This study focuses on the awarding of these section 21 functions to public schools in rural areas despite the numerous problems that many SGBs experience in these areas (Duma, 2013). Section 21 functions mainly deal with financial management responsibilities, which lighten the State's financial commitment towards these schools. It is questionable whether the SGBs in these areas are able to carry out these functions because the illiteracy level of parents is high and the parent governors are not well equipped for the expected governance functions (Heystek, 2004). The Schools Act stipulates that the parent component of the SGB must be in the majority and the chair and treasurer position be reserved for a parent (South Africa, , 1996b). This stipulation could be problematic in rural areas because of high rates of adult illiteracy (Nyambi, 2005). It is therefore in the light of these assertions that the researcher would like to investigate the role of rural SGBs in section 21 schools in Sisonke district, as outlined above.

In conclusion, there are other studies that have been carried out on democratic school governance, which in the South African scenario involves school governing bodies (Mashile, 2000; Nongqauza, 2004; Mestry and Grobler, 2004; Mkentane, 2003 , Duma, 2010; Sayed, 2002 and Mncube, 2007). However, little research has been conducted on the role of schools governing bodies in section 21 rural schools. This study, therefore, attempts to fill this lacuna in the literature available on the role of schools governing bodies in section 21 rural schools.

### 1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As asserted in the *Manual: Guidelines for capacity building of school governing body members, South Africa* (2015:12), “research indicates that most of the newly elected SGB members do not have the necessary capabilities to govern schools at the required level.”

According to Pamillis (2005:23), “a common obstacle to democratic functioning of schools governing bodies in South Africa is the lack of capacity among many SGB members who may have not only insufficient knowledge of the legal requirements and rights of SGBs, but also lack the necessary education and skills to manage the school’s finances and business dealings and over above these deficiencies the SGB members may lack adequate support systems from the educational bureaucracy. Arguably, it is in light of these possible deficiencies that the South African Schools Act requires provincial departments of education to provide capacity-building programmes for governing bodies. Notably, Pampallis (2005:23) asserts that the “phenomenon of insufficient skills and knowledge limiting the effectiveness of SGBs of disadvantaged schools in South Africa has been noted by various authors”. Thus, as a consequence of this lack of the requisite capabilities, “experiences with decentralisation in education are somewhat mixed and often disappointing” (Azfar *et al.*, 2001:8). This prevailing situation in respect of the lack of requisite governance skills is accounted for by the fact that “in South Africa a form of decentralisation has evolved that is strong in terms of devolution, but weak in terms of managing the disparate and often discriminatory proclivities and tendencies within local sites” (Azfar *et al.*, 2001:8). What transpires from this is that “decentralisation South Africa’s not necessarily promote allocative efficiency [...]” (Azfar *et al.*, 2001:8). Thus, Azfar *et al.*, (2001:8) view in this regard is that “whether decentralisation in fact improves or harms public sector performance appears to depend on formal institutional arrangements, as well as their interaction with social practices which influence the implementation of decentralised governance”. It is against

this backdrop, therefore, that van Wyk (2007:137) argues that “in ceding power to the local site, the model in use in South Africa has failed to take account of diversity at the local level”. It is worth noting though that despite the failure cited by van Wyk, decentralisation as a pragmatic governance strategy is not dismissed willy-nilly. This view is corroborated by van Wyk’s (2007:137) argument that “the shift to decentralised school governance and management requires SGB members to develop a wide range of skills and capacity to deal with the complex issues and tasks they are expected to fulfil”. Thus, as a response to this predicament, “teachers often mentioned the necessity of providing appropriate training for school governors, particularly the parent representatives” (Van Wyk, 2007:137). Arguably, “skills deficit among SGB members weaken the effective functioning of SGBs (Van Wyk, 2007:135).

The situation under discussion is exacerbated by and large by the fact that “there is a lack of accountability and possible participation problems in the relationship between schools and their governing bodies” (Transparency, 31). In the context of this study it is noted that “although the South African schools Act envisioned a system where schools would be community owned and controlled [...]”, it is regrettable that “communities still perceive schools as belonging to government and teachers” (Transparency,31). Thus, in light of the numerous challenges cited above as being contributory factors on the seeming ineffectiveness of decentralisation in the education sector, this study sought to establish how best decentralised governance in schools could be harnessed notwithstanding its attendant constraining factors.

### **1.3.1 Aim of the study**

The aim of the study was to establish that notwithstanding the challenges besetting the effective functioning of the newly introduced SGBs as reform governing structures in the educator sector, these SGBs have an invaluable role to play in improving school

governance holistically given their strategic positioning in relation to the schools which they govern.

### **1.3.2 Motivation for the study**

The question of which competencies school governing members should have so that they can fulfil their functions as governors in the decentralised governance of schools in the education sector generated on the part of the researcher a quest to unravel that which seems to have eluded the attention of most prominent educationalists. The researcher's involvement with public schools dates back to 1982, when he began his teaching career as an educator and later as a headmaster. This vast experience has convinced the researcher that there are remarkable differences between school governing structures, especially in the case of section 21 schools and ordinary public schools. These differences persist despite the fact that South Africa acquired a new national system for schools after the first democratic elections of 1994. This system was intended to address past injustices in educational provision by providing education of progressively high quality for all learners. In so doing, it was supposed to lay a strong foundation for the development of all learner's talents and capabilities, while advancing the democratic transformation of society, upholding the rights of all learners, parents and educators and promoting their acceptance of responsibility for the organisation, governance and funding of schools in partnership with the state (Mncube, 2009).

There are numerous books, journal articles and stand-alone reports on the involvement of school governing bodies in education. (Nongqauza, 2004; Mestry and Grobber, 2004; Duma, 2010; Sayed, 2002; and Mncube, 2007). These writings include research reports, expert opinions, theory papers, program descriptions and so forth. The studies conducted on school governing bodies in education are mainly based on ordinary public schools. Such studies are readily available in South Africa and in the developed and developing countries. There are, however, no major studies that specifically deal with

the constraining factors impacting negatively on the role of the school governing bodies in rural section 21 schools.

It bears repeating, therefore, that this study sought, among other things, to explore the factors that are the most critical determinants of the seeming ineffectiveness of SGBs in general in the execution of their functions as governors in the local level of the education sector. Thus, in consideration of SGBs' prime obligation which entails not only to shape but also to influence what is offered to children in schools, the researcher deemed it an objective necessity to engage in an exploratory enquiry in the form of a research study to unearth the most critical factors occasioning dissatisfaction of many a critic of decentralisation as a governing strategy in the education sector. This exploratory research enquiry, therefore, took the form of a critical appraisal of the role of school governing bodies in the local level of governance in the education sector.

#### **1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- (a) What are the perceptions of principals of the role of the school governing bodies in rural section 21 schools?
- (b) What problems do principals encounter when engaging school governing bodies in rural section 21 schools?

#### **1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

- (a) To establish the principal's perceptions of the role of school governing bodies in rural section 21 schools.
- (b) To establish the type of problems encountered by principals when engaging school governing bodies as regards the governance of schools.

## 1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As argued by Sikayile (2011:58) the theoretical framework is a critical component in research in the sense that it serves as the guidepost for the theoretical perspectives underpinning the theme under investigation. In light of this, the researcher opted to adopt and apply decentralisation as a framework not only to explicate and predict but also to comprehend the role of school governing bodies in the context of governance in the local level of government in the education sector. As argued by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) in Sikayeli (2011:58), theories such as decentralisation can be applied either to “challenge” or “build on the existing knowledge within the context of what is termed critical bounding assumptions. Thus, the theoretical framework affords the researcher the opportunity to demonstrate how he or she comprehends the theories underlying the topic under investigation ( Sikayeli, 2011:58). According to Sikayeli (2011:59), “there are theoretical underpinnings which profoundly motivate the advocacy for decentralisation”. Notably, “attractive claims advanced in support of decentralisation range from its capacity to strengthen democracy and thus promotes good governance” (Sikayeli, 2011:59).

So, in light of decentralisation’s capacity to ‘strengthen democracy in the form of participatory democracy. Thus, the framework used in this study is decentralized governance in the education sector. In this section of the study, therefore, the discussion examines the ideologies which underlie decentralisation as exemplified in the implementation of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in schools at the local level of government.

Although decentralisation is a primary method for involvement of stakeholders, it is noticeable that not all stakeholders participate with the same intensity at all moments. What is critical to note in the context of this study is that despite the fact that decentralisation is not a magical solution to the real problems facing [...] education in

poor countries, the focus should of necessity be on the fact that the “introduction of decentralisation policies provides an opportunity for change to improve schooling” (Mncube, 2015). Of importance to note, therefore, is that “decentralisation is about shifts in the location of those who govern, about transfers of authority from those in one location or level vis-a vis education organisations, to those in another level” (Mncube, 2015). Notably, although Azfar *et al.*, (2001:6) argue that decentralisation, among other things, “improves the efficiency and responsiveness of the public sector by promoting allocative efficiency and fostering productive efficiency and accountability (Azfar *et al.*, 2001:6), it is argued that its flip side is that those to whom this power devolves “may use their new-found power in ways that exceed the distribution of authority and resources from the national perspective” (Azfar *et al.*, 2001:7). This flip side notwithstanding, it cannot be gainsaid that when effectively implemented decentralised governance is not without its benefits which accrue from its use and that these benefits far outweigh the negatives attendant to it.

## **1.7 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The population of the study comprised of principals of section 21 schools from Sisonke rural district. Sisonke district has 450 public schools, 391 of them are section 21 rural schools. As it was not possible to conduct the research with the entire population, a sample was identified. From a total number of 391 principals, a sample of 200 (n=200) willing participants was purposefully selected to take part. The sample was heterogeneous in terms of gender, age and teaching experience. It was the researcher’s judgement that this sampling strategy was likely to provide the best information to achieve the objectives of this study (Kumar, 2014). For ethical reasons, permission to conduct research in schools was sought from the relevant district office.

## **1.8 DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL TERMS**

### **1.8.1 Section 20 Schools**

A section 20 school is one in which the SGB has not been granted section 21 powers. The school procures goods according to the existing departmental arrangements because money is not deposited into the school account. (South Africa , 1998).

### **1.8.2 Section 21 schools**

This refers to a school wherein the SGB has been allocated extra functions. These include: controlling the school's finances; maintaining and improving buildings and grounds owned by the school; determining the extra-mural curriculum and the choice of curricular subject options as well as purchasing textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school (South Africa, 2002).

### **1.8.3 School Governing Body**

This refers to a body of parents, principal, educator representatives and learner representatives in secondary schools that determines the policy and rules by which a school is organised and controlled (south Africa, , 2002). This body ensures that such rules and policies are carried out both in terms of the law and within the restraints of its budget.

## **1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

To address this research problem, both an in-depth literature review and an empirical investigation based on quantitative research design will be undertaken

### 1.9.1 Research design

In this study the researcher used a quantitative approach making use of statistics and interpreting findings from a questionnaire with close and open ended questions that can be generalised and they can then combine this approach with a qualitative approach using reflective subjective open-ended questions to explain the phenomena discovered in the quantitative section. The idea was thus to make use of a field survey that was supplemented by qualitative open ended questions to elucidate the phenomenon further.

Research design is a set of procedures used to test the predicted relationships among the natural phenomena (Kumar, 2014). The research design addressed issues such as how the relevant variables are to be defined, measured and related to one another. Researchers can draw on a variety of research designs, each with its strengths and weaknesses. There are four general types of research designs often used in the study of organisational behaviour. They comprise of case studies, field surveys, laboratory experiments and field experiments. A field survey provides easily quantifiable data; the laboratory experiment allows the researcher high control of variables and field. The experiment takes place in a realistic setting. The research design developed is a field survey design. The researcher selected field survey types because it enabled the researcher to gather information about the wider population without much difficulty. The respondents were free to express their emotions when answering the questionnaire in the absence of the researcher (Kumar, 2014). A field survey usually relies on questionnaires distributed to sample of people chosen from a larger population .The questionnaires are generally mailed or delivered by hand to participants at home or at work and may be returned by mail or picked up by the researcher. The respondents answer the questions and return their responses and try to make inferences about the larger population from the representative sample. A field survey can focus on a variety of topics relevant to organisational behaviour. It provides information about a much

larger segment of population than case studies. They also provide an abundance of data in easily quantifiable form, which facilitates static analysis and the compilation of normative data for comparative purpose.

The disadvantage of field survey is that information used may reveal only superficial feelings and reactions to situations rather than deeply held feelings, attitudes or emotions. The design and development of field survey require a great deal of expertise and can be very time consuming. People tend to answer in the same way, creating a misleading impression. A field survey gives the researcher little or no control over who completes the questions, the mental or physical state of the respondent and many important conditions. Nonetheless, a survey can be a very useful means of gathering large quantities of data, assessing general patterns of relationships among variables.

