

**PARENTAL PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL
GOVERNING BODIES IN RELATION TO THE
EMPLOYMENT OF TEACHERS**



BY

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

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**PARENTAL PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL GOVERNING
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**This mini thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the M. Ed. degree in the Department of Comparative Education,
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WESTERN CAPE**

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ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how and the extent to which parents participate in the decision making process in school governing bodies in relation to teacher employment. To determine the nature and extent of parental participation in school governance in relation to teacher employment, the study used qualitative research methods for data collection and a critical theory for data analysis. The study comprised six public high schools from the Bushbuckridge rural areas situated in Mpumalanga Province with a total of twenty-four parents (four parents from each school) selected for face to face interviews. An interview schedule to test the following was used: background of schools and participants; dynamics and procedures followed in school governing bodies' meetings; parental participation in decision making; the role played by parents in decision making around teacher employment; parents' perceptions of their role around teacher employment and communication between parents and the Department of Education.

The study found that the nature and extent of parental participation in school governance in relation to the employment of teachers is determined by the socio-economic background of schools and parents studied. Attendance in school governing bodies' meetings by parents from schools from upper and middle socio-economic backgrounds was high. Attendance in meetings by parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds was poor.

This study found that parental participation in decision making by parents from upper and middle socio-economic backgrounds was active. This study suggests that schools from upper socio-economic backgrounds employ shared and consultative decision making strategies. It also suggests that schools from middle socio-economic backgrounds employ co-determinate and participative decision making strategies. Participation in decision making by parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds was passive. This study suggests that parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds employ conditional bureaucratic and persuasive decision making strategies. The study found that parents from schools from upper and middle socio-economic backgrounds take a more active role in decision making around teacher employment. It also suggests that participation in these schools follow the notion of regulated participation where parents participation in decision making is regulated by the Department of Education. The study found that parental participation in decision making around teacher employment from schools from lower socio-economic backgrounds was passive. This study suggests that parents' lack of participation in school governance in relation to teacher employment is against the notion of stakeholder participation which emphasises that key stakeholders must and should democratically take an active role in decision making around teacher employment.

This study also found that parents have a perception that *they should be* the people responsible for making the final decision around teacher employment. This study suggests that the perception by parents to be in charge of teacher employment is predicated on the notion of community as the basis of participation. Communication between parents and the Department of Education in relation to information regarding school governance was found to be excellent in schools from upper and middle socio-economic backgrounds and bad in schools from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This study concludes that there is scope for developing parental participation in school governance in relation to teacher employment. It recommends that the Department of Education should convene capacity training programmes geared towards empowering parents participating in school governance.

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DECLARATION

I declare that **Parental Participation in School Governing Bodies in Relation to the Employment of Teachers** is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any university, and that all sources I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by full references.



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MAGABANE TSHEPO MARTIN

SIGNED *M. Magabane*

DATE: 08.09.09

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

The abolition of apartheid has in its initial stage made it possible for South African society to enter into debates of inclusiveness and democratic participation at all levels of the country. Constitutionally, legislatively and in terms of policy processes, the South African education system has attempted to realise such inclusiveness in the actual lives of all South Africans and in all social spheres. Given this background, South Africa has entered a new phase of political development with the introduction of a new democratic arrangement of government. Subsequent political developments have injected a renewed vigour into the debate concerning the form, content, and nature of post apartheid education. The contest of political power has been reflected in education as the state and opposition groupings of civil society have become locked in ceaseless hegemonic contestations, discourse and debates in the ascendancy of educational governance. With the arrival of the new South Africa and its education system, efforts have been made to democratise and decentralise the education system.

1.1 Centralisation and decentralisation in educational governance

Mashishi (1994) emphasises that educational decentralisation is a major thrust of international efforts aimed at restructuring the education system. Educational governance as an aspect of education has been given a great deal of attention during the past 15 years. As typified by Johnson (1995), in Europe and Australia, this is thought to be due mainly to the general trend towards devolving responsibility of

spending to schools and a change in governing arrangements. Some of the most prominent countries pursuing a decentralised approach are the United States, Britain (South Wales), and Zimbabwe. The above-mentioned countries have an underlying assumption of school renewal strategy which emphasises the significance of local school management. In this version of educational reform, the notion of school level management is accommodated within the principles of cooperative management. The primary objective of cooperative management is the recognition of complementary and competing interests and an acknowledgment of interdependence. Within this interdependence, it is expected that no groups or individuals must be able to unilaterally transact educational decision making. Decisions are made through the creation of broad forums of negotiation where consensus is regarded as a proper platform for decision making.

1.2 Parental participation in the decision making process

In the area of school governance, in South Africa and most of the developed and developing countries, for many years, there has been a clearly drawn line between home and school, and the roles of parents and traditional administrators were more implicitly defined than now. Education was merely a domain of the school and parents were discouraged from interfering in matters of school governance. Parents, therefore, played a very limited role in the governance of their local institutions. Today, however, it is beyond any doubt that the importance of parental involvement and participation in school governance and the local management of schools is widely recognised by teachers, educationists and parents themselves.

International and local literature around the issue of parental participation in school governance confirms that for any effective governance and leadership in schools, parental participation serves as a starting point. This is evident for example, in the Education Reform Act in the United Kingdom (Ball, Bowe and Gold 1992, Colby and Bashy 1991 and Witty 1989)

Looking at various case studies around parental participation in school governing structures it appears that Thailand, Bangladesh, India, Britain (South Wales) and South Africa serve as useful examples. For example, through the introduction of a project like the cluster project in Thailand, parents gained a larger say in policies regarding staff development and school improvement. In Bangladesh, through a project called "BRAC" and in India, through a project called "PROPEL", parents and the community at large were granted the responsibility to determine school calendar and daily time table, and government interference was reduced to a minimum level. In the same countries, parents were also involved in identifying teaching posts and assisted in interviewing and selecting them. Parents also helped in monitoring and evaluating achievement of non-formal education centres and encouraged high involvement and attendance of both teachers and pupils (Shaeffer 1992).

Britain (South Wales) has school governing structures responsible for the determination of major guidelines by which schools function. In Britain, school governing bodies are responsible for employing teachers and terminating their contracts and for major financial management, including the maintenance of schools.

In South Africa too, there has been increasing awareness of the need to develop a democratic and more participatory form of educational governance. At the policy level, much has been written recently about restructuring the education bureaucracy and the need to improve governance structures as a whole. These initiatives have resulted in legislations like the South African Schools Act (1996-to be referred as SASA throughout the whole thesis), the Teacher Employment Act (1996) and the Amendment to the Teacher Employment Act (1998). The similarity around all the above legislations is that they are attempts in recognising the significance of parents' contribution in decision making around issues of governance and specifically around teacher employment.

In South Africa, the issue of parental participation in the decision making process in school governing bodies in matters relating to teacher employment are related to the concerns about democracy, social justice, equity and equality. Although it remains elusive as to what kind of contribution parents make and how this relates to the improvement of educational governance, parents are now, together with other key stakeholders, in charge of school governance. With this responsibility, it still remains doubtful as to how and to what extent parents are participating within the decision making process in school governing bodies in matters relating to school governance.

2. AIM OF THE STUDY

With the democratic process now being implemented in South Africa, there have been some shifts towards educational decentralisation. This has meant that the South African

educational governance structures have to be altered to feed into a more democratic, decentralised and inclusive educational decision making process. Within this process, our South African education has decentralised school governance through devolving powers of decision making around various issues, including teacher employment, to local institutions. With this democratic process underway, there is a need to examine how and the extent to which parents participate in the decision making process in school governing bodies. This study aims to examine how and the extent to which parents participate in taking decisions in their respective governing structures, with a particular emphasis on teacher employment. The study is interested in parents' perceptions of the nature and extent of their participation around teacher employment.

3. RATIONALE FOR AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In South Africa, democracy is a relatively new concept. Although this concept is embraced by the majority of South Africans, knowledge of participation and involvement in educational decision making and democratic principles are underdeveloped. It appears that while the national Department of Education through SASA (1996) devolved powers of decision making to provinces and schools in matters relating to teacher employment, it is not clear to most parents serving within school governing structures as to who is responsible for employing educators. This has led to a situation where most parents serving within school governing structures believed that governing bodies are the people who employ educators. From my observation, in more than one case, most parents clearly do not understand the legal framework under which they are operating and as such, their performance as vehicles of school management and

leadership is impeded. In my belief, their failure to understand their roles has resulted in confusion and a situation whereby parents passively participate without or with limited knowledge of their expectations and duties. It is unclear as to how and the extent to which parents participate within the decision making process in school governing bodies in relation to teacher employment.

In anticipation of the development of a democratic South Africa, education policy initiatives like the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI, 1992) came into existence. The NEPI (1992) proposed an educational governing structure rooted in democratic principles, with parental participation in local decision making being a primary factor. This policy initiative was followed by the Hunter Commission report (1995) on school governance, which proposed a decentralised system of decision making in education which also attempted to recognise the value of democratic participation, and in particular, parental involvement in educational governance. The previous policy paper on school governance in South Africa (White Paper 2, 1996) reflects this trend towards decentralising school management which calls for more autonomy at the school level, with an emphasis on decentralising power and authority to school level which is geared towards parental and community empowerment.

The SASA (1996) emerging out of the White Paper (1996) states that the principle of democratic governance should be increasingly reflected in every level of the system. For example, SASA (1996) has granted school governing bodies the right and opportunity to participate in deciding which teachers to employ in their schools. However, SASA (1996) is not clear as to the responsibility of school governing bodies

around teacher employment as it refers the matter to the Education Labour Relations Council.

As it stands, SASA (1996) states, “governing bodies have the power to recommend the appointment of educators and non educators to the provincial authorities, subject to the appropriate Labour Law”(p 9). The SASA (1996) further stipulates, “these matters are subject to negotiation in the education labour relation council” (p 10).

The SASA (1996) outlines that the duty of governing bodies is to recommend to the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) who is the best candidate for a particular post without being involved within the final arbitration, and the MEC will accept the recommendation unless there are some irregularities in the process of recommendation. Implicitly, this gives most governing bodies an impression that they are in charge of teacher employment. In contrast to the SASA (1996) and the Teacher Employment Act (1996), the latest Amendment of the Educators Employment Act (1998) is the first legislation around teacher employment which clearly outlines who the employer of teachers is. The latest Amendment to the Teachers Employment Act (1998) clearly states that the central education department is responsible for employing and discharging teachers. The role to be played by parents within school governing bodies is only to assist in interviewing and recommending to the MEC as to who is the best candidate for a particular position.

The latest Amendment to the Teacher Employment Act (1998) stipulates that:

the authority to fill a post as referred to in section 3 (A) at a public

school in terms of subsection (2) is exercised on the recommendation of a public school, as represented by its governing body, and the approval of such recommendation is at the discretion of the provincial ministry (p 11).

The latest Amendment to the Teachers Employment Act serves as a development to the SESA (1996) the Teachers Employment Act (1996). However, most parents participating in school governing bodies find it hard to understand. If South Africa wishes to follow the world-wide trend to democratise educational governance through granting autonomy and community empowerment and succeed in practising participative management at the lowest level, it is important to acknowledge that efforts for reforms and democratisation are futile without a community which is able, willing and prepared to participate in it.

This study is motivated by the many problems and tensions that occur in matters relating to the confusion around the authority structure between the central authorities and the parent component of the governing bodies. This study intends to contribute to the knowledge of schooling in South Africa in a time of transformation where democratic structures of participation at the institutional level are introduced in the school system comprehensively for the first time in the history of schooling in South Africa. Since a large part of previous research projects in the change of governance in schooling focuses on the policy development, I felt it necessary to gain some insight into the process of *policy implementation* and the respective consequences and outcomes of micro-politics in specific contexts of schooling. Given the above consideration, teacher employment is challenging to me as it is an area where the power play of micro-politics in the school organisation seem prevalent. Investigating in

this area will lead me to understand parents' perceptions and attitudes towards the changing educational system and how they respond to these changes.

Most significantly, given the fact that the notion of democratic decision making in educational management and leadership is still in a state of immaturity in South Africa, and while existing research by Stein (1997), Maharaj (1998), and Fletcher and Sayed (1998) point to the importance and value of parental involvement in South Africa, the policy implementation and practicality of these policy initiatives are still doubtful. I am concerned as to whether parents participating in governing bodies really understand the legal framework under which they are operating.

Presently, my impression is that although the concept of parental participation and involvement has gained currency and popularity in South African education discourse, it has been noticeably inadequate in South African literature on school management. Moreover, while much more emphasis is theoretically being placed on parental participation and involvement, it is not evident whether and how parents are practically involved in taking decisions around particular issues, including teacher employment, in governing bodies. This research, I hope, will make a significant contribution to the existing literature on school governance, and in particular this will contribute to the existing knowledge on the nature and the extent to which parents take part in the decision making process, particularly, relating to teacher employment, in their governing structures.

Finally, I hope that this study will contribute to the effective and efficient management

and governance of the schools studied. In this way, the benefit of this research will be at both micro and macro level.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study relied on qualitative research methods for data collection. Qualitative research methods were backed up and guided by a critical framework which helped the study to explore how and the extent to which parents participate in the decision making process in school governing bodies in relation to teacher employment. The use of interviews as a method of data collection gave participants enough space to voice and express their opinions, perceptions and feelings.

Apart from using qualitative research methods, the study used a relevant survey of international and national literature around democracy in educational governance, centralisation and decentralisation of educational governance, parental involvement and participation especially, in relation to teacher employment. For the purpose of theoretical clarity, the study employed the model used by Carrim and Sayed (1997) which categorises participation in South African school governance in the following way:

- ◆ *community as the basis of participation,*
- ◆ *stakeholder participation,*
- ◆ *regulated participation,*
- ◆ *and weighted participation.*

This model provides a useful framework for understanding the dynamics of parental participation in school governance particularly in South Africa.

The population of the study comprised twenty four parents who participated in school governing bodies of six secondary schools in the Bushbuckridge area situated in Mpumalanga province. The sample attempted a gender balance especially in schools where there was equal representation in terms of gender (where possible). The sample comprised two males and two females from each school. The sampling strategy employed was a simple random sampling which was conducted in such a way as to ensure that each parent of the school governing body and each school in the Bushbuckridge area had an equal chance of selection from the total population. A face to face interview was used for data collection. A semi-structured interview with a time allocation of 90 minutes was employed. This was administered through an interview schedule which focussed on the following key areas:

- ◆ *Background of the study:* to understand the context under which the study took place, and biographic details of the participants.

- ◆ *Description of the structure, procedures and dynamics of school governing body's meetings:* to unravel and understand the underlying procedure, structure and format followed in the school governing bodies` meetings.

- ◆ *Understanding roles and duties:* to understand the level to which the parents in the

school governing bodies understand their roles, duties and responsibilities as the vehicles of school leadership and governance, with a particular focus on teacher employment.

- ◆ *What parents think should happen:* to explore in detail the attitude and perceptions of parents on what they think should happen in the decision making process in relation to teacher employment.

- ◆ The last section of the research schedule seeks to understand the *school and departmental communication and support:* to explore the negative and positive communication lines between the national and Provincial Department of Education and the school in issues of school governance.

