Educational decentralization and school governance in South Africa:

From policy to practice

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Jordan P. Naidoo

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List of abbreviations

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ANC	African National Congress
CEPDM	Centre for Education Policy Development, Evaluation and Monitoring
COSAS	Congress of South African Students
CPRE	Consortium for Policy Research in Education
DET	Department of Education and Training
DETC	District Education and Training Councils
DoE	Department of Education
ETDP	Education, Training and Development Providers
EMDG	Education Management and Governance Development
EMIS	Education Management Information Systems
FEDSAS	Federation of Associations of Governing Bodies of South African Schools
GEAR	Growth, employment and redistribution programme
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
GPL	Gauteng Provincial Legislature
HOA	House of Assembly
HOD	House of Delegates
HoD	Head of Department
HOR	House of Representatives
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IDSO	Institutional Development Support Officers
KZDE	
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
KZN DEC	KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture
KZN DOE	KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education
LETU	Local Education and Training Units
MEC	Member of the Executive Committee
NAPTOSA	National Association of Professional Teachers Organisations of South Africa
NASGB	National Association of School Governing Bodies
NED	Natal Education Department
NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NNSSF	National Norms and Standards for School Funding
PDE	Provincial Department of Education
PTA	Parent-teacher associations
PTSA	Parent-teacher-student associations
RDP	Reconstruction and development programme

RSA	Republic of South Africa
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SASA	South African Schools Act
SEM	Superintendent Education Management
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SG	Student Governance
SGB	School Governing Body
SGU	School Governance Unit
SMT	School Management Team
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

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Executive summary

In the past few decades school systems around the world have begun some form of decentralization with a focus on local decision-making and community participation. Such participatory approaches to school governance are justified in terms of ensuring the efficient management of schools and contributing to citizen empowerment and democratization. While there is small-scale evidence to support the efficiency argument, the evidence for empowerment and democratization is partial, tenuous and reliant on the rightness of the approach rather than on proof of outcomes (Cleaver, 1999). South Africa's particular combination of policy changes may be unique, but its experience has much resonance with the worldwide attempts to restructure and deregulate state schooling, and to create devolved systems of education entailing significant degrees of institutional autonomy, through forms of school-based management and governance.

South Africa, like many countries, has introduced new policies for school governance, among a variety of other reforms, in pursuit of national goals of economic growth, democratization and equity. The elections of April 1994, which marked the formal end of Apartheid rule and a shift from authoritarian to democratic rule, ushered in a new South African Constitution with an unequivocal commitment "to representative and participatory democracy, accountability, transparency and public involvement" (RSA, 1996c). Participation, it suggests, does not extend simply to the right to elect representatives but translates into the right to influence decisions. The South African Constitution thus presents an interesting challenge in declaring that the new democracy is both a representative and a participatory one. The challenge is taken up in education through various legislations, not least the *South African Schools' Act* (*SASA*). SASA is intended to create a new school governance landscape based on citizen participation, partnerships between the state, parents, learners, school staff and communities, and devolution of power towards the individual school and community. The Act, which provides for the election of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) by learners, parents and staff, in theory, grants schools and their constituent communities a significant say in decision-making by devolving power to stakeholders who participate in "democratic governance" of schools (RSA, 1996b).

The school governance discourse in South Africa, as elsewhere, takes for granted a shared set of assumptions about democratic decision-making, participation and representation and their outcomes. But definitions of democracy are evolving and no consensus exists on the nature and meaning of participation, stakeholder representation or inclusive decision-making in practice. Furthermore, such reform efforts, with their focus on fidelity of implementation, ignore the reality of variability across school systems, as well as real schools with distinctive organizational characteristics and problems, unique student populations, diverse and particular communities and institutional histories.

This book explores the nature of participation, representation and decision-making in school governance in South Africa based on a collective case study of six schools in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) that was undertaken between 2002 and 2004. The different types of

schools (selected based on level of school and community resources, former Apartheid education administration, geographical location and level) were compared by the following criteria: their interpretation of the new governance policies; students', teachers', and parents' behaviour and attitudes relating to governance; and organizational governance practices. The main focus was on stakeholders' sense-making or theories of action regarding school governance.

In exploring key assumptions in the governance discourse, this book suggests that governance policy in practice is constituted by the interaction of implementing agents' theories of action, the context of the school, the administrative context and policy signals. How parents, learners and educators on the SGB understand and enact different modes of participation, representation and decision-making in school governance is defined in the interaction of these dimensions. The analysis uses the concepts of theories of action (Agyris and Schon, 1974), cognitive frameworks (Spillane *et al.*, 2002) and frames (Bolman and Deal, 1993) to explain how individuals interpret, make sense of and define education policies in practice. It also highlights the importance of deeper historical, structural and ideological contradictions in new school governance policies and in doing so demonstrates that conflicts and dilemmas are central to the experience of school governance, where ideological, power and value-relations shape and pattern forms of participation, decision-making and representation. By focusing on institutions and individuals and the informal, lower-level routines through which they create policy at the point of delivery, it provides greater transparency to policies and a fuller picture of how they are produced and experienced in the context of practice.

The study suggests several conclusions, some of which are fairly tentative, given the complex nature of the subject and the limited sample of schools. On the positive side, the existence of the SGB structure has at least opened up some space for democratic participation. Though quite limited, multiple governance discourses across actors are beginning to surface. While official discourse dominates, individual attitudes and capabilities are beginning to play a part in the way stakeholders are interpreting their roles. In general, these spaces remain unexploited opportunities in the move towards greater democratization of local governance. Most SGBs are interpreting their roles in a predictable way, which is to ensure the effective management of the school and provide support to the principal. Nevertheless, some are making attempts, however small, to experience their membership of the SGB in distinctive ways, which reflects varying individual interpretations and theories of governance at play as different stakeholders attempt to impose their own conception of what school governance means.

There is also considerable variation in the extent to which the different types of schools have begun to implement the governance policy as officially conceived, and in the involvement of school communities and stakeholders. The way governance operates at the school/SGB site is explained by the variation in the schools and communities across the schools in (1) the history of governance and ex-department control, (2) racial make-up, (3) geographical location, (4) level of resources, (5) education and socio-economic level of parents. In addition, governance in practice depends greatly on the theory of action or frame of the most dominant actor - the principal.

The discourse of participation reflects a managerial bias and a prevailing "institutional logic of action" (Bacharach and Mundell, 1993: 427) which emphasizes that governance practices (real or imagined) are focused on achieving apparently neutral, agreed on interests of the school.

There is a strong structural emphasis whereby elections equal representation, which equals participation and decision by consensus, this process is being taken as democratic practice. This discourse is shaping the direction of governance towards a similar path in most schools. The principals and/or school management play a central dominant role in advancing the prevailing organizational or institutional "logic of action" that influences individual decisions and organizational procedures and practices. The dominant logic goes something like this: "if we follow the rules and procedures laid out in the Act and regulations, we can then promote the interests of the school and by implication ensure democratic governance". The dominant theory of governance in most schools is that if formal procedures are followed, and if stakeholders are on the SGB and its sub-committees, then they are involved in democratic decision-making and governance. Paradoxically, the discourse of participation persuades stakeholders that through the SGB, they are empowered and allowed to develop ownership of the policies. However it may serve to disguise the power dimensions of the organization and strengthen the legitimacy of the leadership by representing governance in terms of democratic participation and consensus.

The main lesson for other contexts is that legislation or regulation as a solution to problems of representivity and greater participation does not necessarily ensure greater representation of the diverse needs and interests of heterogeneous communities, nor does it guarantee that oppressive power relations will change. Furthermore, structural membership requirements, which may be guaranteed through legislation, may translate into token participation. What is needed are deeper and more extensive efforts to build a culture of governance that includes all role players, from policy makers and officials to learners, educators, parents and other community members. This requires attention to power relations among stakeholders and change in the theories of leadership among principals so that there is real commitment to cooperative governance and management in practice. In the final analysis there needs to be a more complex notion of democratic citizenship which recognizes that participation, representation and democratic decision-making may be interpreted in various ways by different actors in the context of their practice.

Introduction

The elections of April 1994 marked a shift from authoritarian to democratic rule in South Africa. With the formal end of Apartheid rule, for the first time, the country had a government elected by all South Africans regardless of race. Optimism and trepidation accompanied this momentous development. It seemed like any kind of socio-political and economic future was likely. Some envisioned a prosperous future, an economically stable democracy, and an example for the rest of the continent. They envisaged South Africa, managing to construct the institutions of democracy, a vivid demonstration of the march of democracy in Africa (Diamond and Platter ed., 1999). Others predicted a bleaker future of declining democracy and economic collapse. Yet, there was also continuing hope that nothing would go wrong to render democratic reform meaningless. These contradictory visions remain ten years on, in what is still a transitional phase.

The education sphere in South Africa is not unaffected by the multiple changes aimed at extending democratic institutions. Since 1994, South Africa has been instituting major policy reforms affecting the structure and processes of education. Central to the policy goals of the new government is the development of a common purpose or mission among students, teachers, principals and governing bodies focused on democracy, liberty, equality, justice and peace. Section 3.1 of the White Paper on Education and Training states that the education system is to "empower people to participate effectively in all processes of democratic society, economic activity, cultural expression, community life" and help citizens build a nation free of discrimination (DOE, 1995a: 17). The education system is expected to counter the legacy of violence and inequity by promoting the values underlying the democratic process and the charter of fundamental rights[1], the due process of law and the exercise of civic responsibility. But definitions of democracy are evolving and questions of participation, accountability and inclusion continue to preoccupy practitioners and theorists alike. There is also ongoing debate about the actual impact of these education reforms on schools and communities.

The *South African Schools Act* (SASA) of 1996 (RSA Presidents' Office, Act No. 84 of 1996) is fundamental to the transformation goals in the education sector. The Act attempts to give shape to the principles of access, equity, redress, democratic governance and national development. Among other provisions, it provides for the establishment of governing bodies with considerable powers at all public schools. School Governing Bodies (SGBs) are comprised of the principal and elected representatives of parents, teachers, non-teaching staff, and (in secondary schools) learners. A basic set of functions is stipulated for all SGBs, including determination of admissions policy, setting language policy, making recommendations on teaching and non-teaching appointments, financial management of the school, determination of school fees and

1. The Education and Training White Paper of 1995 and The National Education Policy Act of 1996 reaffirm international conventions ratified by the South African Parliament, the Bill of Fundamental Rights and the South African Constitution which aims to: *Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights; Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law* (RSA, Act 108, 1996).

fundraising. In terms of the official conceptualization of governance, it does not include day-to-day management issues and operational areas related to teaching and learning practices, which are regarded as the domain of school and external professionals. The first SGB elections were held in 1997 and by the end of that year most schools in the country had established governing bodies.

The new governance model is designed to give schools greater autonomy to manage resources, determine the delivery of educational resources, democratize local control of decision-making and respond to community needs. It is expected that greater autonomy will bring several benefits for learners, educators, administrators and school communities. It is also envisaged that there will be "a single school system in which people can work together to improve education quality" (DOE, 1997). In reality, most policies, including the SASA are played out in varying ways in the different school settings. The scope of school governance is broad and complex, ranging from school-based management and governing bodies to district, sub-national and national structures. SGBs form part of complex social and political systems, which can be described in several forms of language and analysis. To add to the complexity, policies in general, are often ramshackle compromises, hit and miss affairs that are reworked, tinkered with, nuanced and enacted through complex processes of influence, text production, dissemination and, ultimately, re-creation in contexts of practice (Ball, 1998).

The terrain of the research for this book is the change or lack thereof in governance structures, processes and relationships brought about by the South African Schools' Act (SASA). The research involved a case study of six schools in two provinces (KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng) in South Africa, focusing on contextual variations, continuities and discontinuities, processes of mediation and conflict, conceptual tensions and varying interests, historical legacies, and individual interpretations that influence schools' responses to external policies and central mandates.

Constructing local school governance

Education change is never simply a matter of implementing a set of principles or policies. Interpretation of policies in the arena of practice may alter national policies in variable ways according to the emblematic character of each location and its participants. Policy settings, which include places, processes and relationships, are contested terrains in which educational policies are "struggled over, not delivered in tablets of stone, to a grateful or quiescent population" (Ozga, 2000: 1). This is particularly true in post-Apartheid South Africa where educational restructuring is located within broader societal transformation.

Educational policies in general are informed by particular doctrines. With regard to decentralization policies specifically, a variety of assumptions inform calls for the decentralization of administrative or political responsibility and the consequences that follow (Elmore, 1993). In the South African context, particular notions of participation and democratization inform the processes of educational decentralization and local school governance envisioned in post-Apartheid legislation. The *espoused theory of action* (Argyris and Schon, 1974) suggests that the SASA and related policies will ensure stakeholder (parents, learners, and school personnel) participation in school governance and promote democracy and citizenship. It

is also assumed that these policies will promote equity and quality in education. However, such external mandates, with their focus on fidelity of implementation across sites, ignore the reality of systemic variability, and assume a world in which all schools are the same (Stringfield *et al.*, 1998). *Real schools* have distinctive organizational characteristics and problems, unique student populations, as well as diverse and particular communal and institutional histories that condition policies in practice.

Owing to the wide variation among schools and communities in South Africa, educational governance reform cannot escape the tension arising from the uniform requirements of external mandates and the particularities of *real schools*. Contextual realities are especially important given South Africa's Apartheid history. Despite changes since 1994, the Apartheid legacy of inequality by race and geographical location, remains. Approximately sixty percent of school-aged children in some areas still attend extremely poor quality schools and under varying admission policies. Governance policies, whatever their intent, will be affected by the make-up of communities that the SGBs are expected to represent, the nature of representation in the context of competing interests, the historical legacy of differential resources including differences in social capital and gender relations. Furthermore, "street level bureaucrats", (Elmore, 1985a) who include administrators, parents, educators and other local stakeholders, are both the targets and agents of reform, and are continually involved in mediating policies and defining practice. Official definitions of decision-making roles and power may therefore differ from the roles created and assigned by participants themselves in new governance processes. As a consequence, modes of participation in school governance may take many forms that may or may not be consistent with policy expectations, resulting in tensions and implementation problems.

By focusing on specific institutions, individuals and the informal, lower-level routines through which they create policy at the point of delivery, it is possible to render more transparent policies that are otherwise opaque and provide a fuller picture of how policy is produced and experienced (Brodkin, 2001). From this perspective, the meaning of school governance policy for implementing agents is constituted by their theory of action, the context of the school and policy signals. How SGB members understand and enact school governance is defined in the interaction of these three dimensions.

According to the South African Constitution, "government is constituted as national, provincial and local spheres of government which are distinctive, interdependent and interrelated" (RSA, 1996c). The new constitutional arrangements gave the national minister of education responsibility for "the planning, provision, financing, staffing, co-ordination, management, governance, programmes, monitoring, evaluation and well-being of the education system" (RSA, 1996a). As the mediating agency between the state at the centre and schools, the provincial level was responsible for systemic management, governance and organization of schools. Responsibility for day-to-day governance and management was located at the institutional site, with the participation of school and community stakeholders. Tension between the different levels may be compounded by these constitutional arrangements, as they expect structural realignment and redistribution of powers and responsibilities.

These reforms are reflective of worldwide attempts to restructure and deregulate state schooling, and create devolved systems of education entailing significant degrees of institutional

autonomy and a variety of forms of school-based management, administration and governance. In the past few decades, numerous school systems around the world have begun forms of decentralization with local decision-making and community participation becoming key policy areas. Since the 1980s, the major education systems have made devolution of authority with provision for community participation in school governance a priority, arguing that this leads to autonomy, flexibility, productivity and accountability as well as more effective and less bureaucratic decision-making. While South Africa- like all nations – is unique in its particular combination of policy changes, many of the themes identified in the South African context have resonance in others contexts worldwide that are instituting forms of local governance in education.

Organization and overview

The first chapter provides a brief history of school governance structures in South Africa and the context of the new policies in education. Chapter two deals with issue of policy as practice. It also introduces the concept of theory of action and reviews the SASA using this concept. It then goes on to discuss the notion that policies may or may not be translated into practice, depending on the theories of action of participants in governance. It also reviews the concepts of democratic participation, representation, decision-making and power. Chapter three traces trends in decentralization and local governance. It highlights the multiple dimensions of local governance in education including various assumptions that are made about this concept. In examining whether local participation in decision-making is facilitated by decentralization of school governance, there is a focus on the complex nature of participation as well as the variety of assumptions associated with promoting democratic participation and representation through new school governance policies.

Besides describing the setting, the chapters which follow (four to seven) present the findings and analyses of the multiple levels of data in terms of stakeholders, schools and the larger administrative context of school governance reform in South Africa. Chapter four provides a description of the six sites that make up the collective case study, paying particular attention to the specific characteristics of each school that are likely to influence the nature of participation and functioning of the SGB and individual actors. Chapter five presents views of school governance with reference to the interpretations and actions of individual SGB members across the six schools. Chapter six focuses on the institutional (school) characteristics and community contexts that affect governance in practice and condition the relationship between the school and the SGB. Chapter seven examines the wider political-administrative context which interacts with that of the school and community in order to have an impact on the work of the governing body.

The final chapter (eight) presents some of the overall conclusions that can be drawn from this study on school governance. The chapter presents conclusions on construction and conceptions of school governance, roles and purposes of SGBs, participation, representation and democratic decision-making as well as policy signals and context. It suggests how SGBs can be supported in a sustainable way and draws broader conclusions from the South African experience in local school governance as it relates to other contexts. The research methods employed in conducting this research and key methodological perspectives are provided in the appendix.

Chapter 1
The context of educational governance policy in South Africa

South Africa presents an array of contradictory images, some of which are profoundly depressing: cold, barely-clad children huddled outside shacks juxtaposed against a high-rise urban modern society; unemployed men idling on street corners or rummaging through garbage bins; and the continuing poverty of under-resourced rural areas (Deegan, 1999). It is a society characterized by high-income inequality, poverty, unemployment and a slow employment creation rate. In 1998, approximately 53 per cent of the population lived below the poverty line, five per cent of the population accounted for more than 40 per cent of its consumption and unemployment stood at a high of 33 per cent (Department of Finance, Intergovernmental Review 1999). An added problem is that this inequality is highly correlated with race. The average per capita income for blacks is one eighth that of whites. Moreover, in the White suburbs (some of which are becoming integrated) public services are excellent, while those in the townships (which remain exclusively Black) are substandard.

As with most basic services, the distribution of education provision follows the pattern of contrasts and paradoxes. In the best-resourced, well-staffed, highly motivated, elite sector of the system, almost all students succeed in their final secondary examinations and a large proportion gain admission to higher education. At the same time, millions of adults are illiterate and millions of children are learning in school conditions which resemble those in the most impoverished states. Disparities within and across provinces are evident in enrolment rates, physical conditions of schools, learner-teacher ratios, teacher qualifications and the degree of racial integration of schools. Such deep differences in school attributes (organizational capacity, human and social capital) and in student and community attributes (poverty, gender and race/ethnicity) must affect the nature of education transformation.

South Africa's political transition included informal contacts and talks, suspension of armed conflict, formal negotiations and pacts between old and new elites, elections, and the inauguration of new leaders, all of which involved a series of compromises among opposing political parties and interests. Not surprisingly, contradictions are no more apparent than in the divergent goals driving the Government of National Unity elected in 1994 (comprising the African National Congress, Inkatha Freedom Party and National Party), namely: ensuring distributive justice, providing the conditions for capital accumulation and ensuring greater responsiveness and participation in forging unity (Sayed, 2002a: 38). However, the SASA, as espoused, attempts a complete break with the past in stating that "the achievement of democracy in South Africa has consigned to history the past system of education which was based on racial inequality and segregation" (DOE, 1996: 2). But it is fallacious to assume that one begins with a completely clean slate or that one can completely transform an existing system. In attempting educational reforms, we are captives of history in two ways: all people and institutions are the product of history (past events) and, all people use history (an interpretation of past events) when they make choices about the present and future. Educational reform (or any planned change) is a

"tinkering towards utopia", involving incremental or gradual changes towards an idealized state (Tyack and Cuban 1995: 6).

Apartheid educational structures

The South African education system has always been extremely complex with a variety of different governance structures at all levels of the education system, with changes taking place over the years. The one consistent trend after 1948, with the accession to power of the National Party and the institutionalization of Apartheid, was that the control and administration of education reflected the Apartheid policies of separate provision by race. Apartheid policies divided the country into Bantustans or Homelands for the so-called different nations in South Africa, limited the right to vote to Whites[2] and denied Blacks (Africans, Coloureds and Indians)[3] fundamental democratic and human rights. At the time of the 1994 elections, there were fifteen different ministries of education: four in the *independent* homelands (Transkei, Ciskei, Venda and Bophuthatswana were granted independence by South Africa, although they are not recognized by any other country); six in the self-governing territories (i.e. the *non-independent* homelands, Gazankulu, KanGwane, KwaNdebele, KwaZulu, Lebowa and Qwaqwa); one responsible for the Department of Education and Training (catering for Africans outside the homelands); one in each of the three tri-cameral houses of parliament (catering for Whites, Coloureds and Indian); and one for the Department of National Education (DNE) established in 1984, which was responsible for coordination and countrywide norms and standards (DOE, 1995*a*). In addition, the administration of white schools was the responsibility of the four provinces.

The Apartheid system, despite the existence of central controls, was not a unitary or integrated system but a conglomeration of different sub-systems fragmented along racial, ethnic and regional lines. Each department had its own school models, funding formula, relationship to the department and parents, as well as arrangements for school governance. The Hunter Report identified three categories of schools in 1994: state schools (the majority of ex-Black, Coloured and Indian schools), state-aided (ex-Model C, which make up about 96 per cent of former white state schools, community schools and farm schools) and independent or private schools (DOE, 1995*b*). The broad categories along racial lines conceal vast differences in quality, levels and sources of funding and in governance.

During the Apartheid era, the various systems made some provision for community participation through school councils, management committees or school boards comprising appointed and/or elected members from the local community (Behr, 1978; NEPI, 1992). Although there were differences along racial lines, by and large, school committees and boards played a consultative role in most schools. There was more autonomy in the white system (especially in the 1990s through the Model C schools) with parents having a supervisory and advisory role. In the black, coloured and Indian schools governance structures played a more consultative and advisory role all along.

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2. Changes made to the Apartheid system in 1983 saw the introduction of the tri-cameral system where the "Indian" and "Coloured" population groups were granted the right to vote for their own parliaments.
3. The use of these racial categories and classification are not supported by the author, but reflect the racial categories that underpinned Apartheid policies, and is a terminology that endures in the new South Africa.

The Clase Models introduced in September 1990 by Piet Clase, the Minister of Education in the House of Assembly, set forth a new admission policy for White state schools in which White parent communities could retain the status quo or adopt one of three models (A, B or C, and later a fourth D was added), which would give them control over admissions. In Model A (privatization option), the school could close and reopen as a private school run by a management committee or board of governors who could dictate admission; in Model B (state school option) the school remains a state school under a management committee within DOE regulations and with open admission; and Model C (semi-private/semi-state option) was a state aided school run by the management committee and principal. Some salaries and costs would be borne by the state. The management committee had the power to appoint teachers, decide on admission policies and set fees (Clase, 1990). These models were intended to ensure that control of White schools remained with white parents rather than be taken over by the new DOE in the run up to the transitional Government of National Unity (GNU).

While the Model C schools continued to exclude students on the basis of race, they marked an important step in increasing parental involvement in governance while permitting some racial integration. By 1994, the arguments advanced by the Model C lobby, couched in the discourse of democracy and social justice and with an apparent educational soundness, resonated with the economic and political arguments gaining currency in state administrative and political circles. It is thus not surprising that the ANC and the National Party's education policies in the early 1990s reveal considerable similarity. Both the ANC's education policy framework (ANC, 1994 & 1995) and the National Party's Education Renewal Strategy (DNE, 1991) emphasized democratic governance, together with balance between centralization and decentralization as well as joint responsibility for education between the state and parents and communities. These overlapping positions represented a powerful convergence of the PTSA and Model C traditions of local school governance. It is within this context that the SASA and other educational legislation were promulgated in 1996.

The nineties: a plethora of new educational policies and legislation

The period after the democratic elections of 1994 was characterised by the rapid formulation of policy, not least in the education sphere, which was faced with the task of providing education with a focus on redress, equity, quality and democratic participation. Major policy reforms affecting the structure and processes of education and training were introduced. Legislation, including the *White Paper on Education and Training* (DOE, 1995), the South African Qualifications Act (DOE, 1995) and the National Education Policy Act (DOE, 1996), gave legal effect to the new policies. A new outcomes-based curriculum was launched with the release of the *Curriculum 2005 Framework* in 1997 (DOE, 1997). *Table 1* which follows provides a summary of key education policy regulations and legislation.

Table 1. Framework for transformation: key education policy regulations and legislation

Legislation/policy statements	Objective	Mechanisms
• The SA Constitution (1996)	• Provide a framework for transformation and democratization	• Guarantee access to basic education for all
• White Paper one and two (February, 1995 and 1996)	• Serve as reference for policy and legislative development	• Education policy framework
• The National Education Policy Act (NEPA) (1996)	• Outline responsibilities of the Minister of Education • Formalize relations between national and provincial authorities.	• Council of Education Ministers, Heads of Education Departments Committee (HEDCOM), inter-governmental forums
• The South African Schools Act (SASA) (1996)	• Promote access, quality and democratic governance in the schooling system	• Compulsory education for seven to 14 year olds. • Two types of schools – independent and public. • School governing bodies (SGBs) • Funding norms – redress through targeted allocation of funds
• Further Education and Training Act (1998) • Education White Paper four (1998) • National Strategy for Further Education and Training (2001)	• Develop a nationally coordinated further education and training system	• Dedicated further education and training (FET) institutions • National curriculum for learning and teaching.
• The Higher Education Act (1997) • Education White Paper three on Higher Education (1999) • National Plan for Higher Education (2001)	• Establish a unified and nationally planned system of higher education	• Council on Higher Education (CHE) • Institutional planning and budgeting framework
• Employment of Educators Act (1998)	• Regulate responsibilities of educators	• South African Council of Educators (SACE)
• The Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) Act (2000)	• Support the development of the ABET sector	• Establishment of public and private adult learning centres
• The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act (1995)	• Integrate education and training at all levels	• National Qualifications Framework (NQF) – scaffolding for national learning system
• Curriculum 2005 (C2005)	• Promote learner-centred outcomes-based learning • Integration of knowledge and skills	• OBE Curriculum Framework

The National Education Policy Act of 1996 defined a fiscal federalist model similar to that in the United States. Education policy implementation, including budget decisions, was transferred to the provinces in 1994. Concurrent centralization and devolution in education were part of a complex package of reforms aimed at transforming Apartheid education. This involved attempts to shift the locus of control in two directions. First, with a single national system, authority for goal setting, curriculum development, establishing norms and standards, and monitoring was vested in the national department with some sharing of these powers with provincial departments. Second, it was hoped that certain powers and authority would be devolved to school and community levels through local governance of schools. Efforts to define the national-provincial relationship and the role and form of local governance would be critical to the direction and efficacy of education reform. While there were different motives for the devolution of power, post-apartheid education policy associated local governance with democratic participation, equity and improving the quality of education.