This study follows a positivist research paradigm with a quantitative approach. The positivist research paradigm was selected as it is best suited to the objective nature of the research to be undertaken. The aim is to objectively determine the perceptions of the participating principals. A descriptive survey research strategy was therefore utilised.

### **1.9.2 Research Instrument**

The researcher developed a close-ended, Likert scale questionnaire to gather information regarding the principals' perceptions. The respondents responded on a scale that examines frequency of occurrence which ranges from "always" to "almost never". Group administration of the questionnaires was employed to ensure a high return rate. In order to ensure validity and reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted. The questionnaire was piloted with a sample of 5 principals from the Sisonke district who did not take part in the actual study.

### **1.9.3 Data Analysis**

After all the questionnaires were received the important task was to reduce the mass of data obtained to a format suitable for analysis. The responses were coded and frequency distributions were generated.

### **1.10 DEMARCATION OF THE DISSERTATION**

This dissertation is demarcated as follows:

*Chapter 1* serves as an orientation to the study. It focuses on the introduction, statement of the problem, definitions of terms, aims of the study, motivation for the study, research, questions, assumptions and significance of the study, research methodology and the structure of the study.

*Chapter 2* provides the literature review. The researcher aims at presenting the theoretical concepts that support the study in order to show the importance of study.

*Chapter 3* deals with the research design. The research method incorporated in the study is presented.

*Chapter 4* looks at the raw data as well as an interpretation thereof. Data analysis is provided and rich description making use of themes, are shared.

*Chapter 5* deals with the discussion and implications of the study

*Chapter 6* concludes the study. This chapter is based on the findings and conclusions obtained from research. Recommendations will also be done to remedy the situation. A conclusion will follow.

## 1.11 SUMMARY

This chapter introduces the theme of the research project namely: *The role of school governing bodies in rural section twenty one schools in Sisonke District*. It presents the background to the study and the problem leading to the study, statement of the problem, answers to the research questions and basic assumptions of the study. The next chapter will deal literature review

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

There is no silver bullet with decentralisation: what is equitable may not be efficient, what is efficient may not be democratic, what is democratic may not be equitable. In practice, reform policies must attempt to optimise the sometimes inevitable trade-offs between efficiency, equity and democracy while seeking to improve on all three...The actual design and implementation of decentralisation reforms are inherently political processes; hence, the decisions about making these trade-offs rightly occur in the political arena (Gershberg & Winkler, 2003:1).

The first chapter did not only introduce and highlight the problem under investigation in terms of its nature and scope, but also provided the background to the study and defined operational terms and other relevant concepts applicable in this study. Furthermore, the aims and objectives of the study were outlined together with the delimitation of the study and its method. This chapter, therefore, reviews the literature pertinent to the role of school governing bodies in rural section 21 public schools. For purposes of representativeness the literature reviewed provide insights from both local and international research on the roles and responsibilities of school governing bodies. Arguably, a literature review provides a bird's eye view of the amount and nature of work already done by other researchers on the topic being researched. The overarching aim of this literature review was to draw insights from the existing body of knowledge and use these insights to inform the study being conducted on the role of schools governing bodies in section 21 rural schools.

## **2.2 AN OVERVIEW OF THE ROLE OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES**

### **2.2.1 School governing bodies in Canada**

Burgess, Newton and Robinson (2004) assert that in Canada education is a provincial and territorial responsibility and South Africa's do not fall under the jurisdiction of the federal government. It is further asserted by Burgess et al (2004) that historically, the governance of the education system by the public authorities has been exercised on the following three levels:

- (a) The provincial authorities
- (b) The intermediate authority-called a school board or a school district and which may be local or regional and
- (c) The school.

The central authority is, depending on the case of each situation under consideration, either the provincial Parliament, be it the government, the Ministry of Education or the Minister. It is notable though that in general the governance of the education system resides with the central authority which defines the orientations and the priorities of the system, as well as the education services that people may rightfully demand. Although the schools are creatures of the school boards, the central authority determines their institutional status and thus affects their functioning in multiple ways by promulgating norms concerning the training and granting of tenure in respect of school personnel.

### **2.2.2 The School Board**

This is the intermediate authority, it is an entity to whom judicial status is given, but, who in many provinces, is a decentralised entity (Chan, Fischer & Rubenson, 2004). The School Board is administered by a council of commissioners elected by the population of

the territory and it exercises powers given to it by law. According to Anderson and Ben Jaafar (2005), the school board has the power to deliberate and make decisions and until recently in all cases the board had the ability to tax. The school tax is a property tax and it is paid by local property owners. Over time the central authority assumed an even larger portion of this burden, but it also limited the taxing powers of the school boards in certain provinces by establishing the level of taxation and the various spending categories that the taxes could cover. In principle the school board has a certain room to manoeuvre in terms of its use and allocation of its financing which comes both from the government and the taxes. However, the school board must respect all national limits as well as all pertinent laws and rules so its manoeuvring room isn't large. There are also situations where the central authority gives out budgetary amounts reserved specifically for implementing a policy and buying equipment or for a certain type of student. In this case the school board cannot allocate that money for other expenses.

The school board exercises its responsibilities in a given territory. One of these primary responsibilities is to ensure that all students in its jurisdiction receive the services to which they have the right, in conformity with the orientations, the prescriptions and the frameworks defined and imposed by the central authority (Chan *et al.*, 2004). Corbett, Wright, Monett and Copp (2004) attest that this tri-level structural framework of governance is found in all the Canadian provinces. Gaydos and Anderson (2004) affirm that in some provinces, including Quebec, schools may now have their own funds coming from the financial contribution of those to whom the school provides education services according to certain dispositions. As well, the school can solicit volunteer contributions from people or organisations which wish to support it financially.

### 2.2.3 A structure characterised by participatory democracy

Since inception, the notion of decentralisation has increasingly evolved with on-going disagreements and debates regarding its different forms. Notably, decentralisation is a “multifaceted” concept and its different forms should, therefore, be distinguished as having different characteristics, policy implications and success conditions ( Skayile, 2011:30). Although there are main degrees of authority categorised as decencentration, delegation and devolution, this study has opted to focus on devolution given its appropriateness.

Commenting on the readiness for decentralisation the *International Institute for Educational Planning* had the following to say regarding the conditions that have to be met for the envisioned decentralisation to be effective when applied in decision-making for education:

Two kinds of conditions must be met for implementation of any reform including decentralisation: there must be political support for the proposed changes; and those involved in the reform must be capable of carrying it out. Most decentralisation reforms have failed to reach the objectives set for them, because they did not meet adequately one or both of the two conditions. Many reforms fail because enthusiasm for the changes is shared by too limited a number of actors or stakeholders. [...] many reforms are blocked successfully by teachers who have not been persuaded of the benefits of decentralisation. Other reforms fail because those who receive authority for decision-making are not able to exercise it properly. Reforms that involve local communities, for example, fail if community members lack experience and skills in collective decision-making and organisational management (International Institute for Educational Planning in Mncube (2015).

Each level in the governance structure has always been conceived of as a place for democratic participation, and in the case of a school board and the school, as being places of regional or local community participation. The provincial Parliament and the commissioners who administer the intermediate level are also elected and thus hold a

democratic legitimacy. Meetings of the school board are public. When participation exists on the school level, it is either in terms of consultation, recommendation or decision –making, depending on the case. In Canada for the last twenty or thirty years, the dominant idea behind the conception of the school is drawn from a community ideology: the school must be community-based in the sense that it must work as an education community. But the school must be community-based in the sense that it should establishing links with and to the community it serves, notably by the participation of parents, but as well by other exchanges between the school and the community and specific community organisations.

Education governance in Canada thus has characteristics that for many come from its long history: rests on a tri-level structure and the responsibilities delegated to the intermediate and local levels must conform to rules set by the central level. Governance is exercised by the creation of norms by the central authority and the school board and a system of democratic and community participation that traditionally and ideologically is very important.

**Table 2.1 School councils in Canada by province and territories**

Province Name of Council	Date	Legislation and Background documents	Composition
BC School Planning Councils	2002	Bill 34 School Board Flexibility	3parents,1 teacher, the principal
Manitoba Advisory Councils for School Leadership	1995, 1996	Education Administration Act	7 members with 2/3 parents and 1/3 non- parents including community members. Teachers and staff may be elected but cannot comprise more than the membership
Ontario School Councils	1995	Policy/Program Memorandum No.122	The principal, 1 teacher, parent representatives, non-parent community members.
Quebec School Councils	1998	Bill 180(1997)	Students, parents, teachers, staff and community representatives, Principal ex- officio.

Nova Scotia School Advisory Councils	1996		Students, parents, teachers, staff, and community representatives.
PEI School Councils	1995	Section 66 of the School Act	Parents, teachers and the principal. Students may also be represented.
Newfoundland and Labrador School Councils	1996	Royal Commission (1992); Bill 48, Section 26 of the Education Act	
Yukon School Councils	1990	Education Act	Parent and community members. First Nations representation is guaranteed.
Alberta School Councils	1995	School Act; revised Policy 1.8.3(2003)	1 principal, 1 or more teachers, 1 student, parents of students in the school, another parent or community member

Source: Chan *et al.*, Preliminary Synthesis of Trends in Education policy in Canada.

Before the 1990s, the schools had tried to establish good channels of communication with parents, taking into account their values and expectations, and to obtain parental support and engagement, either in informal ways or by consultative committees or parent assemblies. The tradition in North America conceives of the school as a community institution, becoming a reflector of the surrounding values. This gives parents the right to speak.

The new dimension in the 1990s was not a renewed attempt to engage parents in their children's schooling. It lay elsewhere in the idea of inspiring parents to improve their schools and the student's academic results and to make the school and its actors more formally accountable to an outside group, namely the parents. Certainly, there are degrees to this inspiration and to this calling to account of the school, but everywhere, the school seems imbued with a managerial logic inspired by "new public management". It is the schools that take charge of and assume responsibility for their results with the school board, in theory, ensuring the means and supervising the use of the means. As well, the decision-making powers entrusted to Quebec's school councils

have had as a consequence in some places to shake up the traditional hierarchical relationship between the school board's administrative centre and the schools: henceforth, the school boards and the centralised services must operate on a client-centred basis and show the necessity and value of the services they intend to provide to schools. Finally, there where the government has insisted on reducing the intermediate "bureaucracy" and taken steps to ensure that most of the budget is allocated to front-line education services, the school board has been obligated to refocus on common or transversal services to the schools, such as services for special education students.

#### **2.2.4 School governing bodies in South Africa**

##### *Introduction*

Barrera-Osorio *et al.*, 2009 – Governments around the world are introducing a range of strategies aimed at improving and the financing and delivery of education services, and recently they have added an emphasis on improving quality as well as increasing quantity (in terms of enrollments rates). The decentralization of educational decision making is one such strategy. Advocates of this strategy maintain that decentralizing decision encourages demand for a higher quality of education and ensures that schools reflect local priorities and values. By giving a voice and decision-making power to local stakeholders who know more about the local education systems than do central policy makers, decentralization can improve educational outcomes and increase client satisfaction. One way to decentralize decision-making power in education is known popularly as school-based management (SBM) Barrera-Osorio *et al.*, 2009, 1-2). School-based management is the decentralization of authority from the central government to the school level. School-based management can be viewed conceptually as a formal alteration of governance structures, as a form of decentralization that identifies the individual school as the primary unit of improvement and relies on the redistribution of

decision-making authority as the primary means through which improvement might be stimulated and sustained (Barrera-Osorio *et al.*, 2009:2).

School-based management is very popular. SBM-type reforms have been introduced in countries with diverse educational systems (5). SBM has the potential to be a low-cost means of making public spending on education more efficient by increasing the accountability of the agents involved and by empowering the clients to improve learning outcomes. And by putting power in the hands of the service end users (people who are doing the educating or have children being educated), SBM eventually produces better school management that is more cognizant of and responsive to the needs of those end users, thus creating a better and more conducive learning environment for the students (6).

Across the countries in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) there is a trend toward increasing autonomy, devolving responsibility, and encouraging responsiveness to local needs, all with the objective of raising performance levels (OECD, 2004). Most countries whose students perform well in international student achievement tests give their local authorities and schools substantial autonomy over adapting and implementing educational content, allocating and managing resources, or both. With few exceptions, most students in OECD countries are enrolled in schools in which teachers and stakeholders play a role in deciding what courses are offered and how money is spent within the school. There is a strong positive relationship between school autonomy and student performance. Moreover, greater school autonomy is not necessarily associated with wider disparities in school performance among schools, as long as governments provide a framework in which more poorly performing schools receive needed support to help them improve (7).