To administer this process, a tape recorder was used to record verbatim responses from respondents. This instrument relieved me in the problem of remembering questions to be asked and even more, to recall the responses after the interview. Because ethical problems are involved throughout the whole research process, I used the following strategies: accuracy, length and breadth of consultation and the rights of access and continuity.

The language used in collecting data was English but because of the heterogeneity of the population in terms of literacy, I had to resort to vernacular. All the data collected in vernacular were translated into English with the help of a professional. In analysing the data, a qualitative method called thematic and content analysis was used. This

method enabled me to focus on the underlying meaning of the response given by interviewees within the context of the theoretical framework adopted.

5. ORGANISATION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Chapter one opens with the contextualisation of the study. It serves to introduce the study with a brief summary of the area of focus. It then proceeds with an articulation of the aim of the study, its rationale and significance. This chapter closes with a brief summary of the methods of data collection and an overview of the thesis.

Chapter two gives a detailed account of the literature around democracy on educational governance, centralisation and decentralisation in educational governance, parental participation and involvement and parental participation and involvement in school governing structures in matters relating to teacher employment. This chapter is a review of the relevant international and national literature on the topic under investigation. The chapter concludes with policy statements around the issue of parents participation in the decision making process in matters relating to teacher employment.

Chapter three gives account of how data were collected. It is a chapter which outlines the method followed in collecting, analysing, interpreting and reporting data.

Chapter four identifies significant findings, illustrating tensions and ambiguities which emerge from the investigation on how and the extent to which parents participate in the decision making process in relation to teacher employment. It is a chapter which tries

to present and discuss the findings of the study within the context of the adopted theoretical framework adopted.

Chapter five is the concluding chapter which attempts to consolidate facts gathered from the investigation. Central issues of parental participation and decision making are critically analysed in this chapter.



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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the literature on democracy in education and a broad overview of efforts of educational decentralisation. Provided in this chapter is a variety of vignettes, and summaries of case studies, which explore educational decentralisation around the world. It then focuses specially on some initiatives on parental involvement in school governance and concludes by focussing on parental participation in school governing bodies, particularly in relation to teacher employment. It concludes with an overview of the theoretical framework which guided the research.

2. DEMOCRACY IN EDUCATION

The issues of democratisation, decentralisation and parental participation in the governance and control of education have been central to the educational struggles which have characterised the history of South African education. There was little reason, in substantive terms, that signified the introduction of Bantu education in 1953, more than the transfer of African education from missionary control to the separate, centrally located and government departments. The struggle in the mid 1980`s for "people's education" entered around issues of control, as students and the broader community demanded to be consulted and have a say in matters relating to education.

The democratisation of education in South Africa can be best understood by reflecting on the principles put forward by the Education Renewal Strategy (1990, to be referred to as ERS), the National Education Policy Investigation (1992, to be referred to as NEPI) and the South African Schools Act (1996). Among the principles of governance put forward by the ERS (1990) was that of the involvement of the community by the systematic establishment of management councils at schools as opposed to the Parents-Teacher-Student-Association (PTSA). At this stage, there was little evidence to suggest that the PTSA had become effective democratic governance structures. As argued by Tywala (1992), the PTSA actually became crisis management committees who only went as far as opposing the School Management Councils of the government without necessarily being better at governing schools themselves. However, the existence of these structure gave rise to debates in a number of political circles. Position papers that suggest various ways of participatory decision making in the democratisation of educational governance in South Africa emerged. These are the NEPI (1992) and eventually, the SASA (1996).

The NEPI (1992) proposed that the key governing bodies at the school level should be PTSA. It broke down school governance into management sector and participative sector. The representative sector of the PTSA and would be responsible for setting local school policy. The management sector would be the domain of the principal, senior staff and administrative personnel responsible for administrative functions and the implementation of their policies. The management sector should be responsible and accountable to the PTSA.

◆ *and participation* with reference to the South African experience.

As argued by Lauglo (1993), the centralisation/decentralisation dichotomy is not a point at which to start the discussion on governance. Part of the reason is that these concepts say little about the location of power within our South African education system. For example, within the policy initiatives of South Africa, even though issues of school governance are devolved to the local level, the final arbitration on key issues such as the curriculum, are issues dealt with at the national level. To say that the South African education system is either centralised or decentralised does not in itself reveal much about the dynamics of decision making nor the politics around the control of power and authority. For example, decentralisation in some cases might refer merely to the distribution of administrative tasks to lower levels within the system without any accompanying authority to make decisions, as is the case with the SASA (1996) notion of teacher employment.

What is required is to move beyond mere statements about the virtues of either centralised or decentralised model to examine what implications such an arrangement will have for the locus of power and the extent of meaningful participation within our South African education system.

The common trend in South African decentralisation is to distinguish between four levels of educational administration, namely; national, regional, district and local. A centralised system of education can be characterised as a system which concentrates decision making powers at the centre, whilst a decentralised system of educational

The emergence of the SASA (1996) following from the Hunter Report (1995) and the White Paper (1996) reveals a remarkable shift in the structure of school governance. In agreement with the NEPI (1992), SASA (1996) stipulates that the governance structure of all schools should include parents, teachers, learners and business people who have an interest on the schooling system. They should be elected representatives of the constituent groupings. This should form school governing bodies responsible for school governance which should be distinguished from the responsibilities of the management and administration of the school which are vested in the school principals. Now that the school governing bodies are established as statutory governance structures at schools, with parents as participants, the question that remains to be answered is how and to what extent parents do participate in the decision making process in school governing bodies in relation to teacher employment.

3. CENTRALISATION AND DECENTRALISATION IN EDUCATIONAL GOVERNANCE

The key issue within the discourse on educational governance can be located in the powers of decision making on policy and other related issues in education. The discourse can be categorised into three clusters: *centralisation, participation, and decentralisation* (Lauglo, 1993). It should be noted, however, that the three issues are not mutually exclusive but are integrally interwoven.

This literature review focuses on the above three clusters:

- ◆ *centralisation,*
- ◆ *decentralisation,*

governance would entail the devolution of powers to lower levels, for instance, the regional, district or local levels. However, this is a crude simplification of what is, in practice, quite a complex process. In my discussion, decentralisation will be located in relation to some dimensions of policy as identified by Sayed (1988), Lauglo & McLean (1987), Prawda (1993), and Mankoe & Maynies (1994). The dimensions can be identified as: administrative, political and ideological.

The administrative dimension focuses on the structural issues relating to the education system and is primarily concerned with the distribution and management of educational resources. The concentration is on the effective and efficient utilisation of resources in meeting local needs. The administrative dimension has to do with policy implementation rather than development and determination of educational policies and priorities and control over key policy decisions which may still be in the centre (Sayed, 1998). The national curriculum in Wales is typical of this, where the Education Renewal Act (1988) devolved management powers to schools while all students were still required to follow the national curriculum (Kulati, 1992). This, according to Sayed (1998), suggests that administrative decentralisation is compatible with centralisation.

Administrative decentralisation directs the ways in which the education system is structured while, at the same time, it potentially ignores the distribution of power in the system (Sayed, 1998). For example, the South African Government is still in control in a sense of political power, ideology and authority over key issues of decision making but devolves powers of implementation to schools. The state, together with other groupings of civil society, must have a role to play in the decision making process. In

essence, administrative decentralisation fails to take control of matters central to the discourses of educational decentralisation. Matters relating to transfer of powers, authority, the functions of governance and the manner in which control is exercised are neglected.

In contrast, the *political dimension* and motivation for decentralisation, it seems, are to redistribute, share, extend power and enhance greater inclusiveness in decision making by eliminating centralised control (Lauglo and Mc Lean, 1985). Research by Hurst (1985), and Mankoe (1994) poses doubts as to whether political decentralisation really renders the transfer of powers while Bash and Colby (1989) and Bowe and Ball (1992), suggest that, in reality, central governmental authority for educational decision making is never actualised.

The ideological dimension concentrates on emphasising the set of beliefs and values in the policy of educational decentralisation. As a matter of clarification, I will use Johnson's (1995) method of understanding the ideological dimension. He emphasises that the ideological dimension focuses on the individual and citizen. Within this dichotomy, two elements can be discerned, namely, the new right model and the alternative model. According to the new right model, supremacy of the individual in matters of school service provision is considered. The approach relies on the individual with an underlying assumption that human interaction is based on the principle of self interest. Within this vantage point, total liberty of choice must mean the absence of government interference and all forms of government regulations must be eliminated. The alternative model perceives the individual as a member of a community. This

assertion is amplified by the model's usage of concepts like "democracy" and "empowerment". It explains participation as motivated by values of altruism, love and benevolence (Peters and Marshal, 1988 as cited in Sayed, 1995). Based on the above dimensions of decentralisation, it can be stated that governments are reluctant to give up total control of the education system. Let me give a few examples of international initiatives to prove my point.

4. COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DECENTRALISATION

This comparative study looks at developing countries like Zimbabwe, and the developed countries like the United States, New Zealand, Britain (South Wales), Chile and Norway. The reason for my concentration on these countries is because they to a certain extent underwent the same development pattern. That means, the above countries are following a pattern of educational decentralisation with the principles of local level management grounded on the devolution of power to local institutions. Besides, they share more or less the same experience in terms of educational decentralisation.

Prior to 1980, owing to historical specificities, *Zimbabwe* was administered on the basis of racial domination. The socio-economic, political and educational principles were geared towards sustaining the dual principle of racial domination. The British attempted to centrally administer the country on the basis of separate development of both white and black without socio-political consolidation and integration. During the same period, the education system was centrally administered. This centralised education system

was constituted by a process whereby the state allocates and regulates the provision of education (Sayed, 1995). With the emergence of decentralisation after independence in 1980, the Mugabe Government participated in supporting and supervising resources allocation, curriculum development, teacher training as well as planning and management. There was a shift towards the decentralisation of educational administration through the devolution of decision making powers and prerogatives to local levels. These attempts were geared towards the improvement of effectiveness in the process of implementing educational policy and plans. However, school organisational functions and the establishment of minimum requirements were central activities of the central government through parliamentary legislatures (Sayed, 1995).

United States, Zimbabwe, Britain (South Wales), and New Zealand have an underlying assumption of school renewal which emphasises the significance of local school management. In this version of educational decentralisation, the notion of school level management is accommodated within the principle of cooperative management (Angus, 1989). As stated earlier, cooperative management is guided by the belief that educational decision making should be entrenched at grassroots level. It considers participation by various stakeholders, groups and individuals with different interests. Within this process, it is believed by proponents of cooperative governance that educational decision making should not be a process of one party or group unilaterally transacting educational decision making. Instead, educational decision making should involve consensus among various stakeholders. The guiding principles which informed the decentralisation of Zimbabwe, Britain (South Wales) and New Zealand are

participation and collaboration in a spirit of democratisation and community involvement in local schools. The emphasis seems to be on notions of effective and efficient institutionally based educational management. This management approach is argued to result from the reduction of bureaucratic control and interference at school level (Angus, 1989).

For *Chile*, decentralisation strategies have for the past decade been regarded as a process which allowed educators to target specific disparities in quality and resources (although educators admit that there is yet no discernible direct correlation between quality of performance and devolution of resources). However, the process of decentralisation has regulated attention not so much to infrastructure but rather to an appropriate legal framework which seeks to accommodate the concern of both leadership (authority) and communities. As argued by Hoffman (cited in Godden, 1996), Chile's experience suggests that additional levels of governance may well ensure equitable distribution of resources and greater community participation in educational choices.

Lastly, in *Norway*, as suggested by Johnson (1995), there is a strong legacy of a populist localism inherited from the 19th century, the founding period of basic education. From 1930, the development of schools was influenced by social democratic egalitarian goals, and the associated view that the state had a strong role to play. However, the degree of greater centralism which resulted was a far cry from archetypal bureaucratic centralism. 1960 was a period in which the distribution of authority in education was modified by ideas of democracy. Following the successful European community, which

in times of political crises managed to legitimise their governments through decentralisation, there was some assertion of populist localist ideas in Norway about curriculum and control of schools. Since the squeeze on public finance emerged in the 1980`s, there has been a series of decentralisation shifts designed to promote efficiency, with local government being given more discretion over its own budget. The government was seeking to introduce an adapted form of management by objectives which requires schools to plan activities in a more systematic fashion and develop information systems for better monitoring the school`s goal attainment and resource allocation. There has been deconcentration at all levels, combining various branches of education under one central government and devolving a greater share of state authority to that office.

In most of the countries reviewed in this literature, only managerial and administrative autonomy is granted to schools and parents. The claim of educational decentralisation on the political level, as emphasised by Weiler (1990), cannot be accepted unconditionally by the state. Although decentralisation has gained currency within the discourses on educational governance, the experiences of developing countries (most of which remain highly centralised) suggest that the problem with it is that it is difficult to implement and has at best not delivered the intended outcome (Lauglo and McLean, 1985).

5. THE SOUTH AFRICAN INITIATIVE

To start with, the South African constitution has enshrined power to devolve

responsibility to local schools. This attempt is expressed in the SASA (1996) where it is stated that the community must participate in the decision making process in education. Participatory democracy which is inherent within the SASA (1996) is one form of decentralisation. This means that those who have their daily work in the education system should and must have equal rights to participate in the local governance of their schools. Schools and educational institutions should have greater autonomy from outside control. In South Africa, the Hunter report (1995) and the White Paper on education and training which followed it (1995), state that educational decision making be entrenched at grassroots level. This has committed South Africa to a decentralised course in education. An issue to be raised at this stage is whether decentralisation does in fact lead to community participation.

Looking at community participation, the fundamental key to understanding the dynamics of decentralisation and participation is to look at the relationship between the state and civil society. It is a common belief in South Africa that the state is the only institution which is best able to implement, guarantee, and affect equality and democracy. Since it possesses the appropriate institutional infrastructure, it is seen as effective and capable of yielding political authority, generating economic wealth and social order needed in society (Held, 1987). The government is thus central to the democratisation and decentralisation of the education system.

SASA (1996) is motivated by the desire of the state to establish and create a national system of governance. In legislatively establishing uniform norms and standards, the state sets in motion two processes. Firstly, the state constitutionally protects the powers

and functions that are devolved to schools and its respective governing structures. In this regard, I agree with Sayed (1998) that SASA at least proves the fact that the state does not surrender total educational control unconditionally. Secondly, the state regulates educational governance within a context of devolved authority while it surrenders key functions to local institutions. For example, the budget of the school is a matter for school governing bodies to decide while key issues of the curriculum are matters to be dealt with at national level. The South African Schools Act (1996) stresses this claim that the state does not surrender total control of the education system by proposing a menu of powers specifying twenty functions of governing bodies. According to the Teacher Employment Act as defined in the SASA, governing bodies can choose or recommend and the provincial education department can decide which of the twenty functions governing bodies can assume control over, based on considerations such as capacity. Teacher employment is regarded by the Teacher Employment Act (1996) and its latest Amendment (1998) as not at the discretion of governing bodies. Instead, teacher employment and dismissal are the functions of provincial education authorities with governing bodies only making recommendations. At the same time, the SASA (1996) gives governing bodies constitutional status. This implies that their powers and functions are guaranteed and thus statutorily recognised and that they may make decisions as cooperate body.