The main themes of *The White Paper on Education and Training* (DOE, 1995) included reconstruction of the education and training, the organization of the new system plus reconstruction and development of the school system. This White Paper also articulated the fundamental principles for transformation, namely: open access to quality education, redress of educational inequalities, the utilization of state resources to achieve equity, community participation, democratic governance, accountability and financial stability. In terms of democratic governance, it motivated for the formation of school governing bodies that reflected the main stakeholders in the school community, especially parents, with sensitivity to race and gender representation. White Paper one recognized that the school system at the time of the transition was characterized by gross inequities and inconsistencies:

> *The present pattern of organisation, governance and funding of schools is a patchwork from the past. It contravenes the rights to equality and non-discrimination which the Constitution guarantees. As a basis for a national system in a democratic South Africa it is dysfunctional and cannot continue unchanged* (DOE, 1995a: 69).

Therefore it called for a review of the structure, the governance and the funding of the school system. As a result, the new Minister established the *Committee to Review, the Organization Governance and Funding of Schools* chaired by Professor A. P. Hunter. The Committee recommended a single system of public schooling and governance (DOE, 1995*a*). However, the new government's dilemma was how to establish a single uniform system that would allow redistribution of state funding to schools serving the poorest communities, without precipitating a possible middle-class flight from the public school system.

Wide-ranging public discussion and negotiations between the National DOE and different constituencies ensued with the release of the Hunter Committee Report and the Draft White Papers of 1995 and 1996. These exchanges were influenced by the broader socio-political transformation under way. As the GNU approached the end of its term of office, it "made a sharp right turn away from its initial redistributionist Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) toward the liberal, growth-oriented Growth, Employment and Redistribution Programme"

(GEAR)[4] (Mattes and Thiel, 1999: 137). With GEAR driving the government's macro-economic policies, socialist demands including nationalization, all but disappeared from the national agenda. As a consequence, while the rhetoric of democratization and equity still permeated education discourse, policies began focusing more on efficiency and the system began to assume a more federal character. The changing emphases and competing discourses in South African education in a period of rapid social and political change are in many ways reflected in the SASA (the focus of the next chapter), the central educational legislation on school governance in the new South Africa.

4. The RDP White Paper of 1994, describes the RDP as an integrated, coherent socio-economic policy framework for the provision and maintenance of affordable infrastructure services, strengthening local government capacity to provide services, and meaningful participation by local stakeholders (Ministry in the Office of the Deputy President, 1994). The Growth, Employment and Redistribution strategy (GEAR) adopted in 1996 sees an export-orientated economy as central to development. The GEAR strategy emphasizes employment and a stable macro-economic environment, private sector involvement in development through investment, broader investments in infrastructure, more effective local spending, and reprioritising of budgets (Government of Republic of South Africa, 1996).

Chapter 2
SASA: Policy as practice and the theories of action

Education as an institution has been in the foreground of attempts at transformation during the political transition in South Africa. In viewing education reform as critical to national policy interests, policy makers in South Africa, as elsewhere, appear to subscribe to the belief that it is possible to take control of change and to direct it to an alternate future and that when there, it will not be too different from the scenario that was envisioned (Carter and O'Neill, 1995). Their perspective reflects the continued dominance of a rationalist stages model of policy, despite numerous recent explanations that point to the policy process being far more complex, dynamic and interactive than the traditional linear models suggest (Walford, 2001). Alternate models have begun to focus more broadly on the nature of social problems, governance and organizational systems in which policies operate, and the will and capacity of people involved in the process (Spillane *et al.*, 2002). However the rational model still dominates in many contexts including South Africa, wherein policy makers often equate policy intention with policy practice. In turn they exhibit a simplistic understanding of the motivations of individuals to participate that denies individual agency as it relates to the construction of social structures and practices.

Using the concept of theory of action to make sense of policy

The term *policy* is used in many different ways. In terms of the approach in this study, laws, government regulations and general strategy documents are regarded as statements or signals of government policy and not policy itself. Laws and the like are viewed as authoritative statements or guidelines involving government and subject to interpretation by a variety of actors. Schools are subject to a variety of policies and other external and internal influences simultaneously. Within the context of practice, local realities may vary according to social geographies, institutional configurations and individual interpretations. In reality conflicts and dilemmas are central to the experience of schooling, and ideological, power, and value-relations shape and pattern school management, governance, and leadership in different historical and cultural settings (Grace, 1995: 2-3). Concepts such as devolved management and local governance are often contested and school governance discourses are likely to be received in very different ways by individual members who constitute the school community, depending on a variety of factors, not least individuals' own theories about governance. As a result, a concept like governance may take on different and sometimes contrasting meanings and forms.

National policy mandates, such as the South African Schools Act (SASA), are but frameworks or national architecture that provide a rubric within which actors, continually design, enact and re-enact policy at all levels. The design, enactment and re-enactment, occurs at the level of the school and within the school governing body itself. While there are multiple historical and institutional influences, individuals in the SGB and in the school community, are influenced by their own beliefs about governance. Actors who affect change at different levels of the system engage with the principles that constitute the grammar of the reform–not only the activities or practices associated with it. Therefore, it is essential to go beyond an understanding

of the policy intent and to view the various school-level stakeholders as active agents in the creation of their changing conceptions of school governance and participation. Their perspectives can be understood by an articulation of *theories of action* (Argyris and Schön, 1974). Argyris and Schon define a theory of action as: "*A theory of deliberate human behaviour, which is for the agent a theory of control but which, when attributed to the agent also serves to explain or predict his behaviour*" (1974: 6). Such theories may be likened to cognitive maps which constitute frameworks used to guide, interpret and justify their actions. These theories affect how individuals interpret the demands made by policies on them in the interplay between policies that attempt to direct local action and the direction that is constructed by local actors (Spillane *et al.*, 2002).

The concept of theory of action provides a means to explore assumptions informing educational policies and practices at systemic, programmatic and individual levels. Within a theory of action, one may distinguish between theories that are explicit (espoused) and implicit (theories-in-use):

> *When someone is asked how he would behave under certain circumstances, the answer he usually gives is his espoused theory of action for that situation. This is the theory of action to which he gives allegiance, and which, upon request, he communicates to others. However the theory that actually governs his actions is his theory-in-use, which may or may not be compatible with his espoused theory* (Argyris and Schön, 1974: 6-7).

Policy initiatives embrace *theories of action* or sets of principles and propositions, orientations and assumptions that can be used to illustrate and assess the efficacy of the interventions (Malen *et al*, 2002). Even if the rhetoric is not supported by logic, certain basic assumptions and expectations that underpin the policy texts and their interpretations influence how the policies are articulated in the context of practice. In relation to school governance, espoused theories may be likened to the intentions and functions that policy documents or actors assert are the objectives of school governance bodies, while the theories-in-use are linked to functions that are actually performed. A stated policy objective or intention of governance reform such as the promotion of democratic practices may ignore actual activities in practice. For example, a reason cited for the establishment of governing bodies is to extend democracy. But in reality their activities may be focused on supporting efficient functioning of the school organization with little regard for democratic participation.

School governance and decentralization policies are typically based on *theories of action* that presume that the institutionalization of local school autonomy will have broad effects on education. A tacit assumption made by most central policy makers involved in formulating and implementing large scale educational governance reform is that a universally applied remedy is received by local schools in uniform ways (Fuller and Rivarola, 1998). Yet, the outcomes of governance policies are far more complex and informed by more than a set of limited stated purposes. Moreover, it is naïve and short-sighted to believe that new policies will lead to the enactment of all changes they beckon. Internal dynamics, institutionalized features of

environments or sectors, and individuals' interaction with new governance policies condition their evolution and impact. Examining the espoused *theories of action* and the theories-in-use at a programmatic level (e.g. in the stated rationale of SASA), and in terms of individuals involved in governance practices, enables us to develop a better understanding of participation and governance.

SASA and its theory of action

The elections of April 1994, marking the formal end of Apartheid rule and a shift from authoritarian to democratic rule in South Africa, introduced a new Constitution with an unequivocal commitment to representative and participatory democracy, accountability and public involvement (RSA, 1996*c*). The essential vision is that people should participate beyond episodic national elections in shaping their destiny. Participation, it suggests, does not extend simply to the right to elect representatives but should translate into the right to influence decisions. The South African Constitution thus presents an interesting challenge in declaring that the new democracy is both a representative and a participatory one.

The challenge is taken up in education through a variety of legislation and in particular by SASA. The SASA promulgated after the second White Paper on Education in 1996, reaffirmed the principles of equity, quality and democratic governance. Its espoused theory is to create a new school governance landscape based on citizen participation, partnerships between the state, parents, learners, school staff and communities, and devolve power towards the individual school and community. As a result, it provides mechanisms for stakeholders to participate in decision-making, specification of who should participate and guidelines on areas over which particular stakeholders may exert influence. SASA therefore provides for the election of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) by learners, parents and staff. In theory, it grants schools and their constituent communities a significant say in decision-making by devolving power to stakeholders who participate in "democratic governance" of schools. In promoting democratic processes and community ownership, the new Government had to face the challenge of integrating the historically decentralized system, improving the efficiency of the system and redressing the imbalances of Apartheid.

The dual expectations of serving democratic transformation and financial efficiency are evident in the twinning of decentralization policies for school governance and financing, particularly in SASA and National Norms and Standards for School Funding (DoE, 1998). The NNSSF, which spelled out in detail new norms and standards for school funding, was partly in response to the Register of School Needs Survey (Education Foundation *et al.*, 1996*c*), which highlighted the glaring inequities in educational opportunities. The SASA and the NNSSF, were the outcome of a long struggle to democratise the education system by enabling parents, educators and learners to have a say in the way the education system as a whole and schools, in particular, are governed. In the lead up to the passing of SASA, there was intense contestation over the form and function of local governance in general and on the role of SGBs in particular. The current framework for SGBs should be understood as an outcome of this contested process.

It may be argued that the SASA is a compromise solution in its attempt to simultaneously acknowledge and address the diverse school histories of under-development and self-management (Karlsson, 2002). Consequently, there are likely to be common as well as divergent expectations across levels of the system, school sites and individuals.

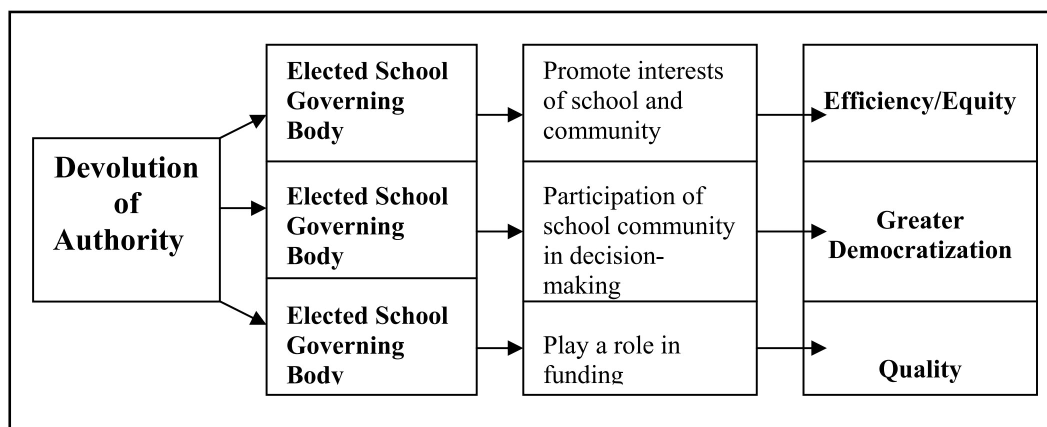
While there are undeniable links between the SASA and policies that came before, the SASA is a radical piece of legislation prescribing fundamental changes in school governance for all public schools numbering in excess of 27,000. In theory at least, the involvement of stakeholders in governance was extended to all sectors of the education system to advance access, equity, redress and democratic participation. These reforms, embedded in the larger socio-political changes, challenged long-standing hierarchical arrangements and applications of power within a key institution in society, the school. The Act, which replaced the multiple Apartheid school models with the categories of public and independent (private) schools, marked a significant move towards democratization and a departure from the former practice in which parents and administrative representatives were appointed, rather than elected. It implied a shift in the balance of power in favour of governing bodies, with parents in the majority and therefore a force to be reckoned with in the control of schools.

Local or decentralized governance reforms such as SASA, like other policy interventions, rest on sets of assumptions regarding the relationship between policy actions and policy outcomes. These interrelated, often implicit assumptions form the policy's theory of action and provide the conceptual map of the underlying logic that links the actions taken with the outcomes sought (Malen *et al.*, 2000). A significant contradiction is that while equity rhetoric permeated most education policy statements, a number of policies, including governance policy signals, actually highlight the efficiency of the system. The new governance model was expected to extend democracy, promote greater educational participation and put into place equity and redress strategies, all without alienating the privileged white minority. Despite such contradictions and the shifting orientation of the South African government towards educational governance, the espoused theory of action in SASA is that with more control over resource allocations, organization, policies and programs, public schools will develop, adopt or adapt practices that will help:

> *...redress past injustices in educational provision, provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners and in so doing lay a strong foundation for the development of all our people's talents and capabilities, advance the democratic transformation of society, combat racism and sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance, contribute to the eradication of poverty and the economic well-being of society, protect and advance our diverse cultures and languages, uphold the rights of all learners, parents and educators, and promote their acceptance of responsibility for the organisation, governance and funding of schools in partnership with the State* (DOE, 1996: 2).

A fundamental assumption behind SASA is that the new policies will enable previously marginalized groups to become involved in decision-making at the local level. The SASA model of governance is a top-down model wherein the SGB is legitimated by the fact that its members are elected and that it acts within a nationally created law, the SASA. The model focuses on form; that is, the formal articulation of the structure, roles and functions of different levels of government – their composition, powers, channels of accountability and rules guiding their operations (Grant Lewis and Motala, 2004). The theory of action that SASA reflects may be represented by figure one which follows:

Figure 1. SASA and the espoused theory of action



Within this frame, the theory of action implies that:

(a) Governance reforms and the establishment of an elected SGB would promote the interests of the school and ensure efficiency and equity;
(b) Governance reforms and the establishment of an elected SGB would increase community participation in school level decision-making and advance the cause of democracy; and
(c) Governance reforms and the establishment of an elected SGB would ensure greater funding for schools and thus advance quality education.

The SASA delegates authority over specific functions and decision-making to an elected body that includes parents, learners (in schools with grade eight classes or higher) and employees (teaching and non-teaching staff) within the school, and the principal who is an ex-officio member. These schools are required to establish a Representative Council of Learners (RCL), elected by learners according to provincial guidelines. RCLs are entrusted with the duty of electing learners to serve on the SGB. The Act further allows SGBs to co-opt additional members who do not enjoy voting rights. The number of members to be elected by each category of stakeholder is determined by the Provincial Minister of education based on a formula that "*must provide reasonable representation for each category and must be capable of application to the different sizes and circumstances of public schools*" (RSA President's Office, 1996*b*: 20). The

Act also prescribes that parents make up the majority of SGB members, stipulating that "*parent members must comprise one more than the combined total of other members of a governing body who have voting rights*" (RSA President's Office, 1996b:18).

To guide the exercise of democratic governance, SASA stipulates a basic set of functions for all School Governing Bodies (SGBs). In theory, at least, the SGB has extensive powers in areas such as admission and exclusion of pupils, recommendation to the province on teaching and non-teaching appointments, administration and control of buildings, the determination of school fees, and budgetary and financial management of the school. In addition, in terms of Section 21 of the Act, if the Provincial Head of Department (HOD)[5] deems that an SGB has the requisite capacity, it may be allocated additional functions that include the power to: maintain and improve school property, determine the extra-mural curriculum and choice of subject options, purchase text-books, and/or pay for services (RSA President's Office, 1996*b*: 14-16).

SASA views management and governance as distinct concepts, with governance being the domain of the SGB and management the domain of the principal and the school staff. The distinction, in terms of overall policy versus day-to-day operations, may appear very appealing. However, the distinction is often unsatisfactory, both theoretically and practically, and provides little help in defining the complex relationship between governance and management. Governance and management responsibilities often overlap. In addition to making policy, SGBs may perform a number of management functions. The principal or school management, on the other hand, constantly has an important role in policy making. In any event, the governance management distinction may play out in a variety of ways depending on the particular context and the theory of governance of individual participants.

Carver (2001) suggests that the board be painstakingly explicit in describing the nature of any delegation and clarity of roles. However, this is no simple task. The issues that the SGBs and SMTs have to confront do not come labelled as policy/governance or management. The SGB needs to sort out what are its major policies and objectives, but it must also be prepared to adjust them as conditions change. This makes the simple divisions between ends and means, or between governance and management, difficult to implement consistently (Kouri, 1999). No sharp line can be drawn between the two and the board and management must usually work together (Houle, 1989:11). If anything, it may create more problems as it can imply that the SGB and the principal or school management are separate entities in opposition vying for power rather than partners in a common enterprise. In making this distinction, there has also been a tendency to present management as an objective, value-free, and rational activity. As a result, local autonomy may simply be "reduced to bureaucratic managerialism preoccupied with inputs and outputs" (Russell, 1997: 17).

In addition to the basic and allocated functions, Sections 20 and 21 of the Act detail a number of financial responsibilities of the state and of SGBs. The SASA establishes the principle that the state is obliged to fund public schools on an equitable basis "in order to ensure the proper exercise of the rights of learners to education and the redress of past inequalities in education

5. Head of Department here refers to the head of the provincial department of education, who has different titles in different provinces. For example, in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, the HOD is the "Chief Executive Officer" (CEO), while the HOD in the North West Province is the Superintendent General.

provision." At the same time, all SGBs are expected to "supplement the resources supplied by the state in order to improve the quality of education provided by the school to all learners", through school fees and other forms of fund-raising (RSA President's Office, 1996*b*). Some critics argued that the measure smacks of the post-Apartheid state playing-up the symbolic value of policy in the absence of fiscal capacity to enact measures that would affect genuine redress and equity in education. They contend that policies like SASA rely heavily on stated claims to address inequalities, confront the Apartheid legacy, promise equity, redress, democracy, transformation, quality, lifelong education and training, access for all, because the implementation capacity has been undermined by economic choices under GEAR (Jansen, 2002).

Representation is another key issue that policy makers viewed as fundamental to changes in school governance in South Africa. The SASA mandates that the Provincial Minister of Education determines the number of members to be elected by each category of stakeholder based on a formula that provides "reasonable representation for each category and must be capable of application to the different sizes and circumstances of public schools" (RSA President's Office, 1996*b*). However, the Act does little to clarify what is meant by representation. This is perhaps understandable given that the meaning of representation is highly contested, with no "remotely satisfactory agreement on what representation is or means" (Pitkin, 1969: 7). In general legal mandates on representation have been limited to the formal arrangements and procedures for representation, offering little in the way of "clarity of responsibility" (Manin *et al.*, 1999: 50). Pitkin (1969: 16-20) suggests that while there is a central core, basic or general dictionary meaning – "making present of something that is absent" – its uses are "complex and multiple, each with its own characteristic context, assumptions and implication". She argues that the concept of representation only sets outer limits within which there is room for a range of positions regarding the representative's role and relationship to his constituents.

One can only speculate on the reasons for the framers of the SASA adopting a non-committal stance with regard to defining or setting parameters for representation. Whatever the reasons, such a policy has decided outcomes in practice. It is vital that empirical work on school governance in South Africa, which is sorely lacking currently, focuses on the nature of representation. In practice representation is likely to range from parents representing exclusively their own children's interests to more broadly providing parental and community perspectives on policy. In examining governance in practice, one has to therefore confront "the question of what parents are being asked to represent in the name of parental participation in schools" (Fine, 1997: 467).

In addition to equity, quality and democracy motivations for expanding local school governance, governance policies may be used to regulate conflict between interest groups, often favouring those groups that support the objectives of the state. Governing bodies in this scheme of things allow for the incorporation of representatives of the main interest groups in a locality and provide a forum for the local resolution of disagreements. This function is particularly relevant in post-Apartheid South Africa where schools in the past were theatres of struggle. It transfers to the school level many of the issues about priorities and resources, which are so difficult to resolve in a society where the costs of transformation are likely to outpace the government's ability to fund change (Bush and Gamage, 2001). From this perspective, devolution

of power to local levels is not a means to eliminate or contain conflict. Rather it may be a strategy that involves the dispersion of power – the proliferation of points of power so as to deflect heat away from a single central focal point (Horowitz, 1995: 597). This allows central authorities to devolve responsibility for resolving difficult issues to local actors while taking credit for promoting grassroots participation and democracy.

SASA democracy, participation and local decision-making

The concepts of participation and democracy are constant refrains in most post-Apartheid education policies statements and legislation and were constantly cited as central purposes in the transformation of education. The preamble to SASA states that the purpose is to provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners and advance the democratic transformation of society. Education White Paper one, which sees the goal of education and training policy as enabling a democratic, free, equal, just and peaceful society to take root and prosper states:

> *The principle of democratic governance should increasingly be reflected in every level of the system, by the involvement in consultation and appropriate forms of decision-making of elected representatives of the main stakeholders, interest groups and role-players* (DOE, 1995: 14).

But definitions of democracy and participation have been many and varied conceptually and in practice. Democracy has been discussed for over twenty five hundred years, yet it has not provided a tidy set of ideas about which everyone could agree. Perhaps this lengthy history has contributed to the confusion for it has meant different things to different people at different times in different places (Dahl, 2000: 2-3). Whether one talks of representative democracy, deliberative democracy, liberal democracy or other variants, there are differences within and across the concepts and in practice. Among these variants, two models of democracy occupy centre stage: aggregative and deliberative. In the aggregate model, democracy is a competitive process in which political parties and candidates offer their platforms to satisfy the largest number of people's preferences. Deliberative democracy associates democracy with open discussion and exchange of views, which leads to agreed-on policies. Moreover, both share certain basic assumptions; that is, democracy requires a rule of law, voting is the means of making decisions when consensus is not possible or too costly to achieve and democratic process requires freedoms of speech, assembly, and association (Young, 2000: 18-25).

Like Young, Phillipe Schmitte identifies democracy with the process of decision-making, though he maintains that it is a capricious concept that has been over conceptualised and often misunderstood, which at times seems formless and without content. Despite the range of possibilities, he argues that all forms of democracy involve decision-making across a continuum. At one end is majoritarianism, which relies on counting of votes, whether it is that of the electorate, in parliament or in a committee. On the other end is a weighing of intensities of citizen's preferences as opposed to a simple counting of votes (Schmitte, 1991: 23).

According to Bollen and Paxton (1997: 15) democracy refers to the degree to which political power is evenly distributed, where political power concerns the ability of groups and individuals to influence decisions. Ability refers to structural barriers to participation, such as excluding some groups or the concentration of power in the hands of a few. In terms of this continuum, the lowest level of democracy is where all decision-making power resides in the hands of one individual and at the other extreme, all individuals have an equal say in decisions.

Democracy may be seen as a symbolic ordering of socio-political relations and more than a mere form of government involving rational decision-making. Such a conception accepts pluralism as constitutive of the very nature of democracy, recognizes differences and antagonism, and questions the objective of unanimity and homogeneity (Mouffe, 2001). It admits to the existence of inequalities in power derived from often vastly unequal economic and social resources. Such asymmetries, which give unfair advantages to some participants, are derived from a history of domination and subordination (Mansbridge, 1999).

The extent to which SGBs become vehicles of democratization is dependent on power and authority devolved to them. A crucial question revolves around the appropriate balance between centralized control and decentralized decision-making, and the optimum balance between state control and citizen participation. A related question is the extent to which devolved control facilitates actual participation by the school stakeholders and the community. Analyses directed at these questions have often tended to interpret participation in a strikingly narrow way (Johnson, 1969). The capacity to influence decision-making has been viewed in a formal quasi-legalistic sense and restricted to institutional roles. In asking questions such as “what does governance mean?” and “who governs and how?” analyses must transcend institutions and ideologies to include actual practices of governance which emerge out of particular localized struggles (Marshall and Peters, 1999). This is vital as democracy in particular contexts is often home-made and its form and content is derived from the socioeconomic context and cultural setting. Ignoring the local and contextual only leads to a serious misreading of events, practices and outcomes. At the same time, we should not ignore structural barriers to participation such as the exclusion of some persons to citizenship, or concentration of power in the hands of a few (Midlarsky, 1997: 3).

In terms of SASA and related policy statements, the notion of democracy in education is associated with community participation. Community participation as a variant of democracy is viewed as the capacity of the different beneficiaries of the educational system to influence decision-making, inform and hold the responsible stakeholders accountable for the provision of a service which they have a constitutional right to receive. The participation discourse in South Africa prior to 1994 and in the framing of SASA, posits participation as dynamic as well as transformational at the personal, local and systemic levels. However, as writ SASA implies, this is a form of participation akin to consensus and homogeneity. Community participation in education thus takes on a somewhat apolitical colour which is unexpected given that education was closely embedded in politics during the Apartheid struggle.

While there is bound to be a certain amount of consensus in sites of democratic governance, there is also likely to be conflict and confrontation. Foucault’s concept of “governmentality” (Foucault, 1979) refers to the art of governance with its pluralized forms and

complexities. It is a form of activity designed to shape, affect or change the conduct of a person or persons and can be understood as the government of the self and others. The self or personal identity is constituted by others, official discourses and what Foucault calls "power/knowledge". Power is exerted implicitly by the way in which conversation (discourse) is formed and is often exerted by denying its own truth, or by myths that misrepresent the source of power by pointing to less powerful sources (Foucault, 1983).