**NOTE:** By making individual schools the focus of educational policy change, SBM South Africa's not assume that governments will be completely out of the decision-making

picture. Public schools always will exist in some larger policy and administrative context that affects their operation. The key is to identify precisely what the government's role in decision making should be, given each political and social context (5) (induction and training of the SBGs).

School learning is a cumulative process and students need to have been exposed to SBM for at least 5 years to enjoy the potential benefits of the reform (12, Barrera-Osorio et al, 2009). Sikayile (2011) writing on *Educational Decentralization in Zambia: an analysis of Policy and Practice* notes that "despite various arguments which have been advanced in favour of educational decentralization, there is no ideal version of decentralization. This explains why success or failure in implementation tends to be context based and mostly influenced by a number of factors such as the availability of financial resources (2011:ii). The adoption of educational decentralization has, in certain instances, led to positive changes, especially in participation and transparency both at the district and school level (2011:ii). Espousal of the view that as much as institutional capacity, accountability and local autonomy are critical factors, they are merely a means to an end, since educational decentralization (where not properly implemented) can, in practice, reproduce similar problems as those experienced under centralization (2011:iii).

Thus, as argued by Van Wyk (2004:49), since 1994, the South African government has been committed to a new system of education and training regulated by the new education legislation SASA which is based on the fundamental principles of democracy, unity, non-discrimination, equity and equality. SASA mandates the establishment of democratic structures of school governance in all schools. The rationale is to ensure that educators, parents, learners and non-teaching staff will actively participate in the governance and management of schools with a view to providing a better teaching and learning environment (Van Wyk, 2004:49).

In South Africa the state has a major role to play in education in general and in school administration in particular. Because national education requires planning, financing, organizing and coordination on a tremendous scale, the state can only undertake it effectively and efficiently if it works hand in hand with other social structures with an interest in school governance, such as the parents who are members of a statutory governing body that governs the school. This means that the school governing body is set up by an Act of Parliament. Duma (2015) asseverates that the school governing bodies are part and parcel of the education system as they are part of the wider governing managerial structures through which there is a participation and representation of all social structures with an interest in education. On the same note, Duma and Mabusela (2015) aver that the first duty of the parent governors is to represent the parent dimension of school governance.

The governance of every public school is vested in its governing body. The general purpose of the SGB as expressed by Mncube (2015) is to perform its function efficiently on behalf of the school for the benefit of the community. Mncube (2015) furthermore describe the school as a juristic person, as it can through the SGB sell, buy or own property, enter into contracts, sue or be sued. The SGB is, therefore, placed in a position of trust towards the school and is expected to act in good faith to carry out all its duties and functions and to be accountable for its actions. It has decision-making powers concerning the school, and it may bind the school legally.

Various factors can strengthen the role of parents in the SGB. These factors foster the ability of parents to evaluate information and press their own interpretation and conceptions. The parent governors may represent a considerable diversity of experience, as some parents are councilors, trade unionists, business executives, and members of community interest groups. Such members therefore possess the capacity to extrapolate from what they read and encounter elsewhere to the business of their own SGB. Contact and association with other social structures with an interest in school

governance provide the parents with a perspective from which to test and broaden their opinions. One of the major tasks of the SGB is to bring about and develop partnership based on trust and respect among all the stakeholders in school administration. Various functions of the SGB are regulated by the education acts and legislation.

From the above discussion, it becomes evident that the main objective of governing bodies is to promote the welfare of the schools and to ensure that the learners receive the best possible education. For this reason, there are various models of governing bodies, whose most important task is to help the principals organize and manage their schools activities in an effective and efficient way. The adoption of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 resulted in the introduction democratically elected School Governing Bodies (SGB) in South African schools. These bodies were given far more responsibility than the school committees, which had governed schools before the dawn of democracy in 1994. As statutory bodies, these governing bodies ensure the participation of parents, educators and other staff members, principals, learners and co-opted members of public schools in South Africa (Beckmann and Blom, 2000). According to the South African Schools' Act, section 16(1), the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body and the principal of the school has formal legal authority in terms of the management of the school (RSA, 1996) The school management team (SMT) is responsible for the professional management of the school, which are the daily activities of the school (Heystek, 2003).

Heystek (2003) argues that a school governing body is not supposed to be involved in professional management activities such as decisions about learning material, which teaching method or class assessment should be used even if the SGB could be paying the salary of the staff member. This should be done by the School Management Team (SMT) which consists of the principal, the deputy principal, and the heads of department (education specialists) or senior teachers in schools where there may be only one or two

heads of department. It is, however, important to note that the Schools' Act requires SGB members in Section 21 schools to play an important role in curriculum issues although it is not made explicit how they should do this.

### **2.2.5 Composition of the school governing body**

In accordance with the South African Schools' Act (South Africa , 1996) the membership of the SGB is made up of elected members, the principal and co-opted members. Elected members of the SGB comprise individuals from each of the following categories: parents of learners of the school, educators at the school, members of staff at the school who are not educators and learners in the eighth grade and higher. Parents are in the majority in the SGB and there should be one parent more than the total of all other members combined. The number of parent, educator, non-educator and learner members who sit on governing body depends upon the size of the school enrolment and whether it is a primary, secondary or comprehensive school (Mpumalanga Department of Education (2002).

A primary school of between 160 and 719 pupils has six parent members, two educator members, one non-teaching member whereas a secondary school with more than 629 learners will have ten parent members, three educator members, two non-teaching members and three learner members (South Africa , 2002) In the absence of a non-teaching member the number of parent governors is reduced by one. The small number of educators is, according to Van Wyk:2004, problematic for educators as they have frequently to rely on the SGB as a whole (and not their educator representatives) to meet their needs, as educators are often reluctant to engage in direct confrontation with school principals at SGB meetings. This small number means that their right to have a say in the affairs of the school is curtailed. The entrenchment of the position of parents is indicative of the importance attached to their input in the affairs of the school.

SGBs are allowed to co-opt members from the community if they feel that the person can make a good contribution to their functioning. Wragg Partington (1990) asserts that co-opted members should bring a dimension to the governing body, which other members cannot readily give. However, such members do not have voting rights on the School Governing Body. Governors normally serve for three years except Learner Representative Council (LRC) members who serve for a year unless re-elected and provided they are still at school. During these three years, if for whatever reason any member ceases to qualify as a governor s/he automatically ceases to be a member of the governing body (South Africa, 2003). The primary reason for members losing their status is that they cease to be members when their children leave the school (South Africa 2003). Office bearers serve for only a year unless re-elected.

The establishment of SGBs with the inclusion of parents, educators and learners (in secondary schools) clearly demonstrate the government's commitment to democracy. This is supported by Mncube 2015 who stresses that this will help involve people in making decisions that affect their lives and therefore has a role in spreading democracy. Duma 2015 adds that local institutions develop greater motivation, commitment and involvement when in control and this control is important if education is to be relevant to local needs and conditions. School governing bodies were instituted with the aim of entrenching democracy and instituting representative governance, which, it is strongly believed will enhance the effectiveness of schools and therefore improve the quality of education (South Africa South Africa 1996b) Davies (1999) states that representation of these stakeholders on the governing body of the school is a positive move in the effort to achieve the aims of democratisation, which includes participation. This participation in education is formed to achieve better education for all learners. The philosophy of giving significant powers to parents in decision-making "gives primacy to the concept that decisions about managing are best taken by those people closest to the users of the service" (Green, 1999). By involving more people in school governance the government hopes that this will boost democracy and ensure equity amongst schools.

## 2.2.6 Functions of the school governing body

### *Functions of governing bodies in Section 20 schools*

A section 20 school is a school that performs the functions listed in Section 20 of the South African Schools' Act 84 of 1996 only. According to the Department of Education (1998), these schools do not have approval to procure their own goods and services according to existing departmental arrangements. These schools must be informed of their paper budget so as to prepare them to understand the actual costs of running the school (South Africa, 1998). Subject to SASA, the governing body of a public school must:

- (a) Promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school;
- (b) Adopt a constitution;
- (c) Develop the mission statement of the school;
- (d) Adopt a code of conduct for learners at the school;
- (e) Support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions;
- (f) Determine times of the school day consistent with any applicable conditions of employment of staff at the school;
- (g) Administer and control the school's property, and buildings and grounds occupied by the school, including school hostels, if applicable;
- (h) Encourage parents, learners, educators and other staff at the school to render voluntary services to the school;
- (i) Recommend to the Head of Department the appointment of educators at the school, subject to the Educators Employment Act, 1994 (Proclamation No. 138 of 1994), and the Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act No. 66 of 1995);

- (j) Recommend to the Head of Department the appointment of non-educator staff at the school, subject to the Public Service Act, 1994(Proclamation No. 103 of 1994), and the Labour Relations Act, 1995(Act No. 66 of 1995);
- (k) At the request of the Head of Department, allow the reasonable use under fair conditions of the facilities of the school for educational programmes not conducted by the school;
- (l) Discharge all other functions imposed upon the governing body by or under this Act;
- (m) And discharge other functions consistent with this Act as determined by the Minister by notice in the Government Gazette, or by the Member of the Executive Council by notice in the Provincial Gazette.

It is also recognised that in terms of subsection (2), the governing body may allow the reasonable use of the facilities of the school for community, social and school fund-raising purposes, subject to such reasonable and equitable conditions as the governing body may determine, which may include the charging of a fee or tariff which accrues to the school. Additionally, subsection (3) of the governing body may join a voluntary association representing governing bodies of public schools.

#### *Disadvantages of being a section 20 school*

As mentioned earlier, in the case of section 20 schools, the state's allocation is not paid over to the school. The Department sends a paper budget to the school for consideration. Bischoff and Mestry (2003:23) stress that the school has to spend the allocated amount as follows:

- (a) Learner support material plus education material and equipment plus curricular needs.
- (b) Maintenance of and repairs to buildings.
- (c) Payments of services (municipality).

Bischoff and Mestry (2003:23) identified the following as disadvantages of section 20 schools:

- (a) Schools are unable to negotiate discounts, better prices and efficient suppliers. They must only deal with suppliers contracted to the Department.
- (b) Districts do not have the capacity to process the requisitions in time for the commencement of classes because there are usually approximately 150 schools in each district and all problems that schools experience must be attended to by district officials.
- (c) Suppliers cannot process all requisitions on time, with the result that schools lose out on the allocations because there is no "roll over" of the budget. This means that if the school South Africa's not spend a certain portion of the state's allocation in that financial year it loses that allocation. This is confirmed in the report on the Review of Financing, Resourcing and Costs of Education in Public Schools(South Africa,2003:147) where it is noted that section 20 schools (mainly the poor schools ) were not receiving their roll overs from the previous financial year. The Review also found that running balances for schools were not available and this paralysed attempts by schools to conserve resource as well as to secure procurements (South Africa, 2003: 147).
- (d) Sometimes goods are not delivered in time and services are not rendered when required. If the cost of the service provided is far more than the amount allocated by the state, then the state will have to pay for these services.

#### *Functions of governing bodies in Section 21 schools*

A section 21 school therefore refers to a school that has been allocated the responsibility of carrying out the further functions listed in section 21 of the SASSA, 84 of

1996. The SGB of a section 21 school perform more functions than the SGB of a section 20 school as the former are allocated more functions because of their proven capability, knowledge and expertise. In these schools there is a significant and consistent decentralisation to the school level of authority to make decisions related to the allocation of resources (Caldwell and Spinks, 1992:54) The section 21 functions are conditional on the SGB having the “capacity to perform such functions effectively” (South Africa, 1996:16). The allocation of these extra powers and responsibilities makes these schools self-reliant, hence they are also known as self-managing (South Africa 2002:10). An SGB that demonstrates the capacity, knowledge and expertise to perform compulsory (mandatory) section 20 functions may be allocated certain functions over and above these functions.

The allocated functions are:

- (a) To maintain and improve the school's property, and buildings and grounds occupied by the school, including school hostels, if applicable;
- (b) To determine the extra-mural curriculum of the school and the choice of subject options in terms of provincial curriculum policy;
- (c) To purchase textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school;
- (d) To pay for services to the school; or other functions consistent with this Act and any applicable provincial law.
- (e) The Head of Department may refuse an application contemplated in subsection (1) only if the governing body concerned South Africa's not have the capacity to perform such function effectively.
- (f) The Head of Department may approve such application unconditionally or subject to conditions.
- (g) The decision of the Head of Department on such application must be conveyed in writing to the governing body concerned, giving reasons.
- (h) Any person aggrieved by a decision of the Head of Department in terms of this section may appeal to the Member of the Executive Council.

- (i) The Member of the Executive Council may, by notice in the Provincial Gazette, determine that some governing bodies may exercise one or more functions without making an application contemplated in subsection (1), if
- he or she is satisfied that the governing bodies concerned have the capacity to perform such function effectively; and
  - there is a reasonable and equitable basis for doing so.