Within SASA (1996), parents participating in school governing bodies are regarded of in two levels. At one level parents are implicitly conceived of as citizens in a constitutional democracy. They are thus citizens with citizenship rights which are to be exercised in a context of devolved school governance (Sayed, 1997). On the other

level, parents are regarded as consumers with the power to decide the best education for their children within commodities on offer. Giving parental participation a numerical majority in their favour because they significantly contribute to the education system with children and funds raised from taxes raises the question as to why other participants in school governing bodies are weighted more than other participants. This is against the principles of equal representation which was the subject of the hard won struggles around the democratisation of educational governance.

6. GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION

The strengthening of partnerships in school governance has been the focus of the International Institute of Educational Planning held in France. As the World Declaration from the above-mentioned institute on education for all during the Jomtien Conference held in France as stated in Shaeffer (1992) observes:

New and revitalised partnerships at all levels of the education system are necessary: partnerships among all sub-sectors and forms of education: recognising the special role of parents and that of administrators and other educational personnel: partnerships between education and other government departments, including planning and finance, genuine partnership contributes towards the planning, implementation, managing and evaluating of basic education programmes. When we speak of an expanded vision and a renewed commitment, partnership is at the heart of it (p. 7)

Following the attention given by the Jomtien Declaration cited in Shaeffer (1992) to the need for new partnership and collaboration in the promotion of local school

management, the International Institute of Educational Planning has initiated programmes of case studies and workshops in relation to parental participation in the decision making processes within school governing structures.

These case studies stress that parental participation in school governance can be pursued through involving parents in the management and governance of their local schools. Parental participation, as emphasised by Shaeffer (1992), can be initiated through the establishment of parents associations and collaboration of various stakeholders in school governance. Parental involvement and participation of this kind have been common in many places as a result of the inherited interest of families and communities in the education system. Education thereby becomes part of the community and not a separate institution imposed by the state.

The reason for the growing importance of parental participation in school governance is what is seen as the crisis of relevance, appropriateness and sustainability of the reform of innovation and democracy. It has been argued by Lattif (1991) that even if reforms designed in a central ministry could be implemented in the average school, financially and bureaucratically, they might not be relevant to the local needs and thus would be unable to either stimulate local demands or be sustained. This has led to the need to decentralise and devolve authority down to other parts of and partners of the system. Such decentralisation can either be collaborative in nature, leading to deconcentration or delegation of central authority and greater involvement in the management of service on behalf of the central power, or it can be more genuinely participatory in nature, leading to the actual transfer of decision making, planning and

implementing authority to local levels of government and beyond.

There is evidence of this around the globe. For example, a new Indonesian Law on Education (1990) devotes a major section to community participation. The trend towards restructuring education in North America, where in some cases state departments of education have been abolished to be replaced by advisory boards to fully autonomous school districts, is also a case in point. The many different kinds of local schools cluster models tried around the world where decisions around curriculum, upgrading materials and school schedules are made and are found as part of routine system administration serves as a relevant example of the growing importance, of parental participation in the decision making process in school governing structures.

Wood (1991) argues that there is a growing awareness that parental participation can be both a means to a better education and an end itself. As a means, parental participation and collaboration is considered as a way of providing more resources, facilities and even more places within the education system. Parental participation also helps the school to become more relevant to local needs and conditions by making it more effective and efficient through community input and monitoring of both pupil and teacher attendance and of assisting the community to see value in the school, an institution often seen as alien.

In addition to parental participation and collaboration becoming a means to these ends, it can be an end, leading at the individual level to changes in knowledge, attitudes and skills, greater awareness, self-confidence, self-reliance, efficiency and better

management practice. At the community level, parental participation in school governance can lead to greater control over information, the formation of alliances and networks, more effective management of local resources and the development and strengthening of local organisations. At the social level, parental participation can lead to lower development costs, greater equity of benefits, continuity and sustainability of development programmes (Wood, 1991).

7. PARENTAL PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL GOVERNING STRUCTURES

The conceptual frameworks documented by the International Institute of Educational Planning (1992) provide us with several case studies of educational innovation of government officials aimed at parental participation in school governing structures. The case studies represent a variety of types of parental participation at school level deemed to have proven relatively successful or at least sustainable. The innovations and reforms selected in this literature review share one common goal. They attempt to enhance the quality of education by encouraging greater collaborative participation by various actors at school level.

The above-mentioned cases deal with efforts at enhancing parental participation in decision making processes in key issues of school governance. Besides the commonalities within the case studies, their innovations vary in many ways. Some, as in the Uganda programme on pupils' written texts, the Philippine's parents' learning support system, and the Indonesian experiments with Parent-Teacher Associations, focus on the need for parental participation. The cluster projects in Thailand and

Indonesia (projects geared towards mobilising and empowering parents to participate in educational decision making) set up quite complex, new structures and procedures for professional development, curriculum reform, and community mobilisation required at both school and central levels.

Underlying these innovations, simple or complex, are quite profound changes in how schools are meant to operate and how reforms are meant to be planned and implemented. Most generally, these changes make education more participatory, with more parents taking a more active role in carrying out more activities in and around schools. These innovations call for more active collaboration of a large number of partners especially at school and community level. For example, the cluster project in Thailand encouraged teachers, principals, parents and education officials within and across schools to work more closely together to assess their own problems and decide how to deal with them and so to improve the management of their schools.

The projects in Philippines and in Indonesia extend this involvement to parents and in Uganda, to pupils, private sectors and non-governmental organisations. To varying degrees, some of the projects go further into issues of governance, responsibility and accountability and the need for a more genuine participation of a more equal partners in school leadership and management. In the best of Thailand schools and in an environment in which power is being devolved to lower levels of the system, decisions about school policy and practice are being shared between teachers and parents. Even in Indonesia, where the pace of devolution from the centre is slower than in Thailand, the experiment in forming community-school teams to develop local curriculum content

and in giving remote communities the responsibility to select para-professional tutors are milestones. This is the case with the Thailand project called “ OPLANNER” where community fora of a large variety of interested parties help to plan and manage resources of their schools. These innovations lead to an education system in which a broader range of partners are more actively involved, in some cases in the fine education delivery, in others in the planning, management and governance of the school. However, in areas of school policy and governance, some of the case studies indicates powers by parents, to set specific goals and expectations of the school (Shaeffer, 1992).

In the cluster of activities in Thailand, parents gain a larger say in policies regarding staff development and school improvement activities. The project in Bangladesh called “BRAC”, as well as the other in India called “PROPEL”, is an initiative which gave their community, largely via parents, in school governing structures the responsibility to determine annual school calendars and daily time-tables to ensure that the government interferes as little as possible with family and community economic circles. In the same projects, parents also identify candidates for teaching posts and assist in interviewing and selecting them, encourage linkages among other educational activities, for example, literacy classes and early childhood education centres, help monitor and evaluate achievement of non-formal education centres, and encourage high involvement and attendance of both teachers and pupils.

Although Indonesian parent associations ordinarily do not move into the area of policy and governance which has been seen as clearly a professional area, the new project

catering to remote schools does assign parents and local communities the task of selecting part time tutors and a daily time-table appropriate to local economic circles.

Governing bodies in Spain, England and Wales, are responsible for determining the major guidelines by which schools function and the system of control and supervision. In England, the governing bodies are responsible for employing teachers and terminating contracts and for major financial management, including maintenance of schools, the salaries of staff and development training. In contrast, governing bodies in Spain do not participate in the employment and dismissal of staff. Neither do they have the same degree of financial responsibility (Laffitti, 1993).

For a more active participation by parents, issues of attitudes of participants and their perception around their responsibilities should be considered. With regard to the above point, Darlin (1994) and Carron and Chan (1996) suggest that good interaction between different groups of stakeholders in a school, with parents playing their role, is crucial. As argued by Darlin (1994) and Carron and Chan (1996) the development of shared meaning among those involved in the improvement of governance process at school level is crucial, for lack of communication will work against shared meaning.

8. PARENTAL PARTICIPATION IN TEACHER EMPLOYMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

With regard to parental participation in South African school governance, the issue of active participation in the decision making process by parents can be summed up in Murphy`s (1997) words:

in schools and school system, teachers, parents, administrators and community members are labouring to reframe their conceptions of learning and schooling and their roles within this process to meet the demands of a democratic education system (p 36).

Although it remains elusive as to what kind of contribution parents make and how this relates to the improvement in school governance, parents are now, together with other key stakeholders in schooling, in charge of the provision of school governance. In South Africa, the post-apartheid process of transforming the education system has largely focussed on new structures and legislation. In terms of policy, it was in the first instance concerned with the issue of the financing of schooling and the reconstruction of school organisation and school governance. With the new SASA (1996) in place, it is hoped that the strong involvement of parents in the running and the process of schooling will have a positive effect on school management and leadership.

Unlike in Indonesia and England where parents participating in school governing bodies have the powers to employ teachers, South Africans have some limitations. SASA (Schedule two of the Act, 1996), affirms that all educators appointed to public schools will be appointed by the provincial education department. The Act suggests that the provincial authorities may create additional posts at a public school on condition that such posts are paid by the school concerned.

Teacher employment within SASA (1996) can be analysed as falling under the powers and functions granted to public schools governing bodies by the Member of the Executive Council (MEC). Governing bodies are provided with a list of 20 powers and functions which are subject to the provision of the Act. The powers of school governing

bodies as subject to SASA (1996) are:

a governing body of a school may recommend the appointment of educators to the head of the department, subject to the Educators Employment Act, 1994 (proclamation No. 103 of 1994), and the Labour Relation Act, 1995 (Act No 66 of 1995). The ministry of education shall decide which powers and function on the provided list may be performed by governing bodies and which one they may apply for (p.8).

The list of responsibilities which may be conferred by governing bodies includes teacher employment. Schedule 2 of the SASA (1996), which deals with the employment of educators, provides that the provincial authorities shall accept the recommendation of a governing body to appoint an educator unless the candidate is incompetent for the post, has a record of misconduct or if the recommendation is to be found inequitable. In terms of this kind of legislation, it is ambiguous as to whether governing bodies are fully or partially in charge of teacher employment. What one should try and ascertain is to what extent the Department of Education, if ever, overrules the recommendations of the school governing bodies. SASA (1996), together with the Teacher Employment Act (1996), avoids the responsibility of clarifying teacher employment by adding to its legislation these words: "These matters are subject to negotiation in the Education Labour Relation Council", (p10). For those parents participating in school governing bodies without the skill to read and write, it becomes difficult to separate arbitration from recommendation. For them, the impression is that they are in charge of teacher employment since it is rare that their recommendation is rejected by the MEC.

These perceptions are highlighted by a particular experience in the Eastern Cape, where one school had an acting principal. After a due period of operation by the acting principal, the post for principalship in that school was advertised. The acting principal

was among the candidates for the post. Candidates were interviewed and the recommendation of that school's governing bodies favoured the acting principal. With the final arbitration in the hands of the department of education, the final results favoured a person whom the school governing body and the community at large *did not* recommend. This discretion by the Department of Education raised a hot debate as the community and the governing structure of the school had recommended a candidate not considered by the department. This kind of tension in relation to the devolution of powers resulted in a mass action as parents and the community at large stood up and contested the department's decision.

This story shows how governing bodies can only make recommendations and the Department of Education has powers, authority and discretion to employ whoever they regard suitable for the post. Despite the sound educational background of the principal, the recommendation and the final arbitration from the Department of Education showed the tension inherent within the process of teacher employment.

After this kind of incident, the question to be asked is, is our education governance really decentralised? Who in fact has the major say in decision making in governing structures? In South Africa's quasi-decentralised form of educational decision making, governing bodies may find themselves entrapped in bureaucratic legal battles that undermine their effectiveness as vehicles of democratic participation. And it opens a permanent controversy between schools and the department of education over the definition of decentralisation of powers and functions.

Given this background, one question which is raised is: do governing bodies have the proper knowledge and skills to take part in the decision making process around issues of teacher employment? Are they involved in taking decisions around teacher employment? If so, how and to what extent are they involved in the decision making process within their school governing structures in matters relating to teacher employment?

In consideration of the tensions raised by SASA (1996) and the Teacher Employment Act (1996) over power and authority over decision making around teacher employment, the Government has come up with legislation that, for the first time, outlines clearly who the employer of teachers is. The seven chapter Amendment to the Teacher Employment Act passed on September (1998) provides for the regulation of conditions of service, discipline, retirement and discharge of educators employed in public schools, department offices, adult basic education centres and further education and training institutions. The Amendment serves as an improvement on the recent situation where parents and teacher unions had to talk to the many school governing bodies individually because of lack of clarity as to whom exactly the employer of certain categories of teachers is.

The Amendment (1998) places the MEC in charge of determining salaries and other conditions of service of all educators. The Amendment (1998) gives power to the state to create, grade and regrade posts, designate and redesignate them, convert and abolish, allocate and reallocate them. However, it still reaffirms the power of school governing bodies by providing that all appointments, promotions and transfers be made

on their recommendation. Heads of Provincial Education Departments may, however, decline recommendations of school governing bodies in instances where agreed to procedures were not followed. Power over decision making is devolved to local schools, hence, without the authority to exercise those powers. Power and authority over decision making is vested in the central government.

With this kind of education policy development in South Africa, it is required of us to critically look at the nature and extent to which the policy initiative of the new educational administration is implemented. It demands us to engage in a critical analysis of what happens at the lower levels of the education system. In this regard, Christie and Potterton (1997) refer to the point that it is by no means a straightforward process to change established patterns and dynamics in schools. The change process cannot simply be mandated by policy directives.

DeClerq (1997) demonstrates that it should not be assumed that the priority of local management at school level would encourage more flexible, responsive, professional and collaborative school institutions. Hence, as emphasised by De Clerq (1997), it should be expected that only privileged schools within South Africa will benefit from the governance structure reforms while the larger majority of school will be incapable of transforming their schools in a genuine effective learning environment.

The above argument corresponds with the standpoint of Hannaway (1993) who argues that decentralising reforms in schools system can only succeed if there is already a well functional baseline. That is, there must at least be some efforts of parental participation

initiated and to a minimum level, operating. As mentioned above, this is not the case in sizable parts of the former black South African school system.

Implicitly, democratic and decentralised school governance can be a significant indicator of transformation at the lowest level of the education system, but there are a number of problems linked to it. Among the most crucial is the issue that schools are teacher professional territories. This means that school governance is seen as a professional area which needs professional expertise. Consequently, parents do not find it helpful to interfere with what they regard as the responsibility of teachers. It is also not clear how far teachers are prepared to collaborate with parents. Furthermore, parents' will and capacity to participate has to be questioned. Namibia's example which could be viewed as relevant to the South African context, demonstrates that parents, after five years of a new political dispensation, do not see their relationship with schools as significant and do not consider it an option to enter school grounds unless they are specifically invited (Angula and Lewis, 1997).

Change
Change is a complex process filled with socio-political processes which underline the difficulty in changing what happens at schools through state policy. As elaborated by Matola (1997), a school is an organisation with a number of internal interactions and processes. The cultural peculiarism of schools has to be taken into account in an initiative to develop schools for the better. If a school is to be changed, fundamental cultural change has also to take place. Factors that lead to effective and efficient school governance in one school do not necessarily apply in another.