If decision-making in school governance is largely about relationships and shared power, exchange theory (arising from the work of Peter Blau and later of Margaret Archer and Stewart Ranson) may be useful in describing how governing bodies are operating and how individual members are interpreting their roles. From the perspective of exchange theory, political and social actions are a process of exchanges involving a complex network of relationships in an environment of uncertainty and scarcity of resources (Kogan *et al.*, 1984: 17). Authority and power are critical bargaining levers for manipulating exchanges in a network of relationships, for example between school actors, parents and community members, and within each group. Principals and teachers may be able to assume power as a result of critical resources and capacity available only to them. Also school communities in South Africa are not homogeneous, with some segments invariably enjoying certain advantages that may privilege them in the exchange process.

Much of the justification for local participation rests on the idea that all stakeholders (including politicians, government organizations, the private sector, voluntary organizations and, especially, ordinary citizens groups) should actively take part in decisions that affect their interests. At a basic level, participation simply means sharing or taking part in. However in practice participation has tended to be highly controversial. By its very nature, participation is political as it relates to how groups and individuals are empowered and have control over their lives. Furthermore, the process of participation is neither steady and uniform nor irreversible. It is not a simple homogeneous variable, but an umbrella concept for a whole set of variables with different causes and consequences (Huntington and Nelson, 1976).

While much of the contemporary literature on parental involvement in schools implies an undifferentiated parental voice, the reality of participation in schools is quite different. Despite the calls for expanding participation on moral or efficiency grounds, devolution of decision-making to lower levels of the system may not necessarily extend local participation to the disenfranchised and marginalized. It may move to an expert elite or privileged group. In initiatives involving parents' representative bodies, school boards and parent councils, parental involvement is not explicitly classed but, in practice, it is middle-class parents who are most involved, most visible and who are, therefore, proximal to schools (Hanafin and Lynch, 2002). Participatory decision-making may exploit or empower people, stifle or stimulate organizational change, and reinforce or redefine the patterns of power and privilege in organizations, including schools, and in the broader society (Malen, 1999).

Democratic participation goes beyond a set of procedures and refers to a process or way of life in which participants define and seek social efficacy through full participation in governance and in making decisions that affect them (Beane, 1990). One has to consider issues of voice (Hirschman, 1970), which relate to representation in the SGB as well as the nature of the participation of different members in the SGB. Issues of representation start with the process by which candidates are selected to run for the SGB, the election process itself, including who voted and the degree to which the community the school serves is represented in candidates and elected members. The nature of participation relates to the specific functions and decision-making powers that are assumed by parents, teachers, learners and the education bureaucracy. As we explore issues of democracy and participation, we have to consider whether SGB members are acting as representatives of their constituents, as representatives of the school as a whole or, in the case of principals, as representatives of the education bureaucracy.

Chapter 3
Local school governance: a contested concept

South Africa's governance reform policies, which involve major shifts in the distribution of power from national to local levels, are not unique. Who should decide school direction and policy has been a core issue of educational governance for the past hundred years or so in many countries. A variety of local school governance models are being implemented worldwide, so much so that the issue of decentralization and questions of "Who controls the schools?" and "How are schools to be governed and managed?" have emerged as contentious political issues. For example, school governance, in the course of a long political football in the United States, has moved back and forth between a diffused, decentralized and centralized mode. Each decade has witnessed immense public debate about the control of schools, but the basic objective has changed little over time, as reflected in current worldwide governance initiatives: *how to balance the involvement of education authorities, parents, community representatives, teachers and in some cases students*. This question in turn relates to issues of democratic participation, representation, decision-making and power that are central to the complex shifts associated with restructuring school governance. Governing carries connotations of control, authority, responsibility and prestige related to decisions about the operations and objectives of educational institutions (Houle, 1989).

Trends in local governance of education

Referred to by variety of names such as decentralization, devolved school management, site-based management, school-based management etc., local educational governance is a complex process that can result in major changes in the way school systems are organized, make policy, generate revenues and spend funds, manage schools, develop and deliver the curriculum among other functions. In general, education governance reforms worldwide have involved attempts to dismantle a centralized education bureaucracy to create devolved systems entailing varying degrees of institutional autonomy and forms of management (Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1998). They have involved moderate or radical shifts in authority across four levels: central government; provincial, state or regional governing bodies; municipal, county or district governments; and schools. At the same time, decentralization or local school management and governance implies some form of redistribution of power within the education system in ways which enhance the importance of the individual school *vis-à-vis* the wider system (Simkins, 2002). However, whatever the form, centralization and decentralization are primarily about who should have access to and influence over decisions.

Both in form and process governance initiatives involve the concepts of centralization and decentralization in the administration and control of education, and have involved a disparate mix of aspects. These include moving certain responsibilities nearer the school and classroom, strengthening some decision-making arenas and weakening others, empowering parents and communities, curbing professionals' control, and inserting the style and substance of modern business and financial management (Arnott and Raab, 2000). The fluidity of the system between

centralized and decentralized may be better captured by the concept of "*educational organizations as loosely coupled systems*" (Weick, 1976). Such a notion sensitizes us to the indeterminacy of education systems and schools. It also challenges the rational bureaucratic organizational models which imply that education systems and schools are tightly coupled and can be understood by simply focusing on the formal structures, rules, goals and activities of an organization; whereas, organizations may be informal and chaotic, yet productive, adaptable and crudely organized.

In the eighties, decentralization of decision-making became a worldwide event (Townsend, 1994). Assumptions that schooling could be improved if more attention was paid to standards, if more effective regulations were written and if teachers increased their performance, were challenged by suggestions that educational failures had more to do with the system than with individual educators and that empowerment and involvement were more likely to work than prescription. In the US and Britain, there were doubts raised about whether schools were adequately preparing children to meet the needs of the technological society, and whether parents had any voice in the type of education their children were receiving. Calls for decentralized decision-making in the USA and greater power for school governing bodies were proposed as one way in which new influences could be brought to bear in schooling (Kogan *et al.*, 1984).

Since the 1980s, a major focus of the restructuring of school systems in many countries involves greater autonomy for schools and decentralization of decision-making power through school or site-based management (SBM) and shared decision-making. SBM involves structural and vertical decentralization of decision-making power from the state to the school, while shared decision-making represents horizontal devolution of authority within the school, from the principal to members of the school community. It was generally implemented by setting up a council or similar structure at the school site. Formal authority is supposed to be delegated and redistributed to principals, teachers and parents (and sometimes students) at the school site to make or influence decisions related to budget, staffing and curriculum. It is assumed that benefits such as better quality decisions, more humane work environments, equitable educational opportunities, and improvement in learning and teaching will ensue (Malen *et al.*, 1990).

In New Zealand, the United Kingdom and in several Australian and USA states, school boards can now hire and fire principals and teachers, decide on budgets and, within guidelines laid down by the State, decide on what is taught in the school. SBM is a popular political approach to redesign that gives local school participants – educators, parents, students and the community at large – the power to improve their school. It is part of a discourse in which parents, local communities and school boards are seen as stakeholders, groups and individuals that affect or are affected by the actions, decisions, policies, practices or goals of the organization. (McDaniel and Miskel, 2002). By moving governance and management decisions to local stakeholders, those with the most at stake are empowered to do something about how the school is performing. It is expected that schools understand their new roles and responsibilities and will take appropriate action to improve performance (Wohlsetter and Mohrman, 1996). The assumptions underlying devolution and redistribution of decision-making authority are that greater ownership, morale and commitment among stakeholders will result and decisions made at the local level will be more responsive to specific, individual school contexts (Stevenson, 2001).

While the business or industrial model is the primary motivation for SBM, it is often proposed as means to integrate school-based governance with participatory decision-making. In SBM all those involved with the school are expected to participate in making decisions. However, the extent of participation in actual decision-making by parents and community members as opposed to teachers and administrators is not always addressed. Even under community-control models, school professionals maintain primary control over decisions (Opfer and Denmark, 2001). Under the Chicago School Reform, an example of the community-control model, community members defer to professionals and act as "monitors rather than initiators" in the school (Merz and Furman, 1997: 52). Further, parents or community representatives on the councils tend to be "traditional supporters of schools" (Malen and Ogawa, 1988: 260) and may not represent the diversity of the school community.

Furthermore, SBM takes a long time to implement, does not always focus on educational issues and often results in friction, rather than collaboration (Wolhsetter and Mohrman, 1996). Often, it means an incremental shift of responsibility from central administration to the school site on a limited set of dimensions. According to Beck and Murphy (1996) calls for local school management are informed by a limited knowledge base and a host of assumptions about the actual and ideal governance of schools. Yet calls for increasing local governance and management of school continue unabated. Proponents of school reform continue to suggest governance and organizational changes in efforts to improve the performance of education. The last decade has witnessed a major shift to self-governance for schools in many countries. In England and Wales, Australia, New Zealand, parts of the USA and Canada, Spain, Portugal and Hong Kong among others, schools have been given greater powers to manage their own affairs within national frameworks. Even in countries with a tradition of centralized control, such as Singapore and South Africa, there have been moves towards decentralization (Bush and Gamage, 2001).

Implications of the new forms of governance

While the effects of changes in the governance of education systems are still unfolding, certain patterns and implications of the new forms of governance are already emerging.

Some implications that are relevant to the South African context are:

- Decentralization and local governance reforms are often part of a package of reforms that may include curriculum changes, assessment reforms and parental choice of schools - all of which affect schools, relationships, roles and educational outcomes. The combination of policy reforms not only makes it difficult to analyse governance reforms, it also makes it hard for stakeholders to recognize it as a discrete factor. This has led to complaints about reform overload and contestation over the meaning of local school governance and management (Raab and Arnot, 2000). In South Africa, Jansen (2000) associates the overload of policy with political symbolism marking the shift from Apartheid to post-Apartheid society. He questions whether the policies are really intended to fundamentally change structures or processes in education.
- Unfounded assumptions that inform decentralization efforts may compromise intended outcomes. These assumptions are that decentralization by its nature promotes democratic

participation and that communities will automatically embrace increased responsibilities (Fuller and Rivarola 1998; Johnson 1996a). There is always a hopeful expectation of clear and conclusive information on the positive impact of educational decentralization at the classroom level. However, there is little reason to believe that decentralization necessarily improves the situation. It is difficult to establish direct cause (decentralization) and affect (test scores) relationships. And, even if it were possible, they are of questionable validity because of the host of intervening variables, such as teacher training, parent support, resources, student and teacher motivation etc. (Hanson, 2000).

- Improvement in teaching/learning processes is not generally the primary objective of most decentralization initiatives. Political and economic objectives such as: transferring costs from the national to regional budgets, bringing stability to divided regions, and addressing demands for local autonomy drive the reform rather than educational considerations per se. There is an expectation that these changes may have some impact on the quality of learning and teaching.
- There is great variability in the education functions performed at different levels of government and vastly different amounts of authority is devolved to different levels. Functions that might be re-distributed include setting staffing qualification, curriculum content, textbook development, accreditation of schools, monitoring and evaluation of curriculum and instruction, decisions on capital development, pre-service training, design and provision of in-service training, and assessment, including examinations. At the school level, the most common functions devolved are partial financial management responsibility, development of school rules and regulations, and maintenance of buildings and property.
- Local control is increasingly diffused and school board decision-making does not alone determine what will or will not occur in schools. Teacher unions, principals, teachers and governing bodies all make decisions and share authority (Danzberger, 1994). Who is the object of decentralization or what actual decisions are to be made at the school level is often not clear (Malen *et al.*, 1990), but it still has wide-ranging implications for what goes on in schools and impacts educators, principals, parents and learners. It is therefore necessary to examine the distribution of decision-making power and authority involved in restructuring.
- Decentralization plans and local governance reforms may have unintended or even paradoxical outcomes. For example, while decentralization is often motivated by a desire to increase participation, international experience suggests that it can serve to undermine participation. Authoritarian leadership at sub-national or local level can undermine meaningful participation by stakeholders despite substantial local devolution of decision-making (Karlsson *et al.*, 1999). Often efforts to increase community participation translate narrowly into increased community financing and fail (Maclure, 1994).
- While new models of democratic management and governance are steadily becoming the norm in many countries, the central influence of the principal or headmaster in school leadership should not be underestimated. Official reports and policy statements exhibit contradictions between a predilection for strong and effective school leaders and a commitment to consultation and participation in decision-making. In the new "modern management culture", consultation and participation may simply be a mechanism through which power and strong leadership derives democratic legitimacy (Grace, 1995). Yet there is also evidence of those who are genuinely committed to real consultation in schools and new forms of leadership, with a radical break from leadership notions in its historical or new management forms.

- The inherent complexity of local school governance may be compounded in practice by the fact that: (1) a variety of educational and social benefits of local school governance are assumed; (2) governance reforms often are implemented in concert with a variety of other reforms; (3) in devolving governance to schools, it is often not very clear exactly who in the local context will make decisions or what actual decisions are to be made at the school level; (4) notions of participation and representation often assume an undifferentiated parental/community voice when the reality may be quite different; and (5) government initiated plans for decentralizing school governance often focus only on procedures and structural arrangements and ignore issues of power, contestation, and plurality that are integral to most school contexts. Given these complexities, it is almost certain that there is likely to be much variation in the way in which policies and plans for devolution of governance are received and interpreted.

Despite considerable problems, school-based decision-making holds some promise for improving schools and building community. School-based decision-making can contribute to improving schools if the following conditions are present: empowerment, knowledge that enables employees and community members to understand and contribute to the organization, information about the performance of the organization, and rewards for high performance (Wolhsetter and Mohrmanm, 1994). Most importantly, community members must be authentically engaged in the decisions impacting the school.

Chapter 4
Communities, schools and individuals

SASA mandates that every public school have its own SGB, emphasizing that school staffs, parents, learners (in secondary schools) and educational authorities operate in relation to individual schools. Given this legal arrangement, the specific characteristics of schools are likely to influence the nature of participation and the functioning of the SGB. There is wide variation among schools and communities in South Africa. Despite changes since 1994, the Apartheid legacy of inequality by race and geographical location remains. Table two which follows lists some key differences across the schools examined by the school in terms of level of resources, former education department and geographical location.

Table 2. Summary description of selected schools/cases[6]

School Name	Province /District	Type	Ex-Dept	Median Household Income
Noord Sekondêre	Gauteng Johannesburg Northwest	Coloured Township	HoR	R25 126
Eastern High	Gauteng Johannesburg East	Black Township	DET	R14 451
Southwest High	Gauteng Johannesburg West	Black Township	DET	R21 000
Beach High	KZN Port Shepstone /Beach/Dawe	Ex-White Suburb	Ex-NED	R47 653
Umdoni Secondary	KZN Port Shepstone /Umdoni/ Dawe	Ex-Indian Suburb	Ex-HOD	R29 722
Zulu High	KZN Port Shepstone/Dawe	Black Rural	KZDE	R11 691

The Gauteng schools

The three Gauteng Province schools in the study are located in the greater Johannesburg area, in three districts East, West and Northwest. Greater Johannesburg, the largest geographical

6. The names used and specific districts are pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.

council area (576,185 square kilometres) in the province, has a fragmented pattern of settlement both financially and racially, which is reflected in the study of districts and schools. There are huge disparities in wealth across this metropolitan area, with average annual per capita incomes ranging from R53,927 in the northern suburbs to R8,358 in the districts where these schools are located[7]. Mixed areas, which started to develop in the inner city during the 1980s, are now becoming poorer and predominantly Black. Wealthier Indians and Africans are starting to move into former white suburbs, but the scale of this relocation is too low to have any significant impact. The traditionally Black residential areas (mainly townships) remain exclusively black and the township schools continue to serve only black learners. There has been greater integration in schools that served Coloured and Indian students, which are more accessible from the township.

Noord sekondere

Noord Sekondere is a dual medium (Afrikaans/English) school in South Western Johannesburg, a region that was previously reserved for Coloureds under Apartheid residential segregation policies. The school is in an area made up of a cluster of Coloured townships/suburbs, including Noordville, Bosmont, Newclare, Riverlea and Westbury. The township it serves has a population of 28,614, made up of 6,512 households with an estimated annual median household income of R25 126 ($3,500) – though approximately 40 per cent of households earn below R18000 ($2,500). The African National Congress (ANC) won the last local government election, but there is some support for the Democratic Party.

The student population (1,260 – 607 male and 653 female) is divided between 60 per cent coloured children and 40 per cent African (Black), which is steadily increasing. The majority who speak Afrikaans are Coloured children. African children, who are in a minority, are the majority in the English medium stream. The majority of Coloured learners live in the neighbourhood relatively near to the school. Most black learners live in Soweto, but recently the school is drawing some black learners from Black families that have moved into the surrounding areas. In general the school draws its learner population from less affluent areas, including from the squatter camp or informal settlement that abuts the school and low cost Council housing (flats). The average school fees are R460 per year per learner. The SGB granted 23 (2 per cent) fee exemptions in 2002. Like many other ex-HOR schools, Noord Sekondere feels the pressure of inadequate facilities, too few teachers and expanding class sizes. Noord Sekondere has 44 educators[8] (20 male and 24 female), two of whom are paid by the SGB, three administrative/secretarial staff, five maintenance or cleaning staff and three security staff paid for by the SGB. It has a learner/educator ratio of 28 to 1 and learner/classroom ratio of 31 to 1.

The current SGB, which came into office in April 2000, is comprised of nine parents, the principal, two educators, one non-educator and two learners. Six parent representatives are

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7. The provincial and district demographic data is from the Municipal Demarcation Board of South Africa based on the Statistics South Africa Census 1996 and Census 2001 databases (http://www.demarcation.org.za). School specific data is from the SRN 1996, SRN 2000, the EMIS Annual Survey for Schools (March 2002) and the 10th School Head Count Survey (2002).
8. Educators are staff in teaching posts and include the principal, deputies and specialist teachers. Administrative staff include secretaries, receptionists etc. Support staff include, maintenance crew, cleaners, gardeners, security etc. as outlined in the EMIS Annual Survey.

Coloured, two are Black and one is Indian. The SGB chose to become a Section 21[9] school taking on additional responsibilities for maintenance and services. Owing to its Section 21 status, level of fees and fundraising, the Noord Sekondere SGB is responsible for managing a budget of over a million rands. However, as is the case in all the schools in the study, the actual financial management remains with the principal and other in-school actors.

Pastor William Elias, the Chairperson of the Noord Sekondere SGB, has a long history of community involvement through the church and membership of other community organizations. He has been involved in Noord Sekondere for over 30 years and in governance in four schools in the area as a member of the appointed school committees and in informal PTA structures.

Mr. Rylands, the principal of Noord Sekondere has been involved in previous governance structures and the new SGBs for many years. As one of the leading principals among the ex-HOR schools in the province, he often organizes meetings among these schools to tackle common problems. He is a strong manager who takes a hands-on approach to governance and management of the schools. As to his role and that of the parent body, he said: "*The parent body should oversee the running of the school, leaving the professional management to the principal, and in addition to making sure that the principal has support from the department, teachers and community, ensure that finances are available. I will then manage the school".* He is also of the view that parents are unable to play the appropriate role because "*they are not skilled and don't have the training."*

The Principal is also somewhat condescending of the Chair, which may have a significant impact on the way the SGB performs. In describing the authority of the SGB, the Principal said:

> *The chairperson carries authority in meetings only because I allow him to. Why is this? Simply because he doesn't see himself as my superior, as I am the principal. He doesn't have the education I have, so he takes a backseat. He doesn't carry the authority, so the authority that is carried in a SGB meeting, is the authority that is allowed by the principal.*

An educator representative on the SGB, Ms. Gamez has been a teacher for six years and a SGB member for two years. It is her first experience in school governance. She indicated that her colleagues nominated her because of her outspoken feisty nature. When asked why she may have been elected she answered: "*I am not afraid to oppose the principal if I think it's in the best interests of teachers*." She added however that as school governance is something new SGB members are uncertain of their rights.

Ms. Janet van Schalkwyk, a student representative, a Grade 12 learner, the RCL Chairperson and a member of the School Management Team (SMT), was selected by the RCL executive as the student representative to the SGB. Ms. Van Schalkwyk felt her responsibility

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9. In terms of Section 21 of the Act, if the Provincial Head of Department (HOD)[9] deems that an SGB has the requisite capacity, it may be allocated additional functions that include the power to: maintain and improve school property, determine the extra-mural curriculum and choice of subject options, purchase text-books, and/or pay for services (RSA President's Office, 1996*b*: 14-16).

was to "*improve the low pass rate", particularly as her community is dogged by gangsterism, drug, alcohol and child abuse*.

Eastern Township high

Eastern Township High School is located in the East Bank neighbourhood of Eastern township which is about 20 kilometres north of Johannesburg. It is an area with neat, well-kept homes - in sharp contrast to the run-down shacks in the rest of the area. The estimated population of the township that the school serves is 29,237 (25 per cent are school-age) and there are 8,750 households with an annual median household income of R14,451 ($2,000). More than 50 per cent of households earn below R6,000 ($800) and more than 45 per cent are unemployed. Most people from the township work in the service industry, but less than ten per cent are employed as professionals or skilled workers. The African National Congress (ANC) won the last local government election in this section of the township.

The school was established in 1995 through the initiative of the local branch of the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU). The current principal played a key role in moves to open the school in order to fill the void of secondary school provision in this area. The student population (1,375 – 631 male and 744 female) is exclusively African (Black). The majority of learners live in the immediate neighbourhood of the school. The average school fee is R100 per year, per learner. No fee exemptions were granted in 2002. Eastern Township, which is a relatively new school, has fairly adequate buildings and facilities in comparison to other township schools. However, the school has no sports or other extra-curricular facilities. Eastern Township High has 41 educators (13 male and 28 female), three administrative staff and seven support staff whom are all paid for by the state. It has a high learner/educator ratio (34 to 1) and an even higher learner/classroom ratio of 38 to 1.

The current SGB, elected into office in May 2000, has nine parent members, the principal, three educators, two non-educators and three learners. The school was not elected to become a Section 21 school and the SGB manages only finances derived from learner fees, donations and fund-raising. The total budget for 2001 was R94 845.

Mr. Samele, the Chairperson of the Eastern Township High SGB, is a white-collar worker at a large firm. He has been involved in governance at the school since its establishment in 1995. He was a member of the PTSA that preceded the first SGB, which was elected in 1998. He was part of a group of five parents who were active in the primary school and saw a need for a secondary school in the area. When the SADTU branch took the initiative to start the school on premises owned by the local Roman Catholic Church, he also became involved. Most parent SGB members are not attached to local community or political organizations and appear to be motivated to participate in local school governance out of a concern for the quality of their own children's education. The chairperson explained the motivation for their initial involvement in efforts to start up the school: "*we said ok, we will involve ourselves because there is nothing at school, no books and no teachers. Then we put our heads together to fight for teachers*." He added: "*The parents on the SGB are parents who are concerned. They are not politicians, just ordinary parents. Some are domestic workers and others are working in the factories around*."

Mr. Martin Sithole, the principal at Eastern Township High, has been the principal since its inception in 1995. He was a leading member of the local SADTU branch and a teacher at another high school in the township when he was requested by the union to assist with the establishment of a new secondary school. He is still quite involved in union affairs in the region. Mr. Sithole sees his role as directing the SGB and acting as its link with the provincial DOE. He said: "*I represent the education department. I have to see to it that everything being done and decisions being made are according to what the department expects. I regard myself as the interpreter of policies for the SGB".*

An educator representative at the school, Mr. Marvin Shamase, started at the school in 1995 and has been on the SGB from the beginning. He feels that he was elected because of his experience and knowledge of school matters. He also emphasized that his membership of SADTU and a community-based forum may have played a role. He pointed out: "*I am very involved in Union matters – SADTU of course. I've been a site-steward for six years, so people have confidence in me. I am seen as someone who has knowledge about community affairs*."

Ms. Bongi Nene, a learner representative, is in grade 11 and the deputy president of the RCL. The RCL, elected in student-wide elections, chose the learner representatives for the SGB. This is her first experience in either student affairs or governance. Describing her view of the SGB, she said: "*SGB represents everybody. It represents the school society, which is everybody – the teachers, the non-teacher staff, the parents, our students and also the district*".

South west high

South West High School is located in Soweto, a cluster of townships (including Diepkloof, Orlando, Meadowlands and Pimville) 15 kilometres south of Johannesburg , a few kilometres from the Roodepoort Durban Deep gold mine and a thermal power station that burps toxic emissions. While there has been much development in Soweto – with some sections now boasting fine facilities and grand homes – unpaved roads and landfill sites dot the immediate environment of the school. Some houses contain as many as 30 people, despite being designed to accommodate much less. Services in the township are also inadequate. The estimated population of the section of Soweto that the school serves is 25,541 (27 per cent are school-age children) and there are 4,985 households, with an estimated annual median income of R 21,000 ($3,000). More than 25 per cent of households earn below R6,000 ($800) and the unemployment rate is 45 per cent. Most people from the township work in the service, manufacturing or light industry, but less than 20 per cent are employed as professionals or skilled workers. The African National Congress (ANC) won the last local government election.

The student population (597 – 341 male and 256 female) is exclusively African (Black). The majority of learners live in the immediate neighbourhood of the school. South Sotho and Setswana are the main ethnic language groups among learners, accounting for 80 per cent – the rest are mostly Zulu speaking. The average school fee is R75 per year per learner. The SGB granted no fee exemptions in 2002. While the school has enough buildings for instruction, including a laboratory and other specialist rooms, materials are in short supply. Furthermore, a number of rooms need repairs. The school has a small adjoining field that is used for soccer practice and two classrooms have been combined for use as a hall. Southwest High has

24 educators (14 male and ten female), two administrative or secretarial staff, two support staff (maintenance or cleaning) and two security staff, all paid by the state. It has below average learner/educator (25 to 1) and learner/classroom ratios (26 to 1) in comparison to other schools in the study and other schools in the township in general.

The current SGB, elected in March 2000, has nine parents, three educators, one non-educator and three learner members. The school was not elected to become a Section 21 school and the SGB manages only funds derived from learner fees, donations and other fund-raising. The school provides electricity to TELKOM (the national telephone service provider) and receives payment, which goes to school funds. In 2001, the total budget was R16,110, which is much lower than that of any other school in the study.