*Advantages of being a section 21 school*

Section 21 schools enjoy far more financial freedom than non-section 21 schools (Bischoff and Mestry: 2003). The onus is on the school to exercise fiscal discipline on finances. Section 21 schools' state's allocation is paid directly into their bank accounts. Although section 21 schools are required to spend the money in the same way as section 20 schools, they can apply or notify the Department of Education if they need to alter the provided Guidelines Budget Allocation. The Department requires schools to spend 28% of the allocated money on municipal services. However, the majority of schools in rural areas do not have a need for this and as a result this money is usually moved to another budget post, which is relevant to the school.

Bischoff and Mestry (2003) maintain that being a section 21 school is advantageous because:

- (a) Schools can negotiate the best prices, discounts and delivery dates for learning support materials from suppliers,
- (b) The state's allocation that has not been utilised in that financial year can be used in the next financial year because, unlike section 20 schools where the money is in the state's account, the allocation in section 21 schools is not lost since the money is in the school's bank account.

- (c) The principal can save money by commissioning out some of the smaller maintenance jobs or the learners on the voluntary basis whilst supplying the tools and material needed.

Although being a section 21 school seems to have a lot of advantages, the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) rejects the policy of establishing section 21 schools as it argues that it amounts to privatisation in education which the union vehemently abhors (The Educator's Voice,2004) this is seen by many as a strategy to abrogate financial and political responsibility for education provision(Mathonsi,2004) SADTU further argue that section 21 schools ,as part of the decentralisation of education governance to the local level , "tends to shift financial responsibility of the state to communities under the guise of education ownership despite financial hardships which many a household experiences every day (Mathonsi, 2004).

#### *Procedures of awarding section 21 functions*

As mentioned earlier SGBs that feel they have the necessary capacity and ability to perform the above mentioned functions apply to the Head of Department (HoD) to be granted the powers to carry out the functions. Section 21(2) of the South African Schools' Act empowers the Head of the Department to either approve or disapprove the applications of these functions. If the HoD after carefully examining the schools governing body feels that it South Africa's not have the capacity to perform these functions, or can perform only some of them, he or she can refuse such an application or approve it only conditionally. However, the HoD must give reasons for such a refusal in writing to the school governing body concerned. Moreover section21(6) states that the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) may, by notice in the Provincial Gazette, determine that some governing bodies may exercise one or more functions, without having to apply to the HoD if:

- (a) He/she is satisfied that the governing bodies concerned have the capacity to perform such functions effectively and;
- (b) There is a reasonable and equitable basis for doing so.

*Withdrawal of section 21 functions from governing body*

The Head of Department may, on reasonable grounds, withdraw functions from a governing body. Such grounds would include, amongst others, abuse of school funds. In order to do so the Head of Department must:

- (a) Inform the governing body of the intention to do so and the reasons thereof.
- (b) Grant the governing body a reasonable opportunity (30) days to make representations to him/her relating to such intentions.
- (c) Give due considerations to such representations received.

In urgent cases, the Head of Department may withdraw a function of a governing body without first contacting the governing body. However the Head of Department must:

- (a) Furnish the governing body with reasons for his/her actions.
- (b) Give the governing body a reasonable opportunity to make representations relating to such actions; and
- (c) Duly consider such representations received.

The Head of Department may for suitable reasons, reverse or suspend his/her action to withdraw the functions of a particular school.

Any person aggrieved by the decision of the Head of Department in terms of this section may appeal against the decision to the Member of the Executive.

Mosana (2001) argues that the withdraw of functions shows beyond doubt that the Head of Department has more power than the School Governing Body because if he/she feels that the School Governing Body is not accountable enough to some of the duties , he/she can simply withdraw these functions. Although the Head of Department has the power, these powers are curtailed by the conditions that need to be adhered to in the exercising of these powers, as they are not absolute. The Head of Department must follow certain conditions when exercising these powers and this reveals the general democratic principles within South African society.

#### *Capacity building for school governing bodies in section 21 functions*

The allocation of section 21 status to a school depends on the capacity of its School Governing Body to perform these extra functions. It is for this reason that the capacity building programme is considerable practical relevance ). Furthermore, Van Wyk (2004) adds that the competence of the members of the School Governing Body is directly related to the amount of training they receive. The Provincial departments of education have a responsibility to provide capacity building to the School Governing Bodies in a province. While School Governing Bodies in the former state-aided schools are better equipped with skills and knowledge, “many school governing bodies particularly in poorer schools are in need of the capacity building programmes that the South African Schools Act requires the provincial education departments to provide” (Motala & Pampallis, 2001). Beckmann (1999) warns that the capacity building programme should be holistic and integrated in terms of time and content and should not be provided on ad hoc basis, as seems to be the case presently. Beckmann (1999) suggests that a programme for capacity building should cover the following:

- (a) Aspects of the constitution, which impact directly, or indirectly on the functioning of the school governing bodies and those whose achievement could in turn impact on the school governing bodies in a school setting.

- (b) Aspects of the schools' act, in particular those sections which provide directly for particular facets of the functioning of the school governing bodies. These include mandatory, allocated and optional functions.
- (c) Various policies and regulations, for example those regarding norms and standards for language policy.
- (d) Administrative law aspects that inform the implementation of certain functions
- (e) Certain province-specific provisions or policies.

In order for the training to be successful Beckmann (1999) recommends that:

- (a) Assessment procedures be built into programmes. This notion is supported by Van Wyk (2004) who states that follow-ups should be implemented to evaluate their performance.
- (b) Governors should identify their training needs themselves.
- (c) Capacity building programmes should be based on recurrent short, medium and longer terms.
- (d) The success of all programmes should be assessed and be refined regularly.
- (e) The diversity of schools and governors should be recognised in order to eliminate the need to force people to make use of inappropriate training.
- (f) Accredited service provider or special sections of the provincial department should provide programmes.

It is also worth noting that:

Educational decentralisation is a popular reform theme of governments around the world, but with its goals, strategies and outcomes that are as different as the countries themselves" (1998:111).

Educational decentralisation is generally perceived as if it is an answer to problems of high centralisation when in actual fact, it is merely a management strategy which may be adopted when and where a highly centralised education system is ineffective and

inefficient (Skayile, 2011: 136). Need for political commitment as well as for setting up a clear and strong regulatory framework to support implementation (Skayile, 2011:136).

Effective functioning of devolved structures can be a difficult and time consuming endeavour (Skayile, 2011:132). Thus, to this effect Skayile 2011 ) asserts that:

Decentralization South Africa's not just come with the formulation and adoption of policies. Like most types of reforms, it is built rather than created. It happens slowly because the accountability systems as well as the institutional culture (e.g., "the way we've always done things around here") must be transformed, new roles and skills learned, leadership styles altered (e.g., shifting from controlling to supporting behaviours), communication patterns reversed, planning and decision making procedures revised (e.g., bottom up and top down), and regional policies and programs developed" (p.9).

"If properly conducted, decentralisation is the best means of managing education efficiently. But it requires many sacrifices; it requires transparency, accountability, better training of implementers, good dissemination of information, etcetera" (A school principal in Guinea: in Lugaz and De Grauwe, 2010:139 quoted in Skayile, 2011:133). High enthusiasm and commitment in playing their role as manifested by their contribution to basic education. On the 'optimistic side', "some of the board members even go as far as meeting certain running costs and spending their time for monitoring works in schools. Some teachers even use their own money to meet school requirements like chalk and duster boards etcetera" (Skayile, 2011:134).

### **3.9 SUMMARY**

This chapter dealt with an overview of the role of school governing bodies, the school governing bodies in Canada, the school board and the composition of the school governing bodies and their functions. The following chapter will deal with the methodology of study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The practice of social research South Africa's not exist in a bubble, hermitically sealed off from the social sciences and the various intellectual principles which their practitioners hold. Research designs and methods of social research are closely linked to different visions of how social reality should be examined. Methods are not neutral tools but are linked to ways in which social scientists envision the connection between different perspectives about the nature of social reality and how it should be studied. Thus, research data are collected in relation to the problem which can either be a burning social issue or, usually, a theory" (Bryman, 2008:4).

The previous chapter presented the review of literature focusing on the role of school governing bodies in schools. This chapter, therefore, is devoted to the discussion of the methodology and research design that were utilised in this study. To this end, the justification of the methodology is presented first subsequent to which is the presentation of the research paradigm within which this study was embedded. This is followed by the research design, the sampling method or technique, methods of data generation, data analysis, the issue of trustworthiness as well as the ethical issues which had to be considered during the entire period of the investigatory enquiry on the topic in question. Lastly, and by way of conclusion, the chapter probes into the limitations of the approach used for data collection.

## **3.2 METHODOLOGY**

Unlike the objects of nature, the layers of experience are not rigidly ordered, nor are its moving contents related according to mathematical patterns. Methods designed to study physical objects are not a good fit for study of human experiences. Therefore, data collection methods are specifically constructed to take account of particular characteristics of human experience and to facilitate the deeper investigation of the lived experiences within a particular context (Polkinghorne, 2005:138).

This study is rooted in the qualitative epistemological position which recognises the significance of locating qualitative research within a particular social, cultural and historical context. The purpose of the study and the research questions influenced the choice of methodology. However, in selecting this approach it was necessary not to overstate or exaggerate the significance of qualitative methodology. This is why some scholars prefer to minimise the conflict between behaviour and meaning in social research by applying mixed methods as a way of maximising the strengths of both methodologies (qualitative vs. quantitative) while minimising their weaknesses (Polkinghorne, 2005). Since the objective was to explore the complex assumptions and experiences underlying the role of SGBs in practice in the Sisonke district, the qualitative approach was deemed the most appropriate method for the exploration of these assumptions and experiences. Thus, one of the reasons for choosing this approach is that it generally allows researchers to see through the eyes of the people being studied within a limited setting of the large context (Bryman, 2008 in Sekayile, 2011:75).

## **3.3 LOCATION AND RATIONALE FOR THE CHOICE OF THE SITE**

In accordance with the need to situate qualitative research in a well-defined location, it was critical for the researcher to locate the study in a chosen site as this helped set the boundary on the subject being studied (Sekayile, 2011:76). Thus, it is argued that

qualitative study should be carried out in a particular social setting where something actually happens (Maxwell, 2005 in Sekayile, 2011:76).

### **3.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

As individuals, different scholars define research paradigms differently. This is so despite the fact that they seem to say the same thing. These conceptualisations are outlined in this section. For instance, research paradigm can be viewed as a framework that defines what is acceptable and what is not, and the way the social world is viewed and perceived by social scientists (Mertens, 2006). Another view emphasises that a research paradigm monitors the course of inquiry and forms the foundation for practice of science by guiding the researcher towards suitable research methods and methodology (Leedy & Omrod, 2005).

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), a research paradigm signifies a specific world view that defines, for the researchers who hold the view, what is acceptable to research and how this should be completed. Obviously such a view is closely related to the one expressed by Mertens, 2006). As it has been observed that there are different ways of viewing paradigms, it can also be argued that there are various paradigms. For instance Neumann (2000) identifies three research paradigms, and these are positivist, interpretive and critical paradigms. Positivist researchers seek to discover and record the universal laws regarding human behaviour, to be able to use them to change or improve how things are done, and predict what would happen in future (Neumann, 2000). The next paradigm is interpretive paradigm and researchers who subscribe to it aim to share the mood and clarifications, and perceive or appreciate through the lens of their subjects (Neumann, 2000). Furthermore, interpretive researchers look for what is expressive and applicable, to those whom they study and how those they study experience and understand their day-to-day life (Neumann, 2000) In contrast to the

first two paradigms , followers of critical paradigm are dissatisfied with the way things are and seek for dramatic improvements to the lives of the participants, and as a result they critique, expose and reveal the underlying truths to encourage dramatic grassroots action (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2011). Through this paradigm, researchers aim to empower the less powerful and marginalised people (Cohen *et al.*, 2011) Each of these paradigms is based on its ontology, epistemology and methodological assumptions (Nieuwenhuis, 2010). What follows below is a detailed discussion of interpretivist paradigm which underpins this study.

### **3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN**

A research design can be viewed as a roadmap, a strategy or blueprint and procedures of how one aims conducting one's research (Creswell, 2007). Issues of research design can include decisions about broad assumptions about research approaches to detailed methods of data generation and analysis (Creswell, 2007).

Creswell (2007) further defines it as "...the whole procedure of research from theorising a delinquent to writing research questions, and on data collection, analysis, interpretation and report writing". In addition, Creswell (2007) posits that there are three types of research designs namely the qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods.