Some of the case studies conducted in South African schools show the value of ethnographic work and other qualitative methods in understanding the complexities of the micro levels where policies have to be implemented and where shared meanings, attitudes and habits have to change. This is especially important against the background that the South African Schools Act (1996) has been drawn up in a contested policy terrain, where competing interests and power balances have shaped regulations which resulted in ambiguous effects.

9. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THIS STUDY

To determine how and the extent to which parents participate in the decision making process in school governing bodies in relation to teacher employment, I broke down the complexities of this problem within a particular framework through which social reality can be viewed. A critical framework guided my research project. Critical theory is an approach that treats people as creative, compassionate living beings and not as objects. It raises questions about power, and particularly inequality, and it views social relations more as the outcomes of willful actions than laws of human nature. Through the critical framework, a system of relationships and the dynamics of parental participation in the decision making process in schools and governing bodies in relation to teacher employment were uncovered. This approach is best reflected in Carrim and Sayed`s (1997) framework of participation, namely,

- ◆ *community as the basis of participation,*
- ◆ *stakeholder participation,*

- ◆ *regulated participation,*
- ◆ *and weighted participation.*

With regard to *community as the basis of participation*, It has been emphasised by Carrim and Sayed (1997) that besides the diverse ways in which the community is defined (territorial, geographical and political), it is accepted by most South Africans that the community must participate in educational decision making. For example, all the education policy documents relating to school governance have a conviction that local schools should and must serve as a mirror of the sentiments of the community within which it is geographically located, Carrim and Sayed (1997). This is the case within SASA's (1996) recommendation that the community must be represented within school governing bodies.

A more critical phenomenon in school governance is *stakeholder participation*, a particularly South African manifestation of joint decision-making. Stakeholder participation is broad-based participation by people who have a stake or interest in their local schools. This includes parents, the community, teachers, learners and business people who have interest in the education system. In educational management and leadership, this means that legitimate stakeholders should be granted the right to participate. Thus the SASA (1996) makes provision for the participation of stakeholders such as parents, teachers, students and the community on school governing bodies. This discourse has a difficulty, namely, the shift from the notion of community to stakeholder in the use of terminology. The notion of stakeholder suggests that certain people have more of a stake than others in a particular context. This, according to

Carrim and Sayed (1997), delimits whom in fact may be claimed to be a legitimate participant in making particular decisions in particular situations. Implicitly, this suggests that not all things are open to all people at all the times. This in essence is different from community participation which tends to be far more inclusive and open to who may be in that community. Whether domestic workers or professionals, the notion of community participation is premised on the fact that the community must participate in educational governance. Hence it is possible that people who are not stakeholders may have the most useful contribution to make to the enhanced performance of the school as much as it is conceivable that those regarded as legitimate stakeholders may not have anything substantive to contribute (Nzimandand Skhosana, 1992).

In contrast to stakeholder participation, *regulated participation* in educational leadership can be regarded as co-operative governance. Cooperative governance is premised on the principles of participation by the community at large with the exclusion of unilateral decision making. In South African conceptualisation, regulated participation is an attempt to move away from the potential antagonism that community and stakeholder participation generates and to avoid over-determination by the state. The assumption of regulated participation is that no single individual, parties or groups are or should be able to unilaterally transact educational decision making and that consensus between agencies, groups and individuals is possible through creating forums of negotiations. This notion is reflected in the National Council of Higher Education (NCHE) governance proposal (1996). As it stands it states that:

the transformation of higher education provides for a governance framework based on the principles of co-operative governance. This framework is premised on the assumption of autonomous institutions working cooperatively with a pro-active government and in a range of partnerships. Good governance must be based on recognition of the existence of different interests and the inevitability of contestations among them. It must therefore create structures and encourage processes which enable differences to be negotiated in participative and transparent ways (p.12)

The NCHE (1996) is grounded on the desire by the state to regulate the control and governance of higher education.

Weighted participation, as emphasised by Carspecken (1991), is an option which could be operative simultaneously in all the above forms of participation. Whether stakeholder or regulated participation, there is assumption that some people have more rights than others. This reflects itself through the limitation of the number of people to participate in school governing bodies. SASA (1996), by suggesting that parents should constitute the majority in school governance structures, weighs parental involvement more than it does for either teacher and students. This assumes that parental choice is central to school governance.

The above models (community as the basis of participation, stakeholder, regulated and weighted participation) were used to understand and analyse the issue of parental participation in chapter four of this study.

The next chapter set outlines the method followed in collecting, recording and analysing data on how and the extent to which parents participate in the decision

making process school governance in matters relating to teacher employment in South Africa.



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CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the method followed in collecting and analysing data on how and the extent to which parents participate in the decision making process in school governing bodies in matters relating to teacher employment. The chapter gives a detailed account of the research design and the approach pursued in collecting data. It outlines the method followed in selecting participants, and the instruments used in data collection. It also considers a detail step by step account of the method followed in analysing and interpreting data and the reasons for choosing the kind of data analysis. The chapter concludes with ethical considerations relating to this particular study.

2. RESEARCH APPROACH

In my study, I systematically collected and analysed empirical evidence in order to understand the nature and extent to which parents participate in the decision making process in schools governance, particularly in relation to teacher employment. I relied on a qualitative methodology for it provides a rich description and colourful detail that will give the reader a feel of the actual social setting. A qualitative research

methodology was considered owing to the explanatory nature of the study. This approach gave participants enough space to voice and express their feelings, opinions and perceptions. The qualitative research approach assisted me in obtaining insight and in-depth responses from the participants. According to Leedy (1997), qualitative research assists researchers who aim at discovering and exploring issues which lead to the building of a theory rather than testing it. This study, therefore, predominantly fits into a qualitative paradigm.

3. THE STUDY

A critical and relevant survey of international and local literature was undertaken for the purpose of providing a framework for the empirical study. With specific reference to the survey of related literature, experiences relating to democracy in education, centralisation and decentralisation in education, parental participation in decision making in local schools, parental participation in school governing bodies and parental participation in school governing bodies specifically around teacher employment were conducted. This helped me to clarify the different meanings and initiatives already being undertaken in the area of local school governance. The survey covered the clarification of concepts and problem areas around the issue of school governance, democratisation of school governance, parental participation in school governance and around issues of teacher employment. In addition to the literature review, documentation relating to state policy in education, ministerial speeches, magazines and various articles and journals in relation to the topic under investigation were used

to review relevant policy relating to notions of participation and the implication of this policy proposal for implementation at local level. The empirical study comprised qualitative research method which was boosted by a critical framework. Face to face interviews with parents participating within the decision making process in school governing bodies was used as a tool for data collection. The population of the study comprised a gender balance (where possible) of twenty four participants from six high schools in Bushbuckridge. A simple random sampling was considered for this purpose. The study resorted to thematic and content analysis for data interpretation.

3.1. Participants

The participants of this study comprised the parent component of the school governing body from six public secondary schools (with two from poor socio-economic backgrounds, two from a middle class context, and two from upper socio-economic backgrounds) in the Bushbuckridge area situated in Mpumalanga Province. Socio-economic background of schools was measured in terms of the nature of the area which surround the schools. In the study, the concepts upper, middle and lower socio-economic background are used to embrace the differences of the schools in the area. This means that schools from upper socio-economic background are schools from rural areas which have very good facilities. Schools from middle socio-economic background are schools from rural areas which are judged to be moderate in terms of their physical structure. Schools from lower socio-economic background are those schools from rural areas which are judged as very poor in terms of their physical appearance. The upper

socio-economic schools include children from professional families, with most parents being lawyers, accountants etc, and these schools provides a conducive environment in terms of infrastructure. Middle socio-economic background are those schools with children from semi-professional families, with parents working as secretaries, clerks etc, with schools rated as moderate in terms of infrastructure and to a certain extent extent able to yield a favourable environment for learning. Lower socio-economic background are tyhose schools which are regarded as historically disadvantaged, with children from families which are either not working or with one parent working as a cheap labourer.

This study only included parents representatives from the school governing bodies because the study w as interested in *the parents` perceptions, attitudes and opinion* around their participation in the decision making process. The reason for my concentration in public schools is that it is in these schools where problems in relation to the confusions and misunderstandings in terms of implementing the policy aroyund teacher employment seem most prevalent. These schools form the majority of schools in these areas. It is also in these schools where much has to be done in terms of adjustment and commitment to the implementation of newly formulated policies.

Because the study dealt with a population characterised by heterogeneity, and because my study dealt with small samples, my study had to resort to a more convenient sampling strategy. My study relied on simple random sampling which made sure that no one was discriminated on any basis. Because my study concentrated on different

schools, there was a need to take an equal sample from each of these schools. This is regarded as simple random sampling not because of the number of schools selected for participation but because of the number of participants selected in each school for the study. This sample was convenient and assisted in reaching the aim of the study.

The sampling was conducted in such a way as to ensure that each parent of the school governing body and each school in the Bushbuckridge area had an equal chance for selection from the total population. In my selection, the names of all the secondary schools, their socio-economic background in relation to the nature of the area within which they are geographically located in Bushbuckridge were drawn in a sampling frame. The sampling frame was placed in a list which was converted into numbers in a box. These numbers were thoroughly mixed and the required sample was drawn out like pulling names out of a hat. Four parents from each school, two male and two female (where possible), were randomly selected for gender balance. This means that from each school, four parents were randomly selected for face to face interviews: a total number of 24 participants in the study. To ensure that my study represented different races and gender, the method used was to obtain a list of all parents (inclusive of their race and gender) serving in governing bodies from the principal of each school. After this procedure, I took the names of all parents participating in the governing structure of each school and converted them into numbers to be drawn in a hat. I then randomly selected the numbers until I obtained the gender balance from each school.

3.2. Research methods and instruments

The aim of this study is to examine how and the extent to which parents participate in the decision making process in school governance in relation to teacher employment. For this purpose an interview method was used to collect the data. I used a semi-structured interview with each of the selected parents of the school governing body.

116 According to Martin (1990), interviews provide three kinds of information, namely:

- ◆ *observation of a limited sample of behaviour manifested during the interview,*
- ◆ *data about the clients` present situation and predicament*
- ◆ *and life history data.*

The interview as a research method is unique as it involves the collection of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals. As argued by Walter and Meredith (1989), its main advantage is its adaptability. The interviewer can make full use of the responses of subjects to alter the interview situation. As emphasised by Thomas and Nelson (1985), the interview method has the following advantages:

1. It is more adaptable. Questions can be rephrased and further questions can be asked.
2. The interviewer can observe how the respondent responds to questions and can achieve greater insight as to the sensitivity of the topic and intensity of feelings from interviewees.
3. Because each participant in the research project is contacted prior to the

interview, interviews have the advantage of greater rate of return. Moreover, people tend to be more willing to talk than to fill out questionnaires.

In the words of Martin (1990):

the interview method is used to find out not only what happened to the client, but also his or her perception of those events, the meaning ascribed to them and the current evaluation put upon them (p.106)

Because face to face interviews involves a process of communication in a natural setting, the researcher can observe the feelings and the emotional reaction of participants. It has the advantage of higher rate of return as the researcher is the one who asks questions rather than giving participants questionnaires to fill in.

A 90 minute session was reserved for the interview. This enabled an explanation of all questions, and the reduction of the possibility that respondents could misconstrue the questions. This face to face method was used to designate a type of communication in which there was an appreciable amount of control exercised over both the presentation of the questions and the recording of the answers. Interviews were conducted in English but, given the educational background of the Province, there were some interviews which were held in vernacular. Those interviews which were held in vernacular were recorded and, with the help of a professional, translated into English.

In this process, an interview schedule (provided in the appendix) designed to explore how and the extent to which parents participate in the decision making processes in

their school governing structures in matters relating to teacher employment was used. The schedule was designed to understand the attitude and perceptions of parents on their current level of participation in the decision making processes in their respective governing structures, as well as what they think they should be. The interview schedule assisted me in recording answers in a systematic and standardised way. In my interview, open-ended questions were asked and a verbatim response was taped.

A pilot interview with two parents was pursued. I used the research schedule to interview the parents so that I could identify those questions that would elicit relevant response in terms of my research aims and to avoid repetition of questions which could irritate respondents.

My choice of using open-ended instead of closed-ended questions was based on the fact that this method has an ability to give the respondent freedom to respond in a relatively unrestrictive manner. And because my project was an adventure in learning about the respondents' level of information, his or her frame of reference and opinion structure, open-ended questions were most suitable. This kind of data collecting method can be credited for its ability to regard interviewees as active individuals whose insight, feelings and cooperation are an essential part of a discussion that reveals subjective meaning. This involved a mutual sharing of experience. The method allowed for the discovery of new aspects of the problem by investigating in detail the explanation given by the respondents. According to Leedy (1997) the wealth and quality of data gathered from this method can be relied on.

3.3. The interview schedule

3.3.1. Aims

The interview schedule used was designed to explore how and the extent to which parents participate in the decision making process in their school governing structures in matters relating to teacher employment. The interview schedule was also designed to test the opinions of parents in terms of how they think they *should* participate in the decision making process in their respective governing structures. The five sections of my interview schedule were as follows:

3.3.2. Background

This section was divided into two subsections, namely, biographic details of the participants, and background of the school. This background could assist in understanding the context under which the study took place, as well as the biographic details of each individual participant (e.g. gender, socio-economic background, race).

3.3.3. Description of the structure, procedures and the dynamics of school governing body meetings

This section attempted to understand the dynamics, structure, procedures and the format followed by the respective school governing bodies in decision making. This section dealt with the participants' opinion structure: how they perceive the structural

arrangements, procedures and dynamics in their meetings and how they actually participate in their school governing structures, particularly in relation to teacher employment. Provided in this section, therefore, were questions exploring the dynamics of participation in their decision making process. For instance, are they debating before reaching conclusions or are they listening to other groups without input?, For instance, what decision making strategies and methods do they employ in the decision making process and how do parents put their skills of governance into practice?. This section attempted particularly to understand the way and extent to which parents participate in their meetings.

3.3.4. Understanding of roles, duties and responsibilities

This section attempted to understand how parents in the school governing bodies understand the roles attached to their status in school governance. It also attempted to understand whether parents understand their governance roles in matters related to the specific issue of teacher employment, which is the key focus of this study.

3.3.5. What parents think should happen within the decision making process

This section focussed on what parents think *should* happen within the decision making process within school governing bodies, particularly relating to teacher employment. Questions within this section included: whom do you think should be responsible for teacher employment?

3.3.6. Government department-school communication and support.

This section explored the parents' perceptions of the relationship between the central government (national and Provincial Departments of Education) and local schools. An attempt at revealing the support system and link between the Department of Education and the schools studied was made. This section tried to reveal the initiatives taken by the national Department of Education to train and prepare parents who lack the necessary skills and knowledge to participate in school governing bodies. It was hoped that understanding this relationship would help in understanding why parents are participating the way they are. Provided in this section were the positive and negative perceptions by parents on their relationship with the department of education.

4. METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Since my project was concerned with interpretation of communication and content, content and thematic analysis best suited this adventure. As argued by Leedy (1997), this method has a potential to capture the richness and complexity of the data. This technique is useful for qualitative research because it enables one to focus on the underlying meaning of the response given by the interviewee. This diagnostic tool of qualitative method was good in analysing data when faced with open-ended material. 116

As an analyst, I took the raw material gathered through interviews and subjected it to scrutiny to see if any regularities occur in terms of single words, themes or concepts. The main purpose of choosing this method was to identify characteristics of

communication systematically and objectively in order to convert the raw material into scientific data.