Mr. Musa Thulani, the SGB chair, lives in Meadowlands, on the next street from the school. He has been working in the maintenance department of a parastatal electricity utility for 27 years. He had no previous experience in school governance and volunteered to be on the SGB without actually knowing what he was volunteering for. He explained: "*It was my first meeting. They asked for volunteers, so I raised my hand. I didn't know for what, I just raised my hand. Afterwards they said they needed parents for the SGB to run the school, so I said I would be able to do that*".

The principal of Southwest High, Mr. Themba Gawase, had been in office for about five months, having just been promoted from another school in the area. This was his first formal experience with school governance. He remarked: "*Where I taught before, I was consulted by parents here and there but was not involved in governance*."

An educator representative, Mr. David Nyela, is in his 25th year of teaching. His current SGB membership is his first experience in school governance. He views his SGB membership as an opportunity to "*start learning from within*". He added that he was elected because his colleagues had confidence in him: "*I am a SADTU site-steward and also a member of the community. I play a role in community affairs – I am in the executive of the church choir, a member of the African National Congress and I take part in meetings*".

Donald Lehokho, a learner representative in grade 11 and a member of the RCL, is an active student leader and key member of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), Southwest Township Branch. Although this is his first formal experience in school governance, he has been involved in student affairs for some time as a member of the student protest group in the community. He explained that the SGB was a place where he could "*help with upgrading the community and where learners could be heard*".

The KwaZulu-Natal Schools

The three KwaZulu-Natal schools in the study are all located in one district, Rooiburg, in the south coast of the province, about 55 kilometres from Durban, the largest town in the province. This is a large district which has developed beach resort towns, residential suburbs, farming areas, some large industries (e.g. a paper mill) and deep rural components. Kwa-Zulu Natal, one of the poorer provinces, with a total population of over 8.5 million, has an atmosphere

that is a blend of Western, African and Eastern cultures. The overall condition of education in KwaZulu-Natal is far from favourable with about 25 per cent of the schools in the province deemed unsuitable for teaching. Classroom shortages are severe in many districts and about 75 per cent of the schools completely lack specialized facilities such as laboratories and libraries (SRN, 2000). The condition of schools however vary tremendously even within a district like Rooiburg, where some schools are properly resourced – with many well-equipped laboratories, innumerable specialist rooms, networked computer facilities and sports facilities, from swimming pools, gymnasiums to athletics tracks – other have average facilities and some are extremely under-resourced.

Beach High School

Beach High School is an ex-Model C, English medium school located in a seaside town/village about 55 kilometres south of Durban. The golden beaches, indigenous forests and rolling hills make the seaside town a major holiday destination on the KwaZulu-Natal south coast. The town has a population of 4,304 (African – 522/12 per cent, Coloured – 24/1 per cent, Indian – 359/8 per cent, White – 3,361/78 per cent) and 1,636 households. While the estimated annual median household income is R 47,653 (approximately $7,000), over 40 per cent of households have an income of more than R100,000 ($13,000). The unemployment rate is a low four per cent. The Democratic Alliance won the last local government elections for this area.

Beach High is a well-resourced school, with ample classrooms and specialist rooms and laboratories for science, biology, art, home economics and technical subjects. It also has a school hall, a well-equipped media-centre and a computer room with 36 networked-computers. The school has very good sporting facilities, including a swimming pool and tennis courts. While the school draws most of its white students from the town, the African (Black) and Indian students come from as far away as 30 kilometres. Beach High School is a nationally recognized as a high performing school, having been consistently placed in the top 70 schools in the Sunday Times list of Best Academic Schools in South Africa. The student population (533) is quite mixed: 60 per cent are white and 40 per cent Black, Indian or Coloured. The compulsory school fee for 2002 was R3,960 plus a non-refundable registration fee of R100. All parents are expected to sign an undertaking to pay the required fees and in the event of failure to comply, they can expect legal proceedings. There are 27 educators (some of whom are employed by the SGB) and six support staff. The support staff includes a financial secretary, a debt collector and a laboratory assistant employed by the SGB. The staff is integrated and includes four Indian educators and one Black educator who teaches Zulu. It has a low learner/educator ratio (19 to 1), and an even lower learner/classroom ratio of 16 to 1.

While Beach High has had a governing body for some time under the Model C dispensation, this is the second SGB under SASA regulations. The current SGB, comprising 13 members (seven parents, two educators, two learners, one non-teaching staff and the principal), was formally constituted in March 2000 during the election of the parent component. The Chairperson is Indian, one parent member is Black and all student and educator representatives are white. The SGB has sub-committees for human resources, marketing, fundraising, maintenance, finance and strategic planning. Some committees have co-opted members (seven). The school has been a Section 21 school from the inception of SASA and the

SGB is responsible for maintenance and services, and also for employing additional teachers. Its operating budget for 2001 was R3,123,988.[10]

Mr. Shah, who is of Indian descent and an attorney, has been the chairperson of the Beach High SGB since 2001. Prior to that, he was the vice-chairman for two years and before that chairman of the governing body at the Rooiburg Primary School. Mr. Shah drew a distinction between governance and management in defining the role of the SGB: "*It is similar to a corporate situation in which the company is run by management and management is reportable to the board of directors. The board of directors, the SGB in this case, ideally ought to discuss and lay down policy and communicate it to management, who must then implement it*".

The principal, Harold Patterson, has been at the school for 16 years, first as the deputy principal and since 1992, as the head. He has experienced the changes in governance first-hand, first as a Model C and now as a Section 21 Public school in terms of SASA. The principal is very experienced and well organized. He characterized the shift as having a very personal impact on his role. He said:

> *When I first went into teaching the running of schools was completely different. In those days, the principal was the King. He ruled and didn't allow any parental interference. When we became a Model C my whole role changed. We were transformed into State-aided schools, eventually becoming Section 21 schools, and I now find that I am a Jack-of-all-Trades. I have to be tuned up on legislation, labour matters and honestly 80 per cent of my time is spent on functions I never ever envisaged doing*.

Mr. H. Bester, an educator representative on the Beach High SGB, is the deputy principal. Afrikaans speaking, he has been an educator for 27 years and at this school for most of that time. He described himself as being "*part of the old system*" and someone who had to go through "*the mental process of change and transformation in education*". Initially co-opted onto the governing body, he was elected as per the SASA regulations in 2000. His previous experience was in the "*hierarchy of the management of the school".* A student representative at Beach High, Suzette Meiring, is in grade 12 and was elected by the RCL as their representative on the governing body. She is also the Head Prefect and was appointed by the teaching staff rather than elected, even though according to DOE regulations, prefect bodies have to be replaced by RCLs. In defining the role of the RCL and prefect body, the Beach High SGB student representative said: "*The RCL is not for disciplining pupils but for getting the pupils opinions. The prefects' role is disciplining the pupils*".

Umdoni Secondary School

Umdoni Secondary is an ex-HOD school located in Umdoni about 50 kilometres from Durban on the South Coast of KwaZulu-Natal. The town of Umdoni is often described as a sleepy seaside or riverside town. The school is located in Truro, a residential suburb of Umdoni, previously reserved for Indians under Apartheid regulations and about three kilometres from the

10. This estimate is based on fees for 2002, departmental allocations for recurrent expenses to Section 21 Schools and other funds raised by the school

coastal town centre. The town has a population of 27,366 (16,913 African, 167 Coloured, 7,309 Indian and 2,794 White) and 6,283 households with an estimated annual median household income of R29 722 (approximately $4,000). Over 50 per cent of households have an income of less than R18,000 ($2,500) a year. The African National Congress (ANC) won the last local government election, but there is substantial support for both the opposition Inkatha Freedom Party and Democratic Party.

The student population (1,289 - 607 male and 682 female) is about 60 per cent Indian and 40 per cent Black. The majority of Indian learners live in the immediate neighbourhood of the school in Truro and its surrounds, while the majority of Black learners come from the Black townships of Umdoni[11] and further away. All the Black learners are Zulu speaking. Umdoni is an English medium school and only Afrikaans is offered as another language subject (no African languages are offered). The average school fee is R400 per year per learner. The SGB granted 90 partial and 11 full exemptions from fees in 2002. The school is relatively well resourced with 26 classrooms and nine specialist rooms (two laboratories and rooms for computer studies, technical drawing/woodwork and home economics). The increase in enrolment in the past few years has led to general overcrowding. It has a high learner/educator ratio (27 to 1) and an even higher learner/classroom ratio of 37 to 1. The learner/teacher ratio has been eased by the employment of additional teachers by the SGB. The school has a soccer field, a netball and tennis court, and two multipurpose rooms for extra-curricular activities. There are 47 educators (25 male and 22 female) – five who are paid by the SGB from school funds. There are two administrative/secretarial staff, and four support staff (three employed by the SGB).

As an ex-HOD school, Umdoni Secondary had a School Committee appointed by the DOE. At various times, it also had a PTA, which was fairly passive and involved mostly in fund-raising and extra-curricular activities. The PTA was elected in the early 1990s and acted as a transitional governing body. It included SGB Chairperson and other current SGB members. The SGB, elected in April 2000, has seven parents, two educators, one non-educator and two learner members. The school has had a number of by-elections since then to replace parent members who have resigned. Interestingly, at one of the by-elections, Mr. Raidu, a Superintendent for Education Management at an adjoining circuit with children at the school, was elected to the SGB. All members of the SGB are Indian, despite the fact that the student population is at least 40 per cent Black. Although not officially a Section 21 School, the SGB has assumed some Section 21 functions, including the employment of additional teaching and support staff. The estimated budget for 2002 was approximately R500,000.

Mr. Pallen, the SGB Chair, is an Indian male in his forties, a community leader and member of many cultural organizations, the Truro residence association and the Truro Community Policing Forum. Mr. Pallen is an administrative clerk in an insurance company and has some governance experience as he has been on various school/parent structures over the past eight years. He felt that the SGB enables "*the parents to have a fair say as far as teachers are concerned regarding the children's education*".

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11 There are at least two high schools in the townships of Umdoni where most of the Black students reside. Since 1994 a number of Black parents have elected to send their children to Umdoni Secondary and other HOR and HOD schools in the surrounding areas, based on perceptions that these schools are of better quality.

The principal, Mr. L. Sunker, has been at the school since 1977, first as teacher and then for more than ten years as the principal. He had prior experience of school governance when he served for five-six years as the secretary of an appointed education committee early in his teaching career. Mr. Sunker felt that the SGB could accord parents more power but doubted this was happening stating that: "*theoretically the school governing bodies have much more power but the extent to which they are exercising that is questionable*".

Mrs. K. Raidu, a SGB teacher representative, has been at the school since 1986. She is a member of the Education Department's Teacher Grievance team for the district. She suggested that her colleagues elected her as SGB staff representative because she is a "*local member in the community, who knows the background of the community and the needs of pupils and parents*". She added that her husband being the Superintendent for Education Management in a neighbouring circuit could have also influenced her election. She explained: *"my husband is also on this governing body. We actually work together. A lot of material comes from the department via him, which assists us in empowering the entire SGB*".

Ms. Kay Nair, the student representative, is in grade 11 and is the president of the RCL. She was chosen by the RCL executive. Ms. Nair felt that the SGB should assist in running the school. As the RCL president and the SGB learner representative she described herself as "*the voice of the learners*", as she is able to "*to take learner's issues to the governing body"*.

Zulu High School

Zulu High School is a rural school in the Southern Kwa-Zulu Natal Province in the KwaCele area approximately 70 kilometres from Durban. Dawe (the immediate area the school serves) has a population of 6,111 (all African) and 1,042 households. Students come from a wider area spanning 25 to 30 kilometres around the school, including Mhlabatini, Mhlongo, Mlangeni and Dududu, which are outside the Dawe school circuit. While the estimated annual median household income is R11,691 ($1,700) over 40 per cent of households have an income of less than R6,000 ($800) a year. There is very high unemployment, with as many as 60 per cent not formally employed. Parents who are employed, work mostly in the service sector as domestic help, cleaners and gardeners in Roiiburg, Umdoni and surrounding coastal towns. The Inkatha Freedom Party won the last local government election in this area by a substantial margin over the African National Congress (ANC).

Although the Zulu High is a public school owned and administered by the province, it is located on private land. In comparison to other ex-KZN Department Schools, the building is in a relatively good condition, but has a low level of resources. There are no sports facilities or specialist rooms. However, it is on quintile three of the Norms for Funding, which implies it has average resources. It has a total of 647 learners (315 boys and 332 girls) and 15 educators (nine male and six female). It has a high learner/educator ratio (40 to 1) and an even higher learner/classroom ratio of 50 to 1. By comparison, the average learner/educator for the six schools is 29 to 1 and the learner/classroom ratio is 34 to 1, and the most advantaged school, Beach High, has a learner/teacher ratio of 19 to 1 and a learner/classroom ratio of 16 to 1. While the other schools have support staff paid for by the state or the SGB, there is no support staff at

Zulu High. Learners and parent volunteers carry out maintenance and general cleaning. The school fee is R165 and no fee exemptions were granted in the past year.

Elected in 2000, the current SGB has seven parents (four elected and three co-opted with no voting rights), two educators, one non-educator, two learner members and the principal. The SGB co-opted people from the community, including a local businessman for help and support. Interestingly this school does not comply with the SASA's requirement of a majority plus one for parent representatives. The turnout at the election meeting was extremely low – only 45 parents attended and it was not possible to get enough candidates to stand for election. The school has had some sort of education committee comprising local leaders since 1990. The SGB manages only funds derived from learner fees, donations and other fund-raising. For 2001, the budget was approximately R90,000. An important difference in the way the SGB operates at Zulu High is the influence of the traditional authority, which occupies an important political space and enjoys public trust, giving it a special relationship with the SGB. The members of the SGB and the principal often consult with the local chief or one of his *indunas* on school and community affairs. For example, the chief succeeded in encouraging parents to attend school meetings after the low turn out at the last election.

Mr. Mkhize, Zulu High SGB Chair, a Zulu male who has lived in Dawe all his life, is an ex-prison warden. This is his first experience with school governance. He was selected by parents at the SGB election meeting to be the Chair. He explained that he was selected as he was readily available for SGB meetings or to meet with the principal whenever necessary.

Mrs. P. Zuma, the acting principal of Zulu High, lives in a township about 50 kilometres from the school. She was the sole teacher at the school when it was established as a two-classroom school in 1989. She emphasized that it has been very difficult to cope with managing the school as well as playing a leading role on the SGB.

A teacher representative, Mrs. Nxumalo, who is a local person was elected by the teachers to represent the staff on the SGB. She pointed out that she was selected because "*it would be easier for her to attend the parent meetings, which are sometimes held on Saturdays or Sundays"*. She also indicated that she was chosen because she is the senior member of staff and "*a responsible person*".

A student representative on the Zulu High SGB, Ms. Gladness Jeza, is the head prefect at the school and on the SGB in this capacity. The RCL and Prefect Body was combined and is elected by the learners. Ms. Jeza emphasized that her role on the SGB was to "*encourage communication with the parents and the students*".

The schools, actors and community contexts vary substantially across the six school settings. Key differences include socio-economic levels, racial make-up and rural/urban context. Two school communities (Eastern and Southwest) are relatively concentric (i.e. small, closed and stable). The other four are open, expanding and fluid, which in turn affects both the composition and functioning of the SGB. Furthermore, all the SGBs and schools are at different stages, in terms of history, culture, skills and knowledge, and available resources. The wide variation may

influence not only governance relationships but also the levels and nature of participation, and definitions of the role of the SGB.

Table 3. Key statistics across schools

School name	Number of learners	Number of educators	Learner/ educator ratio	Learner/ classroom ratio	Number on SGB	Annual fees[12]	Estimated annual budget[13]
Noord Sekondêr	1,260	44	28/1	31/1	15	R460	R1,000,000
Eastern High	1,375	41	34/1	38/1	17	R100	R94,845
Southwest High	597	24	25/1	26/1	17	R75	R16,110
Beach High	553	27	19/1	16/1	13	R3,960	$3,123,988
Umdoni Secondary	1,289	47	27/1	37/1	15	R400	R500,000
Zulu High	647	16	40/1	50/1	15	R165	R 90,000

12. The exchange rate at the time of writing was $1 US equals 7.3 Rands.
13. This refers to the budget for recurrent expenses and does not include the bulk of teacher salary costs which are covered directly by Provincial department Budgets.

Chapter 5
Making sense of governance policy: individual theories

The historical context of school governance in South Africa and recent legislation play a part in reshaping the trajectory of school governance. However, the shape of school governance is not dependent on policy dictates or historical circumstances alone; governance policy in practice is made or modified by the interaction within a network of institutions, groups and individuals fulfilling different functions and with different expectations. Interacting influences include: (1) inextricable connections between the SGB/school and the political administrative system (the focus of Chapter seven); (2) specific institutional and community contexts with their attendant norms and social relations (the focus of Chapter six); and (3) individual actors with particular theories of governance (the focus of this chapter). Within the institution, professionals (principals and educators) and lay actors (parents, learners and non-teaching staff), have the ability to formulate or reformulate objectives and influence governance practices. A dynamic perspective on policy implementation suggests that governance policies are made in practice and that there is likely to be changes in the policy as it moves down the different levels of the educational system. In this research, it is argued that changes may be due to different *theories of action* at play at each level.

Table four which follows summarizes the *theories of action* (espoused and theories-in-use) across each level. The theories are composite approximations and there are differences within each level among individuals and groups. Outlined in table four, the following theory is that which is dominant and prevailing at a particular level:

Table 4. Theory of action across levels of the education system

Theory of action/ level	**Espoused theories**	**Theories in use**
National	• SASA and the SGB ensures stakeholder participation in governance • SGBs promote democracy and citizenship • SGBs promote equity and quality	• Focus on the SGB carrying out stated functions in order that schools run efficiently
Provincial	• SASA and the establishment of SGBs ensures stakeholder (parent, learner, and school personnel) participation in school governance • SGBs promote democracy and citizenship • SGBs promote equity and quality	• SGB follows the rules as laid down in SASA • Proper financial management is the primary reflection of successful SGBs
District	• Governance is about the efficient management of schools	• Reliance on principal and SMT to provide

	• SGBs should support the SMT to ensure efficient functioning of schools	direction for the schools • Professionals know what's best
School	• SASA and SGBs ensure stakeholder (parents, learners, school personnel) participation in school governance to promote democracy and citizenship • SGBs promote equity and quality • If the SGB follows the rules as laid down in SASA then they are being democratic and representative	• SGB's prime function is support for school to ensure it functions efficiently • Principal and SMT provide direction – Professionals know what's best • Parents can only be involved if they have certain technical skills • Community is homogeneous and all sectors are represented

In emphasizing the role of individuals' *theories of action* in the way governance develops, one needs to recognize that actors are embedded in a variety of discordant and contradictory discourses, some being more dominant than others. Often the discourses supported by the state and reflected in legislation, have an obvious dominance (Walford, 2002). In addition, the SGBs members' autonomy in defining their roles may be influenced by the existing institutional contexts and the norms and social relations which constitute them. The SGB may provide its own "corporate socialization" (Kogan *et al.*, 1984: 21) to the extent that new SGB members interpret their roles in similar ways to sitting members, whether they belong to the same group or not. But they are also affected by their individual attitudes and capabilities in interpreting their governance roles, thus experiencing their membership of the SGB in distinctive ways.

What role individual stakeholders or groups are playing affects the nature of the SGBs and its operations and whether SGBs are actually enabling democratic participation in decision-making or merely meeting structural mandates. Given their particular experiences, cognitive perspectives, *theories of action* and socialization, different stakeholders may have unique views on what each one's appropriate role is, which affects roles in practice. Furthermore, the process of governance and the definition of roles is not a simple matter of training, learning or following official regulations; it may involve a fair degree of conflict, negotiation and compromise.

While many teachers and principals displayed set views on the role of the SGB, given the newness of the experience for many (especially African, Indian and Coloured parents), there is also much uncertainty about what specific roles should be. With the likelihood of conflict and the need to negotiate appropriate roles being great, many participants tended to adopt a structural approach to defining their role, expecting a correct way out there to follow. In this line of thinking, the SASA and other policy prescriptions provide the template for how the SGB should work. In this way conflict and contestation that accompanies role definition is denied or not

recognized. Yet, it is a far more conflictual arena. In Beach High, for example, the principal said: "*We had a session with the governing body and we ironed it out –we really had to draw up the battle lines"*.

Considering that different individuals operate on the basis of individual *theories of action*[14] (Argyris and Schon, 1974), one would expect great variation in the way SGB members within and across stakeholders view their own role as well as the role of other members. However, variation is limited by constraints on individuals' ability to define their own roles. The power exerted by particular actors, for example, tended to negate the *theories of action* of some stakeholders. Principals who enjoy greater power and authority by virtue of history and position were able to assert their own value orientations and theories of governance, which emphasize managerial and organizational efficiency. As a result, the level of broad stakeholder participation in governance and school affairs generally is circumscribed. For example, the principal of Noord Sekondere said: "*We need to draw a line between what we want them to do. What is it that you want parents to do? They want to come into the school and run the school because of ignorance. That is a breach of the Act"*.

Purposes and roles

According to the SASA, the purpose of the SGB is to "promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners" (RSA, President's Office, 1996*b*: 14). It was also seen as an "elected government to serve the school and community" (DOE, 1997: 2). The stated policy takes for granted a set of shared assumptions about the purpose and role of the SGB and of its individual members. In reality, the SGB is surrounded by a constellation of values and purposes from which it must choose its role. The role is also subject to interpretation by individual SGB members, each with their own values and theories.

Initial responses indicate that most stakeholders subscribe to the idea of a common purpose around shared interests. Almost all stakeholders felt that getting parents involved in governance was in the school's best interest. The principal of South West High insisted that there could be little opposition to parent involvement because "*governance deals with the overall running of the school for the welfare of the school in total*". Respondents' views seem to reflect the policy signals and the dominant governance discourse in post-Apartheid South Africa, which emphasize (even if rhetorically) the value of democratic participation in school level decision-making. Parents, learners and educators referred to the law as defining the purpose and role of the SGB, stressing that SASA and the SGB provided the opportunity for all, but especially parents, to be involved in school governance. Reliance on the law alone as a justification for new governance practices may actually signify an over-dependence on the role of the state while downplaying the engagement among actors and the assumptions, norms and values that impact policies in practice.

Since 1994, it has become fashionable in South Africa to uncritically accept the idea of participation of the governed in their government as a fundamental condition of active democratic

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14. The concept of *theories of action* is used in a broad sense to include "cognitive structures" or perspectives (Spillane *et al*, 2002), values, frames (Bolman and Deal, 1992) etc.

citizenship. This includes the participation of parents, educators and learners in "representative governance at schools" (DOE, 1997: 1). The "discourse of participation" and associated governance reforms have "taken on the force of common sense". After all, as the argument goes, isn't it obvious that those closest to the action (educators and principals) and those with a direct stake (parents and learners) in the enterprise (schooling) should have a strong voice in decisions (Anderson, 1998: 572)? In such a climate, it is not surprising that all stakeholders come to believe that participation, in theory, is "the cornerstone of democracy – a revered idea that is vigorously applauded by everyone" (Arnstein, 1969: 216). As a result, in their initial responses, all stakeholders emphasized the importance of parental participation in school governance, even if such buy-in is only rhetorical.

A more in-depth interrogation of specific stakeholders' views on participation reveals that many stakeholders, particularly principals and educators, do not necessarily value participation of parents and learners in itself or the advancement of democratic decision-making. Such participation is often little more than information sharing or limited consultation, promoted for how it can help the school or make their work easier. In terms of Arnstein's *Ladder of Citizen Participation*, informing and consultation (Rungs three and four) represent tokenism, but is above non- participation (rungs one and two – manipulation and therapy) as it allows the have-nots to hear and to have a voice. However, they lack the power to ensure that their views are heeded by the powerful. It should be recognized that the have-nots (e.g. parents or learners) and the power-holders (e.g. principals or educators) are not homogeneous blocs. Each stakeholder group encompasses a host of divergent points of view, significant cleavages, competing vested interests and splintered sub-groups (Arnstein, 1969: 217)[15]. Despite these cleavages, dominant power-holders (principals and teachers and, in certain schools, particular groups of parents) institutionalize their own meaning systems (*theories of action*) in the structure of the SGB or more broadly the school to their advantage.

Parents

Most parent members of the SGB, including chairpersons, are uncertain about their roles. As a result, they take their cue from the specific dictate of policies such as SASA or from principals. Even though most chairpersons used the rules in terms of defining their specific roles and that of the SGB as a whole, it was often left to principals to decide. No parent member defined their role in any substantial way in relation to parental leadership of the SGB or promoting democratic decision-making. Most parents' theories of governance reflect the dominant theory across all levels; that is, parental participation in school governance is geared towards improving school conditions.

Most parents' conceptualizations of governance are linked to the dominant discourse and legal imperatives. Mr. Shah, the Beach High SGB Chairperson, for example, emphasized the responsibilities of the SGB as laid down in the Act as being: "*to get parents involved in the interest of the school*". He added that: "*the pre-amble to SASA gives the rationale, which is bringing the governance of schools into the hands of parents of children who attend the school"*.

15. Rung 5 of the ladder is a higher-level tokenism that allows the have-nots to advise but the power-holders retain the right to decide. The top 3 levels of the ladder (6, 7, 8 – partnership, delegated power, and citizen control) mean that the have-nots obtain full managerial power.

The reference to the legal position is not surprising given that Mr. Shah is a lawyer and moreover that at this ex-Model C school, there has always been a focus on codified procedures and a reliance on the law. Nevertheless, Mr. Shah recognized that while the Act was clear in giving parents a role in governance, different individuals interpret the SGB's role in different ways. He explained: *"Giving parents a bigger say in governance has troubled people because there is a restrictive and a broad interpretation. People can interpret it to suit their scenario"*. In practice what it means for parents to be involved or to participate in governance is variously interpreted by parents, learners, teachers and principals, with further variation within these groups and across schools.