In this study the researcher used a quantitative approach making use of statistics and interpreting findings from a questionnaire with close and open ended questions that can be generalised and they can then combine this approach with a qualitative approach using reflective subjective open-ended questions to explain the phenomena discovered in the quantitative section. The idea was thus to make use of a field survey that was supplemented by qualitative open ended questions to elucidate the phenomenon further.

Research design is a set of procedures used to test the predicted relationships among the natural phenomena (Kumar, 2014). The research design addressed issues such as how the relevant variables are to be defined, measured and related to one another. Researchers can draw on a variety of research designs, each with its strengths and weaknesses. There are four general types of research designs often used in the study of organisational behaviour. They comprise of case studies, field surveys, laboratory experiments and field experiments. A field survey provides easily quantifiable data; the laboratory experiment allows the researcher high control of variables and field. The experiment takes place in a realistic setting. The research design developed is a field survey design. The researcher selected field survey types because it enabled the researcher to gather information about the wider population without much difficulty. The respondents were free to express their emotions when answering the questionnaire in the absence of the researcher (Kumar, 2014). A field survey usually relies on questionnaires distributed to sample of people chosen from a larger population.

The questionnaires are generally mailed or delivered by hand to participants at home or at work and may be returned by mail or picked up by the researcher. The respondents answer the questions and return their responses and try to make inferences about the larger population from the representative sample. A field survey can focus on a variety of topics relevant to organisational behaviour. It provides information about a much larger segment of population than case studies. They also provide an abundance of data in easily quantifiable form, which facilitates statically analysis and the compilation of normative data for comparative purpose. This study follows a positivist research paradigm with a quantitative approach. The positivist research paradigm was selected as it is best suited to the objective nature of the research to be undertaken. As the aim was to objectively establish the perceptions of the participating principals, a descriptive survey research strategy was, therefore, utilised.

### **3.6 THE TARGETED POPULATION**

Guided by the research questions, it was possible to figure out which and how many respondents were to be sent the questionnaires from the targeted population. The sampling technique used was convenient sampling. According to Bryan (2008) a convenient sample is one that is almost readily available to the researcher by virtue of the ease of its accessibility.

### **3.7 MY ROLE AS THE RESEARCHER**

In qualitative research, the researcher is an instrument of data collection (Bryman, 2008). This demands reflection in dealing with and reporting on potential sources of bias. Thus, it is important to realise that being an insider-researcher has the potential of imparting one's objectivity. This fact notwithstanding, if high levels of impartiality exercised on the part of the researcher, he or she can still gather rich qualitative data that is objective.

As opposed to being an outsider, the researcher had an advantage of understanding the context as he is currently working in education sector as a Principal of school in the district in which the study is located. An added advantage to the researcher is that as he is located within the district in question, and have, over the years, established good contacts with officials from different stakeholder organisations.

### **3.8 DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

#### **3.8.1 Research Instrument**

The questionnaire was used as research instrument. This quantitative methodology was chosen in the light of the purpose of the study, the kind of information that was

required and the available resources. As McMillan, Schumacher (2006) and Kumar (2014) maintain that questionnaires permit anonymity, preclude possible interviewer biases and permit a respondent sufficient time to consider answers before actually answering.

Data provided by questionnaires can be more easily analysed and interpreted than the data obtained from verbal responses and lastly, questionnaires can elicit information that cannot be obtained in other methods. The researcher believed that this kind of survey would lead to some truths about the role of school governing bodies in rural section 21 schools in Sisonke district and it provided information on whether certain generalisations presented in the literature are also true for this population.

### **3.8.2 Questionnaire**

Kumar (2014) defines a questionnaire as a collection of written questions about the respondent's attitudes, opinions, perceptions and demographical characteristics, states that the questionnaire empowers the respondents, who may read all the questions before completing any and return it during the time, which is convenient to them. One has to ask questions in simple unambiguous terms. The researcher must use the language that is familiar to the respondent. Technical terms and jargons should always be avoided. Questions must be formulated in a clear and unambiguous manner, but will tell the researcher what she /he needs to know.

#### *3.8.2.1 Content of the questionnaire*

The researcher's questionnaire comprises four sections. Section 1 of the questionnaire covers the biographical information. It required information from the respondents about gender, age and educational qualification. The researcher believed that it was a

crucial part of the questionnaire because it provides the researcher with an understanding of how diverse the respondents were.

Section 2 of the questionnaire contains closed questions about the role of the school governing bodies in rural section 21 schools. This section comprises nine questions. The respondents were asked to rate their responses according to the following scale, **Agree, Fully Agree, Disagree, Fully Disagree**. Section C of the questionnaire contains open-ended items as part of the qualitative part of the research whereby respondents were requested to write down problems they encounter as members of section 21 schools and had to suggest ways to improve parents' involvement in the governance of section 21 schools. In order to ensure validity and reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted. The questionnaire was piloted with a sample of 5 principals from the Sisonke district who would not take part in the actual study. In the actual study a sample of 200(n=200) willing participants was purposefully selected to take part. The sample was heterogeneous in terms of gender, age and teaching experience. It was the researcher's judgement that this sampling strategy was likely to provide the best information to achieve the objectives of this study (Kumar, 2014). The first sample population responses were 146 (73%) schools. After a follow-up, 11 schools returned the completed questionnaires to make total responses of 157 (79%) schools. That represented a satisfactory response.

### **3.8.3 Data Analysis**

After all the questionnaires were received the important task was to reduce the mass of data obtained to a format suitable for analysis. The responses were coded and frequency distributions were generated.

#### 3.8.4 Ethical Issues

Ethics is defined by Cohen *et al.*, (2007) as a “matter of principled sensitivity to the right of others, and while the truth is good to the right of others, and that while truth is good, admiration for human dignity is better”. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), there are three ethical principles to be considered; that is, autonomy of the participants, non-maleficence and beneficence. This means that the researcher needs to get consent of all the people participating in the study; the participants need to be assured that their confidentiality is respected and that they are free not to participate if they are not comfortable.

Before data could be generated, the researcher applied for the ethical clearance from the University of Zululand; and also applied for permission to conduct research in section 21 rural schools of Sisonke district from the provincial Department of Education. In addition, the researcher also wrote a letter to the schools principals where the study would be conducted, asking for permission to conduct research in their schools. In addition to the need to seek formal consent in research, the code of ethics also stresses the importance of protecting the privacy and confidentiality of the participants (Christiansen, 2005; Parsons and Sarvage, 2005). The participants have a right to confidentiality, which the researcher must ensure at all times (Christians, 2005; Creswell, 2005; Parsons and Sarvage, 2005). Participants were informed of their rights to confidentiality and anonymity and their voluntary participation, making them aware that they could withdraw at any time without any destructive repercussions. Their right to privacy was acknowledged and their identity was protected by using pseudonyms and it was maintained until data was presented. Participants were made aware of consent letters which they had to sign.

### 3.9 SUMMARY

In this chapter the researcher provided a detailed discussion of the research design and the methodology used in the study. The researcher further discussed the research paradigm used in the study; sampling procedure; outlined the research and the reason for the choice made and the method of data analysis that was used. Trustworthiness issues, ethical considerations as well as, issues of design limitations were also discussed. The next chapter will present and discuss the data that was produced through the questionnaires and documents review.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 3. PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE EMPIRICAL DATA

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter 3, the focus was on the methodology and research design. This chapter, therefore, focuses on the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the empirical data that was elicited from the respondents by means of the questionnaire instrument of data collection which is characteristically quantitatively oriented. After collection of the questionnaires, the researcher organised them (questionnaire data) for analysis and to this end a system of scoring was developed. For instance, the responses from the respondents were assigned identification numbers. The second step entailed the scoring of the questionnaires and each response to an item was assigned a number of points.

Fully Agree	Agree	Disagree	Fully Disagree
4	3	2	1

After the scoring was done and checked by a qualified test-user, the results were transferred to a summary data sheet and the scores were systematically recorded with each item assigned its column. Since the data analysis involved item analysis from the questionnaire, the scores for each item were tabulated. As soon as the statistical analyses were completed, the researcher rechecked the data. For instance, the original scores were rechecked together with the data sheets. The process of rechecking the data by another person ensured the reliability of the scores which were derived from the collected data.

#### 4.2 GENERAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

When the questionnaires were scrutinised, it became clear that all the respondents had fully completed the information regarding the general and biographical data.

**Table 4.1 : Gender of the Respondents**

Gender	No	%
Male	74	47
Female	83	53
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.1 presents the gender of the respondents. A total of 157 questionnaires were collected from the respondents. Of these respondents 47% were male and 53% were female. In light of gender equality, this representative statistics in its descriptive form is fair in terms of its parity in the representation of the female and male respondents despite the apparent slight edge of the number of respondents favouring the females.

**Table 4.2: Age group**

Age	No	%
Under 30	0	0
31-40	20	13
Above 40	137	87
<b>Total</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.2 presents the age of the respondents. As already indicated earlier on, a total of 157 questionnaires were collected 26% of which was of the respondents ranging from thirty one (31) to forty (40) years of age and this category of the range constituted 13%. The large percentage of 87% constituted those above the age of forty (40) years of age. The high percentage of the respondents who are above forty years of age give credence to the study's representativeness. The quality of the responses that were received indicate that they were elicited from matured people who have been in the education system for a long time. These are the people who have observed the manner in which certain tasks are executed in the Department of Education. It is thus arguable that this group of individuals deriving from its evaluative observation of the prevailing state of affairs developed its own outlook of the situation under consideration. The respondents through their responses have shown the commitment and the desire to witness the introduction of changes in the system.

It is against this backdrop, therefore, that the majority of the respondents complain that the department deposit funds into school accounts very late in the year and this jeopardises the effective running of the schools and as a consequence the ability to capacitate the members of the school governing body gets affected. This high percentage indicates that members of the SGB, just like the trustees in Canada, think that they are the conscience of the public and that people look at them as their representative and as such pose as their conscience.

**Table 4.3:** Educational Qualification

Educational Qualification	No	%
No formal schooling	00	00
Below Matric (Grade 12)	0	0
Above Matric ( Grade 12)	157	100
Total	157	100

Table 4.3 presents the educational qualification of the respondents. Out of all the 157 questionnaires collected from the respondents, it was established that all the principals have attained qualifications above matric. Judging from these qualifications so attained by the principals of the respective schools in the district, one would reasonably assume that their academic standing puts them in good stead to render commendable performance not only as principals of their respective schools but also as members of the SGBs. Arguably, their professional training is a resource from which the other members can draw invaluable insights towards steering the activities of the SGBs to the right direction.

#### 4.3 The role of school governing bodies in section twenty –one schools in Sisonke district

Table 4.4. The role of school governing bodies in section twenty –one schools in the Sisonke district

Items		Fully Agree	Agree	Disagree	Fully Disagree	Total
School governing bodies determine times of the school day	N	49	38	32	38	157
	%	31	24	21	24	100
School governing bodies formulate and implement school policies	N	36	58	42	21	157
	%	23	37	27	13	100
School governing bodies set the framework of the school curriculum	N	25	25	55	52	157
	%	16	16	35	33	100
School governing bodies adopt a constitution	N	66	82	9		157
	%	42	52	6		100
School governing bodies develop the mission statement of the school	N	61	71	16	9	157
	%	39	45	10	6	100
School governing bodies adopt a code of conduct for learners at the school	N	75	71	11		157
	%	48	45	7		100

School governing bodies maintain and improve the school's property, and buildings and grounds occupied by the school	N	75	61	16	5	157
	%	48	39	10	3	100
School governing bodies determine the extra curriculum of the school and the choice of subject options in terms of provincial curriculum policy	N	25	41	61	30	157
	%	16	26	39	19	100
School governing bodies purchase textbooks, educational materials or equipment		50		33	36	157
		32		21	23	100

In table 4.4 a total of 157 respondents (n=157) indicated their views on the role of school governing bodies in section twenty one rural schools in Sisonke district.

This table focused on the role of school governing bodies in section twenty one rural schools in Sisonke district. The respondents were asked to rate their responses according to the following scale: **Fully Agree, Agree, Disagree and Fully Disagree.**

Firstly, school governing bodies determine times of the school day. Table 4.4 revealed that more than half of the respondents (55%) indicated that they agree that school governing bodies determine times of the school day. This high percentage indicate that school governing bodies understand the dictates Schools Act .South African Schools ACT 84 of 1996 section 20(1)(f) directs that the governing body of a public school must determine the times of the school day consistent with any applicable conditions of employment of staff at the school.

Secondly, school governing bodies formulate and implement school policies. As shown in Table 4, the majority of the respondents (60%) agreed that school governing bodies formulate and implement school policies. The school governing bodies are in terms of South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 section 20 (1) (a) expected to promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school. They, therefore, have to formulate policies that will be easy to implement, thus realising the objective of providing better and quality education for all. It should be noted that

this function South Africa's not have financial implications to the governing body. It is an action which the governing body may take in the interest of the school, and it involves the development of documents, support to staff, and administration issues at the school. It is encouraging to note that more than half of the respondents feel that the governing bodies need to formulate and implement policies that will promote and create conditions that are conducive for learning and teaching at the school. However these policies must be in line with the dictates of the National Education Law and Policy.