The format followed was an analysis of words, themes, characters and items. I took the communication produced by my interviewees and asked the following questions:

◆ *What has been covered ?*

In this area, I listed all topic areas covered by the data.

◆ *What have I found ?*

In this area, I collected the data together under each of my question headings. For instance, I extracted what each interviewee said about each topic. A brief note and a reference to an interview page was the method used for cross referencing purposes. This method gave me in one place, all the opinions about a particular topic under investigation. I then checked how many people shared an opinion. This provided a frequency of response in terms of themes emerging.

◆ *How does it hang together?*

Here, I looked at the relationships of one topic to the other. I took the topic on my data and look for relationships between each topic. I then discarded the ideas and drew up a linear like pattern to ascertain commonalties in terms of perceptions and opinion of

my participants (Leedy, 1997).

Answers to the five sets of questions in this section were contrasted with the literature on democracy in education, centralisation and decentralisation in education, parental participation in education, parental participation in school governance and parental participation in school governance specifically in relation to teacher employment. In this phase, commonalities and differences with other studies conducted in this field were highlighted in chapters four and five. The model suggested by Carrim and Sayed (1997) was used in analysing parental participation in the decision making process in school governance in relation to teacher employment. To do this, three sections of the interview schedule was analysed in terms of the theoretical framework adopted by the study. This was done within a vantage point of seeing parents' perceptions of their participation within the context of my theoretical framework, thereby taking my analysis to a deeper level.

5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues are involved in all aspects of the research design from the formulation of the research problem through to the point of publication. Leedy (1997) has argued that in order to *adieu* in a research project, ethical issues like accuracy, length and breadth of consultation and rights of access and continuity of purpose be adhered to. To address the ethical problems relating to accuracy, it was significant that my study resorted to using an accessible and understandable language.

To address the problem of length and breadth of consultation, I applied to get the right of access and continuity as well as permission from the district or regional manager of the schools selected as participants in the research project. Furthermore, participants were informed that the product of the project will be available to them so that the research findings may be used to improve the governance of their institutions thereby being of benefit to them.

Individual parents were granted the opportunities throughout the research process to comment upon how they were represented. In terms of the research process, I have approached each school and parent serving in the governing body to ask if she or he would like to be part of the study. Schools and governing structures were at liberty to choose whether or not to participate in the study.

I attempted to be enthusiastic, polite, humble, eloquent and friendly. All these behaviours and attitudes were aimed at facilitating the process of the interview. This kept the interviewee at ease to participate in the study. Swanepoel (1992) argues that an easy, informal and friendly attitude from the interviewer assists in putting the respondent at ease. At the end of each interview, every participant was thanked.

Participants were assured of the confidentiality of the information and their anonymity. The anonymity of participants was concretely emphasised so as to encourage participants to express their views confidently. Names were not used to protect the identity of individuals. It was also of the utmost importance to explain to participants that the research findings were to be assessed by the University of the Western Cape

so that participants can be sure that the information will be used for examination and not any other purposes.

In conclusion, the study used qualitative research methodology to examine how and the extent to which parents participate in decision making process in school governance in matters relating to the employment of teachers. The participants of the study were twenty-four parents drawn from governing bodies of schools. Out of twenty-four participants, a gender balance from each school was attempted. Data was collected through qualitative research methods strengthened by the use of a theoretical framework. The empirical study employed a pilot study with two parents to test accuracy in terms of repetition of questions and logical flow of questions. Face to face interviews administered through an interview schedule was pursued. The method used for data analysis was thematic and content analysis which had an advantage of focussing on the underlying meaning of responses given by respondents.

The next chapter provides an analysis of the data within the context of the research aims and theoretical framework adopted by the study.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a synthesis of data collected from six high schools from the Bushbuckridge area situated in Mpumalanga Province. The chapter analyses the nature and extent of parental participation in the decision making process in school governing bodies in relation to teacher employment. The data set is based on findings from two schools from upper socio-economic backgrounds, two from middle socio-economic backgrounds and two from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Upper socio-economic schools includes children from professional families, with most parents being lawyers, accountants etc., and these schools provide a conducive environment in terms of infrastructure. Middle socio-economic backgrounds are those schools with children from semi-professional families, with parents working as secretaries, clerks etc., with schools being rated as moderate in terms of infrastructure and to a certain extent able to yield a favourable environment for learning. Lower socio-economic backgrounds are those schools which are regarded as historically disadvantaged, with children from families which are either not working or with one parent working as a cheap labourer.

In this chapter, names of schools and individual participants remain anonymous for ethical reasons. Schools are presented either as being from lower socio-economic backgrounds, middle socio-economic backgrounds or upper socio-economic backgrounds. The chapter examines its findings in the context of previous research findings in the area of parental participation in school governance. It provides the

background of the study which gives a detailed account of the context of the study. This is followed by a discussion of the dynamics and procedures followed in school governing bodies meetings. This study then looks at the nature and extent of parental participation in school governing bodies in relation to teacher employment. Parents' perceptions of their future or ideal role is also considered in the chapter. The study then examines the relationships between parents and the Department of Education with regard to the responsibilities and duties of parents around the employment of teachers. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

In line with the aim of the study, this chapter looks at the nature and extent of parental participation in school governance in relation to teacher employment within the context of the theoretical framework outlined in chapter two. One way of interpreting parental participation in the decision making process in school governance in relation to teacher employment in South Africa is to look at the varying notion of participation in South African educational governance. There are four notions of participation as identified by Carrim and Sayed (1997) which seem relevant to this study. They are:

- ◆ *community as the basis of participation,*
- ◆ *stakeholder participation,*
- ◆ *weighted participation,*
- ◆ *and regulated participation.*

The study will employ the above-mentioned notions of participation throughout the analysis of data.

Within the area of parental participation in school governance, it should be noted that participation in school governance in South Africa is predicated on the notion that those people who have a stake in the school system should participate in educational decision making. People who are regarded as having more of a stake are thus deemed by the SASSA (1996) to constitute a numerical majority. The SASSA (1996) has granted parents the right and the power to participate in educational decision making process in their local schools. It gives parents a voting majority on their favour. That is, parents are given the majority status more than any other constituency within school governing bodies.

Owing to this policy stipulation, it can be argued that parental participation within school governance is weighted more than that of teachers and students. This study found that parents did constitute a majority constituency within school governing bodies.

According to Carrim and Sayed (1997) parents are regarded as traditional suppliers of education, defined in terms of the taxes they pay for the education system and children they supply to the system. Grounded on the above judgement, parents are thus regarded as the major stakeholders in the education system. This according to Carrim and Sayed (1997), introduces the practice of parental participation in school governance to the notion of *weighted participation*.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

- This section looks at the background and the context under which the study occurred. It considers the socio-economic background of schools studied and the socio-economic background of participants.
- Schools from the upper socio-economic background had a professional parent representation in the governing structures. These schools' parents comprised magistrates, school principals and lawyers. Schools from middle socio-economic background reflected a middle class representation. So the schools' parents were predominantly teachers, and semi-skilled workers. Schools from lower socio-economic background comprised parent representatives which were predominantly unemployed, part time workers.
- One commonality across all the schools studied is their situation in an educational context undergoing change. In all the schools on which this study was based, there was evidence that the schools are in various ways wanting to change.
- This study suggests that the socio-economic background reflect parents' attitudes, perceptions and the extent of participation in the decision making process around teacher employment. For example, in schools from upper socio-economic backgrounds the commitment by parents to participate in the decision making process was found to be high. Seven out of the eight parents interviewed

from these schools shared the sentiment that they are trying very hard to ensure that the process of decision making in school governance in general is a cooperative process.

To quote from one outspoken parent from upper socio-economic schools:

All parents in our school governing body are labouring to build a new structure of school governance. I can read this from the way in which parents are involved that everybody is taking advantage of our new democratic arrangement of school governance.

From the above quotation, it is clear that parents in these schools are committed to participate in the decision making process in school governance. In schools from the middle socio-economic background, commitment by parents in the decision making process was found to be moderate. In this case the study found that half of the parents come to meetings and participated in decision making process only when they did not have any commitments at work or home. Lastly, in schools from lower socio-economic backgrounds, commitment by parents in the decision making process was found to be very poor. Poor commitment in these schools was judged by the number of parents who attended meetings and the extent to which parents participated in the decision making process in school governance. In relation to the above, parents from these schools did not attend meetings (one or two parents attended meetings but with little or no contribution in the decision making process).

These findings suggest that parental participation in the decision making process in school governing bodies in relation to teacher employment is predicated on the socio-economic background of parents and therefore schools studied. In this case the study found that parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds are not attending meetings

and if by chance they attend meetings, they are not actively involved in the decision making process. Sipamla (1995) found out that lay governors find many aspects of educational practice difficult to understand or do not have the confidence to involve themselves in professional matters. Mansfield (1993) argues that social class seem to be a factor which determines the possibility of parental participation and involvement in school governance. Research by Sipamla (1995) also suggests that the lay-professional relationship substantially limits the power of lay governors. It was also found that parent as governors appear not ready to execute their duties. This was found to be evident in my study.

In summary, it appears that the nature and extent of parental participation in school governance differ from one school to the other depending on the socio-economic background of parents and the schools studied. Although the study did not intend to understand parental participation in terms of literacy, it came to the attention of the study that literacy and class appears to be factors which determine the nature and extent of participation. The above finding is congruent with Sipamla's (1995) and Beatie's (1993) studies where it was found that there is a difference between the working relationship of unskilled parents participating within schools governing structures and professionals who have the skills and knowledge on issues of educational governance. This indicates that socio-economic class of parents participants is a factor which can determine the extent of parental participation in school governing bodies.

3. DYNAMICS AND PROCEDURES FOLLOWED IN MEETINGS

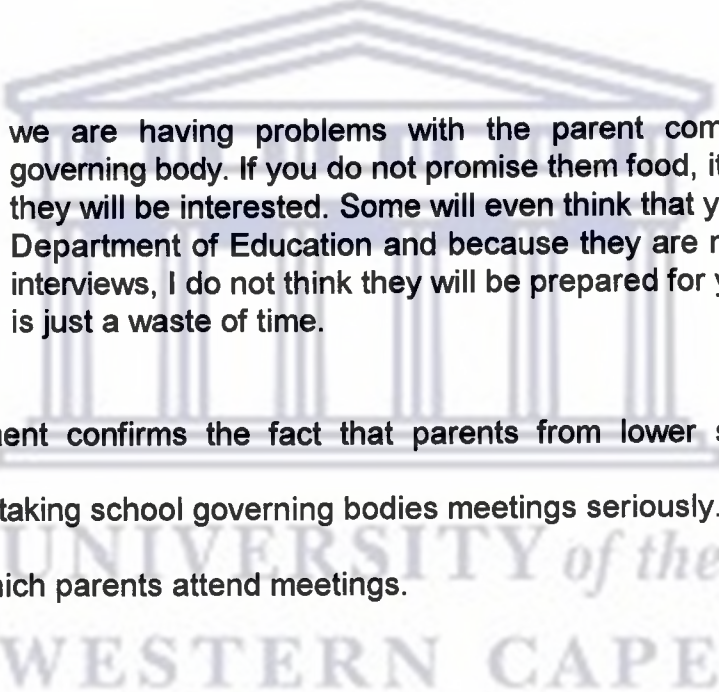
In this section, the dynamics and procedures followed in schools governing body meetings is examined. The section is divided into two sub-sections, namely, attendance and agenda. The first sub-section looks at the extent of parental attendance in school governing bodies' meetings. The second sub-section looks at the procedure followed in drawing up the agenda for school governing bodies' meetings.

3.1. Attendance

It was found that attendance by parents in school governing bodies' meetings ranges from high, to moderate to poor. Attendance in meetings is defined in terms of the quantity of parents attending meetings. High attendance in meetings was defined in terms of all or most parents attending meetings, moderate attendance defined in terms of half the number of parents attending meetings, and poor attendance defined in terms of one or no parent attending meetings. To summarise the findings around attendance, the study found that attendance in school governing bodies' meetings was a problem more especially to those schools with illiterate parents. The study suggests that attendance in school governing bodies' meetings depends on socio-economic background and possibly the literacy of individual parents participants.

In schools from upper socio-economic background, the study found that attendance in school governing bodies' meetings was found to be high, with four to five parents attending school governing bodies' meetings. In schools from middle socio-economic background, the study found that two to three parents attend school governing bodies meetings. From schools from lower socio-economic background, it was found that

attendance in meetings by parents is very poor. The lower socio-economic schools reported low attendance in school governing bodies meetings with one or no parent attending. At its worst, there are occasions when some other members of the governing structure pursue a house search to encourage parent representation in meetings. These schools attract attendance in meetings through promising breakfasts and lunch. This happened during the day of my interview when the principal of the school was doubtful as to whether parents would come. To comfort me, he said:



we are having problems with the parent component of the governing body. If you do not promise them food, it is unlikely that they will be interested. Some will even think that you are from the Department of Education and because they are not familiar with interviews, I do not think they will be prepared for you. For them it is just a waste of time.

The above statement confirms the fact that parents from lower socio-economic background are not taking school governing bodies meetings seriously. This is evident in the number in which parents attend meetings.

These findings suggest that attendance in school governing bodies` meetings is linked to socio-economic backgrounds of the schools studied. Since socio-economic background and participation were found to be linked to the level of literacy of individual parent participants.

3.2. Setting the agenda

The study found that the question of who sets the agenda is an issue in which some

parents have knowledge. The study also found that some parents serving in school governing bodies have no idea as to who is actually responsible for setting their agenda. The study reveals that the area of agenda setting is dependent of socio-economic background and literacy level of individual parents participants.

When looking at the procedure followed by various schools in terms of drawing up agendas for meetings, the study revealed that all parents from the upper and middle socio-economic backgrounds had knowledge of who draws up the agenda for their meetings. When asked who drew up their agenda for their meetings, all parents from upper and middle socio-economic backgrounds answered: "the chairperson is usually the person who draws up the agenda of our meetings". However, parents from the schools from a lower socio-economic background did not know who drew up their agenda. Six out of eight the parents from schools from lower socio-economic backgrounds said their principals drew up the agenda for their meetings while one thought that their secretary drew up their agenda. This same problem is raised by Sipamla (1995) where parent governors revealed that they are not acquainted with the procedures followed in drawing the agenda. According to Tipton (1989) a number of parents in school governing structures are not familiar with key procedure in meetings. In his research, Tipton (1989) found that socio economic class contributes to the problem of lack of knowledge around meetings procedures by parents who do not have the proper skills and knowledge around formal proceedings of meetings.

4. PARENTAL PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

This section looks at parental participation in decision making through a comprehensive

framework suggested by my study and Musaazi (1992). Parental participation in the decision making process in school governing bodies will be analysed with a vantage point suggested by my study and Musaazi (1992). The above framework views parental participation in decision making as categorised into shared-consultative decision making strategies which view decision making as a process of democratic participation in decision making by all parties involved. Conditional bureaucratic-persuasive format of decision making which is predicated on the belief that decision making is based on peoples` status and position in office. Co-determinate-participative decision making strategies emphasises clear roles and conventions in decision making and that the format taken in decision making is clear and open to all participants.