Parent members of the SGB characterized their roles largely in terms of a non-conflictual one, where the role of parents appears to echo official definitions of the role of the SGB, focusing on the interests of the school. The Chairperson at Eastern High presented such a position as: *"To keep the healthiness of the school, the relationship between everybody in the governing body"*. Most of the Chairpersons and parents interviewed tended to see their individual role on the SGB in this way. Some emphasized specific things they could or should do to ensure that learners are not giving problems. The Chairperson at South West stated: "*We must make sure the kids are in school all the time.*" The Chairperson at Zulu High, Mr. Mkhize saw his function and role largely in terms of resources and maintenance: "*It is just to see when there is something that is lacking or what will need to be maintained"*. Few parents described their role in terms of a more independent or oppositional role, based on promoting and protecting parent interests. There was some reference to representing parents and having "*to get feedback from parents*", but this was, according to the Chairperson of Eastern High, "*to inform everybody*". The Chairperson at South West High also emphasized communication with the parents: "As *the chairperson, I hold meetings with the parents so they understand what is happening through me*". Mr. Baptiste, at Beach High emphasized that as a parent representative his role "*was to ensure that what the community wants is addressed*". But the extent to which this latter function occurs is very limited.

Few stakeholders spoke of participation in governance in relation to democratic objectives, the extending community or parent involvement in decision-making. But some parents do subscribe to a broad view of the purpose of the SGB, which includes "*promoting the interests of the school*" and "*giving parents a role in all aspects of school life*". The broader interpretation role goes beyond official policy definitions that suggest that the SGB play only "a strategic steering role linked to policy setting" (DoE, 1996), with the expectation that the SGB will play some role in academic and other day-to-day management issues.

Perhaps only at Beach, where all the parents on the SGB are well-educated upper-middle class professionals or businessmen, are they able to influence the definition of their role to any significant level. Even here, they tend to define their role in a technocratic way based on ensuring efficient functioning of the school, which ensures that the principal still retains substantial decision-making powers. In general, parent members echoed the stated theory of governance of in-school actors and of the SASA, defining the SGB role narrowly and confining it to support for efficient management. However, as parents gain more experience, some are beginning to expect a broader role in terms of representation and greater participation in decision-making.

Principals

Principals in the past have occupied a pivotal position in South African schools, and in most cases still do today. The majority however are not accustomed to collaborative and participative decision-making and one would foresee some change in management styles to suit changing circumstances and expectations generated by the new governance policies. All the principals in this study continue to play a critical and central role broadly in school affairs and more specifically in governance, with little significant changes to their role or style. Where they have made changes, they have tended to conceptualize SGB activities as a rational bureaucratic exercise aimed at efficient management. This reflects a convergence of the principals' theories-in-use with the implicit theory in SASA; that is, governance means getting people to participate so that the school as an institution functions effectively. It is therefore hardly surprising that all the principals in this study stressed the importance of adhering to the law. For example, the Zulu High principal saw the purpose as " *to run the school in the correct manner according to the rules we have been given by the department"*. All the principals claimed that SGB operations were conducted in accordance with the stipulations of the Act.

At the same time, most principals felt that parents should not intrude on "professional and academic" issues that are in the realm of the principal and the SMT. Ironically, where principals envisioned a more limited role for the SGB, they also made reference to the letter of the law, citing that: "*the professional management of a public school must be undertaken by the principal under the authority of the Head of Department*" (RSA, 1996: 14). However, while the Act distinguishes between governance and management, where one begins and the other ends is left to the participants to determine. For example, in stressing the SGB's oversight and supportive role, Mr. Rylands, the principal of Noord Sekondere, was emphatic that they should not be involved in "*management and professional*" issues. He said that: "*They can affect the functionality of the school if they get too involved in all aspects. They should leave the professional management to the principal, but also make sure that the principal is supported from the department, the teachers and the community"*. All the principals were thus very protective of their professional domain, and concerned with efficiency and effective management as well as ensuring that the organizational goals are fulfilled. Principals also justified their hands-on role in governance and decision-making as necessary in the interests of the school and for effective management. Like the principal at Zulu High, they also felt that in terms of the SASA, they are accountable.

The history of school principals, who have controlled schools with little or no participation from parents or teachers for the most part, is also a major influence on their conceptualization of the role of the SGB. It is difficult for principals steeped in authoritarian practices to develop a more participatory style of management that embraces democratic governance. According to the principal of Eastern High, Mr. Sithole: "*With the old system, everything was left in the hands of the principal, even issues of governance that the parents should have had to really deal with"*. Nevertheless, he also stressed that the SGB was there to "*make sure that the school runs effectively*" and see to it that "*the managers at school are accountable*". Mr. Sithole's reference to accountability reflects a broader theory of governance which includes responsibility to the community. This may in part be due to the involvement of

the community in setting up the school, Mr. Sithole's democratic background and involvement in the district teacher union leadership structures.

The definition of the SGB as the parent body provides further insight into how individual's theories are affecting school governance practices. Like Mr. Rylands, most of the other principals defined the SGB as "*the parent body*" or as "*representing the community*". The principal of Umdoni, who saw the SGB as overseeing the running of the school said he had to "*get their go ahead as well because the SGB is supposed to represent all the parents*". This conceptualization reflects his espoused theory of governance, which is informed by a belief in negotiation and community participation. Ashe explained: "*Whatever we are implementing here at school now, we are negotiating with the learners, with educators and then of course it goes to the governing body"*. Yet the theory in use at Umdoni and at the other schools contradicts the stated theory of shared governance. The key participants in governance remain the in-school actors, while the SGB mostly rubber-stamps decisions reached within the school. Furthermore, though principals emphasize consensus and working together, in practice they retain control of decision-making power.

The principals' definition of their role also depended on how they viewed the SGB and the capacity of parents. Often their explicitly stated theory of governance indicated a commitment to more collaborative decision-making and shared governance. Closer examination revealed however that autocratic practices persevere. The more pessimistic principals, who saw parents as incapable, tended to see their role very much as they did in the past, as the main decision-maker on issues of both management and governance. For example, the principal of Noord Sekondere, who felt that parent members of the SGB "*weren't the type of people that you actually want on the SGB"*, explained that he saw his role as *"advisory, to provide guidance to each of the members, the different stakeholders on the SGB"*. Often this advisory role was far more than just advisory. In practice, it involves principals making almost all key decisions and, in the words of the Noord High principal*, "giving guidance in the sense of making sure that people know exactly what their roles are"*. A number of the principals, like the principal of Umdoni, also saw their role in terms of providing information to the SGB and ensuring *"that there is no violation in terms of Departmental regulations"*. Similarly, as regards his official role, the principal of Eastern High also stressed that: "*As a person representing the education department, I have to see that everything being done, decisions being made, are according to the policies. So I would regard myself as the interpreter of policies for the SGB"*. In such circumstances, parents serve on the SGBs for the "*express purpose of educating them or engineering their support*" (Arnstein, 169: 218).

While there are explicit regulations as to who should participate, from this study, it is clear that the participation of all stakeholders is informally structured through the actions of principals - how they define who participates, how they participate and what decisions are open to participation. The leadership philosophy of the principal affects the focus and pattern of participative management and governance. Unless principals are willing to let go of traditional authority roles and allow other stakeholders to have a greater voice, and help to prepare them in a supportive and participative environment, the idea of democratic school governance will remain elusive (Somech, 2002: 343-347). Some principals are moving away from completely autocratic decision-making, embracing information sharing and more consultative forms of decision-

making, but few are yet involved consistently in democratic decision-making involving all stakeholders. However, while most principals appear to be largely in control, ceding little real power over most key decisions, some recognize that their role is changing and that school governance reforms require them to operate differently from previous times. Clearly, there are marked contrasts in roles and responsibilities for principals compared with earlier times where the principal was the main (and often the only) decision-maker in the school. Most principals face major challenges in order to move towards a new way of doing things that requires participation of and collaboration with teachers and parents. The principal of Beach High described how dramatically his own role has altered: *"Now I'm not doing the things which I believe I should be doing as an educator. I am forced to be more sort of administrative in dealing with the changes, and I'm still being inundated"*. The Beach High principal's characterization of his new role underscores the importance of individual's *theories of action*s or value orientations in shaping new roles. These orientations act as motivators or filters, which predispose individuals toward seeing situations in certain ways and taking certain courses of actions (Law *et al.*, 2003: 505).

Based on their particular outlook, theory or frame, principals adopt particular strategies to deal with changing governance and management demands. The particular frame that principals adopt provides a script for relating with parents, learners and educators who are supposed to be playing new roles, and a school environment that is supposed to be managed and governed in a more participatory fashion. According to Bolman and Deal (1993: 22-25), principals employ the structural, human resource, political and symbolic frames as lenses to view situations, and to interpret and respond to particular circumstances. The structural frame relates to clear goals and roles, productivity and purposeful organization; the human resource frame emphasizes needs and motives and a caring atmosphere that provides real opportunities for participation and shared decision-making; the political deals with bargaining and compromising interests to maximize resources; and, the symbolic centres attention on generating commitment through symbols, shared rules and understandings, and loyalty.

By and large, all the principals in this study tended to resort to the structural and symbolic frames to deal with this challenge. For example, a number of the principals indicated they were sharing more decision-making responsibility with other stakeholders, especially with the deputy principal, heads of department[16] and teachers. This change developed not necessarily only as a result of the establishment of the SGB, but out of a necessity to delegate, particularly to teachers, as the number of decisions which needed to be taken at the school level increased. The principal at Beach pointed out that for the sake of organizational efficiency, they have various committees, including "*a human resource committee*", which is given powers to interview and appoint people. Ironically, although the committee reports back to the SGB, he pointed out that the SGB "*basically rubber-stamps the committee's decision*". Principals and educators, who share a professional culture and some common interests that conflict with parental concerns, are dominant in the decision-making forums. In such circumstances, the delegation and the use of committees which provide teachers with greater access to decision-making powers, may be "*a form of collusion"* (Anderson, 1998: 580) that limits parent and learner voice.

16. In their organizational structure most schools in South Africa depending on the size of the learner population, and course and subject offerings, may have one or more deputy principals and a number of heads of department for particular subjects or learning areas e.g. one for languages, another for science etc.

The power of the principal actually expands when it is shared, since the input of staff in decisions may provide ground level support for a principal's ideas. Where they support and encourage greater participation, the principal, as the head of the institution tends to retain ultimate authority. The Principal of Eastern High described his position thus: "*I let people speak out, which helps me assess whether the decision that I want to put in is the correct decision. By virtue of knowing policies, I am the main person who influences the entire SGB. Presently, one tends to override the SGB".* Clearly these schools are still subject to strong personal control and influence by principals. Despite a belief in more democratic decision-making (an espoused theory of all the principals) and some delegation of some decision-making powers to educators and parents, principals retain most power. As a consequence, the principals' *theories of governance in use* dominate and often their conceptualization becomes the SGB's form of governance. Their theory-in- use is that they have to retain control over most decisions in order to ensure that the school as an organization functions efficiently. In practice, the principal's theory of governance is that participation of parent and other stakeholders in governance is good in so far as it facilitates such efficient management of the school.

While there is some negotiation, the discourse of consensus and the semblance of greater democracy obscure the continued dominance of principals. This is not to suggest that all principals behave with "Machiavellian intentionality" (Anderson, 1998) to secure power. It is more likely that the prevailing circumstances in interaction with individual positions reinforce existing patterns of power and decision-making rather than encourage real participatory decision-making. The strategies or frames employed are mediated by personal and organizational characteristics. Personal characteristics include the principal's age, gender, experience, whereas organizational characteristics refer to the school's history, the values shared by staff, and the principal's power to influence. Nevertheless, despite slight variations owing to the organizational effects and individual differences, in all cases, the principals play a key role in framing and defining the reality of others.

Educators

Most teachers welcomed the SGB, seeing its purpose in terms of support like principals. Almost all educators like Mrs. Xumalo in Zulu High, defined the role of the SGB as "*to make the school function properly*". Teachers tended to appreciate parents' involvement in school governance "*because many problems have been eliminated*". Although most teachers welcomed the establishment of the SGB, there were also a number of tensions in relations between educators and the SGBs. Mr. Nyela, a teacher at South West High, felt that "*there are other grounds where the SGB shouldn't be involved, such as managerial matters, which are the principal's grounds"*. Many teachers are uncomfortable with the SGB involvement in what they define as professional matters and according to one principal, many teachers view parent or SGB involvement "*as interference of parents who are not educated"*. The conceptualization of the SGB as the parents' body and teachers' perceptions that the SGB was failing in "*helping to run the school*", add to the tensions. A teacher at Zulu High, Mr. Ngidi described the SGB as "*a part of the parents and so they speak on behalf of the parents*". The Noord chairperson described relations*: "It is a matter of they and us. Teachers don't see themselves as part of the SGB. To them the SGB is the parents".*

Tensions are exacerbated because teachers' conceptualization of the role of the SGB is often in conflict with parents who see an accountability role for the SGB. Almost all the parent members, except those at Beach High, have no prior experience in setting standards that teachers have to adhere to. However, their experiences with the democratic struggle over the past few years have created certain expectations and a new mindset among Black, Indian and Coloured parents about holding teachers accountable. A parent at Umdoni was adamant that: "*Teachers should be accountable to parents. We should have the power to remove a teacher if he is not providing our children with quality education".*

Teachers like other stakeholders described their roles and responsibilities in different ways - as being similar to that of the members of their stakeholder group as well as those in other groups, but with some distinct differences. Moreover, they defined their roles both broadly and narrowly. The teacher representative at Beach High for instance had a narrow perspective and did not see a role for teachers in governance: "*Teachers should not be too involved in policy making because their primary function is obviously parting with knowledge and dealing with subject-related matters".* While such indifference to the SGB was common among the other teacher representatives, a number, like Ms. Gamez of Noord Sekondere, saw the SGB as a forum to express teacher concerns: " *I see the SGB as trying to ease the plight of teachers. I have to voice teachers' opinions. If the SGB makes a decision without the opinion of teachers, it might be to the detriment of the school. Management is not always aware of what's going on at grassroots level".*

The theory of governance of many teachers is predicated on protecting stakeholder interests and promoting representation and democratic decision-making that includes teachers. Others, like Mr. Ngidi, a teacher at Zulu High, defined his role on the SGB more specifically as being to address "*problems teachers have".* To him, the SGB's role is linked to providing support to the school rather than to address teachers' specific concerns: "*Last time we had a burglary problems, we were asked by the teachers to talk to the governing body to help find a man from the community to deal with thieves".* While Mr. Ngidi sees himself as a link between the teaching staff and the SGB, at the same time his role is driven by the larger context of the pressures facing the school. With the devolution of certain maintenance and security responsibilities, Zulu High is facing extreme financial pressures, which affect the staff and the school as a whole.

Yet other educators saw their role and responsibility more broadly and not just in terms of representing educators. The teacher representative at Eastern High saw his role as "*communicating now with everybody who is at school, including the principal, the staff and the learners".* In limiting his responsibility to school actors, this teacher added that "*parents are there to represent the other parents that are not there*". He did not feel obligated to secure parent's interests in the SGB. A teacher at South West High, who felt that the SGB was important as a democratic body explained that he was a link between the SGB and the teaching staff and as a result, normally circulated a note informing teachers of upcoming SGB meetings, in which he asked them to *"indicate what they would like to be said at the meeting with the governance body".* He saw himself as part of the SGB and separate from other teachers. He said: "*as the SGB of course we've got our own plan".*

While some teachers are more active than parents on the SGB and others are wary of the SGB and the intrusion of parents, a number are indifferent towards the SGB. The apathy of many teachers towards the SGB is due to such factors as: the commitment of their own daily work, perceptions of the SGB as a parent body and the perceptions of some that decision-making power remained in the hands of the principal. Although some teachers display a strong loyalty to their colleagues, most are more committed to legitimate personal concerns than to diffusing collective interests. There is uncertainty and variation in the way many teachers on the SGB are defining their roles. Yet, there are also some patterns, with some limiting it to representation of teachers, others seeing their responsibility in terms of the efficient functioning of the school and others adopting a broader perspective in terms of responsibility to the school community as a whole.

The way teachers view their own role on the SGB, as well as the role of SGB more broadly is a product of a complex series of personal, social, structural and cultural factors that underpin teachers' daily lives (Bacon, 1977: 28). A variety of factors influence teachers' views, including individual backgrounds and history, experiences, personal situations, policy signals and their own unique cognitive structures (knowledge, beliefs and attitudes). Historical circumstances and the desire of teachers to preserve a degree of autonomy also affect conceptualizations of governance. Most teachers at the Black schools in the study were members of SADTU (the biggest, most active teachers union in 1994) and were actively involved in protest action geared towards teacher rights. As a result, despite the tensions, they emphasized the necessity of the SGB to represent parents. They felt that their rights could be addressed directly through the principal and the SMT. In contrast to the Black teachers, the Beach High educator representative, Mr. Bester, said that teachers like him do not always see the "*new form of governance*" as positive and "*question the validity of all the changes and argue that the school was functioning perfectly well without a governing body"*.

Learners

There are distinct differences among learners' definitions of the SGB's purpose and role. The Learner representative at the ex-Model C school adopted a broad perspective and equated the SGB with the school management, including curriculum decision. She explained: "*The SGB is responsible for funds and creating a sound environment for learners. It decides if we can offer computers or another subject instead. So, academically they have a say"*. In contrast at Zulu High, where parents play a limited role, the learner representative felt that "*The SGB should control the school, but not what happens inside in the school, like how the teachers teach"*.

All student representatives interviewed conceptualized their role as representing students, as the link between the SGB and the RCL, and presenting learners' opinions and communicating the problems learners face. The Beach High SGB learner representative, Ms. Suzette Meiring, said that the role of learners on the SGB is to "*to hear what learners' problems are and give their opinions to the governing body"*. She explained why this is necessary: "*Many times we have got good suggestions that the governing body would not necessarily have come up with. They don't walk in our shoes, they don't understand certain things"***.** Yet at the same time, this learner (like most learners) saw a more limited role for learners on the SGB. She felt that "*students have no place in teacher appointments as they aren't the ones paying their salary*". In contrast, the learner representatives at Eastern and Southwest High felt they should be more fully involved. Ms. Bongi

Nene at Eastern High, for example, was incensed that learners were not afforded a role in teacher appointments: "*Every stakeholder should be involved in interviewing teachers. Students know what kind of teachers we need*".

No matter how learners define their responsibilities, in practice they are often prescribed roles by other stakeholders and being co-opted, generally accept them. They are often powerless to challenge dominant definitions if they disagree. A learner representative at Eastern High said it was made quite clear that they did not have the same powers as other SGB members: "*In the meeting, they tell you 'ok remember we give permission and not you. We are the ones who are supposed to do this'. So I can't really say my role is the same as the other members of the SGB".*

Few learner representatives are able to define their role in terms of their own theories of governance, and its implications for learner participation and representation. Learners, in general, are given little opportunity to develop their own theories of governance based on their own values, experiences and cognition. They appear to accept the theories of other SGB members, especially those of teachers responsible for RCL or prefect structures. Only at South West High, where learners are involved with students outside their own school (for example in the national student organization, COSAS) in exploring the discourse of democratic school governance and what it means for students, is there a burgeoning of a theory of governance specific to students.

In most cases, students accept roles defined for them in terms of the prevailing institutional theory of governance. Their socialization within the SGB plays a dominant role in shaping how they view governance. They are told which meetings to attend, the kinds of issues they can raise and what to report back to the RCL meetings. Such socialization often involves learners accepting roles defined for them by the principal – the supreme authority in school – or by a teacher responsible for coordinating student affairs. Consequently students have little influence when it comes to defining the SGB's role and purpose, and are at the bottom two rungs of Arnstein's ladder; this, at manipulation and therapy (Arnstein, 1969: 218). They are educated, advised, told what to do and hardly listened to. It's not surprising that most learners accept that the purpose of the SGB, as one learner representative at Eastern High said, "*is to ensure that students are disciplined and, follow school rules, and moreover that the school functions properly*". Learners, like other stakeholders, find it difficult to challenge historically enshrined procedures and power relations.

Individual roles and participation, representation and decision-making

How the different members of the SGB define the purpose of the SGB and their own role impacts the nature of participation in the SGB, the kind of representation that develops and the form of decision-making. The way in which individuals are currently defining the purpose and role of the SGB at these schools suggests that SGBs have developed covert roles, which predispose the SGBs towards being supportive of principals and educators at these schools, which prevents them from becoming contenders for power or truly representing constituent interests. The overt functions of governance, including oversight, policy formulation, and decision-making, codified in SASA are replaced by the legitimation of the principal's power, control of schools as well as by what Thody (1994: 3) refers to as "*consent and protection*". Furthermore, linguistic slippage, with regard to the meaning of participation, results in diverse

agendas being promoted within its discursive umbrella (Anderson, 1998). Some may view situations in which parents and other stakeholders are merely consulted and ratify decisions already taken by the principal and or management as full participation. Others may only view it as full participation when all participants jointly decide on issues.

In these schools, parents' participation in school governance, through the institutional mechanism of the SGB, is often individualistic, sporadic and depends almost entirely on the good graces of principals or the initiative of individual parents, who may or may not have the power to challenge existing patterns of participation. From the way different stakeholders are defining the role and purpose of the SGB, it is clear that the principals' views on participation are especially key in influencing the way participation of all stakeholders plays out. In fact, what principals allow, is affecting the participation of all stakeholders in most of the schools. Principals largely decide the form of power-sharing although there is some consultation with Chairpersons.

Furthermore, how principals perceive the different members, impacts on whether they value such participation. It's unlikely that principals like Mr. Rylands at Noord High will value or encourage parental participation at their schools, believing that: "*the parents involved aren't the type of people actually wanted on the SGB, as they haven't been in managerial positions to be of assistance to the school"*. In such an environment, democratic participation is hindered as parents are forced to accept the theory that efficiency and management are equivalent to the interest of the school and community. Most stakeholders tend to accept roles defined for them, without interrogating the discourse of participation that prevails, and accepting bogus participation as the real thing. Most parents therefore accept their support roles, which appear to fit in with the current *theories of governance in use*, and only a few express any frustration and anger at their exclusion from participation in decision-making about school management and organization. This does not mean that there is no conflict or tension: other stakeholders may have different conceptions of the community that the school serves. Beyond token participation in fund-raising and other support activities, some parents recognize that school personnel appear not to want parental involvement, for instance, in making decisions about curriculum and school organization.

The issue of representation is closely linked to participation, as it affects whether the interests of different stakeholder group are adequately addressed. In respect of their individual role, most SGB members see their responsibility as representing particular stakeholders, e.g. teachers representing teachers and learners being the voice of learners. But as notions of democracy and issues of equity surface, parents and learners are beginning to recognize their responsibilities in terms of representing the whole school community. For example, the Chairperson of Noord described his dual responsibility: "*I represent everybody. As the chairperson, I have to see to it that we are all equal, particularly if a party feels oppressed. But I also have to stand for the parents. This does give me powers to try and resolve conflict"*. This conceptualization may be affected by this individual's personal situation as a local pastor and a person with a long history of community activism. A learner also defined representation in these broad terms stating that *the SGB represents everybody"*, while also emphasizing that in meetings, she has to represent the interests of learners. However, most respondents defined representation in terms of their responsibility to a particular constituency, viz. parents, learners or educators.

At the same time, the reference to representing parents raises a further issue: different groups, whether parent or educator or learner, are not necessarily homogeneous. Particular members of the SGB with varying power may serve particular sectors of their constituency. While some parents see themselves as representing all parents, they may in fact only represent particular parent interests. In Beach High, which now has a diverse learner population, all parent members are middle class and professional, and may thus only represent such interests. Their chairperson's definition of his first responsibility – "*to see to it that the fees parents pay, which amounts to over two million rands, are used properly*" – reflects this orientation. Individual definitions of who they represent and how, are tied in with the context of the school.

The question of the nature of decision-making in the SGB and in school governance is also affected by the way the purpose and role of the SGB is defined. Despite SASA mandates that expect the devolution of most major decisions to the SGB, school personnel did not uniformly believe in this approach. One reason for this is that many school-based stakeholders believe that lay members of the SGB are not capable of making proper decisions. For example, an educator said: "*many decisions cannot be made by the SGB. We have to ensure that correct professional and informed decisions are made*." The theory of governance expressed by most educators in the study on schools indicates a belief in a rational decision-making process. While SASA's espoused theory assumed equal participation, it too stressed the importance of rational decision-making and required technical ability to participate. Thus, while there often appears to be a gap between SASA's espoused theory, which emphasizes wide-scale community participation and the theory-in-use of educators, upon closer examination, there is some congruence.

Meaningful participation by parents in SGB and school-level decision-making is a key element of any attempt to ensure democratization at school level. From the foregoing discussion of the role and purpose of the SGB, and how individuals involved in the SGBs are defining their roles, it is clear that in these schools, previously marginalized groups, such as parents and learners (and to an extent even educators), may only be involved in decision-making in areas that are relatively peripheral to the actual functioning of the school. Furthermore, the nature of the decision-making processes may serve to exclude some stakeholders, especially as, according to one parent, "*the view of the principal and that of educators seem to carry more weight and parents are usually subservient"*. Many parents lack the cultural capital to participate effectively in the decision-making process, and therefore accept the professional's (principals and the teachers) definition of participation in democratic decision-making.

The lack of real participation on the part of subordinate groups (parents and learners) leaves the door wide open for dominant groups to shape governance in practice. Hence a situation is developing where democratic school governance is equated with rational decision-making, minimal conflict and decision-making by consensus. Given that this conception of decision-making is dominant, most respondents viewed decision-making similar to how it was viewed by a parent representative at South West High: "*Decisions are reached on consensus more than a vote. If somebody disagrees with an issue, it is noted and members are given an opportunity to do further research or rethink the matter"*.

Defining democratic school governance in this way, appears to reject pluralism as constitutive of the nature of democracy, denies differences and antagonism, and blindly accepts

unanimity and homogeneity (Mouffe, 2000). While there is much consensus in these schools, varying definitions of the purpose and role of the SGB indicate conflict and confrontation. Furthermore, the dominant position of principals, in some cases educators and in others some parents, points to the persistence of inequalities in power derived from often vastly unequal, economic and social resources (Mansbridge, 1991).

The discourse of democratic participation however persuades stakeholders that through the SGB, they are empowered and allowed to develop ownership of the policies which serves to disguise the power dimensions of the organization. It strengthens the legitimacy of the leadership by representing governance in terms of democratic participation and consensus (Humes, 2000: 46). The persistence of certain unwritten rules of engagement clearly cement the power of dominant actors such as principals. The unwritten rules define certain boundaries and ensure a passive role for parents and learners, and for the SGB as a whole. While there is a semblance of more decentralized governance, centralized management, employing consultation, persuasion and conversion in lieu of authentic participation, results in limited or bogus participation in decision-making of less powerful stakeholders.