In Canada it is the Provincial departments of education that determine education policy in accordance with provincial laws. The minister of education is responsible for setting policy relating to educational affairs, such as the allocation of provincial and federal funds. The central authority establishes policies and norms for other education services offered to students. Provincial policies look at certification of teachers, textbooks and library services, provision of records and educational statistics, and setting and enforcing the term of compulsory education.

In certain cases, the provincial authorities produce uniform programmes for all school boards. Galway and others argue that in Canada there is a perception that the provincial government makes all the important policy decisions and that the most meaningful public engagement is through school councils (Gibbon, Sheppard, & Brown 2012). These changes are a stark reminder that the organization and governance of schools by school districts or boards is "is a political and organisational invention, not a natural and inevitable phenomenon" (Anderson, 2003). In several cases governments have intervened to influence and overturn school boards decisions. These interventions have ranged from public statements criticising the policy decisions of the board to more extreme measures, such as the outright dismissal of board members. This is not the case in South Africa. School governing bodies enjoy much autonomy than their counterparts in Canada. School governing bodies are not political appointees. The Head of Department has the authority to withdraw certain functions after an investigation has been conducted and it had been proven that the School Governing Body is incompetent to carry out the department mandate. Such incompetence is not used as a political tool. There are no public statements

made against the governing body. Canadian school boards make and act on decisions related to organisation's mission, develop policies and monitor their implementation. This is done at political level while the South African governing bodies are concerned with a school where they are serving. They develop policies for that particular school only.

Thirdly, school governing bodies set the framework of the school curriculum. Table 4.4 also revealed that more than half of the respondents (68%) disagreed that the School governing body set the framework of the school curriculum. It is the prerogative of the National Ministry to provide the framework of the curriculum that are taught in schools. This is also the case in Canada whereby the central authority that define the orientations and priorities of the system as well as the education services that people have the right to demand. The Central authority in Canada establishes policies and norms for other education services offered to students. These policies and norms include the law, the curriculum, yearly instruction, and include teaching programmes. The Central authority takes full control of policies and norms and requires examination in certain areas. These policies and norms are obligatory for all students. The dominant trend is to reinforce the central authority's influence to the schools. This is as a result of the fact that public schools are the responsibility of individual provincial education departments and funded mainly from provincial and local taxes, with some federal funds.

Fourthly, school governing bodies adopt the constitution. Table 4 further on revealed that a high percentage of the respondents (94%) agreed that the governing body has the power to adopt a constitution of a school. This is in line with the provision of SASSA 84 of 1996 section 20(1) (b) which directs that the governing body of a public school must adopt a constitution. Section 18 of chapter 3 of the South African Schools Act provides that governing body of a school must adopt a constitution, section 18(1) states; subject to this act and any applicable provincial law, the governing body of a public school must function in terms of a constitution which complies with minimum requirements determined by the Member of the Executive Council by notice in the Provincial Gazette.

The constitution must provide for:

- (a) Meetings of the governing body at least once every school term,
- (b) Meetings of the governing body with parents, learners, educators and other staff respectively, at least once a year at the school.

By so doing, it is expected that the governing body will be effective and function well. Canadian school boards are by legislation valid and legitimate governments in their own right. Their authority is established by provincial legislation which sets out the parameters, mandate, duties, and powers of the board. The same is applicable to the South African School governing body. They are also by legislation valid and legitimate authority in a school. They are established by a provincial authority with specific parameters, mandate, duties, and powers.

Fifthly, school governing body develop the mission statement of the school. Table 4 strongly revealed that a significantly high percentage of the respondents (84%) agreed with the statement that school governing bodies develop the mission statement of a school. It is correct to agree with this statement, because it is the school governing body together with relevant stakeholders within the school who develop the mission statement and vision for the school. This line of thinking is in line with SASA 84 of 1996 section 20(1) (c) which stipulates that the governing body of a public school must develop the mission statement of a school. The mission statement of a school must show the long term intention of the people that develop it and what they want the school to be. This statement South Africa's not carry any financial implication to the governing body, it is part of the development and support to staff and administration issues to the school. It serves as a pointer to the ultimate goal to those who work and learn at the school. It is disturbing to observe that most learners do not take notice of the vision of the school. Even, then, the governing body is expected to inform the learners and parents about the mission statement of the school.

In Canada legislation directs that the school boards must make and act on decisions related to the organisation's mission, develop policies and monitor their implementation, establish decision-making processes, put in place control mechanisms for the allocation and distribution of power and resources, institute procedures for performing specific tasks and self-evaluate (Kelleher-Flight, 2005; Ranson, 2008)

Sixthly, school governing bodies adopt a code of conduct for learners at the school. Table 4.4 again strongly indicates that the majority of the respondents (84%) agreed that school governing bodies adopt a code of conduct for learners at the school. S.A.S.A.84 of 1996 section 20(1) (d) stipulates that the governing body of a public school must adopt a code of conduct for learners at the school. The Code of Conduct must aim at establishing a disciplined and purposeful environment to facilitate effective education and learning in schools. The support shown by the respondents, regarding this statement is encouraging and shows the commitment they have towards education. It is noted that these respondents also supported the statement that talked about the formulating and implementing the school policies. The code of conduct is expected to be in line with the dictates of the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996. Section 3(n) of this Act directs that the Minister of Education must determine the national education policy for the control and discipline of learners at education institutions.

The School Governing Bodies together with the school management team develop the code of conduct for learners at a school. The school code of conduct must be informed by the dictates of the South African Schools Act.

The same is applicable in Canada where "there is a growing perception that provincial governments make all the important policy decision and that the most meaningful engagement is through school councils (Dibbon, Sheppard & Brown, 2012). It is disturbing to infer that the schools have no say in matters regarding their governance.

It would seem that the provinces give more powers to the school boards which are not elected by the parents of the learners at a school which is the case in South Africa. Newton and Snackey (2005) agree with Thomas (2001) and they attest that in Canadian provinces the trustees feel that policy making is the primary role of school boards.

Seventhly, school governing bodies maintain and improve the school's property, and buildings and grounds occupied by the school. Table 4 revealed that the majority of the respondents (87%) agreed that school governing bodies maintain and improve the school's property and buildings and grounds occupied by the school. SASA 84 of 1996 Section 20 (1) (g) which directs that the governing body of a public school must administer and control the school's property, and buildings and grounds occupied by the school, including school hostels, if applicable. In terms of section 21 allocated functions of governing bodies; this function may not be automatic since it is a function with direct financial implications and such functions are only conferred on a public school if such a school has applied for it or if one or more functions have been assigned to it by the MEC by notice in Provincial Gazette. There are also limitations to this function. Funds that are allocated to the school are for specific purposes only. Capital projects and renovations and repairs are the function of the Department. The governing body can only utilise it to do minor repairs and renovations. It is, however, encouraging to note that the majority of the respondents feel that there is a need for schools to have enough funds that can be used for the maintenance of the school infrastructure.

Eighthly, school governing bodies determine the extra-mural curriculum of the school and the choice of subject options in terms of provincial curriculum policy. Table 4 revealed that the high number of the respondents (58%) disagreed with the notion that school governing bodies determine the extra-mural curriculum of the school and the choice of subject options in terms of provincial curriculum policy. It should be

noted that SAsA84 of 1996 section 21 (1) (b) states that, a governing body may apply to the Head of Department in writing to be allocated the function to determine the extra-mural curriculum of the school and the choice of subject options in terms of provincial curriculum policy. This is surprising, because no governing body is prevented from applying to the Head of Department to be given the function to determine the extra-curriculum of the school. It must be noted that this function has a direct financial implication if allocated to the school. Extra-mural activities talk to a big budget, the problem that the governing body would face is that norms and standards funds are never enough and come to a school with specific instructions pertaining to their use, any deviations is regarded as irregular expenditure. The same applies in Canada, where school boards carry the provincial mandate, with the proviso that if the financial books do not balance they will be fired.

Ninthly, school governing bodies purchase textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school. Table 4 also revealed that more than half of the respondents (58%) disagreed with the statement that says governing bodies purchase text books, educational materials or equipment for the school. This contradicts section 21(1) (c) of Act 84 Of 1996. Whereby, the governing body may apply to the Head of Department to be allocated the function to purchase textbooks educational materials or equipment for the school. This function is part of those that have direct financial implications to the school and are only conferred on a public school if such a school has applied for them or if one or more functions have been assigned to it by the MEC by notice in the Provincial Gazette. Section 21 schools with function (c) enjoy the right to purchase textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school. They are expected to work within the parameters set by Public Finance Management Act. Failure to get unqualified audit report leads to a forensic investigation and possible charges to the school principal and expulsion of the entire governing body. (Galway, Sheppard, Wiens and Brown, 2013) lament that the school boards in Canada are now restricted in fulfilling their mandates and this tightening of flexibility is not only

financial but extends to program focus. They complain that the department controls the purse strings, it dictates what the board can and cannot do whether it is a capital project or a curriculum implementation or even the hiring of staff. The same can be said about the South African school governing bodies, their powers are limited. They have no say on matters of curriculum, and capital projects.

#### **4.4 Problems Encountered by Principals as members of section 21 school governing bodies**

This section was an open-ended question, where principals were required to mention the problems they encounter as members of section 21 school governing bodies. In analysing the responses, the problems were ranked in the order of frequency as follows:

- (a) Failure of the department of education to timeously deposit funds into school account (87%).
- (b) School governing bodies lack capacity to govern (85%).
- (c) Poor understanding of public finance management act and supply chain management (80%).
- (d) Failure of the funding model, quintile, used by the department to allocate funds to schools (79%).
- (e) Members of the SGB do not always attend meetings (78%).
- (f) There is poor co-operation between the principal and the chairperson of the SGB on issues of finance (65%).
- (g) Parents are not keen to serve on the school governing body (65%).
- (h) Lack of security in schools (53%).
- (i) Parents do not attend budget meetings (50%).

- (j) Failure of the department of education to deposit funds into school accounts in good time leads to schools failing to purchase learner support material and get timeous deliveries (48%).
- (k) School management unilaterally procure unbudgeted items (45%).
- (l) Teachers make unreasonable demands to school governing body (37%).
- (m) Lack of support from the department of education to do repairs on physical infrastructure (33%).

#### **4.5 Principals' suggestions on improving the parent involvement in the governance of section 21 schools**

In another open-ended question, principals were required to make suggestions on what can be done to improve the parent involvement in the governance of section 21 schools. In analysing the responses, the suggestions were ranked in the order of frequency as follows:

- (a) Capacity building workshops are needed for school governing body members (89%).
- (b) School governing bodies, the parent component, should receive a monthly stipend (87%).
- (c) Parents need to be encouraged to get more involved in school matters so that they are able to take informed decisions regarding the performance of their children (87%).
- (d) The respondents feel that there should be regular SGB meetings in schools (82%).
- (e) Management should display a good measure of transparency with regard to finance matters (79%).
- (f) There must be a minimum literacy qualification for all members of the SGB (76%).
- (g) Refreshments should be provided in SGB meetings (67%).

- (h) Only members who have a skill that the members do not have can be co-opted into the governing body (67%).
- (i) The views of every parent who is in a meeting must be respected (56%).
- (j) All committees that are prescribed need to be established (53%).
- (k) Various incentives should be made available to members of the governing body (44%).
- (l) Only biological parents of the learners should be eligible for election to serve in the governing body (38%).

#### **4.6 SUMMARY**

This chapter focussed on the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the empirical data that was elicited from respondents by means of questionnaires. It probed into the general and biographical profile of the respondents. After scrutinising the responses of the respondents it became evident that all the respondents fully completed the information relating to the general and biographical data. The age group showed that 87% of respondents were matured and had experience in education. The researcher painstakingly analysed the fully agree, agree, disagree and fully disagree responses. The researcher then compared the findings of this study on how schools are governed in South Africa with how schools are governed in Canada. The next chapter, therefore, focuses on the discussions of the implications of the study which are predicated on the findings emanating from the analysis in chapter four above.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **5. DISCUSSION OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter used statistical inference to draw conclusive statements regarding the implications of the study as derived from the literature in chapter two and the descriptive statistics in chapter four respectively. Such inference derives from the fact that the statements drawn are reflective of the responses of the sampled population herein referred to as the respondents. Notably, inferential statistics involves to a very large extent the weighing of the evidence which has been adduced from the descriptive statistics which characteristically foregrounds the sample's central tendency and variability in its description. It is against this backdrop, therefore, that by using descriptive statistics, the researcher sought to summarise the information from the data in order to detect notable patterns and tendencies to be used in the application of statistical inference in the drawing of the implications of the study. Thus, in seeking to draw such implications, we used inferential statistics which, as already indicated above, focuses on making statements about the population deemed to be representative of the larger population within the education sector.