As argued by Morris and Everard (1990) participation in decision making can be a painful process since it usually involves change, conflict, the risk of being wrong and being called to account. My study found that most parents participating in school governing structures found it difficult to actively take part in the decision making process because they are afraid of criticisms from other constituencies. However, some parents within the study revealed an element of active participation with the democratic principles of shared decision making which is prevalent within cooperative governance.

Parents from schools from lower socio-economic backgrounds find it difficult to participate in the decision making process in school governing bodies as they fear criticisms from other participants. This is evident as one participant from a school with lower socio-economic background, when asked to explain whether and how she participated in the decision making process in the school governing body said "yes, but

teachers (inclusive of principals) manipulate the decision making process and when contributing, they make jokes of me". This response suggests that parents in these schools find it difficult to give input as they fear that teachers will criticise whatever they say.

4.1. Frameworks on parental participation in decision making

From the study, it appears that decision making in schools from upper socio-economic backgrounds is a participative process which takes a democratic format ranging from debating issues, arguing to voting and then consensus based on the most popular view in meetings. When asked as to whether and how respondents participate in the decision making process, one parent from these schools said:

yes, we take part, in fact, we do not accept any decision from anybody without clearly understanding the basis of such decision. We discuss issues before we adopt decisions.

Parental participation in schools from upper socio-economic backgrounds was found to be very active, with parents not "rubber stamping" any decision or issue.

Parents in schools from upper socio-economic background participate in the decision making process and challenge any decisions taken without their participation. These schools' parent representatives understand that decision making serve as an important matter requiring collective decision making, consultation, debate, responsibility and accountability. These findings suggest, therefore that parental participation in these schools is active. This kind of participation, as argued by Shaeffer (1991), views

parental participation as a consultative process at best, where parents as new partners and actors share the burden with traditional administrators. Within the upper socio-economic backgrounds, parental participation and involvement involves elements of willingness and commitment on the part of parents to share not only ownership but also the responsibility and accountability for change.

Interpreting the nature of participation from schools with upper socio-economic backgrounds, it appears that participants employ what I refer to as a mixture of *shared decision making* and *consultative decision making* approach. Whether the school governing body is setting goals, planning how to achieve them or coping with the issue of decision making, the process depends on the parents' skills, willingness, commitment, and their ability to take and implement decisions. To accomplish both the taking and the implementation of their decisions consistently is not an easy task. The ingredients for their successful decision making include self-discipline, change of perception, creativity, dynamism and a sense of responsibility as argued by Musaazi (1992).

There are clear roles and conventions in going through decision making as identified by my study. Among parents interviewed, responses from seven out of eight parents from upper socio-economic backgrounds revealed conventions and roles which are followed in the decision making process. Seven parents from these schools confirmed that in taking decisions in school governing body's meetings, there are always procedures to be followed. Asked as to what kind of procedures, one parent from schools with upper socio-economic background said:

we respect the principle that good decision making is a result of various people respecting each other`s views, with a skill of listening to what others say. The purpose of listening is not to adopt his or her view but to construct a sensible argument towards good decision making.

Comparatively, the roles and conventions are similar to those emphasised by Musaazi (1992) which includes that:

- ◆ the people involved in the decision making process share perceptions of the situation and criteria to be followed in decision making,
- ◆ all participants ask questions (and give answers) and put forward perceptions, problems, and facts relevant to the situation. At the final step of decision making, participants give proposals for action and conclusion,
- ◆ the decision making process follows a format of listening, bearing in mind that the task of listening is not primarily to reproduce other participants` ideas but to use the best ideas whatever their source,
- ◆ finally, there is an implied contract that having being given every opportunity to contribute to the decision making process, all participants will each play their full part in making it work.

However, as Musaazi (1992) argues, it should be borne in mind that these conventions between participants can be broken by either side. Typical breaches of these conventions to be avoided include:

- ◆ one person suppressing key information,

- ◆ some participants personally attacking and criticising rather than making constructive ideas and proposals,
- ◆ some participants being defensive or feeling that it is their duty to have all ideas; those people really do not listen to the ideas of others but have clearly made their mind up in advance,
- ◆ other participants not giving their full commitment to the decision making process.

The study found that even though schools from upper socio-economic backgrounds employ time consuming shared and consultative decision making strategies, it is nevertheless the best format of democratic participation in decision making process. To quote from Morris and Everard's (1990) study:

consultative decision making is not an easy process. It is a slow way of coming to a decision, and it brings with it a conceived risk of confrontation. However, it has an advantage of active involvement and commitment by parents and other stakeholders and most significantly all participants benefit from each other, (p.115).

The parents from schools from middle socio-economic background revealed that decisions are taken through debates and voting. Participants discuss and debate issues before coming to a conclusion. Apart from the manner in which decisions are taken, it is quite clear that the schools are employing a method of *co-determinate decision making* along with *participative decision making* in their meetings. This is because the nature of decision making used by participants take into consideration that the form of decision making is open and clear to all participants. Within the process of decision making, all participants understand and establish conventions with situations where

votes for decision are resorted to. When asked to explain how participants take decisions in meetings, one parent from these schools said:

we discuss, debate, vote, but actually when we do not agree on a particular issue, we resort to a voting system. This is where the most popular view and the view which win majority support in the house are taken.

The schools from the lower socio-economic backgrounds which have a high proportion of illiterate parents participating in the school governing structures, revealed a lack of commitment and active involvement in the decision making process in general. Their participation reflected passiveness in terms of their contributions in taking decisions. When asked as to how parents participate in the decision making process, one parent who served as a chairperson of the structure said:

despite parents being absent from our meetings, parents do not take pride of their duties. We are experiencing a situation whereby parents occupy a passive position within the school governing bodies. It is disgusting to find a parent sitting without saying a word in the decision making process.

According to Musaazi (1992) bureaucratic format of decision making is predicated on the assumption that participation is based on the official appointment of participants. One's position in the structure automatically guarantees his or her power and authority to take decisions. Viewed in this vantage point, those who occupy the highest position in an organisation have the responsibility and duty to take decisions on behalf of subordinates.

The study reveals that schools from lower socio-economic background employ a strategy of what Musaazi (1990) refers to as a *conditional bureaucratic format* of decision making. In this strategy, parents and participants at large still hold to the traditional bureaucratic mode of decision making where parents' passive participation results in the domination by other groups in the decision making process. Participation is predicated on one's position in the school. One's status of office gives the one the power to take decisions. Because of incompetency when compared to professional administrators, and their lack of confidence, parents feel that professional staff members are best able to take decisions. This attitude results in a situation whereby suggestions and proposals by those in the high positions go unchallenged and unquestioned.

It does not appear to be the intention of other constituencies in the school governing bodies to overpower and dominate parents in terms of decision making. It is because of the way in which parents participate in the decision making process that other participants take decisions with little or no contribution of parents. Parents from the schools from lower socio-economic background confirmed that professional staff members dominate discussions and parents feel incompetent as they lack the knowledge and skills to take part in the decision making process. One parent from schools with lower socio-economic background who was serving as a chairperson of the structure stated that:

parents are not participating as expected and they show no responsibility and commitment in dealing with issues which are central to the functioning and effectiveness of the structure.

To take decisions in this situation, other participants within the governing structure

resort to a *persuasive decision making strategy* whereby certain participants employ their powers of advocacy to explain and justify their decisions to other participants (parents). This is the case as one parent serving as a chairperson of a governing structure of a school from a lower socio-economic background said:

there is no morale and commitment from parents to either take part in the problems of the school or decision making process. Parents are not participating at all. This kind of behaviour forces the school governing body to decide issues on their behalf.

According to Lattif (1991) lack of morale and commitment by parents can lead to the bureaucracy's fear of opening up school governance too widely to outside observation. A similar experience can be found in Namibia, where after five years of decentralised decision making, parents still find it time wasting to take part in the decision making process (Angula and Lewis, 1997). The same applies in India, Bangladesh, Uganda, and schools in Thailand and Philippines where schools, after the introduction of local level governance and management, are still suffering from hierarchical and often bad management, and inactive, and unaccountable parents participation (Musaazi 1992).

In this manner, parents' views within meetings become unpopular because of parents' low level of attendance; passiveness in contributing towards discussions and debates; or absenteeism of parents in governing structures meetings. As a result, parents' voices have little impact. An imbalance of power between different stakeholders emerges where professionals or teachers gain an upper hand in the decision making process.

This kind of strategy, as emphasised by Musaazi (1992), is not very open to

negotiations. Passive members are manipulated by slick “ sales talk” in accepting a *fait accompli*.

4.2. Summary of findings

Table 1: Decision making strategies

Upper socio-economic schools	Middle socio-economic schools	Lower socio-economic schools
Shared and consultative decision making	Co-determinate and participative decision making.	Conditional bureaucratic and persuasive decision making
Collective responsibility and accountability	Positive commitment in theory without initiative to change. Clear conventions governed by negotiations	Lack of commitment with negative attitude towards change. Power of advocacy govern decision making
Positive attitude towards change. Roles and conventions govern decision making process	Consumes a lot of energy and time to conclude	Not very open to negotiations and quick in taking decisions
Takes long to reach conclusion	Inconsistent in decision making	Uncertain about decisions
Brings with it a conceived risk of confrontation		

The above graph illustrates that decision making strategies differ from school to school. Decision making in schools from upper socio-economic background was found to be active following a format of shared and consultative decision making strategies. Decision making in schools from middle socio-economic background is predicated on co-operative governance with a format of co-determinate and participative decision making

strategies. Participation in schools from lower socio-economic background was poor with parents not participating in the decision making process. To take decisions in these schools, the governing body follow a format of conditional bureaucratic decision making. Persuasive decision making strategies and the power of advocacy is used to justify decisions taken.

5. THE ROLE PLAYED BY PARENTS IN DECISION MAKING AROUND TEACHER EMPLOYMENT

This section is a combination of parental participation and the role played by parents in the decision making process in school governance in matters relating to *teacher employment*. This section analyses the role played by parents in the decision making process around teacher employment through using the model suggested by Carrim and Sayed (1997), namely, regulated and stakeholder participation summarised in the beginning of this chapter.

Schools from upper socio-economic contexts indicated that decisions around teacher employment are taken through a democratic process, with parents participating through interviewing and recommending to the Department of Education who the best candidate for a particular post can be. One parent who was serving as a chairperson of the school governing structure in this school confirmed that all parents participating within the school governing body, together with other members of the structure, have a responsibility and duty to interview and recommend to the Department of Education who the best candidate is. The parent representatives of these schools revealed knowledge

of the legal framework which guides their roles. This reveals that parents from these schools are aware of their responsibility within the process of teacher employment. When asked as to who has the power to decide whom to employ for a particular post, a clear majority of parents from schools from upper socio-economic backgrounds confirmed that it is the Department of Education which has the authority and power to decide on the right person to fill a particular teaching post. To quote from one respondent from these schools, he said:

governing bodies only recommend to the Department of Education and we as parents are involved within the process of interviewing. Our parents are committed to the whole process of interviewing.

One way of interpreting parents' roles around teacher employment is through using the notion of participation which Carrim and Sayed (1997) refer to as *regulated participation*. Regulated participation in parental participation around teacher employment can be regarded as co-operative governance. Regulated participation through co-operative governance is premised on the principles of participation by the community at large or through representation with the exclusion of unilateral decision making. The assumption of regulated participation is that no single individual, parties or groups are or should be able to unilaterally transact educational decision making and that consensus between agencies, groups and individuals is possible through creating forums of negotiations. The regulatory agency of this governance is the state. As emphasised by Carrim and Sayed (1997) regulated participation states that:

the notion of co-operative governance is based on the assumption of autonomous institutions working cooperatively with a pro-active government and in a range of partnerships. Good governance must be based on recognition of the existence of different interests and the inevitability of contestations among them. It must therefore create structures and encourage processes which enable

differences to be negotiated in participative and transparent ways, (pp 12).

Parental participation within the above notion of participation is grounded on the desire by the state to regulate and control the decision making process around teacher employment. This suggests that power and authority over the decision making process around teacher employment cannot be accepted unconditionally by the state. According to the aim of this study, all eight parents interviewed expressed the sentiment that the Ministry of Education has the power and authority over decision making around teacher employment. Parents` roles in this regard were found to be only to recommend and not to take the final decision around teacher employment. To quote one parent from the schools from upper socio-economic background:

we only recommend to the Department of Education and sometimes they take our recommendation and sometimes they do not. It is the power of the Department of Education to decide as to whom to employ.

From the study, it is clear that the role played by parents in teacher employment is limited only to recommending to the Department of Education. The fundamental key to understanding state regulation on decision making around teacher employment is to look at the relationship between the state and civil society. It is a common belief in South Africa that the state is the only institution which is best able to implement, guarantee, and effect equality and democracy. Since it possesses the appropriate institutional infrastructure, it is seen as effective and capable of yielding the political authority, generating economic wealth and social order needed in society (Held, 1987). The government is thus central to the democratisation and decentralisation of the education

system.

In this regard, I agree with Sayed (1998) that the regulation of decision making by the Ministry of Education proves the fact that the state does not surrender total educational control unconditionally. The state regulates educational governance within a context of devolved power while it surrenders key functions to local institutions. For example, the recommending and interviewing of candidates for teaching posts are matters for school governing bodies to decide while the final decisions around teacher employment are matters to be dealt with at national level.

Within the context of parental duty and responsibility to interview and recommend, the study found that parents are actively involved in the process. As one of the parents from the upper socio-economic background said:

parents are willing and prepared to take part in the governance of the school. This is evident in the manner in which they show commitment in interviewing candidates for teaching posts in our school.

From the above quotation, it can be said that parents from schools with upper socio-economic background are actively involved and committed to participating in the decision making process around teacher employment.

In this study, parents from schools from middle socio-economic background indicated that they are not the people who take the final decision around teacher employment. These parents revealed that their duty and responsibility around teacher employment

is under the regulation of the central government. The claim was that they assist only by interviewing and recommending to the Department of Education. It was argued that structures like the South African Democratic Teachers Union are invited to assist in interviewing and recommending to the Department of Education. Decision making around teacher employment in this school is predicated on the principles of democratic governance where transparency and consultation are stressed. This shows itself when the governing body invite other interested parties to assist in the recommendation and interviewing process. Asked as to why such structures like the South African Democratic Teachers Union are invited, the response from one participant was:

we would like to see more participation by structures like the South African Democratic Teachers Union being involved within our democratic school governance around professional issues which are more delicate and sensitive like teacher employment, as most of our constituencies could be accused of nepotism.

The manner in which teacher employment is handled by the middle socio-economic background is a good indication that parents are committed and dedicated to democratic school governance. In relation to the upper socio-economic schools, the study revealed that the extent and nature of parental participation in the decision making process around teacher employment in the middle socio-economic schools are the same. This is because both schools from upper and middle socio-economic background revealed that decision making is based on active participation by various parties involved, commitment in terms of interviewing in the process of decision making and dedication to the principles of shared decision making.