Participation, representation and the community metaphor

The reference to community interests was a constant theme in all stakeholders' comments on the role or purpose of the SGB. The Chairperson at Beach High for example, said the SGB "*must be alert and alive to the needs of the community and act as representatives of the parents*". However, *community* and related language such as *community participation* and *democratization* appear to be encouraging symbols or evocative slogans to emphasize the value of the structural changes taking place. There seems to be little thought on how community or its interests are defined, with most actors using the community metaphor in a taken for granted way. This practice across stakeholder groups (parent, learners and educator) in all the schools reflects notions of community similar to those expressed in policy documents.

Yet the notion of community defined by stability, closure and agreed-on norms, does not represent the realities of schools in South Africa today, and may therefore be impossible to obtain. The concentric (i.e. small, closed and stable) notion of community denies the placement of schools in South Africa in their broader jurisdictional structures, processes and histories (Opfer and Denmark, 2001). The diversity of the communities served by most schools in South Africa (including the six schools in this study) cover the demographics of race (including colour and ethnicity), culture, language, socio-economic levels, religion, gender sexual orientation, and location (urban and rural). The diversity of the ex-model C school (Beach High) is starker in terms of race and language differences, and the spread of where the learners live. Yet diversity in terms of language, culture and socio-economic levels is a fact for all schools. It is not unusual for a school to serve learners with great language diversity, as in Noord Sekondere where there are learners whose first language includes, among others, English, Afrikaans, Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho and Tswana. In a similar fashion, the township that Eastern High serves has sections with alleyways of overcrowded single-room shacks and piles of garbage on the streets, areas with large hostels housing itinerant workers, and still some areas with well-tended streets and houses with the usual high walls and pretty pavement gardens that characterize the more affluent South African

suburbs. This diversity is further accentuated by the fact that the communities are ever changing, with the upwardly mobile moving schools that are perceived as being of better quality.

Using the community metaphor, communities give identity and provide a network of support, have rules and conventions, which express a common value system, protect rights and freedoms, and serve the interests of all members. The community metaphor serves to manage meaning and shape the perceptions of the various stakeholders. Such attempts may be perfectly well intentioned and motivated by a desire to give unity of purpose to the school community. Stakeholders may sincerely believe in the notion of a unified community with common interests. However, they may serve less benign purposes and operate as barriers to thinking about first order questions regarding aims and values, and differences among communities. The effects of communities are not invariably or inevitably positive. Those which are rife with crime, vandalism, drugs, intimidation and where the quality of life is poor are negative and destructive in their outcomes. The school communities inhabited by some pupils and teachers can be similar in their effect, particularly, those in which there are students being bullied and experiencing repeated failure and where teachers suffer from stress and overwork, etc. In such institutions, all kinds of negative learning may take place: how to suppress fears and emotions, how to conceal feelings of worthlessness, how to remain silent in the face of unfair treatment etc. In such circumstances, the positive concept of community is at best a myth, at worst a sham (Humes 2000, pp. 39-40). The notion of homogeneity and concentric communities in practice effectively excludes particular segments of the community from governance and is therefore non-democratic. Parents defer to the teachers because of their class position. In the ex-white schools, even those that are now serving predominantly African, Indian and Coloured learners, white professionals dominate the SGBs. Across the schools, the interests of the poor are articulated and defined for them by the middle-class (the black educator middle-class in black schools and the white professional middle-class in mixed schools) (Soudien, 2003).

While there are certain unwritten ground rules, no territory has an internal or natural logic - there are complex and heterogeneous ways in which members of the SGB construct territory and boundaries in relation to participation in governance. Different stakeholders enjoy different degrees of political space and decision-making power, whether structured by institutional practices or legal rules regarding the powers and functions of different members of the SGB. However at this stage, a significant factor is the role of the principal in defining the political space available to each participant. While there are multiple vectors that constitute political space and meaning, for now at least, most stakeholders' definitions are subservient to those of the most powerful actors, namely, principals. While there are some differences in the way governance is perceived and practiced across the schools, the general situation is that most stakeholders display somewhat uniform *theories of governance in use*. The theories-in-use in most cases are aligned to the goals of efficient management. Furthermore, the dominant theory-in-use at all the schools is in line with that which passed through the different levels of the education system, which equates participatory local school governance with support for the school. This is evident despite the fact that most stakeholders have espoused theories of governance wherein the SGB is seen as primarily a mechanism for stakeholder (especially parent) and community participation in democratic decision-making in schools. However, contextual differences among the schools may mediate the prevailing governance theories-in-use at an individual and an institutional level.

Chapter 6
Institutional and community contexts and governance in practice

SASA and subsequent amendments to the Act outline the structure, roles and functions of SGBs – their composition, powers, channels of accountability and rules guiding their operations. But neither government regulations nor individual actors alone set the parameters for the form and operation of SGBs. The SGB is involved in educational governance and administration through the participation and representation of parents and community, and the actions of education professionals within specific institutions. Specific institutional and community contexts with their attendant norms and social relations act in concert with the other aspects to influence governance practices. The nature of the context and organizational characteristics relating to power, relationships, culture and capacity affect governance in practice and condition the relationship between the school and the SGB. Furthermore, the wide variation among schools and communities in South Africa in their racial make-up, geographical location, level of resources, education level of parents and ex-department control, impacts the way governance operates at specific sites.

This chapter focuses on institutional goals, organizational structures, as well as regular patterned activities of the SGBs and schools, noting: (1) all members of an institution do not necessarily subscribe to the same goals, stated goals may not accord with what actually happens and goals change over time; (2) structures are not always stable or durable; and (3) governance is about fluid processes involving conflict and negotiation (Kogan et al, 1984).

The general picture

School decision-making has changed: it is now characterized by greater participation of local actors in governance. Not surprisingly however in practice, the nature and extent of specific stakeholders' (learner, parent and educator) participation varies. In some schools involvement is significant at strategic and operational levels, with substantial participation in decision-making around planning, budgeting and in curriculum issues. In others, participation is only still at fairly superficial levels and hardly goes beyond consultation. There is a fair degree of uncertainty about governance in practice, as described by a district official: "*many SGB members don't know a thing about governance; the principal and electoral officer simply convinced them to join*". The participation of parents, teachers, and learners in school decision-making is a new experience for all but the ex-model C school. There is a focus in all the schools on measures to ensure the SGB is acting appropriately, as defined by the letter of the law: election procedures are followed strictly; SGBs meet at least quarterly, notices are sent to all members to notify them of meetings, minutes are kept, meetings are chaired by the parent SGB chairperson and so on. At the same time, schools are developing some distinctive patterns, given their unique experiences, the specific issues they have to deal with, the varying capacity of SGB members and the nature of the relationship between parents, principals and educators.

Confusion and uncertainty is compounded as, in addition to establishing SGBs and institutionalising a new form of school governance, schools face an overwhelming number of changes linked to the broader transformation. Since schools are loosely coupled organizations, with loose linkages, and are not rationalized, tidy, efficient, coordinated structures (Weick, 1976), uncertainty is not unexpected. Grafting the SGB, comprising members representing different constituencies, onto the school causes disturbance to the organization and its network of relationships. Multiple individual interpretations or theories of governance add to the uncertainty and messiness of school governance in practice. Yet most stakeholders initially painted a picture of little conflict and disagreement, emphasizing the ideal situation of all stakeholders working together and making decisions by consensus in pursuit of a common interest. For example, the principal of South West High indicated that the members of their SGB worked together as "*there is a complimentary scenario; we need one another to advance the best interests of the school*". There is a general denial of complex issues of school politics, as well as diverse and competing constituent interests, values and demands. It appears that the discourse of participation is absorbed into a managerial bias and institutional logic that advances the apparently neutral and supposedly agreed on purposes of the institution (Anderson, 1998: 579).

However, many stakeholders, on reflection, acknowledged that there was a fair degree of conflict and negotiation, as they struggle to establish a new form of governance. A parent at South West said that different stakeholders sometimes "*don't see eye-to-eye*" because the SGB has to *"involve parents, educators and learners on matters of school governance and put forward the interests of each group".* The principal of Eastern High emphasized the challenge: "*The SGB is supposed to represent a common interest, but the common interest is not always achievable. There is confusion with the three components of the SGB not seeing governance as something to bring all the people together".*

Despite the uncertainty that exists around governance, there is also a certain prevailing organizational or institutional "logic of action" (Bacharach and Mundell, 1993: 427) that influences individual decisions together with organizational procedures and practices. A bureaucratic logic of action, which is often implicit, is shaping the direction of governance towards a similar path in all the schools. It ranges along a continuum and is most prevalent in Beach High, Noord Sekondere and Umdoni, and more diluted as we move from Eastern to South West to Zulu High. This bureaucratic logic assumes that relying on well-defined means, goals and relationships can eliminate uncertainty in governance. The dominant theory of action (-in-use) translates into something like this: "if we follow the rules and procedures laid out in the Act and regulations then we can promote the interests of the school and by implication ensure democratic governance". The Beach High teacher representative suggested that to avoid misinterpretation of existing policies and confusion, a formal process is followed to ensure democracy: "*The SGB member in charge of a particular portfolio submits items for the agenda before a meeting. The agenda is circulated to all members and there is a formal report-back during the meeting. It's a formal process. Obviously, all members of the governing body are allowed to participate in discussions, so it is quite democratic".* The dominant theory of governance is that if formal procedures are being followed, and if there is stakeholder representation on the SGB and its sub-committees, they are involved in democratic governance.

In addition to following the rules, reaching decisions by consensus is also equated with democracy, resulting in a reluctance to vote on decisions. The principal of Umdoni High claimed this is democratic because: "*When an issue is discussed it is thrown to all in the meeting. People are allowed to input and then a decision is made based on consensus"*. The Noord High Chairperson explained that they only vote as a last resort: "*We seldom go to a vote. If however there is great division of opinion, we call a vote"*. More telling, the South West principal emphasized that they always try to eliminate dissension: "*We overcome questioning of SGB decisions by encouraging teachers to attend parents' meetings so that they don't question decisions taken there later on"*.

Taking into account the dominant governance theories-in-use, namely supporting the school to run efficiently; the SGBs may be categorized as accountable-supportive, advisory-supportive, supportive-mediating, and supportive[17] (see Table five). The categories are not mutually exclusive, and an SGB may display characteristics of another category. The SGB is placed in a particular category because of the dominant picture at the school. In the first three categories, the first role listed is the primary role that the SGB plays.

Table 5. Typology of SGBs by governance theory-in-use

Accountable-Supportive	**Advisory-Supportive**	**Supportive-Mediating**	**Supportive**
Beach	***Noord/Umdoni***	***Eastern/ South West***	***Zulu***
• Overseeing school activities • Ensuring resources are used appropriately • Providing support to the school (principal and teachers) • Ensuring smooth, efficient functioning of school	• Providing a forum for reporting school activities to stakeholders • Providing support to school (principal and teachers) ensures smooth, efficient functioning of school	• Providing support to school (principal and teachers) ensures smooth, efficient functioning of school • Expressing stakeholder interests promotes democracy and consensus	• Providing support to school (principal and teachers) ensures smooth, efficient functioning of the school

In Zulu High, while the SGB sometimes plays an advisory or a mediating role, its primary role is supportive. That the supportive role is primary in the three Black schools and secondary in the other schools is in part due to differences in access to resources. The operating budgets for these

17. The models are adapted from those suggested by Kogan *et al* (1984, pp.144-159) to describe governing bodies: accountable, advisory, supportive, and mediating.

schools differ dramatically. In 2001 it ranged from three million rands at Beach High, one million at Noord Sekondere, half a million at Umdoni, ninety thousand at both Eastern and Zulu, to a low of sixteen thousand at South West. In addition, Zulu High, which has the highest teacher-pupil ratio, has the fewest and lowest quality physical resources. The Chairperson of the Beach High SGB stressed the link between the availability of resources and the nature of governance:

> *We don't experience problems in working out what the SGB should be responsible for because money is our last worry. We have what we want most of the time. It doesn't lead to petty problems between the SGB and staff. The school premises are pleasant and well run and if you have that infrastructure, your problems must and will get less. Resources certainly impact on governance. If you are well resourced, you function more efficiently.*

Beach High SGB tends to operate like a board of a company, as the policies and principles for organizational action are established there. This is done through goal and mission statements, policy statements, organizational strategy and allocation of resources. The principal operates like a CEO implementing the organizational action in concert with his staff. The SGB-principal (management) relationship is based on a partnership built on mutual respect, effective communication, and codified procedures and rules. The SGB's accountability role here is to some extent also due to it being a Section 21 school[18], responsible for additional functions, including legal responsibility for payment of services.

At Noord High, which also opted for Section 21 status, the SGB operates differently and plays a minimal accountability or policy-setting role. It acts as a forum for information sharing and has a secondary supportive role related to helping school actors deal with discipline issues. It has developed in this way owing to school context factors such as the capacity of the SGB members, severe social problems affecting parts of the community, level of resources etc. In addition, individual influences, particularly the attitude and style of the principal, affect the performance of the SGB. The principal suggested that the SGB is not playing the role that Section 21 status implies: "*The section 21 company is run by a board of governors which is the way that they would like schools to be functioning. Unfortunately it didn't work that way"*. At Noord, despite having a budget exceeding a million rand, there is constant pressure to secure resources and therefore the general attitude of school actors (the principal especially) towards the SGB is that: "*When it comes to doing work, they are not doing anything for the school*".

Umdoni Secondary, while not officially a Section 21 school, has assumed Section 21 functions relating to maintenance and services. Unlike Beach High, however, the principal pointed out that "*most of the functions are actually carried out at school, and it is just a matter of rubber-stamping them at the governing body meeting*". Here the primary role of the SGB is not in policy setting or decision-making but information sharing. The principal felt that the SGB played a limited role because, "*it is a new concept, unlike in the ex-Model-C schools where the governing bodies have been in place for many years and do a real job*". The SGB's support role is largely through the payment of fees, participation in fund-raising and affirming decisions taken

18. In terms of Section 21 of SASA, if a SGB has the requisite capacity, it may be allocated additional functions that include the power to: maintain and improve school property, determine the extra-mural curriculum and choice of subject options, purchase text-books, and pay for services.

by school personnel. According to a number of stakeholders, SGB involvement in practice is mainly a matter of the principal and SMT "*consulting with the governing body on financial matters like school fees and extra-curricular activities"*.

In the other three (Black) schools, the SGBs play a much different role, which is mainly one of support. There is also some difference between Eastern and South West High on one hand and Zulu High on the other. In Eastern and South West High, in addition to emphasizing the SGB's support role, there is an attempt to represent specific stakeholder interests. According to the principal of Eastern High, specific stakeholder interests sometimes take precedence over school interests because: "*Teachers elected to the SGB think they are to represent their constituency – the teachers – and don't see governance as the school's interest first*". In Zulu High, the dominant conceptualization is around support with the SGB engaged primarily in making sure that things run well, buildings are fixed and students are disciplined. In South West High, even though students remain marginalized, they assert their interests more than anywhere else, suggesting that the SGB does play a greater mediating role there. But in both Eastern and South West, while the SGB is playing a mediating role, the support role is still primary. Furthermore, the challenge to increased participation of all stakeholders in decision-making is really substantial in situations where the principal feels that: "*It would be better to have administrators in schools who just make decisions without having to consult others about it, because members of SGBs tend to be so consumed with their own interest that they forget to promote the interest of the school*".

Another general pattern is that most parent SGB members play a consultative role, with governance simply being a matter of rowing under principal's direction and leadership. This is less so at Beach High where parent members who have more power assert their influence. However, all the principals exercise power so that they institutionalize their own meaning systems in the structure of the SGB and school. The exercise of power derives from the formal position as head of the school, and from the possession of certain resources and capacity. The principal of Noord Sekondere characterized his position thus: "*As the manager and representative of the department, I am the authority in the school, though the SGB want to be the authority above me*." Even at Eastern High, where there is greater parental and educator participation in decision-making, the principal plays a dominant role, as the principal explained: *"By virtue of knowing policies, I am the main influence on the entire SGB. Because of the knowledge that one has, one tends to override the SGB"*.

A distinguishing feature between Zulu High and the other schools was the role of traditional authorities in governance. Since it is located in a rural Zulu community, the local Nkhosi (Chief) and the Indunas[19] play a big role. In this rural context, the traditional political jurisdiction occupies its own dimension of political space, with traditional authorities holding positions of public trust in accordance with customary rules. The SGB, a state structure, and not yet a community institution, sits alongside or even below the traditional structure. Such authority is a potential resource of great value in maintaining civic morale and social order. Accordingly, the Zulu High SGB often calls on this authority to advance school governance. The Chairperson of the SGB at Zulu High described how they used the tribal structure: "*I just went to the tribal*

19. The *Nkhos*i (local chief) delegated some powers and functions to the heads of smaller administrative units called *izinduna* (Zulu), *induna* or headmen who are extensions of the chief's authority.

court and talked to the Nkhosi who then talked to Indunas. He told them that in each area (there are four Indunas in Kwa-Cele) the Induna has to tell his people to go to their school when there is a parent's meeting". However, at times, in involving the traditional authority, there may be an abandonment of democratic values. Participation and representation is complicated further at Zulu High, a rural school with its own socio-cultural dynamics, by the involvement of a group of other parents that assumes some SGB functions. The principal explained that to maintain discipline "*the parents formed another group, on top of the governing body, with the help of the chief of the police and chief Cele*". The existence of a parallel advisory group of concerned parents, who engage with the principal to deal with discipline issues and help with maintenance, suggests that many governance responsibilities are taken up outside the formal structure of the SGB.

Stakeholder participation and elections

The election of stakeholders is a key structural component of the new governance system – a means to ensure the active involvement of different stakeholder groups. All the schools elected their second SGBs according to the legislated procedures. The extensive regulations and guidelines, including the use of independent electoral officers were followed in all the schools to ensure transparency. One principal indicated that: "*Violation of the guidelines can cause problems in the legality of the SGB, so they are strictly adhered to"*. Special meetings were convened for the election of parents; teachers elected their representatives in closed forums; and learners chose their representatives through Representative Council of Learner (RCL) elections. There were slight variations in the election of learner and educator representatives in some schools, which affects the extent and nature of their participation.

In almost all the schools, the volume of participation, that is, the number of parents involved in the election of SGB members, was very low. The principal of Beach High described voter turnout at his school: "*Absolutely disappointing, we have 553 pupils and we should have 400-450 parents. In the last three governing body annual meetings, if we had 60 people there, it would have been a lot"*. Similarly, the Principal of Zulu High described problems with attendance at election meetings at her school: "*Maybe four or five times, no one turned up, not a single parent"*. The same was true for Noord Sekondere, Umdoni and South West High, where all stakeholders described parent participation in elections as disappointingly low.

Only at Eastern High was the voter turnout different, with many more parents participating in the election. The Chairperson described their election: "*There were many parents – somewhere between 600 and 800. The classes became too small to a point that we even had to sit outside*". The high turnout for SGB elections at Eastern High owes much to the history of the school and its close connections to the community, which was involved in the founding of the school. The principal said: "*We started the school together from the ground. While we were still negotiating with the Gauteng Department to start the school, governance was put in place. So parents got involved because they wanted a school nearby"*. In this context the call for parental involvement in governance seemed quite natural.

At schools that were hard pressed to ensure an adequate quorum for the SGB elections to take place as per regulations, there were interesting differences in the reasons for the low turnout

and the strategies adopted to stimulate attendance. While the specific reasons for low participation differed slightly across the schools, there were common references to the apathy of parents and their reluctance to become involved. The principal of Umdoni suggested that low participation in the SGB elections at his school was due to the attitude of some parents: "when it comes to *present day Indian parents, the younger ones think teaching is the responsibility of teachers and so they should not interfere. Even if something goes wrong at my school, they are reluctant to question me"*. At this ex-HOD school, the parent community is defined in terms of its prior composition, with little consideration to the fact that African (Black) students make up 30 per cent of the learners. Another principal complained that: *"parents just don't want to get involved throughout schools"*. At most schools, parents are seen as the problem, raising the question of what measures schools themselves are taking to ensure that parents become more involved. Communities and parents are looked down upon and treated as though they don't belong because they are uneducated and don't have required skills.

Strategies used by the schools to encourage parents to attend SGB elections include: the use of threats (Noord and Zulu High), accessing social networks and targeting specific individuals (Beach High), and accommodating parents' interests and issues (Eastern High). At Beach High, after the dismal turnout of parents at an election meeting in 2001, nominations were sent out in newsletters. Sitting SGB parent members and staff garnered support "*by calling on individuals in the community who would be willing to serve and could strengthen the SGB*". This approached seem to work at Beach High where there are more parents with experience and expertise in governance and management (human capital), who belong to stronger social networks, rely more on networking and try to protect a sense of neighbourliness. The principal is also more open to sharing authority with parents on the SGB.

However, even here where parents are perhaps most active, the situation is far from what is expected, i.e. an active school community fully involved in governance. The Beach High teacher representative painted a picture that is reflective of the situation across all six schools: "*Only a very small percentage of the parents are actually involved in school governance. Most parents don't care two hoots about what the governing body is actually doing. Once they have voted in someone, their responsibility stops"*. But at Beach High, networking and tapping of human and social capital ensures that some qualified people are available for the SGB to operate efficiently. It also ensures that particular classes or types of people are represented. Even when membership is expanded in terms of racial composition, it is shaped in particular ways. The Beach High SGB Chairperson explained: *"There is only one member from the Black community on our governing body and he is a principal of [another] school. He was convinced by us to stand for elections. We knew he understood the workings of the SGB"*.

Valuing and understanding the community also played a part at Eastern High in the positive community response, as the Chairperson described: "*We do not prolong the meeting and that makes them come. We make them feel special so they contribute in the meeting, rendering them more important, than they would be if we just told them what to do and what not to do"*. In Beach and Eastern High, closer links between the school and community are largely due to the history of involvement. While the communities they serve are very different in their racial make-up and socio-economic status, both take into account the community make-up and then design appropriate outreach strategies. However, the practical outcome of the election strategies in the

more advantaged schools is that exclusivity is encouraged. Parents who are less educated, of lower socioeconomic status or deemed not to have required skills are excluded or else discouraged from participating. In addition, new members from outside entrenched groups are assimilated into accepting existing practices and the status quo.

Learner representatives are generally elected through the Learner Representative Council as required by the SASA. Each class usually elects two representatives to the RCL, which chooses the representatives to the SGB. In most cases, the RCL chairperson is automatically chosen as one of the representatives. In Beach High, the school maintains a prefect body and an RCL. There the Head Prefect who is also an RCL member is on the SGB, instead of the Chairperson of the RCL.

The election of educator and non-educator representatives on the SGB appears to have followed the procedures laid down in the SASA, with little variation across the schools. Most school staffs convened special meetings as required and elected the specified number of representatives to the SGB in their respective schools. While the procedures followed are similar, the specific institutional contexts affect who is chosen. Educators were elected to the SGB who appear to be leaders, through association with the teacher union, by being part of the administration or a voice against the administration. At Eastern High, for example, in addition to knowledge and experience, membership of the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) appears to have played some part in the election of the teacher representatives. The school as a whole has strong SADTU connections, as it was founded by the leadership of the district SADTU branch. Moreover the principal, Mr. Samele, is the SADTU Branch Chairperson who led the drive to create Eastern High. There appears to be some common ground from the outset between the educator representatives and the principal. In contrast the Noord Sekondere teacher representative, Ms. Gamez explained that she was elected because of her "*feisty nature, and ability to challenge the principal*".

Local school and community dynamics played some role in the selection of the educator representatives at South West, Zulu High and Umdoni Secondary. At both South West and Zulu High, a key consideration in the selection the teacher representatives was their residence in the area. The reasoning being that they would have knowledge of the local community and it would be easier for them to attend SGB meetings, which are sometimes held on weekends. At Umdoni, Mrs. Raidu, one of the educator representatives, is a local resident, has children at in the school and is married to a KZN DOE official. She explained: "*I was elected by the staff basically because my husband is in the education department. He is currently a SEM* (Superintendent Education Management) *for the Umzinto circuit*." The specific circumstances of the election of different stakeholders at each of the schools do impact their participation on the SGB as well as the functioning of the SGB as a whole. At Umdoni, for example, the teacher representative's unique position facilitates the operations of the SGB at one level, but also has a constraining effect and leads to a fair amount of tension.

Participation in the SGB

Broader participation in governance and democratic transformation is expected to occur through the SGB as "*the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body*" (RSA

President's Office, 1996: 14). The SASA is based on a theory of representative democracy, with the power to make binding decisions vested in stakeholders who simply take part in governance. But participation is highly controversial in practice and may vary from stakeholder to stakeholder and from one site to another in terms of scope (proportion of people involved) and intensity (scale or duration) of the activity (Huntington and Nelson, 1976). Participation within and across stakeholder groups, varies across the schools over time, depending on issues, school circumstances and individual inclinations. A learner at one school pointed out that while everybody participated, "*some teachers, and even some parents are more active than others, have more to say than others. Others just play a very passive role and just listen".* A consistent trend is that learners and parents face real challenges in expressing their voice in governance.

Parents' participation

Participation of parents in the SGB is adequate from a structural or procedural perspective in most of the schools. Meetings are generally held on schedule, usually once a quarter or once a month, and parents attend regularly. However, there have been occasions where parent members have been dismissed for non-attendance or have resigned because they are unable to fulfil their commitments. At Umdoni a special by election had to be called to replace a parent member who failed to attend a series of meetings. At Zulu High many meetings were called off because parents did not turn up for scheduled meetings. The Principal lamented: "*Unfortunately, in this community the parents don't attend meetings. Last year even when we were supposed to tell them how the money works, only one person came.*" Yet most stakeholders perceived parent participation as being very high. The parents and learners who painted a picture of high parent participation in the SGB stressed that this was the first time parents were substantially involved in a formal decision-making structure in the school. A number pointed to their consistent and high attendance at meetings, while others said that they were active, did most things and " *contributed a lot in discussions".*

Parents, and particularly SGB Chairpersons, appear to work more closely with the principal and management, and to a lesser degree with teachers directly. The South West High Chairperson said: "*Anything which the principal and SMT do nowadays, if they want to buy something, if they want money, they have to contact me"*. At the same time, direct contact between teachers and the SGB is sometimes frowned upon and seen as the SGB getting involved in management issues. This was raised at Beach High, where the principal indicated that a teacher's approach to the SGB for long-leave created much tension between the SGB and the SMT. According to the Chairperson, they only resolved this issue because they were able to define this as a management issue, to be dealt with by the SMT.