#### **5.2 DISCUSSION**

In this chapter, the focus of the discussion will be on the implications of the study as informed by the analysis in the literature review in Chapter Two and in Chapter Four where the analysis was based on the data collected from the sampled population of the schools' principals in the Sisonke District. In these chapters, we probed into the kinds of conditions that have to be met for decentralised governance to be effective when

applied in schools' educational management. In our probing, we have established that by and large for reform change to be effective there must first be 'political support' and secondly those tasked with the reform change must have the capability of executing such reform changes. What transpires from these conditions is that government which is representative of the political domain must display unswerving commitment to reform changes in the education sector. Arguably, government can demonstrate this unswerving commitment by not rendering sporadic support to the local governance structures such as the SGBs in the context of decentralised governance. By necessary implication, therefore, the attainment of capacity on the part of those involved in the implementation of the envisioned reform changes hinges on the national government taking upon itself to capacitate these stakeholders at the local level. This capacity-building of SGBs in particular must be done by subjecting them to specific training tailored towards equipping them to fulfil their functions as governors in the local sphere of the education sector.

Again, in chapter two and chapter four respectively, we also probed into how the role of SGBs is construed firstly by the scholars who have written extensively on the topic and secondly, the schools' principals who, among others, are direct stakeholders in school governance. In our probing in this regard, we established that notwithstanding the challenges besetting the effective functioning of the newly introduced SGBs as reform governing structures in the educator sector, these SGBs have an invaluable role to play in improving school governance holistically given their strategic positioning in relation to the schools which they govern. What this implies, therefore, is that the ensuing of problems which are, arguably, inherent in any reform change calls for constructive responsiveness on the part of the stakeholders as and when the need arises. Since challenges incidental to reform changes are inevitable, those involved in reform change structures need to be innovative in terms of how they respond to intermittent challenges which more often than not characterise the nascent stages of reform change. The argument thus advanced in this study is that these challenges attendant to reform

changes, as is the case with the SGBs, should be construed as affording members of SGBs individually and collectively scope for creativity in terms of how they respond to unavoidable challenges incidental to reform changes.

In our analysis of the responses of the respondents in Chapter Four, we were guided by the two research questions which sought firstly, to establish the principals' perceptions of the role of school governing bodies in rural section 21 schools and secondly, to establish the type of problems encountered by principals when engaging school governing bodies as regards the governance of schools. Thus, in establishing these perceptions, one crucial step was to tabulate the frequency of each characteristic found in the material being studied. Thus, this representative sample derived from the principals of schools in one District in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal, is to be construed as a probabilistic model that is deemed to resemble the population (which encompasses all the districts in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal) from which it was drawn. This helped us make broader claims about the population as represented by the sample. So, gauging the representativeness of the sample was a critical factor as it helped us in determining the probability of the perceptions of the population.

In this study, therefore, statistics gave us a procedure for the gathering of evidence which had to be evaluated in relation to what transpired in the literature reviewed in chapter two of the study. Consequential to the evaluation of the evidence as adduced from the evaluation, conclusions predicated on that evidence are thus made. It is important to note, therefore, that the use of inferential statistics provided a way of going from the sample to the population by inferring the parameters of the population from the data on the statistics of the sample. In our use of inferential statistics the fundamental question we posed was: can we infer the population's perceptions from the sample's characteristics and arguments advanced which are in favour of decentralisation in the reviewed literature?

Comparatively speaking, the arguments advocating for decentralisation in the reviewed literature in chapter two outweigh those against it. Also, there is a high-frequency level of a positive disposition by the respondents in chapter four towards the functioning of the SGBs. So, the high-frequency level of a positive disposition which has been confirmed both in the literature reviewed in chapter two and the responses of the respondents in chapter four calls for the enhancement of the skills of SGBs members to capacitate them so that they can perform their duties as governors with the utmost care and diligence. The call for the enhancement of SGBs' skills implies that decentralisation of education as a reform strategy towards the envisioned change is not an end in itself. On the contrary, it may be a critical means of helping improve education.

Arguably, therefore, factors that influence the success of decentralisation should be interpreted to mean factors that influence desirable decentralisation. What transpires from the respondents' positive disposition towards the role of decentralised governance is that decentralisation in general, and it is usual accompanying concepts such as participation and co-management holds prospects for increased proximity to clients and local ownership. Thus, decentralisation as a process should be conceived as a set of policy reforms whose aim is to transfer responsibilities, resources, or authority from higher to lower levels of government. It should be noted though that this fact notwithstanding, for some critics, decentralisation of education management implies shifts of the same old problems to levels that are less capable of resolving them. Arguably, therefore, the critics of decentralisation can only be silenced in their criticism of decentralisation by having those involved in decentralised governance make service delivery within the scope of their mandate their prime concern.

Although so far the validity of the argument that devolution of decision-making to local and school levels make schools and teachers more accountable to children and parents and more efficient, thereby increasing their effectiveness has not as yet been realised to

the fullest, it has been established from the explication of the perceptions of schools' principals of the role of SGBs that there are positive prospects of success which hinges on effective implementation of the reform change process.

### **5.3 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, we have argued that decentralisation as a process should be conceived of as a set of policy reforms whose objective to transfer responsibilities, resources, or authority from higher to lower levels of government. We have also argued that the critics of decentralisation can only be silenced in their criticism of decentralisation by having those involved in decentralised governance make concerted efforts to deliver mandatory services within the scope of their mandate and that they can only do this when they make service delivery their prime concern.

Thus, on the basis of our analysis in the literature review in Chapter Two and the analysis of the responses of the respondents in Chapter Four, we can assert emphatically that one of the practical implications of the study is that without capacity-building which is a critical condition which has to be met for SGBs to effectively fulfil their functions, the envisaged service delivery by the SGBs members will always remain in the domain of wishful thinking. We argue, therefore, that the high-frequency level of recommendations by the respondents of the need to capacitate SGBs members is an indication that SGB members in general are favourably disposed towards reform change as instantiated by the introduction of SGBs as decentralised governance structures at the local level of the education sector. We thus conclude that since government envisages education to be a societal issue with a sense of ownership by the local community, it (the government) must continually give its political support to the capacity building of SGBs by monitoring whether issued directives from the national government as regards the implementation of policy reforms are indeed observed to the letter. Such monitoring, will, arguably, help circumvent the undesirable throwing of the SGBs in at

the deep end of school governance without having capacitated them for such governing functions.

## CHAPTER SIX

### 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes the study by drawing on the arguments advanced in the reviewed literature in chapter two, analysis of the collected data from the sampled population in chapter four and also in the discussion of the implications of the study in chapter five. Having rendered the conclusion, recommendations are made based on the discussion of the implications of the study. Subsequent to this, we give a synoptic account of each chapter subsequent.

Prior to embarking on the discussion of the conclusion and recommendations, it bears repeating briefly that this study was, among other things, motivated by the seeming ineffectiveness of SGBs resulting from the fact that the newly elected SGB members do not have the necessary capabilities to govern schools at the required level. These capabilities range from the necessary education and skills to manage the school's finances and business dealings. It was noted that over above these deficiencies the SGB members also lack adequate support systems from the educational bureaucracy. It was thus noted that it is for these reasons enumerated above that "experiences with decentralisation in education are somewhat mixed and often disappointing" (Azfar *et al.*, 2001). It is against this background, therefore, that this study sought to establish what it is that needs to be done in order to enhance the effectiveness of SGBs in their role as school governors at the local level of government. As an answer to this quest to establish what can be done to make decentralisation work effectively, we established that the situation can be remedied to commendable degrees by providing not only appropriate but also continual training for school governors. Thus, we have established that notwithstanding the challenges besetting the effective functioning of the newly introduced SGBs as reform governing structures in the education sector, these SGBs

have an invaluable role to play in improving school governance holistically given their strategic positioning in relation to the schools which they govern. Of importance to note in this regard was the fact that two conditions namely, political support and the attainment of the requisite skills levels of those involved in decentralised governance, have to be met in order for the SGBs to perform their functions at the required level.

## **6.2 CONCLUSION**

Thus, on the basis of what transpired in the literature review in chapter two and the analysis of the responses of the respondents in chapter four and also the discussion of the implications of the study in chapter five, we conclude that despite the fact that ‘communities still perceive schools as belonging to government and teachers’, there is need to uphold the South African Schools Act’s ‘envisioning of a system where schools are to be community owned and controlled’. In light of what transpired in the literature review and the analysis of the responses of the respondents in chapter four there are no substantial grounds to justify the dismissal of decentralisation as a pragmatic governance strategy willy-nilly. On the contrary, we argue that there grounds to heed the call for the capacity-building of SGBs so in order to improve their functioning as governance structures in the education sector.

## **6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The researcher, after analysing the responses, came to the conclusion that in order to make school governing bodies more efficient and effective in schools, the following recommendations are made:

- (a) School governing body members must be subjected to continuous workshops. The majority of the respondents in this research recommended that capacity building workshops are needed for school governing bodies.
- (b) School governing bodies, parent component, should receive a monthly stipend.

- (c) The majority of the respondents recommended that parents needed to be encouraged to get more involved in school matters to enable them to take informed decisions regarding the performance of their children in schools.
- (d) The majority of the respondents recommended that there should be regular school governing body meetings in schools.
- (e) The respondents recommended that management should display a good measure of transparency with regard to finance matters.
- (f) It was the recommendation of the respondents that there must have been a minimum literacy qualification set for all members of the school governing bodies.
- (g) Respondents recommended that there was a need to provide refreshments in school governing body meetings.
- (h) The majority of the respondents recommended that the school governing body could co-opt persons with specialised skills only.
- (i) It was recommended that views of all members in a meeting must be respected.
- (j) The majority of respondents recommended that all prescribed committees must be established in schools.
- (k) It was recommended by the respondents that various incentives should be made available to members of the governing body.
- (l) The respondents recommended that only biological parents of the learners should be eligible for election to serve in the governing body.
- (m) It was recommended that communication from the department of education related to school governing bodies should be directed to SGB members directly
- (n) It was also recommended that the term of office of the SGB be extended to five year, for consistent performance of the incumbents.

## **6.4 SUMMARY**

In summary, this study explored the most critical contributory factors to the seeming ineffectiveness of SGBs in general in fulfilling their functions as governors in the local level of governance in the education sector. In consideration of SGBs' prime obligation which entails not only to shape but also to influence what is offered to children in schools, the researcher engaged in an exploratory enquiry to unearth the most critical factors causing dissatisfaction of many a critic of decentralisation as a governing strategy in the education sector. This exploratory research enquiry thus took the form of a critical appraisal of the role of school governing bodies in the local level of governance in the education sector. This involved probing into the effectiveness of SGBs by inquiring into how principals of schools perceive the role of SGBs in section 21 rural schools in the Sisonke District. It is thus argued, in light of what has been discussed in the various chapters of the study, that the devolution of governance power to SGBs at the local level of government should not be construed as an end in itself. What is critical to note is that despite the fact that decentralisation is not a magical solution to the real problems facing education in rural schools, the focus should of necessity be on the opportunity for change to improve schooling introduced by decentralised policies. Notably, therefore, "decentralisation is about shifts in the location of those who govern, about transfers of authority from those in one location or level vis-a-vis education organisations, to those in another level" (Mncube, 2015:www.unesco.org/iiep).

## **6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The researcher concedes that the study only had access to the views and opinions of the principals of schools from the Sisonke rural district. The researcher is of the view that the findings of the study would be true for other Districts in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

## **6.6 OVERALL SUMMARY OF THE STUDY**

Chapter one of the study, dealt with the orientation to the study. In this orientation, this chapter discussed the background to the study and highlighted how school governance was executed during the apartheid era in South Africa. The chapter also probed into the impact of the South African Schools Act (Act No.84 of 1996). Additionally, how the various categories of schools were changed to one public school system was also addressed. The foregoing discussions referred to above were meant by and large to situate the statement of the problem in which it was highlighted that in terms of what research indicates most of the newly elected SGB members do not have the necessary capabilities to govern schools at the required level. Notably, the relative unavailability of literature on this topic under discussion, is an attestation of the view that research has to be done in order to provide more insight on this topic and to improve the approaches designed to address this issue. The research questions were designed to help the researcher establish the perceptions of the school principals on the role of the school governing bodies in rural section 21 schools coupled with the attendant problems which the principals encounter when engaging school governing bodies in rural section 21 schools. This chapter also looked at research objectives that were mainly to determine the perceptions of the principals and to identify the problems with regard to school governing bodies in the governance of schools. This chapter dealt with the delimitation of the study taking into cognisance the number of schools in Sisonke District.