In contrast to schools from upper and middle socio-economic backgrounds, parents from

schools from lower socio-economic backgrounds indicated no knowledge of the party or individual responsible for teacher employment. When asked about who takes the decision as to which teacher to employ, three parents from these schools claimed that the principal is the person who takes decisions around teacher employment. Four parents from these schools were not aware of who actually takes decisions around teacher employment. The study found that parents from schools from lower socio-economic background have no knowledge whatsoever as to their role around teacher employment, nor the role of the Department of Education around teacher employment and nor the role to be played by school governing bodies in this regard. This is evident as one parent who served as a chairperson within the school governing structure said:

except for taking part in the decision making process with various groups, those parents who, by luck, do attend the interview sessions do not know what to ask and how to contribute in the process.

The above quotation is reflected in Sipamla's (1995) findings in his case studies that parents participating in school governing bodies are not familiar with the procedures and questions to ask in interviewing candidates for particular posts.

The manner and extent of parental participation around teacher employment in lower socio-economic schools neglects the principles of democratic decision making which includes shared decision making and active participation by all stakeholders in the school governing structures. It is contrary to the notion of stakeholder participation referred to by Carrim and Sayed (1997). This stakeholder theory is integral to notions of local democracy with the emphasis that those who are affected by decisions should

be able, through representatives, to take decisions.

The SASA (1996) has enshrined powers of decision making to local schools. Within the process of devolving these powers, the idea is that parents as major stakeholders within the school system should and must participate in the decision making process around teacher employment. Based on the fact that they are the primary consumers of education, their participation is weighted more than any other constituency within the school governing structures. Against this background, the nature and extent of parental participation within the above-mentioned schools is such that their stakeholding status is not properly used and realised. As found by this study, parents from lower socio-economic schools are not taking their responsibility in this regard. What the education legislation expects of them as major stakeholders, is capacity and willingness to participate in the decision making process around teacher employment. More contribution was expected from parents as compared to other constituencies within the school governing bodies.

Lack of time, as well as lack of knowledge and experience of participation and decision making were found to be the two major reasons why active participation in school governing bodies meetings in matters relating to teacher employment proved to be problematic in the lower socio-economic schools. Those parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds were said to have a tendency of showing no interest in attending school governing bodies' meetings and not actively taking part in the decision making process around teacher employment. As the study found out, parents from lower socio-economic schools only attend meetings when promised food. The implication of the

nature and extent of parental participation around teacher employment in these schools means that effective communication links need to be established between parents, teachers and other constituencies participating within school governing bodies.

Participation through hierarchy based on expertise, as prevalent within most schools from lower socio-economic backgrounds, is further governed by contextual features which relate to the attitudes and perceptions of powers of decision making. These perceptions and attitudes relate to the expectations that non-professionals do not have the necessary expertise and confidence to decide on issues which are regarded as purely educational (e.g. teacher employment) (Shaeffer, 1992). Maintaining monopoly over the decision making process by traditional administrators of the schools from lower socio-economic backgrounds have an effect of restricting the involvement and participation of parents in decision making around teacher employment to the level of “rubber stamping” of decisions that are taken. When asked how they participate in taking decisions around teacher employment, one parent from lower socio-economic school expressed the sentiment that:

the principal is the person who takes the final decision. He is the one who has the knowledge and skills to decide and choose the best teacher for the school.

These findings concur with Sipamla`s (1995) conclusion that the active involvement of parents within decision making in schools from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and with parents without the knowledge and skills of participation, is restricted by parents` perceptions about administration which is purely predicated on their consideration of the

operation of schools which according to them can be defined in structures and hierarchies. Participation viewed in this way is predicated on the conception that decision making powers are directed through the official appointments and expertise of participants. This attitude and perception provides us with a good explanation for passive participation by parents around teacher employment which views the purpose of professionals as not interviewing and recommending but as decision making.

This experience confirms Shaeffer's (1992) findings in Indonesia where it is a common belief that school personnel know better about educational matters than the community and parents, and that such a conception works to block the active participation by parents. It also blocks parents from taking an active role within the recommendation and interviewing process.

This study confirms that the process of change, as argued by Joubert (1992), does not happen overnight, but rather requires new attitudes and behaviours in the school. As argued by Shaeffer (1992) the process of educational innovation needs commitment from below, positive attitudes towards the process of change and the desire to make such innovation a reality. Professionals should be able to share information with parents, thus parents will be able to change their attitude and adjust to the process of change. Participation by parents in the decision making process requires certain knowledge often not easy for them to understand. Parents need to be taken to interview sessions to observe, as is the case in Phillipines where school councils have established a network of programmes geared towards educating and empowering parents on their duties (Shaeffer, 1992).

6. PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ROLE IN DECISION MAKING AROUND TEACHER EMPLOYMENT (WHO *SHOULD* BE RESPONSIBLE)

This section looks at the perceptions of parents regarding their role in the decision making process around teacher employment. It looks at who parents perceive *should* be responsible for taking decisions around teacher employment. This section employs Carrim and Sayed's (1997) model of participation, namely, community as the basis of participation.

The overwhelming majority of parents interviewed (twenty out of twenty-four) reported an element of dissatisfaction with regard to the powers and responsibilities they are granted by the Department of Education with regard to the general governance of schools. Interviewees were asked as to what change they would like to see in decision making and what do they think should happen in the decision making process around teacher employment. The most frequent reply was that they should take decisions around teacher employment. Several added remarks like, "more clearly", and "more rapidly".

Most parents across all the schools studied, irrespective of socio-economic background, think that they *should* be playing a major determining role with regard to teacher employment. Parents thus think they should participate in making the final decision and not only participate in the interviewing and recommending part of the process. Four schools out of five (eight parents from upper, eight parents from middle and four parents

from lower socio-economic background) felt that they *should* be making the final decision around teacher employment. The reason being that they stay next to the schools; they are the best people who can monitor teachers on a daily basis; and, when contrasted with other groups, they are best situated to evaluate the performance of those teachers. To quote, one parent said:

the Department of Education do not (sic) know what the situation in the local schools is like. We are the one`s who stay next to the school, who know the needs of our children and who can monitor those teachers who instead of going to school go to shebeens. These put us in a right position to be able to evaluate the best teachers for our children, in line with what the community aspire.

The above quotation relates to the notion of *community as the basis of participation* as suggested by Carrim and Sayed (1997). This notion emphasise that people who have a stake in their local schools should participate in the decision making process. The basic assumption around this kind of participation is that parents as stakeholders and constituencies of the local community should represents the sentiments and aspirations of the community within which they live.

From my study, parents feel that no matter how much the area of school governance is professionalised in terms of decision making, their participation should reflect the sentiments and aspirations of the community which they represent. This was reflected by parents` desires to take final decisions around teacher employment. Parents in all schools studied felt that, irrespective of their differing interpretation of participation and their difference in terms of socio-economic background, the community, through representative democracy, should and must determine and lead the decision making process, especially around teacher employment. Parents in schools studied felt that the

decision taken in the decision making process in relation to teacher employment must be a reflection of the sentiments of the community which they represent.

Only two parents from one lower socio-economic school felt satisfied with the role assigned to them in relation to teacher employment. However, the same parents reported that they would feel more satisfied if the Department of Education would not contradict their recommendation, as happened to be the case.

In summary, the majority of parents interviewed in the study expressed the sentiment that *they should* be responsible for teacher employment, for the reason that they are the primary beneficiaries of their local schools. The other reason being that they stay next to their schools and that put them in a better position to monitor teachers on daily basis. Owing to the policy legislations around teacher employment, parents feel that they should be given the power and authority to take the final decision around teacher employment. This sentiment is congruent with the model of participation suggested by Carrim and Sayed (1997) as community as the basis of participation.

7. PARENTS' RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

This section looks at the communication line between the Department of Education and parents serving within school governing bodies. It looks at the manner in which parents and the Department of education share and exchange information with regard to school governance in general, and teacher employment in particular. The section strengthens its analysis by looking at the impact such a communication line has on the attitudes and

perceptions of parents with regard to the role and duties of the Department of Education.

Throughout the study, parents highlighted a lack of support by educational administrators. When parents were asked whether they received any information from the Department of Education in relation to their duties, especially around teacher employment, the answer was, "no". When asked whether they would like to have any training, the answer was a resounding, "yes".

While parents recognised that professionals` (teachers) expertise and knowledge of administrative duties made it appropriate that they should be in a position to make sound decisions around the teacher employment, parents felt that they (parents) should take a more active role in deciding who to employ in their local schools.

The study suggests that schools from upper and middle socio-economic background are able to adjust to the changes around school governance. There is evidence from the study that upper and middle socio-economic schools enjoy the privilege of a conducive climate created by both the renewed arrangement of school governance and smooth communication line with the traditional administrators. The above-mentioned schools revealed mutuality in terms of communication and sharing of information which is significant for the effective and efficient governance of schools in general and particularly, teacher employment. Apart from parents being granted the right and the power to participate in decision making around teacher employment, there are also initiatives from the Department of Education to empower parents in their duties. The following quotation from one parent from a middle socio-economic school confirms the

above claim:

we communicate with the Department of Education with regard to any issue of significance to the governance of our school. Our communication ranges from sending policy documents, pamphlets to workshops. When we feel any need to ask something, we usually consult the circuit inspector.

Parents from all schools studied indicated that they needed more training in interviewing. Parents from lower socio-economic schools indicated that they needed access to information from the Department of Education and administrators within their schools so that they could become more involved within the decision making process, particularly around teacher employment.

This study has revealed that those parent representatives from upper and middle socio-economic background schools, that is, formally educated or literate parents, have access to information from the Department of Education. However, not all parents who are participating within school governing structures in the schools studied are educated and literate. This study reveals that there is no communication line of any kind between parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds and the Department of Education with regard to information pertaining to school governance in general and teacher employment in particular. This claim is confirmed by a response from one parent from a lower socio-economic school. When asked whether he or she received any information or training from the Department of Education with regard to teacher employment, the parent said:

no, we do not receive anything from the inspector, only the principal informs us of meetings and activities happening in our school.

The above quotation clearly suggests that there is a communication breakdown between parents from lower socio-economic background and the Department of Education with regard to information relating to the general governance of their schools.

This study also found that the level and extent of communication results in either parents having a negative or positive attitude about the Department of Education. Parents confirming good communication lines showed a positive attitude towards the duty and role of the Department of Education, with little criticism on their role around teacher employment. Parents from upper and middle socio-economic schools, with knowledge of the legal framework which regulates their operation, and good communication with the traditional administrators, revealed that they feel satisfied with the role played by Department of Education in relation to teacher employment. Parents with bad communication lines with the Department of Education revealed a lack of knowledge around the duty of the Department of Education and as a result, they have developed a negative attitude as to the functioning of the Department of Education in the process. This study found that parents from lower socio-economic schools, without any communication with the Department of Education and knowledge of their legal framework, revealed that they do not see any significance of the role played by the Department of Education in relation to teacher employment.

♥ In conclusion, the new policy of education in South Africa gives parents the opportunity ♥

to be more involved in the decision making process than in the past. Teachers, management and governing body members now have more responsibility in the governance and management of the school. However, many schools continue to face problems and challenges. Parental participation in the decision making process in school governance in relation to teacher employment is about a change of attitude. Change is not an easy process. It requires commitment, dedication and hard work. People get used to doing things in a certain way so that it is difficult to try something different. Often, when they try to do some things in a different way, they do not do it well in the beginning. It takes time to get it well and right. Parents need to keep practising new skills until they are good at it. They need support from others so that they do not give up. Often, there is a culture of negativity, where both parents and other participants are demotivated. They feel powerless to change and as a result there is an attitude of doing as little as possible. The main responsibility of parents and of teachers, the community and the Department of Education is to help develop a healthy, cooperative educational governance in schools. It is not only parents who needs to address their attitude problems, schools and the Department of Education have a responsibility to change their attitudes and structures and procedures to facilitate a more effective participation.

8. SUMMARY

To sum up the findings of this study, the problem of participation by most parents from lower socio-economic schools in the decision making process in school governing bodies in relation to teacher employment is a phenomenon which occurs within the

democratic arrangement of school governance with the principles of broad based participation by the community. According to the findings of this study, the nature and extent of parental participation in school governing bodies in relation to teacher employment can be interpreted as categorised as follows:

- ◆ *parents who are indifferent and uninvolved with regard to participation in the school.* These parents are from lower socio-economic backgrounds. These parents often lack appropriate knowledge and are too busy to devote attention to the governance of their local schools, or they avoid the school on the basis of an unpleasant school experience and negative attitudes towards it. Parents from lower socio-economic schools usually feel incompetent and inadequate. These parents hold on to the traditional bureaucratic form of decision making around teacher employment. These parents do not challenge decisions taken by teachers because they regard the responsibility of teachers as decision making and their position in office determines their power and authority to take decisions. School governing bodies often experience the most problems in getting this group of parents to be more involved, because parents do not have skills and knowledge of their duties as vehicles of school governance and they do not receive any training with regard to their duties around the decision making process in relation to teacher employment.

- ◆ *parents who are really interested and involved in the governance of their local schools.* This group of parents, who are from middle and upper socio-economic schools, show active interest and are involved in the decision making process in

school governing bodies in relation to school governance in general, and teacher employment in particular. They regard their active participation as important for the sake of the well being of their local schools and the community as a whole.

This chapter has analysed parental participation in the decision making process in school governance in relation to teacher employment. It started with a brief background of the study. Further, it looked at the dynamics and procedure followed in school governance structures. Parental participation in school governance was analysed using a comprehensive model suggested by both Musaazi (1992) and my study. The nature and extent of parental participation in the decision making process in school governance in relation to teacher employment was also explored. To do this, the study used Carrim and Sayed's (1997) model of participation. The analysis then looked at parents' perceptions as to who should be responsible for teacher employment through the vantage point suggested by Carrim and Sayed (1997). Finally, the chapter looked at the relationship between parents and the Department of Education in relation to parental duties. The impact of communication lines between parents and the Department of Education in school governance was also explored.

The next chapter summarises the study. It looks at the recommendations of the study, limitations of the study and some considerations for further research. The chapter closes with a conclusion.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

1. INTRODUCTION

In the area of school governance, it is sometimes assumed that the presence of parents on a school governing body constitutes a liaison between the school and the community it serves. Certainly, school governing bodies offer a potential for developing such a liaison. Yet, despite the appropriateness of parental representation, an elected parent on a school governing body may make little contribution in the process of decision making. The same parent may have little contact with his or her constituency, may have few channels for ascertaining the concerns of the community, may be socialised into approaching the schools aims and problems from the viewpoint of the traditional education authorities, may be diverted from central education issues of the school, and may do little to encourage or enhance a sense of partnership between teachers, parents and other members of the decision making groupings of the school governing body.

The present chapter serves as a summary of the study. It also gives recommendations, limitations of the study followed by some recommendations and advice for further research. The study is rounded off with a brief concluding remark.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

To understand the manner in which parents participate in the decision making structures in relation to teacher employment, issues of class, socio-economic background and

literacy of participants must be considered in the local governance of the schools. The above concepts should be considered together with the notions of parental participation suggested by Carrim and Sayed (1997). The analysis of parental participation in the decision making process in school governance in relation to teacher employment has followed the following format:

- the background of the study,
- attendance and agenda,
- participation in decision making,
- the role played by parents in the decision making process in school governing bodies in relation to the employment of teachers,
- parents` perceptions of their role around the employment of teachers, and
- the relationship between parents and the Department of Education in relation to parents` duties around the general governance of schools and teacher employment.