While parents are increasingly more involved, the extent of their participation in decision-making varies depending on the kinds of decisions and the school. Parents are more involved in discussions around finances, helping with learner discipline and in building maintenance. For example, at Umdoni parents on the SGB "*insist on a financial report at each meeting, but in terms of curriculum and other school matters they aren't that much involved*". Then again the nature of parent (and of SGB) participation in budgeting and financial matters also differs dramatically across the schools, with deep involvement in actual decisions around finances occurring at Beach High, and the SGB playing a ratification role in the other schools. The

significant role of parents in Beach High is linked to the status and professional expertise of the parents on the SGB. The student representative at Beach High explained: *"Parents have been on the governing body for a long time and are qualified. They are businessmen and know where they come from. They have a lot of say. On every issue, the parent who is an accountant looks at it from an accountant's perspective and gives his opinion. It's really good".*

Parent participation is changing over time, with some growth as parents acquire greater confidence and expertise and as principals allow or facilitate greater participation. The principal of Eastern High described one such change:

> *It is a process that one is working on. At first I drew up a budget and took it to the SGB. Most of the time, they just adopted it, saying I know better. Then I decided to shift from doing it alone. I got the treasurer (a parent) to come in and we draw up a proposed budget together after getting the needs from all the departments in the school. We then took it to the SGB. Well, now the SGB is starting to give their inputs.*

Overall parent input is valued and parents on the SGB are seen as being very capable and as having expertise and a lot to offer" only at Beach High it appears; in the other schools this is thought of only one or two parents, who are allowed to play a more active role even in policy-setting. In the majority of cases parents are seen as inexperienced and lacking in expertise. Their input is trivialized because many of the dominant actors, especially principals, feel that they "*do not know what school governance really means*". As a result, the teacher representative at Noord Sekondere pointed out that: "*Parent members are easy to push over. They are not aware that they can get involved in many issues and leave things to the teachers and principal – the experts".*

The high parent participation in some schools may be in part due to the history of the schools, the longer tenure of the SGB and prior experience in local school governance. These organizational characteristics had a direct bearing on the functioning of the SGB at Eastern and at Beach High for example. However, even in these schools the question still remains whether parent participation makes a difference in actual decision-making. A teacher at Eastern High commented that: "*Parents merely accept what educators say. In other words we the professionals lead them".* The parent component at Beach High on the other hand has a fair degree of expertise, which enables it to participate actively. For example, its SGB can call on the legal expertise of some parent members. The Chairperson explained: "*The school has been fortunate. We've always had a person on our SGB in the legal profession. Right from the word go we discussed the SGB role as laid down in the Act. Again, as issues pop up, we go and look at the act with the help of these people".* At Beach High, the espoused theory and theory-in-use equates the ability to participate in governance with the possession of certain technical skills. Interestingly this is in line with what is expressed by most principals as well as administrators at national, provincial and district levels.

The financial commitment of parents in this school also appears to afford them the right to participate in governance, including in academic issues. The teacher representative there said: "*Obviously parents are major stakeholders at a school like ours because they pay a considerable amount of money to have their kids here".* The espoused theory is that parents are entitled to

participate in governance, but in practice (the theory in use) such entitlement is not accorded to all parents. While it appears that parent participation is highest at Beach High, parent participation is limited by race and socio-economic status. Almost all members of the SGB are white, professional and upper-middle class even though the student population is about 50 per cent white, 30 per cent Indian and Coloured and 20 per cent Black. Beach High's lone Indian parent SGB member, Mr. Shah, the Chairperson, is a lawyer; the one African (Black) member, Mr. Shezi, is a school principal. However, participation of the more privileged is not limited to Beach High. A teacher representative at South West High pointed out: "*the parents who contribute, are the parents who are knowledgeable and of course who are more educated and know what is expected from an institution*". Participation across the schools is related to social status, income or occupation, race and geographical proximity.

Despite some gains in some schools some of the time, the way that the agenda for meetings is drawn up reflects how limited parent participation is in practice most of the time. The issue of who draws up the agenda reflects the form and extent of power sharing between the principals and the parents. According to regulations, Chairpersons are expected to preside over meetings and are responsible for drawing up the agenda for SGB meetings. Except at Beach High, where it is done in consultation between the principal and chair, the principal draws up the agenda. A vital element of power, namely, that of placing matters on the agenda to be discussed and decided, remains out of parent's reach. The principal at Noord captured the prevailing situation: "*The agenda is drawn up by the principal in consultation with the chairperson. But that is a very faint line. Very few parents or even the chairperson actually comes forth with what is to be discussed at the meeting*". Similarly the principal of Eastern High pointed out that he consulted with the SGB Chair in drawing up the agenda but *"comes up with the bulk of the proposals for the agenda*". One of the paradoxes of the discourse of participation is that the focus on following codified procedures and fulfilling certain defined functions in the interests of the school may actually reduce the participation of parents.

Principals' participation

Principals are the key participants in school governance by virtue of their position as head of the institution. Furthermore, the structural arrangement where principals head the internal management (SMT) and are ex-officio representatives of the department of education on the SGB, cements their dominant position. The principal of Noord Sekondere highlighted the dual role he plays: "*I see my role as an advisory, providing guidance to the different stakeholders, explaining SASA to them – what it means exactly. I make sure people know exactly what their roles are. But I also have to curb people from overstepping the boundaries*". While this principal suggests that he plays an advisory role, he is much more domineering in reality and his guidance is prescriptive in that he interprets the Act for the other participants and steers the SGB. This illustrates a key challenge in enabling greater participation of all stakeholders in governance and decision-making. Principals find it difficult to confront the fact that the role they play has changed as it challenges their entrenched authority. The Beach High principal revealed this: "*At governing body meetings, educator representatives raise certain issues that should come through me. I am almost being left out of things. It is in a sense undermining my role as the chief administrator. Maybe it is my problem, hanging on to a past where everything was filtered through the headmaster*".

Without exception, the principals, are not only the most active participants, they often also dictate how the participation of other stakeholder develops. This is not surprising, given the pivotal position of the principal, and is evident even in Beach High, where broader participation of stakeholders is most prevalent. The Beach SGB Chairperson explained: "*Our communication and contact with the school, the learners and the educators, is through the principal. He is really the accounting officer and the link between the school and us"*. The principals comprise a relatively diverse group in terms of background, experience and gender and have to deal with different circumstances, and relate to SGB members with varying capacity and power. A dominant position is however true for all. There is some variation in how they execute this dominance, given differences in personal characteristics and in their organizational and community context. Despite minor variations, the central role of the principal in governance, continues largely because of the legacy of the traditional authority of the principal, the history and experience of the school with governance, and the principals' personal attitude towards relinquishing power.

The dominant position resulting from the structural arrangements is reinforced by the specific actions of each of the principals in relation to the context of their own schools. Explicit actions that ensure that principals are playing the most dominant role in the SGB and more broadly in governance are augmented by a variety of covert actions, their continued positional authority and position, and their relationships with parents and teachers. Hence we find that there are some differences to the extent in which principals are able to exert their influence, with it being strongest in Noord Sekondere and weakening, but only slightly, as we move from Zulu, Umdoni, South West, and Eastern to Beach High.

Learners' participation

Learners view their participation in governance rather differently from other stakeholders, with some over-rating of student participation by students and parents. Teachers and principals, on the other hand, feel that students play a minimal role, with limited participation and little or no influence on decision-making. Teachers were especially critical, pointing out that there is much lip-service by school management and the SGB when it comes to student participation in real decisions.

Learner representatives attend SGB meetings, but this is not regular, with many having only attended one meeting over the course of six months. More importantly, even when they attend, they seem to have little say in what goes on there. Except in South West High however, most learners were very positive about their participation. The Beach High representative (and most learner representatives), painted a picture of on-going engagement of learners in governance: "*We interact a lot on the SGB. They include us. It isn't like here is the staff and there are the learners. For everything they do, they ask our opinion"*. However, some parents and teachers presented a somewhat different picture of learner participation, insisting that it is minimal and limited to structural participation; that is, they are on the SGB but qualitatively they contributed very little. The Chairperson at Umdoni went so far as to describe learner contributions as virtually non-existent: *"In the last the last three years, they have made little contribution, last year, nothing. Even when they attend, learner reps just sit there and wait. They*

make no contribution". A number of learners themselves on reflection acknowledged that they participated sparingly in discussions on key matters. In fact, they were often excluded. Learner representatives pointed out that on occasion they are told by the principal or teacher representatives that: "*it is not necessary for them to attend the SGB meeting, as nothing being covered is of concern to students*".

In most cases, but particularly in the schools that still have dual prefect systems or where these overlap (as in Beach, Umdoni and Zulu), there is a strong sense of co-option of learners. While official regulations do not specifically outlaw the prefect system, it is frowned upon as a limiting factor. The Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, in a speech on the Education Laws Amendment Bills stated that the Representative Council of Learners (the RCL) is "*the only recognized and legitimate learner body at the school*". He argued that prefect bodies, which are not democratically elected, though put forward as the group representing learners, in their rightful place, are an arm of the management of the school, appointed by the school to serve a different function from the RCL (Asmal, 2001). The dual system limits learner participation in governance, which is channelled through traditional routes, with little space being provided for learners to become involved in actual decision-making in the SGB.

Nevertheless, all the representatives gave a very positive image of their involvement, saying that it provided a channel for them to voice learner concerns. In terms of this, it would seem that learners are not engaged in larger discussions around policy and overall governance, but are often limited to very specific day-to-day concerns of students around dress codes and the like. The closing of school premises is one different specific area that was dealt with. In 2001 and 2002, there was much controversy especially in the Gauteng schools relating to school safety policy and the closing of gates during school hours[20]. A number of stakeholders at both Eastern and South West High described the gates issue as a time where students and the SGB were on a conflict course. That student power was actually being reduced through their participation in the SGB, can be seen in the way it was dealt with at South West High school. A teacher explained: "*We had to sit down to convince learners of the importance of closing the gates. We ended up being in agreement and announced this to all the students. But outside elements disrupted the agreement and now the whole thing is a mess*". The SGB learner representatives at the school perceived the situation quite differently, believing that most students were against the closing of the gates, and that the decision taken by the SGB did not actually represent learner concerns.

In both Eastern High and South West, where learners are more involved in governance and concerned about representing the interests of students, there is a greater sense of learners engagement. Even so the South West High learner representatives were outspoken about their limited role in governance and complained that other stakeholders prescribe the roles of learners': "*If you are presenting at a meeting, you are told to remember that they are the ones who are supposed to give permission and not you".* A key difference between South West High and the other schools was that the learner representatives at this school appear to be involved in student affairs more broadly, being the leading members of the local branch of the students' union,

20. In a directive issued by the MEC for Education for Gauteng (and subsequently by other provincial MECs), schools were to have complete lock-downs, with no student being allowed out during the school day. In the past many students, especially in the township schools left the school during the lunch breaks. The education authorities had decided because of issues of violence and the safety of students to institute the lock-down.

Congress of South African Students (COSAS). They were afforded greater opportunities to voice learners concerns on school policy broadly. But their concerns were not acted on, leading to frustration among student leaders.

Some teachers were especially critical about the way learner participation was playing out, pointing out that there was much lip-service on the part of the school management and the SGB when it comes to student participation in real decisions. Despite the role of learners being limited, a number of stakeholders appear to welcome a role for students as part of the effort to promote democratic decision-making. For example, the principal of Beach High, Mr. Patterson, emphasized: "*Learners have a right to have an input into various things even though it may upset some of the more traditional people. It actually improves the school*". This reflects the big challenge that all the schools face in making student participation more meaningful and moving it beyond just attending meetings to listen to what's going on or merely making some presentations. Their voices have still to be taken into account in making actual decisions across most schools. Nevertheless, the SGB does provide a forum for student leaders to voice student concerns.

Educators' participation

Educators generally felt that it was desirable and necessary for them to be represented on and to participate in the SGB, but are also cautious about the level and value of participation. Teachers don't always value participation, as some see it as an impediment to their work. For example, the teacher representative at Beach High referred to teachers' impatience with decision-making as a result of wider consultation: "*Even though it is supposed to be more democratic, it can lead to irritation when there is an immediate need for something, as it first has to go through the governing body and they expect ready answers*". However, such a negative perception of the SGB was limited to Beach High where teachers appear to have had some role in management through the SMT for a longer time. In some ways this teachers' position may reflect the situation at Beach High where the SGB acts an accountable body, and the educator component is not in a position to define the agenda or dominate proceedings at SGB meetings. Here we find that the parent component and educators act on an equal footing, and the parent component does have greater authority.

Even in cases where teachers defined the SGB as the parents' body or saw SGB involvement in school affairs as interference, they welcomed the SGB and were quite active in the SGB, often dominating proceedings. The teacher at Noord Sekondere said: *"It's easy for the principal and teacher reps to overrule the parents because they are not aware of their duties."* But other teachers insisted that the teachers did not play a key role on the SGB and that *"parents are the ones who are discussing and influencing the decisions that we are taking on the SGB"*. In reality, even if they don't dominate proceedings, teachers generally shape the operations of SGBs. Teachers often shape participation in the SGB by insisting that the SGB has no jurisdiction over professional matters. For example some teacher representatives make sure that *"teachers are not discussed at the SGB meetings because it is a professional issue"*. To this end, the teachers often request that the SGB be *"enlightened to what their proper mandate is"*. Teachers are thus very active in most of the schools not only in actual proceedings, but also in interpreting the mandate of the SGB.

Representation

How representation is played out is dependent on both individual conceptions and conditions in particular schools. The communities and stakeholder groupings that the schools in the study serve are hardly homogeneous. Some of the school communities (South West, Noord and to a lesser extent Eastern) face a greater threat from the negative and destructive effects of crime, vandalism and poverty issues. In Beach High, Noord, and Umdoni Secondary, the school community is fairly dispersed and more diverse racially and socio-economically. In this context, current individual and school-wide conceptions of community interests and homogeneity of communities actually deny the complexity of representation.

The community metaphor and attempts at enforcing consensus tend to minimize the representation of more diverse communities. Stakeholder representatives on the SGB may represent particular sub-groups or develop a sense of responsibility in which the school becomes more important than those they are supposed to represent. At Eastern High, the principal, who defined representation in terms of the interests of the school, expected all components to represent a common interest: "*Educators think that they are representing educators, learners see themselves as representing learners, and parents see themselves as representing parents, which is not in the interests of the school"*.

Representation becomes more problematic when the school-as-community is narrowly drawn and is restrictive and exclusionary. In Beach High, the community is quite dispersed with many of the students who are not white, coming from outside the neighbourhood of the seaside town/village that this school served in the past (before 1990/92) when it began integrating. Yet the community is still defined in the same way by key actors at the school. For example, the principal said: "*Living in a small community, we know the people in the area."* Even if it is recognized that the SGB is not representative, blame often falls on particular parents for not being more involved. The Chairperson at Beach High described their attempts at broadening representation: "*We discussed the issue of the school population being fifty-fifty and thus shouldn't the SGB be more representative. The difficulty is that most black parents find it difficult to attend meetings, they just not geared for it and there isn't that willingness or someone there who fits the job"*. Similarly a parent at Umdoni said: "*I am for democracy, I am for representation of all race groups at governing body level, but once the election is held, I mean that is the only legal way*".

Representation across the schools is clearly affected by the historical context, ideological constraints, as well as the balance of power that exists within these schools and in their communities. The realities of historical experience are important as people operate within the confines of what existed before. The persistence of ideology and belief are moreover powerful intervening factors especially in a society like South Africa which was divided for so long.

Decision-making and functioning of the SGB

At first glance, one gets a picture of the SGB functioning in an open and democratic manner, with widespread consultation among stakeholders and on-going attempts to reach decisions by consensus. However, in practice the consultation process is managed by the

principal, all stakeholders are not equal participants and consensus is often more apparent than real. Across the schools, participatory decision-making and the empowerment of parents and teachers occurs within clearly defined operational parameters and is often symbolic. For example, the committee structure gives the appearance of wider participation in decision-making, but it may actually limit the participation of parents. At Umdoni Secondary, for example, the principal's description of how fees are set illustrates this: "*The SGB has a role in setting fees. The management and finance committee at school decide on what would be an appropriate fee, then we make the recommendation to the SGB*". Here, as with decision-making strategies across the schools, the reliance on existing organizational routines and standard operating procedures actually serve to limit wider participation. All the schools, except for Zulu High, have established a series of dedicated sub-committees for finances, human resources, building maintenance etc. In all the cases, they have ensured that there is representation of at least parents and educators on these sub-committees, with the principal or school management often also represented on the committee. While committees are representative, actual decision-making or responsibility for follow-up action (which often involves further decision-making) is often restricted to school personnel.

At most of the schools, SGB meetings are often information-sharing forums rather than gatherings where key decisions are made, as the principal of Noord High said: *"unfortunately, it is to give them information. Our meetings are normally information sharing"*. In a number of the schools, much of the information deals with maintenance issues. This was especially so at Zulu High where the SGB was seen basically as a means to fix things up at the school. In the three Black schools, the ex-HOD and ex-HOR schools, there appears to be many more decisions taken in informal discussions between the principal and SGB chairperson or otherwise by principals unilaterally or in concert with educators and the school management. Furthermore, in some schools, although in theory there appears to be a dedication to codified rules, it is less so in practice. At Zulu High, many decisions are made during informal discussions between the principal and chairperson, reflecting an espoused commitment to the rules, but in practice fluidity and informality where governance is concerned.

Most parent members have very little to say at meetings as the principal generally directs the meeting. The Chairperson chairs the meeting, but this mostly involves welcoming SGB members, outlining the agenda and introducing the meeting. In most instances, after the principal or chairperson outlines an agenda item, the principal or the teachers dominate the discussion and parent interjections are limited to clarification questions. For example, at some meetings that were observed, the principal and teacher representatives provided most of the inputs on the budget. Parents participated by posing questions to get clarity on issues they were less familiar with.

Collectively the SGBs are responsible for a range of functions including: budgeting and setting fees; developing a code of conduct for learners; determining the times of the school day; administering and controlling the school's property, buildings and grounds; recommending staff appointments; and administering the use of the school by the community. Despite the limited role that the SGBs are playing in key decision-making, across all the schools, one area where there appears to be greater involvement of the SGB is in budget and financial matters, at least in so far as these matters are raised at SGB meetings. As a parent representative at South West said: "*I*

would say what we always got is the budget stories from the principal". In contrast, at Beach High the SGB is involved in all aspects of the budgeting process, including actual decision-making. The Chairperson at Beach high pointed out that although "*the bulk of the work has to be done by the people on site, with the SGB sometimes just giving the go ahead*", their SGB is fully involved.

SGBs have become important structural players in the system of educational governance, but participation in school decision-making is less clear, ranging from exclusion to controlled participation. In school organization, the degree of involvement may be conceptualized along a continuum that includes: autocratic decision-making, where no advance information is given to participants and the principal makes the decision on his own; information sharing, where the principal obtains information from others in the organization, and then makes the decision unilaterally; consultation, where the principal shares the problem with others and then makes the decision which may or may not reflect input obtained from other participants; and democratic decision-making, where the principal reflects on an issue together with other stakeholders and after joint deliberation they arrive at an acceptable decision (Somech, 2002: 345). In general, ex-Model C schools like Beach High are making some progress towards democratic decision-making. However, even there problems remain as to representation and who exactly is participating. In most schools, there is a mix of information-sharing and consultation, to information-sharing only or a combination of information-sharing and autocratic decision-making by principals.

The opening of decision-making processes to stakeholders is a powerful means for broadening participation, but in the absence of a fair distribution of resources, it serves to empower the already mobilized or advantaged. It is empowering certain sectors of the parent population in some schools and only educators in others. In ex-Model C schools which have a tradition of parental participation like Beach High, the SGB functions relatively well, with the ability to deal with financial management and fund-raising. In the other schools, there are more problems linked to the functioning of the SGB, expressed particularly by the lack of parental participation and the dominance of school management.

Chapter 7
Administrative context – expectations and responsibilities

Schools do not go it alone, but are actively part of a wide network of structures, relationships and forces in which influences, external and internal to the school, are equally important. Moving beyond the traditional concept of the encapsulated school provides a more realistically complicated picture of the formal and informal networks in which schools are embedded (Sarason, 1996). This chapter explores the complexities in the relationship between the schools, SGBs and authorities at different levels, recognizing that (1) different authorities differ in what they do and how they do it and (2) authority may be modified by institutional and community actors involved in governance.

The SASA stipulates that "the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body" which "stands in a position of trust towards the school" (Section 15 and 16, RSA, President's Office, 1996*b*: 12-14). The Act also requires that the governing body "must function in terms of a constitution which complies with minimum requirements determined by the Member of the Executive Council" (Section 18). In addition, "professional management of a public school must be undertaken by the principal under the authority of the Head of Department (HOD)"[21]. The HOD has the authority to withdraw functions of a SGB and appoint persons in place of an SGB deemed not to be performing its functions. It is also required to provide "training to governing bodies" and "ensure that principals and other officers of the education department render all necessary assistance to governing bodies in the performance of their functions*"* (RSA, President's Office, 1996b:14-16). The SASA and other policy pronouncements suggest that the link between the political-administrative system and the school and SGB is a simple managerial relationship, symptomatic of a top-down rational pattern of policy-making and decision-making. In reality the relationship is far more complex and is conditioned by a variety of factors, which include: the level of resources, the capacity, the school, the district and the province; particular modes of behaviour and attitudes to participation and consultation; individual relationships and personal goals; administrative and political culture; and bureaucratic practices, expectations and other characteristics of the administrative system at district, provincial and national level.

Political and administrative leadership in education in South Africa emanates from the centre through national, provincial and district structures of the DOE. They consist largely of mandates and regulations and interactions between officials and individual schools. Figure two which follows outlines the linkages between the SGBs and different components of the political administrative, community context. The linkages covering formal relationships between the DOE and the school, and a variety of informal forms of contact and networks, are not static and involve complex influences. The relationships are moreover often very ambiguous.

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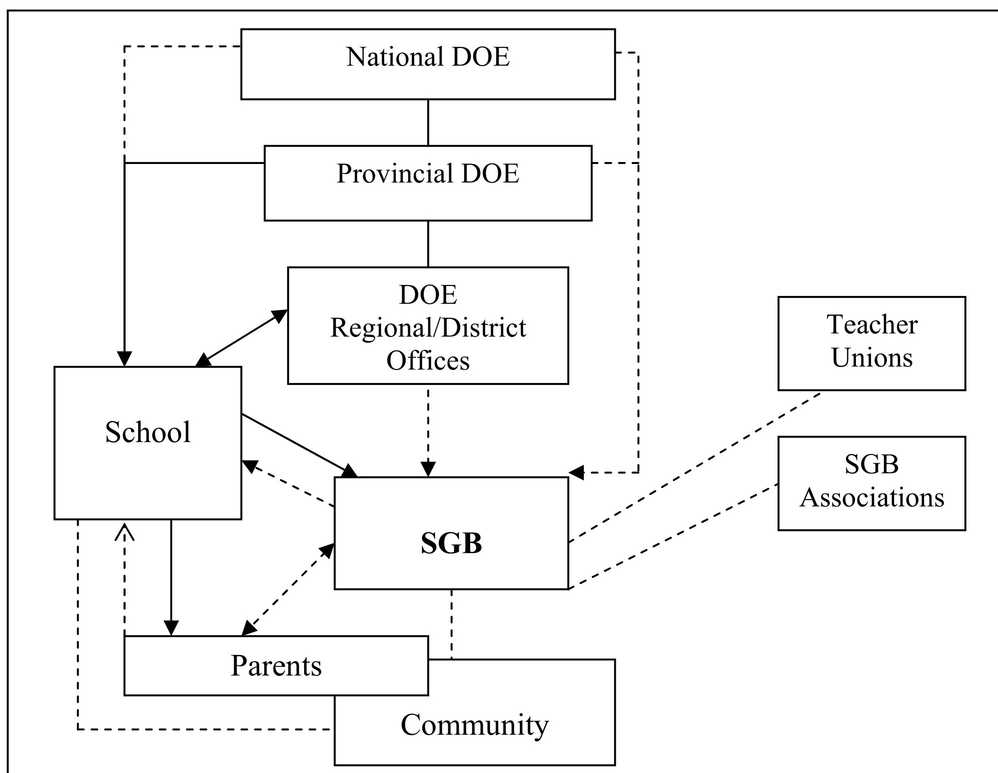
21. The Member of the Executive Council (MEC) refers to the nine Provincial Ministers of Education and the Head of Department (HOD) refers to the head of the Provincial Department of Education. The MEC is the political head, an elected member of the provincial parliament, appointed to the Provincial Cabinet in charge of education. The HOD, the executive head, is an appointed civil servant in the provincial bureaucracy.

The interactions between the national and provincial levels and the SGB almost entirely involve directives from top-down through legislation, policy statements and regulations. Some direct contact, though irregular, occurs in limited cascade training, where SGB members are told what is required. Usually one or two representatives of SGBs who attend large mass-based, lecture type training sessions, are expected to provide feedback to the other members of their SGBs. However, in most cases, little structured feedback is actually provided to other members of the SGB. The passing of directives top-down occurs via the school from national and provincial levels and from the school to the SGB.

Figure 2. SGB linkages



In the school-SGB link, in-school steering of the SGB is strong, while the influence of SGB on school affairs is weaker. A similar situation exists in the school-parent body relationship, where the school provides information to parents either directly or through the SGB, but does not receive a strong input in return from parents and the community. The SGB- community/parents relationship is weak in both directions. The same is true of the link between the SGB-SGB associations/teacher unions relationship.

The national context

The influence of government structures and actions are especially important in post-Apartheid South Africa where there is a strong belief in declaration of policy. The national

Minister of Education is accountable to the President and Cabinet and has to ensure that approved policy is effectively executed. The national Department of Education (DOE) headed by the Director-General (Head of Department) is responsible for the efficient management and administration of the department , as well as being accountable to Parliament for the funds voted to the department in the budget and to the Minister of Education for the execution of policy. In practice the DOE "provides professional resources for the development of policy as directed by the Minister" (DOE, 1995). A similar situation prevails for each province with a Minister of Education and a DOE head. Each province has regional and/or district offices that administer education at local levels.