The researcher decided to a number of schools that was likely to provide the best information to achieve the objectives of the study. It was in this chapter where the definition of operational terms were elucidated. These were Section 20 schools whose funds are not deposited into the school account, Section 21 schools whose funds are deposited into the school account. School Governing Body was explained as the body

of parents, principal, educator representatives and learner representatives in secondary schools.

This chapter further dealt with the method of study. To address this research problem, both an in depth literature review and an empirical investigation based on quantitative research design was undertaken. The chapter further discussed the research design. The researcher selected field survey type since it enabled the researcher to gather information about the wider population. The chapter revealed that this study follow a positivist research paradigm with a quantitative approach. The positivist research paradigm was selected as it was best suited to the objective nature of the research that was undertaken.

The aim was to objectively determine the perceptions of the participating principals. A descriptive survey research strategy was therefore utilised. This chapter discussed the research participants who were the principals of section 21 schools from Sisonke rural district. The questionnaire was used as research instrument. This quantitative methodology was chosen in the light of the purpose of the study, the kind of information that was required and the available resources.

The researcher believed that this kind of survey will in all likelihood shed some light on the invaluable role of school governing bodies in rural section 21 schools in Sisonke district and it provided information on whether certain generalisations presented in the literature are also valid for this population. The chapter further dealt with data analysis. After all the questionnaires were received the important task was to reduce the mass of data obtained to a format suitable for analysis. The responses were coded and frequency distributions were generated.

Chapter Two provided an overview of the literature on the role of school governing bodies in schools. A literature review provided a bird eye view of the amount and

nature of work already done by other researchers in the field that was researched. The major aim of this literature review was to highlight the gaps in the existing knowledge and indicate what this research could possibly do to improve the understanding of the role of school governing bodies in section 21 schools. An overview of the role of school governing bodies in both Canada and South Africa was looked at. A window of information regarding how education is managed in Canada was unpacked. Functions and powers of the school boards were discussed. A structure characterised by participatory democracy provided information on how education is perceived in Canada.

This chapter also looked at the legislation governing school boards in Canadian provinces and territories. Composition of school councils was provided. It transpired that school governing bodies in South Africa are up by an Act of Parliament. The composition of school governing bodies was also looked at as per the dictates of the South African Schools Act.84 of 1996. This chapter compared the functions of both the school board in Canada and school governing body in South Africa. Chapter Three provided a detailed discussion of the research design and methodology used in the study. It further discussed the research paradigm used in the study; sampling procedure; outlined the research and the reason for the choice made and the method of data analysis that was used. Trustworthiness issues, ethical considerations, as well as, issues of design limitations were also discussed.

Chapter Four focussed on the analysis, presentation and interpretation of empirical data that was elicited from respondents by means of questionnaires .It looked at general and biographical profile of the respondents. Findings also clearly outlined. Deliberate attempts were made to connect the findings to existing literature on the topic. Chapter 5 deals with a summary of the results obtained through the research which is presented along with a literature control for the results obtained during this research study, followed by a discussion of the conclusions drawn from the results

after which reference is made to the research questions, the perceived contribution of this study and recommendations with regard to research and practice is provided and finally, the limitations inherent in this study is discussed.

The study revealed that principals had post matric qualifications. This shows that there is high a level of competency in managing section 21 schools in Sisonke. The study further on revealed that the majority of the school governing bodies determine times of the school day. Once more in this study it was found that the majority of school governing bodies formulate and implement school policies. It should be noted that this function South Africas not have financial implications to the governing body. It is an action which the governing body may take in the interest of the school, and it involves the development of documents, support to staff, and administration issues at the school.

It is encouraging to note that more than half of the respondents feel that the governing bodies need to formulate and implement policies that will promote and create conditions that are conducive for learning and teaching at the school. However these policies must be in line with the dictates of the National Education Law and Policy. In this study it was further revealed in Canada it is the Provincial departments of education that determine education policy in accordance with provincial laws. The minister of education is responsible for setting policy relating to educational affairs, such as the allocation of provincial and federal funds. The central authority establishes policies and norms for other education services offered to students. Provincial policies look at certification of teachers, textbooks and library services, provision of records and educational statistics, and setting and enforcing the term of compulsory education.

The study also revealed that more than half of the respondents disagreed that the School governing body set the framework of the school curriculum. It revealed that it

was the prerogative of the National Ministry to provide the framework of the curricula that are taught in schools. The study showed that it was also the case in Canada whereby it was the central authority that defined the orientations and priorities of the system as well as the education services that people have the right to demand. The study also revealed that a high percentage of the respondents agreed that the governing body has the power to adopt a constitution of a school. This was in line with the provision of SASA 84 of 1996 section 20(1) (b) which directed that the governing body of a public school must adopt a constitution, read with section 18 of chapter 3 of the South African Schools Act which stated that governing body of a school must adopt a constitution, also read with section 18(1) which stated; subject to this act and any applicable provincial law, the governing body of a public school must function in terms of a constitution which complies with minimum requirements determined by the Member of the Executive Council by notice in the Provincial Gazette.

This study strongly revealed that a significantly high percentage of the respondents agreed with the statement that school governing bodies develop the mission statement of a school. It was correct to agree with this statement, because it was the school governing body together with relevant stakeholders within the school who developed the mission statement and vision for the school. The study again strongly indicated that the majority of the respondents agreed that school governing bodies adopted a code of conduct for learners at the school. SASA 84 of 1996 section 20(1) (d) stipulated that the governing body of a public school must adopt a code of conduct for learners at the school. The School Governing Bodies together with the school management team develop the code of conduct for learners at a school.

The study established that the majority of the respondents agreed that school governing bodies maintained and improved the school's property and buildings and grounds occupied by the school. SASA 84 of 1996 Section 20 (1) (g) which directed that the governing body of a public school must administer and control the school's

property , and buildings and grounds occupied by the school, including school hostels, if applicable. In terms of section 21 allocated functions of governing bodies; this function may not be automatic since it was a function with direct financial implications and such functions are only conferred on a public school if such a school has applied for it or if one or more functions have been assigned to it by the MEC by notice in Provincial Gazette. The study revealed that the high number of the respondents disagreed with the notion that school governing bodies determined the extra-mural curriculum of the school and the choice of subject options in terms of provincial curriculum policy. It should be noted that SAsA 84 of 1996 section 21 (1) (b) states that, a governing body may apply to the Head of Department in writing to be allocated the function to determine the extra-mural curriculum of the school and the choice of subject options in terms of provincial curriculum policy.

The study also revealed that more than half of the respondents disagreed with the statement that said governing bodies purchased text books, educational materials or equipment for the school. This contradicted section 21(1) (c) of Act 84 Of 1996. Whereby, the governing body could apply to the Head of Department to be allocated the function to purchase textbooks educational materials or equipment for the school. This function was part of those that have direct financial implications to the school and are only conferred on a public school if such a school had applied for them or if one or more functions have been assigned to it by the MEC by notice in the Provincial Gazette.

The study established that the majority of the principals considered failure of the department of education to timeously deposit funds into school account to be a major problem. The study revealed that the majority of the principals were concerned about the school governing bodies lacking capacity to govern. The study indicated that the principals were concerned about the poor understanding of public finance management act and supply chain management policies. The study showed that the

principals were worried about the failure of the funding model, quintile, used by the department to allocate funds to schools. The study indicated that the principals considered as a major problem the fact that the members of the SGB do not always attend meetings. The study further showed that the majority of principals felt that, there is poor co-operation between the principal and the chairperson of the SGB on issues of finance. The study also indicated that majority of principals were concerned that parents are not keen to serve on the school governing body. The study listed as a concern for the majority of principals, the lack of security in school. The study revealed that many principals were worried that parents did not attend budget meetings.

The study listed as the problem of the majority of the principals, the failure of the department of education to deposit funds into school accounts in good time and that failed schools to purchase learner support material and get timeous deliveries. The study listed as a concern by the moderate number of principals that school management unilaterally procured unbudgeted items. The study further indicated that the moderate number of principals were worried about teachers who made unreasonable demands to school governing bodies. The study further indicated that less than half were concerned about lack of support from the department of education to do repairs on physical infrastructure.

This chapter also looked at the legislation governing school boards in Canadian provinces and territories. Composition of school councils was provided as well as school governing bodies in South Africa. It transpired that school governing bodies in South Africa are up by an Act of Parliament. The composition of school governing bodies was also looked at as per the dictates of the South African Schools Act.84 of 1996.

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## **ANNEXURE A:**

**Letter to the Head of Department requesting a permission to undertake research at Sisonke District.**

P O Box 714  
Umzinto  
4200

Dr SNP Sishi  
Head of Department – Basic Education (KZN)  
247 Burger Street  
Pietermaritzburg  
3200

Dear Sir

### **RE: LETTER OF REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY WITHIN YOUR DEPARTMENT.**

I am currently doing my Masters degree at the University of Zululand under the supervision of Dr M.A.N Duma in the Department of Social Science education.

I request a permission to conduct a research for a M.A degree in Sisonke District schools. The title for my research study is: **The role of school governing bodies in Section Twenty-One rural schools in Sisonke District**

The purpose of the study is:

- To explore the role of the school governing bodies in section twenty -one rural schools.
- To identify problems encountered by principals in engaging school governing bodies in the governance of schools.

Participation in this study will be voluntary. There are no known or anticipated risks if they participate in this study. Data generated for this study will be kept for a period of 5 years and will be locked in the office at the University of Zululand.

Should you have any questions regarding my study or you would like to obtain more information before you reach a decision about my request, do not hesitate to contact me on: 083 33405576 or you can e-mail me at [duma.edmund@yahoo.com](mailto:duma.edmund@yahoo.com) .You are free to contact my supervisor Dr MAN Duma at 035-9026495.

Your favorable response will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

---

Mr B E Duma.

## APPENDIX B:

### PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

### INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

(Participant)

Project Title: ... **The role of school governing bodies in Section Twenty-One rural schools in Sisonke District.**

**Duma B E** from the **Department of Social Science Education** University of Zululand has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project, and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

- 1 The purpose of the research project is to investigate the role of school governing bodies in Section Twenty-One rural schools in Sisonke District.
- 2 The University of Zululand has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
- 3 By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards the improvement of SGB functioning in schools
- 4 I will participate in the project by completing the questionnaire
- 5 My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.
- 6 I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed. (***Should there be compensation, provide details***)
- 7 There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that
  - a. the following risks are associated with my participation: ***N/A .. (state full details of risks associated with the participation)***
  - b. the following steps have been taken to prevent the risks:
  - c. there is a **medium** chance of the risk materializing
- 8 The researcher intends publishing the research results in the form of published articles. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.
- 9 I will receive feedback in the form of articles regarding the results obtained during the study.
- 10 Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by

- 11 By signing this informed consent declaration I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
- 12 A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, ..... have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

.....  
**Participant's signature**

.....  
**Date**

## APPENDIX C

### QUESTIONNAIRE

#### FOR PRINCIPALS

This is not a test, but a questionnaire, which forms a part of a research project to identify the role of school governing bodies in Section Twenty-One rural schools in Sisonke District. Your co-operation is of great importance

PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS

#### SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Answer each question by putting a cross(X) in the relevant space.

<b>1.1 Gender of Respondent</b>		
Male	1	
Female	2	
Other	3	

<b>1.2 Number of Parents on the SGB</b>		
None	1	
1-2	2	
More than 3	3	

#### SECTION 2

Use the scale given below to indicate how much you agree with or differ from each statement.

**4 = Fully Agree    3 = Agree    2 = Disagree    1 = Fully Disagree**

#### **2.1 Essentiality of Parent Involvement in School Administration**

2.1.1 Parents have a significant role to play in section 21 schools	1	2	3	4
2.1.2 Parents have the responsibility to support the school management structures	1	2	3	4
2.1.3 Schools fare better when they draw parents' expertise and assistance	1	2	3	4
2.1.4 Parents can share school management responsibilities	1	2	3	4
2.1.5 Parents have to ensure that their children attend school	1	2	3	4
2.1.6 Parents can be effective in instilling discipline among learners	1	2	3	4

**SECTION 3**

3.1 What does being a section 21 mean to your school?

.....  
.....

3.2. Which section 21 functions have been allocated to your school?

.....  
.....

3.3 What are the advantages of the acquisition of section 21 status?

.....  
.....

**SECTION 4**

4.1 Write down the problems you encounter when attempting to involve the school governing body in school governance

.....  
.....  
.....

4.2 . The following can be done to enhance the role of the school governing body in section 21 schools

.....  
.....  
.....