Parental participation in decision making is viewed in terms of the framework suggested by this study and Musaazi (1992). The framework views participation by parents as categorised into: shared-consultative decision making, co-determinate-participative decision making and conditional bureaucratic-persuasive decision making strategies. With regard to the role played by parents in decision making around teacher employment, the study employed the notions of regulated and stakeholder participation. participation suggested by Carrim and Sayed (1997). The model of community as the basis of participation is employed in analysing parents` perceptions of their role around

teacher employment.

SASA (1996) indicated a growth of local democratic influence of school governance throughout South Africa. The system of school governing bodies in South Africa has undergone changes which have ensured that each school has its own governing body. The SASA (1996) outlines, in detail, the structure and function of school governing bodies.

My analysis of the nature and extent of parental participation in school governance in relation to teacher employment has revealed the following:

2.1. Attendance

Attendance in school governing bodies` meetings is very high in schools from upper and middle socio-economic backgrounds. The study found that in schools from upper socio-economic background, at least more than half the parents serving in the school governing bodies attend meetings. Schools from middle socio-economic background revealed a moderate attendance in school governing bodies` meetings with three to four parents attending meetings. Schools from lower socio-economic background revealed absenteeism in meetings with most parents going to their farms during school governing bodies` meetings. The study suggests that socio-economic background of participants and schools and literacy of participants determines attendance in school governing bodies` meetings.

2.2. Setting the agenda

Parents in schools from upper and middle socio-economic background have knowledge of who draws up the agenda for their school governing bodies' meetings. Parents from schools from lower socio-economic background revealed no knowledge of who is responsible for drawing up the agenda for their meetings. Most parents from schools from lower socio-economic background expressed the sentiment that it is their principal who draws up the agenda for their meetings. Some said it was their secretary who is responsible for drawing up the agenda.

2.3. Parental participation in decision making

Participation in decision making process by parents from upper socio-economic background was found to be active. This study suggests that parents from upper socio-economic background follow a participative format of decision making with democratic principles of debating and voting in terms of decision making. The study suggests that decision making by parents from upper socio-economic backgrounds follow a strategy of shared and consultative decision making. Within the above strategy of decision making, parents employ their skills, experience, dedication and willingness in decision making in school governance.

Participation in decision making by parents from middle socio-economic background was found to be active. Participants discuss, debate and challenge issues before taking conclusions. The study suggests that middle socio-economic background employ co-

determinate and participative strategies of decision making. Decisions taken in their meetings acknowledge that the form of decision making should be open and clear to all participants.

Participation in decision making by parents from lower socio-economic background was found to be very low with low commitment, passiveness and absenteeism in school governing bodies` meetings. The study suggests that decision making is still predicated on the traditional bureaucratic mode of decision making where parents` passive participation determines their domination by other groups. Participation in this regard is predicated on the belief that participants` positions and status in office determine their power to take decisions. To take decisions in this situation, other participants in school governing structures use persuasive strategies of decision making and whereby other participants resort to the power of advocacy to explain and justify decisions already taken.

2.4. The role played by parents in the decision making process in school governance in relation to teacher employment

Parents from upper and middle socio-economic background revealed that decisions around teacher employment are taken through a democratic process. Parents actively participate through interviewing and recommending to the Department of Education who the best candidate for a particular post could be. Parents` representatives from these schools revealed knowledge of the legal framework which regulates their duties and responsibilities around the employment of teachers. The study suggests that the role

played by parents around teacher employment is regarded as regulated participation, as emphasised by Carrim and Sayed (1997).

Schools from middle socio-economic background added principles of democratic governance where transparency and consultation are emphasised. This was stressed by the school's governing bodies' attempt to invite other structure to assist in interviewing candidates for particular teaching posts.

Parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds indicated no knowledge of who is responsible for teacher employment. Some expressed that it is the responsibility of the principal while some said that is the duty of school governing bodies. This suggests that parents from lower socio-economic background are not informed of the legal framework which guides their behaviour in school governance and teacher employment. They do not have any knowledge of their responsibilities and duties around teacher employment. The study also suggests that schools from lower socio-economic backgrounds neglect principles of democratic decision making which includes shared and active participation by all stakeholders in school governance. It is against the notion of stakeholder participation suggested by Carrim and Sayed (1997). The study concludes that lack of time, commitment, knowledge, skills and experience around participation in school governance accounts for a lack of parental participation in school governing bodies in relation to teacher employment.

2.5. Parents' perceptions of their role around teacher employment (who should be responsible)

The study suggests that parents' perceptions of their role around teacher employment is that they should be the people responsible for taking the final decision around teacher employment. In all schools studied, the majority of parents interviewed expressed the sentiment that they should be the people in charge of teacher employment. Parents think that because they are the primary consumers of the school system, they stay next to the school, they are thus the best people who can express and represents the sentiment of the community through representative democracy. The desire by parents to take the final decision around teacher employment is predicated on the notion of community as the basis of participation, as suggested by Carrim and Sayed (1997).

2.6. Parents' relationship with the Department of Education

The study argues that there is evidence that there is a smooth communication line between the Department of Education and parents from upper and middle socio-economic backgrounds. This communication line relates to the mutual sharing and exchange of information between parents and the Department of Education in relation to school governance and teacher employment. However, parents from schools from lower socio-economic backgrounds revealed a lack of support and communication with the Department of Education in relation to information pertaining to school governance and teacher employment.

Behind the successful participation by parents in school governance, parents and other stakeholder in school governing bodies must have the commitment, willingness and the ability to change. Commitment and pressure for change implies comprehension of, and commitment to, greater participation throughout the system. This is the case in England where there is a continuous commitment and pressure from local school and parents in particular, to collaborate and participate in the decision making process, (Joubert, 1992). What is necessary, in other words, in the black impoverished schools without a functional baseline for parental participation (without experience of local school governance), is a strong commitment to the principle that good school governance and good teaching and learning, by definition, have to include active participation by parents and collaboration with other stakeholders. As observed by Wheeler (1991):

the major determinants for effective school governance reflects collaborative, participatory relationships within schools and between schools and parents/communities, (p2).

As confirmed by Shaeffer (1992), new knowledge, attitudes and skills are required of parents, so that they can actively take part in the decision making process in school governance generally, and especially in relation to teacher employment. This will facilitate the effective operation of school governing bodies and thus to facilitate greater collaboration among various participants in school governing bodies. Teachers and the Department of Education should change the way in which they communicate and interact with parents. They should treat parents as equal partners in school governance who should receive information, guidelines and support with regard to carrying their duties.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Parent training

Training seems to be an important solution to many of the problems experienced in terms of the nature and extent of parental participation in the decision making process in relation to teacher employment in South Africa. The notion of capacity building through training is posed by many authors as one of the solutions to the problems of parental participation in school governing bodies in the decision making process around school governance.

Johnson (1993) foresaw a problem in the practical operation of the school governing bodies in particular as they involved sectors of different interests in school governance. He therefore suggested a training programme for schools in order to strengthen and sustain capacity of parents to participate in school governance. The United Kingdom's experience strongly supports the idea of training parents to participate in school governing bodies. In the United Kingdom, the Department of Education and Science (DEC, 1988) states that local education authorities are responsible for offering every parent and member of school governing bodies such training as they may need to exchange their responsibility effectively. The Taylor Report of 1977 also recommended training of school governors in the United Kingdom. Burger and Sofer (1986) argue that all education authorities should make initial and in-service training courses available to school boards, and as soon as practicable, all governors should have a short period of initial training and attended in service training courses regularly. The newly appointed governing bodies would appreciate some form of training to give them confidence in the

effective performance of their duties. Kogan (1984) and Golby and Bringley (1989:173) agree that if school governing bodies are to perform effectively, “the problem of lack of in-service training should be overcome and the way to overcome them is by the what is generally known as training”. Most generally, this will include:

- rationale and knowledge of collaboration and greater participation and its inherent advantages, constraints and risks,
- skills that will encourage an open, transparent, collegial environment in the school governing body,
- opening channels for communication between parents, various stakeholders and the Department of Education,
- workshops geared towards enhancing interviewing skills around the selection of teachers.

Hold and Murphy (1993) argues that if parents, teachers and other participants within the school governing structures do not receive adequate and on-going in-service training, school governance will be reduced to a “muddling through” decision making activity. Field (1993) argues that on the job training is the only way because school governing bodies` backgrounds are so different that training has to be a response to individual needs.

The SASA (1996) proposes training programmes for school governing bodies . There are expenses involved in developing training materials and training trainers. The government`s contribution would be necessary to fund such efforts. The training itself

would not suit individual needs due to differences in standard of education and experiences of parents in school governing bodies. There is little precedent for the Department of Education to draw on. However, there have been a few on-going programmes that are coordinated nationally or even locally to provide necessary skills that are needed to develop the capacity of parents to participate in decision making around teacher employment.

3.2. Parent organisation and empowerment

Parents who are not organised need to be strengthened to bargain with confidence with other participants within the school governing bodies. Participation in the decision making process is a bargaining process and requires that the bargaining parties be empowered. For parental participation to be developed, or parents to be confident and accountable for the outcomes of the decisions taken around teacher employment, there should be more support by the traditional administrators. This will facilitate the effective operation of parents and thus develop greater collaboration among various participants in school governing bodies. This could be realised through the formation of parents associations and committees geared towards the exchange and sharing of experiences with regard to school governance by various parents.

There has to be effective communication channels between parents and the Department of Education. A large number of parents enter school governing structures without the experience and skills for effective participation in school governance. Parents therefore need to be empowered to carry their duties and responsibilities. Empowerment is

defined by Rappaport (1984) as a process and a mechanism by which people, communities and organisations gain mastery of their lives. It implies that many competencies are already present or possible given the correct opportunities. Furthermore, what is seen as inactive participation and involvement by parents may be a result of the structure of school governing bodies and lack of knowledge, skills and experience which make it impossible for the existing competencies to function. Empowerment process may lead to a control and practical power to effect active involvement and participation by parents.

Parents need to be empowered by the Department of Education and traditional administrators so that they can develop the ability, motivation and confidence to actively participate in the decision making process. Parent empowerment is the responsibility of all the parties involved in the education system.

4 .LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

4.1. Literature review

Although the area of parental participation in school governance has been accorded ample significance through policy legislations around the democratisation of school governance, the literature on the implementation of such policy is limited. That is, detailed information relating to the implementation of policy legislation around parental participation in school governance in relation to teacher employment has been very limited. Consequently, it is difficult to present a detailed analysis of the extent and

nature of parental participation in the decision making process in school governing bodies in relation to the employment of teachers in South Africa.

4.2. The interview process

The interview used as a method of data collection had limitations which in effect had a bearing in the study. One limitation is the inclusiveness of the population in the data collection process. An interview with a few parents from a given school may not be convincing in terms of the generalisation of findings. The limited number of interviewees who were selected for participation in the study is not representative of all parents or all interest groups and therefore may not represent the reality behind the decision making around the issue of teacher employment. As a consequence, the validity of the data and information given by interviewees may not be a true reflection of what happens within the decision making process in school governing bodies in relation to teacher employment. However, the study selected two schools from the same socio-economic background and four parents from the same school so that some comparison in terms of responses could be established. This method helped the study in analysing the content and themes of responses from a variety of parents within the same school.

Another problem was that illiterate parents do not have the knowledge about research, so the process of interviewing was perceived as an initiative from the central government to monitor the actions of school governing bodies. This perception could have led to a situation where the participants did not give honest and true answers with the aim of protecting the reputation and dignity of their respective schools. In an attempt

to overcome this problem, the study used a method of explaining the purpose, aim and ethics of the study prior to interviewing. This helped the study in clarifying to participants that the study is for evaluation for a particular programme and not as an evaluation criteria by the central government. Another strategy used to address this problem was to explain to participants that names of schools and participants would not be used. This helped in motivating participants to express their views freely without any fear that the information they are giving will be uncovered or exposed.

Although the interview schedule was examined by a qualified specialist, it was apparent that there were still some questions which were ambiguous and which respondents could not respond to.

In research of this nature, where the researcher is part of the community in which the study occurred, there is a possibility that the interviewees may have responded in a manner they thought would be pleasing to the researcher. The administration of interviews by a person not linked to the population may have solved the limitation.

5. FURTHER RESEARCH

Currently, parental participation in school governance, generally and in relation to teacher employment, is characterised by many problems, including the issue of socio-economic background of individual participants, micro politics within the school governing body and other issues.

In a more specific follow up study, there would be a need to employ more standardised instruments to appropriately determine the nature and extent of parental participation in the decision making process in school governance in relation to the employment of teachers. For further research, there need to be improvements on the research design. I recommend that further research in the area of school governance should look at the forging of relationships and the undeclared factors that come into play during the bargaining process, like the formation of coalitions and the use of power to influence decisions within school governing bodies. Such research could cover the relationships that are built among various stakeholders within the school governing structures. Research in this area would be significant as the area of decision making within school governing structures involves different categories of people, including those who are literate and illiterate. This would clarify problems of active participation by parents and it could pour some light on the possibility of developing the understanding of parental participation in school governance.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study has shown that there are differences in the nature and extent of parental participation in school governing bodies, generally, and in relation to teacher employment. The nature and extent of parental participation in school governance in relation to teacher employment appears to be determined by the socio-economic class of participants, perceptions and attitudes held by participants around the new policy arrangements, and the relationship between parents and the Department of Education in relation to information pertaining to their duties and responsibilities around teacher

employment. The study recommends that the Department of Education should provide in-service training for parents participating within school governing bodies. The in-service training should be provided to all participants irrespective of educational background.

To this end, the study recognises that schools need parents who can actively participate in the decision making process in school governing bodies, generally and in relation to the employment of teachers. Parents need to change their attitudes and perceptions around educational governance and the process of change. For this change to result in development and improvement, parents require the kind of support and empowerment which will facilitate this process. The shift in how we look at school governance will require dramatic changes in the way parents are currently participating in school governance, generally and around teacher employment.

With regard to the aim of the study, the findings of this study can add to the literature on school governance and democratic participation by parents. This could provide a useful basis for understanding and conceptualising parental participation in school governance.

2.2. Participation

Do you participate in discussions and decision making in meetings ?

Yes/No, Explain

Are you involved in taking decisions around teacher employment ?

Yes/No, Explain

How do you participate in decisions around teacher employment ?

Section 3: Dynamics and procedures followed in meetings

3.1 Existing Roles

Who takes the decision as to which teacher to employ in your school ?

What is your understanding of the role of school governing body in matters relating to teacher employment ?

What is your understanding of the role of parents in school governing bodies in relation to teacher employment ?

What is your understanding of the responsibility of the department of education around teacher employment ?

Section 4 Who should be responsible for teacher employment ?

Whom do you think should be responsible for teacher employment ?

What should be the role of school governing body in matters relating to teacher employment ?

What should be the role of parents in school governing body in relation to teacher employment ?

How should parents participate in school governing body in relation to teacher employment ?

Section 5: Relationship with the department of education

Do you have access of information from the department of education relating to matters around teacher employment ?

Do you receive any training or workshops in relation to your duties ?

What should be the responsibility of the department of education around teacher employment ?

How do you view your relationship with the department of education ?

Excellent
Satisfactory
Unsatisfactory

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