Key central policy makers see the formulation and implementation of policy as the responsibility of government. Professor Bengu, the first post-Apartheid Minister of Education, who distinguished between policy goals and policy implementation plans, argued that "*implementation plans can only really be made by a government*" (1998: 33). In reviewing achievements since 1994, the DOE suggests that policy and legislation are levers for fundamental change (DOE, May 2001). More recently, a government gazette on religion and education policy stated: "I [Kader Asmal, Minister of Education] hereby declare the national policy on Religion and Education as policy in terms of Section three (4) (1) of the national Education Policy Act" (DOE, September 2003). This appears to further the belief in the power of policy by declaration and confirm Sarason's contention that most government-initiated education reform efforts are based on an implicit theory of change which assumes that "change can come about by proclaiming new policies or by legislation" (Sarason, 1990: 123). There is an assumption that declared policies will be translated into practice in an unproblematic smooth process, if there are strong controls to ensure that the bureaucracy faithfully executes directives from the top. But policy ideas are received and interpreted differently within different political architectures, infrastructures and ideologies. The policies are reworked, tinkered with and nuanced through complex processes of influence, dissemination and re-creation in contexts of practice (Ball, 1998). The likelihood of recontextualization is especially great in the post-Apartheid South Africa, where policy declarations often contain serious contradictions owing to efforts to address the diverse concerns of multiple stakeholders. On one hand, the policies try to address the demands of the previously disenfranchised for redress, equity and democracy, yet at the same time, they attempt to accommodate the interests of the more privileged.

National-provincial relations

The South African Constitution, the National Education Policy Act and related education legislation, entrust responsibility for government policy on education and training to the national Minister of Education for the country as a whole. In addition, the National DOE is responsible for matters that cannot be regulated or implemented effectively by provinces and for those aspects that need to be coordinated in terms of national norms and standards. Relations between the National and Provincial DOEs are guided by national policy, within which the Provincial DOEs set their own priorities and programs. The National Minister and DOE is supposed to have a larger oversight role and a smaller functional role in the day-to-day implementation of policy. In practice, the distinction is not always clear and there are always problems and tensions about respective roles at all levels.

The National DOE is fully involved in governance support by virtue of a key directive principle of national education policy that emphasizes "co-operation between the national and provincial governments on matters relating to education, including the development of capacity in the departments of education and the effective management of the national education system" (RSA Presidents' Office, 1996: 7). In practice, owing to concerns about fidelity in policy interpretation and implementation, the lack of capacity in the Provincial DOEs and on-going reorganization at regional and district levels, the National DOE has played a substantial hands-on role in the implementation of SASA, going beyond policy support. Intensive national involvement in implementation is justified by perceptions that most of the new provincial bureaucracies comprise collapsing institutional structures lacking in capacity. Concerns have been raised that the reconstruction has not created bureaucratic structures capable of efficient policy implementation, and that the poor performance of provinces is hampering the ability of the central government to honour promises made to the people in 1994[22]. Many of the concerns are quite legitimate and have prompted calls for even greater national intervention in policy implementation. In the Eastern Cape, for example, the DOE failed to pay builders involved in school construction. Similar examples of administrative disintegration are evident in other provinces.

Cooperation between national and provincial governments in implementing governance policies is fraught with tensions, which are increasing as the provinces gain greater experience in defining and interpreting their roles. As provincial governments develop greater capacity, restructure delivery mechanisms and staffing arrangements, and begin to pay more attention to local demands, their priorities are changing. Tensions are also due to relations of control and regulation, with the national department as the final arbiter continuing to define interactions between the national and provincial governments.

Key individuals from the Minister and Director General to lower level officials, interpret stated policies in practice. Such interpretation is affected by their theories of action and by the context of their operations. In the National DOE, the Education Departments Support Unit and Education Management and Governance Development (EMGD) are the critical structures responsible for governance policy implementation and development. A core objective of the units is not only "*about bringing people into a unified system, but also about the development of a shared vision, new values and attitudes, and the creation of capacity and an ethos that can drive achievement of organisational goals*" (DOE, May 2001). The EMGD directorate, which is responsible for overseeing the implementation of governance as well as management policies, assumes a *"synergy between governance and management"*. It is an interpretation shaped by its director (Mr. Pearson) who feels that "*you cannot do governance without having the bigger context of management"*.

In pursuance of its "managerial objectives", the EMGD directorate oversees an inter-provincial network to effect management and governance development programmes across all nine provinces. National level interpretations are passed through to the provinces in a variety of ways, including: (1) quarterly meetings organized by the EMGD Directorate that bring together the EMG coordinators from the provinces; (2) direct contact as part of the National DOE's

22. The first official recognition of the calamitous decline in state capacity in post-apartheid South Africa was in the 1997 Provincial Review (Ncholo) Report (Department of Public Service and Administration).

support role when provinces request assistance; and (3) training of provincial SGB support personnel and SGBs as part of the nodal area development[23]. Thus the EMGD Directorate plays a key role in interpreting governance policy directives. This is not to suggest that policy signals are uniformly absorbed by provinces and passed down, even though the national DOE, according to the EMGD Director Mr. Pearson, "*tries to make sure that we are all talking the same language when it comes to governance*".

Interactions at each level may change the policies both in interpretation and in implementation. Although this is an unavoidable consequence of expanding local participation, it is seen as one of the biggest challenges facing national officials, reflecting continuing official concern with policy fidelity. Officials regard the quarterly meetings as vital because the values and assumptions about governance and the role of SGBs are changing and there is a need to ensure a common understanding of the policy. As a result, there are on-going attempts "*to adapt the systems of control at the different levels*", and an insistence on uniformity and more national regulations including amendments to the SASA. These changes include: a new process for newly qualified teachers and for the appointment of teachers entering the education system after a break in service; establishing one national instrument for assessment of learner achievement; and introducing a code of conduct for SGB members to make it easier to deal with cases of misconduct. Other amendments and prescriptions are likely in the near future, arising from the investigation of the Ministerial Review Committee on School Governance. A task team, chaired by Professor Crain Soudien, was appointed by the then Minister of Education, Kadar Asmal, in March 2003 to investigate the effectiveness and functioning of SGBs. Its report was to be tendered in October 2003. However, a draft report was only publicly available in July 2004, so it is difficult to speculate on which of its recommendations will be acted upon.

There is a perception by national officials that there is resistance to national dictates. Mr. Pearson pointed out that for some years *"there has been increasing pressure from the provinces towards more federalist attitudes if not structures"*. Mr. Pearson is referring to the trend in some provinces, like KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape, which have had opposition political parties in power[24], to assert the authority accorded to them by the Constitution[25]. Such resistance, it is argued, is connected crucially to the broader political struggles between different political parties. For example, the Western Cape Provincial Schools Bill is different in many respects from the SASA. Other provinces with ANC majorities like Gauteng, also began to assert provincial authority, as they felt they had the requisite capacity and resources to execute their powers. For example, the National DOE had planned to establish an institute or academy for management

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23. The national Government has committed an additional R1.5 billion over three years for infrastructural development and other inputs in key rural and urban nodal points, identified for focused additional support.
24. Following the 1994 elections, the majority party in KZN became the Inkatha Freedom Party and National Party in Western Cape. Recently cross party alliances have changed the picture in both these provinces.
25. According to the Constitution of South Africa, the "Government of the Republic" is "constituted as national, provincial and local spheres of government which are distinctive, interdependent and interrelated" (RSA Constitution, Section 40, [1]). Section 104 [1] states, "the legislative authority of a province is vested in its provincial legislature, and confers on the provincial legislature the power to pass a constitution for its province and to pass legislation for its province with regard to any matter within a functional area listed in Schedule four or Schedule 5". Schedule four refers to overlapping functions between national and provincial, and includes, education at all levels (excluding tertiary education), health services, housing, language policy, police, and welfare services. As a result, the provinces have legal and managerial responsibility for the individual schools.

development. For a variety of reasons, to date no action has been taken on the creation of a national institute or academy. Consequently, the Gauteng Department of Education [GDE] decided to undertake a feasibility study for the express purpose of establishing an academy for education management and governance development (McClennan *et al.*, 2002). Another evidence of the Gauteng province's lead role is the passing the School Education Act (Gauteng Act 6 of 1995) that, in essence, preceded the SASA. This legislation was the first attempt at devising an organization, funding and governance model for schools (GDE, 2002).

National push for uniformity

The push for greater autonomy by some provinces was accompanied by an increasing tendency by the national department to go beyond its oversight role. While it recognizes that in terms of the constitution, the provincial department is responsible for delivery and implementation, the National DOE is increasingly playing a more direct delivery role. Thami Mseleku, the current National DOE Director General, suggests that DOE plans reflect *"the move from policy development to implementation of projects that will ensure that we achieve our mandate"* (DOE, 2003). Many National DOE officials see their intervention as "*being more proactive*". The more proactive stance is due to perceptions that nationally declared policy is not translating into change at school level, as "*advocacy and support for these policies are constrained and even non-existent*" at provincial and lower levels (Rensberg, 1998: 51). This stance is well-motivated considering that all the study schools were unhappy with the extent and nature of support provided by the Provincial DOEs. Similarly, the Review Committee, noted that SGBs uniformly across the range of different kinds of schools, were not happy with their relationship with Provincial DOEs (DOE, 2004).

On the other hand, many provincial and school level actors see this as the National DOE adopting a more intrusive role. Perceptions that "*SASA is so difficult to interpret and put into effect"* are reflective of the national department's position more generally regarding national provincial relations. It may be leading to a more interventionist approach at national level and continued use of legislation as a constraining mechanism to control the actions of state actors. The SASA stresses shared governance, yet paradoxically the view from the top is still that legislation and prescription is the route to transforming educational governance. There is still substantial reliance on uniform mandatory solutions and specific directives to ensure implementation of governance reforms according to the national vision.

Despite the preponderance of legislation (SASA) and a variety of regulations on governance, these are perceived as inadequate. As Mr. Pearson explained: "*For 6 years, we have been operating in a non-policy driven environment. We have a policy framework, but no guidelines on how to use the framework to create transformatory environments and effective schools".* Mr. Pearson like many others in the DOE subscribes to the notion of declared policy which needs to be transmitted through the system. The prevailing theory-in-use at a national level is that governance changes can come about by proclaiming or legislating new policies. The message communicated through the system down to the SGB itself is: if there are sufficient guidelines and controls, these will result in actions that will lead to democratic decision-making in the interests of the school. Yet governments cannot mandate what matters, because what matters most is local motivation, skill, know-how and commitment (Fullan, 1994). In addition,

individual policy makers and bureaucrats interpret the policy in terms of their own specific knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes in their particular situation and in the context of wider policy signals.

A telling manifestation of the policy by declaration mindset and its pervasiveness is apparent in some of the recommendations of the Review Committee. A prime example is the Committee's conclusion on elections, where it suggests that, "the rules and regulations around the election of school governors are not always sufficiently comprehensive to deal with the challenges of inclusivity and representivity". Although the Committee rightly identifies a key problem around representation in terms of gender and race, its recommendation takes the usual route. In accord with the official reliance on regulation and as a means to solve perceived problems, the Committee recommends, "that clear and uniform national guidelines are provided for the management and administration of SGB elections" (DOE, 2004: 79-80). With regard to gender it recommends "that at least one third of parent members on a governing body should be women. It is recommended that this be regulated through amendments in the national and the provincial legislation" (DOE, 2004: 69). Most of these recommendations are justifiable on the grounds of the exclusionary nature of many SGBs. However, it is debatable whether legislation and quotas are the appropriate response. Experiences with guidelines at the study schools, the district and province suggest that the dominant theory in action around governance ensures that guidelines translate into uniform national dictates and rules that may strengthen rather than challenge exclusion in practice.

National perception of needs

Although there is a tendency towards uniformity, the national perspective is not static. For example, it can be argued that the National DOE's stance on fee exemptions reflects a changing position in the national ministry as a whole with regard to parents' capacity to pay fees in the poorer areas. Statements by the Minister of Education, other policy-makers and officials in the DOE, indicate that the national ministry is weighing moves to outlaw fees completely in the poorer schools. In a recent speech to the Stellenbosch SGB Association, Minister Kader Asmal stated that based on reports from poor people, some governing bodies "were violating the right to equality of access to education, either through financial means, or through a deliberate neglect of the language provisions of the Schools Act" (Asmal, 2003). He added that some schools did not have appropriate processes for determining budgets and setting fees, leading to financial hardships and exclusions. In stressing that it would be premature to speculate on the possible findings and recommendations of the Committee, the Minister emphasized that he was obliged to address problem areas in implementing democratic school governance and the provisions of the SASA. He indicated that in a preliminary report, the Committee had already identified some problem areas. These include issues of representivity in governing bodies, financial matters related to the setting of fees and fee exemptions, and the involvement of governing bodies in employment matters (DOE, October 2003). The Committee found that many parents were unable to pay school fees and that this was a major cause for concern in many schools as it influenced other aspects of school functioning. It's not surprising then that in its Report, the Review Committee recommends "that a system is developed for managing, and even, limiting the increases in school fees that a SGB can set" (DOE, 2004: 134).

The Review Committee collected a wealth of information using various methods, including public hearings in all provinces, questionnaires to a sample of 1000 schools and studies of 37 different types of schools. However, completed questionnaires were returned by only 25 per cent (251 schools), and 69 per cent of these were from schools that have partial or full Section 21 status, suggesting that results are biased towards more functional SGBs. Furthermore, there are clear problems with the survey instrument, designed as a checklist to test compliance with legislation (Chaka and Dieltiens, 2004). The enormous scale of the Review Committees' work and its subsequent detailed, comprehensive report must be acknowledged as a great advance in providing new insights into governance practices post SASA. However, the kind of in-depth study necessary to get a true reflection of the complexities of governance processes across the variety of schools falls far short of what is required.

The questioning of the SGB model as a vehicle for expanding local participation in democratic decision-making is evident in the view of a senior National DOE official, who said: "*The problem with our school governance model is that while it is important for democracy in principle, its effect in implementation is problematic. Wealthy schools are performing well under this model, and have gone beyond their powers"*. The view that SGBs need to be reined in, perhaps for sound equity reasons, may actually lead to the limiting of SGBs' powers, thus reversing gains in democratic decision-making and local participation in school governance across the system, when there are problems in some schools. In some ways pre-empting this criticism, the Review Committee suggests that it is not calling for a reduction in the powers of the SGB, but is concerned that the exercising of powers in an unfettered and unchannelled manner has compromised the ability of the SGBs to fulfil its mission of facilitating social transformation (DOE, 2004: 133).

Nevertheless, it could be argued that the state is cynically changing its policies (using its legislative mandate) when faced with serious challenges from SGBs. Minister Asmal acknowledged that this approach may seem unduly prescriptive or prohibitive but contended, owing to equity concerns and its constitutional obligations, the National DOE had to ensure that all schools operate within the provisions of the Constitution and other applicable laws (DOE, October 2003). However, the general message communicated from the National DOE, which is by and large absorbed and reinforced at the lower levels of the bureaucracy, is that local school governance is fine only in so far as it serves the objectives the administration specifies. This puts immense pressure on SGBs to conform to a model that is prescribed outside the confines of its own processes and boundaries.

The definition passed from the National DOE down to the district offices, and shared by most educators and principals, makes efficiency concerns paramount. How the SGB may serve to support the effective functioning of the school becomes the object of participation. The primacy of the efficiency goal is reflected in Mr. Pearson's view of SGB elections:

> *Stopping every three years for a whole month for elections is distracting for districts. Principals complain they have to deal with a whole new group who don't even have an idea of what governance means. What we haven't done is to encourage continuity. I want to change that. I want to encourage people to stand again particularly if they are responsible for financial matters.*

The focus of the national level is then on ensuring that there are capable people who can ensure that the SGB functions effectively and is able to carry out its functions. This reinforces the position of the most powerful actors at school level, especially principals who promote similar objectives. Where participation is encouraged in the community, it often favours the most educated, most economically well off or some other elite. Individual or even community interpretation of the role of the SGB, especially by parents, becomes subservient to the efficiency discourse. The national vision dominates through prescriptions and reorganizing efforts. The dominating influence of national officials and policymakers reflects attempts at the centre to assert power and control, while simultaneously reorganizing governance and management of education that allows a degree of regional and local participation in educational decision-making. While there appears to be a commitment to decentralization and more local participation in policy statements, in practice there appears to be greater centralization in pursuit of system efficiency. This reflects the gap between the espoused theory in SASA, which emphasizes devolution of local educational decision-making as a key element in transformation of education, and the theory-in-use, which stresses professional, administrative and bureaucratic control of decision-making.

In addition, National responses to problems in the implementation of the government's stated governance policies appear to be driven by perceptions about what is happening in the ex-model C and more privileged schools, which comprise less than 10 per cent of the total number of schools in the public system. Yet, owing to continued problems around access and equity, the state's response is understandable. What is crucial, however, is the need for greater clarity about the roles and responsibilities of various levels of the state and of different actors at every level. Moreover, the DOE needs to play a more proactive role, not merely by declaring further policy in reaction to problems, but by actually supporting the democratization of schools by acknowledging that conflict and contestation are likely as new governance process are institutionalized.

Provincial context

Although South Africa has a single national education system, it is organized and managed on the basis of nine provincial subsystems. The Constitution has vested substantial powers in the provincial governments to run educational affairs (other than universities and technikons), subject to a national policy framework. The provincial Minister of Education is responsible for policy issues within national guidelines, while Provincial DOE has the responsibility for establishing, managing and supporting schools. The exercise of these powers by the provinces is affected by variations in demographics, size of their school systems, resources and the administrative capacity to assume effective responsibilities[26].

26. The differences that exist between the GDE and KZN DOE are reflected in the differential support that the study schools received from their respective provincial departments, due in part to differences in size, resources and capacity between the two systems. For example, SGBs in the GDE schools are now receiving more individual school-based training, while the KZN schools continue to receive mass-based cascade training.

These pressures together with the complexity of National/Provincial DOE relations contribute to difficulties in managing and coordinating the system, resulting in attempts to exert more centralized authority and control. These attempts at greater central control, while encouraging local decision-making through school-based governance, is manifested in the pains taken at provincial level to ensure that the law is followed. The Chief Director for education managementin KZN, Dr. Luther, who is responsible for governance said: "*Governance is very legalistic and is carefully spelt out in the law – the law says this and whether you like it or not you have to do it"*. This interpretation, which is quite narrow is consistent with and reinforces the principals' framing of school governance at school level, and contributes little to expanding broad-based local democratic decision-making.

The KZN DOE has a directorate dedicated to school governance development and learner affairs. In addition, there is a School Governance Unit (SGU) that includes the members of the two sub-directorates and at least one member from each of the educational regions in KZN. According to its Director Mr. Zuma, the (SGU) "*meets once a month, and receives reports from the regions and sub-regions that detail success stories and challenges, their plans and the support they need from the SG Directorate"*. The Gauteng school governance coordinator, Mr. Mathole, works through three different Directorates: the Institutional Development Support Directorate, Districts Directorate, and Standards in Education and Policy Development Directorate. The Provincial Governance Unit is quite small, with a staff of two professionals and one administrator. However, it liaises with the Institutional Development Support Officers (IDSOs) based in each of the 12 districts. The primary responsibilities of the governance coordinator involves liaising with the districts, providing leadership and policy in-puts on governance matters, direct support to SGBs, schools and districts, training of IDSOs on governance issues, as well as overall monitoring and evaluation. According to Mr. Mathole, one of their most important functions is "*advocacy of community participation, and greater racial and gender representation in the role and functioning of SGBs*". The IDSO's role involves coordinating training for SGBs on: meeting procedures; drawing up school development plans and constitutions; financial management; and understanding SASA, and policy development and implementation.

The provincial perspective in Gauteng and KZN is consistent with the message conveyed at national level in terms of the purpose of the SGB. At provincial level too, the emphasis is on efficiency and school support. Dr. Luther described SGB's purpose: "*The primary function of the SGB is to make the school function effectively. We have always said that there are three things that make a school run effectively: a well functioning, supportive SGB, an effective principal and SMT, and teachers who do their job"*.

In addition to focusing on ensuring that the SGB contributes to the functionality of the school, according to the Gauteng provincial governance coordinator, one of his key responsibilities is to "*get people to understand various policies and to establish a common perspective"*. He acknowledged that this was difficult because the profile of SGB members within and across schools varied so much. However, little has been done to meet the challenge of understanding such enormous variations in the composition of SGBs, with much of the provincial engagement focused on "*financial management arising out of Section 21 demands*". In line with the GDE's commitment to encouraging self-management through Section 21 Status, by 2001,

over 700 schools (29 per cent) of approximately 2,400 schools were awarded Section 21 status (GDE, 2001). The promotion of Section 21 may reflect a "new managerialism" (Ball, 1998) in the GDE, with its stress on constant attention to quality and client needs. In practice, the GDE Section 21 policy does not necessarily extend the power of the SGBs and the clients (community), but is reinforcing the role of the principal and the SMT, given the central role of the principal in the "new managerialism". In the GDE generally, it seems that while community participation is important, it is desirable only at certain stages and in certain areas to ensure efficient delivery of services. For example, a NEDLAC report[27] on infrastructure cites a GDE official: "We are committed to working with the communities but not when it comes to assessing what are the priorities, because everyone thinks that their priority is the greatest" (NEDLAC, 2000).

In KZN, the head of the SGU, Mr. Zuma, felt that the SGU had a direct connection to schools and that their role was not limited to services but included "*cascading policies down to school level*". He pointed out that as the SG coordinator for KZN he attended inter-provincial meetings organized by EMGD every two months, which "*brought together a wider group to discuss policy issues, including challenges in ensuring that the national policy is implemented"*. At the same time, Mr. Zuma stressed the importance of the province: "*Our role is to identify the gaps, to issue circulars and to make policies within our province, within the broad parameters of the national framework. We also have to interpret national policy and regulate governance in the province".* Mr. Zuma's comments reflect a key difference in the provincial context between KZN and other provinces, which impacts on the schools across the provinces. KZN has a strong Inkatha presence and is one of the two provinces (the Western Cape being the other)[28] where the ANC was not the ruling majority in the provincial legislature. Many officials in these provinces have a more provincially-based perspective and as result, in KZN you have district councils (KZNDEC) comprising representative SGB Chairpersons, the District Manager and some principals. There are also Regional Councils and a Provincial Council that advises the KZN MEC for Education on matters relating to governance. These councils also represent attempts at garnering greater grass-root support. In practice, however, they tend to reinforce the overriding concern with efficiency of the system. Despite minor differences, in KZN, as in the national discourse, there is also a top-down orientation towards school governance.

Gauteng, which is the most well resourced province, with a more developed DOE organizational structure, reflects greater alignment with national policy signals than KZN. It too has established consultative forums at provincial and district level. The Gauteng Education and Training Council, representing a range of civil society organizations, is an advisory body to the MEC for Education in Gauteng. It has advised the MEC on proposed education policy, legislation and regulations since its inception in February 1997. The GDE also plans to establish District Education and Training Councils (DETC) to advise the District Managers. In relation to governance specifically, Local Education and Training Units (LETUs) as well as groupings of education institutions in each education district, were established in 2002. Representatives of

27. The National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) is a statutory body established in 1995 brings together government, organised business, organised labour and organised community groupings on a national level to discuss and try to reach consensus on issues of social and economic policy.
28. The provincial political configuration has changed after the 2004 General Elections; the ANC secured outright control in seven and became the dominant coalition partner in KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape.

SGBs form the core of the LETUs, but the LETUs may include other stakeholder groupings. LETU functions include developing and implementing programs to determine the GDE vision for education and making recommendations on education-related matters to their respective DETCs (GDE, 2002). While the councils have the potential to provide for greater local participation and consultation, currently, their main purpose is to ratify the centrally determined GDE vision.

Some provincial officials are reinforcing school level concerns about parents and the SGB stepping over the professional boundary". One provincial official said: "*SGBs are supposed to be the superstructure of the school and not involved in day-to-day matters. They have to be in charge of financial management and try not to get involved in professional matters, as is the case in many schools".* This official, like many others, finds common ground with teachers who are hostile to what they perceive as the intrusion of SGB members in their professional domain. This development is not surprising as many officials are ex-teachers, who believe that the SGB has to adhere to certain standards, which includes not intruding on the professionals and the day-to-day management of schools. This is another example which illustrates that when the interests and values of powerful elements coincide, it leads to a limiting of the power of the SGB and constrains the democratic participation of less powerful actors (parents and learners) in decision-making.

This follows the provincial official's definition of their primary function as being to ensure that things go smoothly. For example in KZN, because of perceptions of increasing tensions, the Chief Director of Education Management, Dr. Luther, has taken an active role in trying to clarify the governance management relationship and trying to "*harmonize the relationship between principals and the SGB*". While the process reflects some attempts to facilitate dialogue among different participants, it still smacks of top-down pre-set solutions, involving discussion followed by the right answer. It also indicates not only the critical role of the provincial department, but also the key role of specific individuals in shaping policies and practices. At the same time the individual's own experience, perceptions and cognitive approach or theory of action is key. Dr. Luther pointed to his involvement in the restructured KZN DOE from the outset, and the fact that him being put in charge of governance from the beginning had a lot to do with the way the SGU and governance policy progressed in the province. He explained: "*thirty years of experience in the old Natal Education Department (NED)*[29] *has given me a particular understanding of the challenges around governance in the province*".

Whatever variations exist across these provinces, the overall trend is towards a formal, centralized form of policy making. While there are some expectations that SGBs will embrace a number of functions, the main policy signals from national and provincial levels are centred on financial management and efficient functioning of the school. While democratic objectives are spoken about, at this stage, they are not the prime focus. From national to provincial level, different value positions seem to be subsumed by the predominant efficiency discourse, and there appears to be few cleavages in opinions and much more consensus reflecting narrow technicist interpretations of school governance.

29. The NED was responsible for 'White education' in Natal as part of the apartheid structures.

District context

All nine Provincial DOEs have deconcentrated some functions to regional or district offices and to smaller organizational sub-units (circuits or wards). Some authority has been delegated to districts directly in Gauteng, while in KZN it is to eight regions and 41 districts[30]. This form of decentralization requires that districts administer and manage on behalf of the provincial ministry of education policy implementation and professional support, while the provincial DOE is responsible for coordinating policy implementation, allocating posts, providing management support to districts and provisioning schools.

The current district configuration in KZN and Gauteng (and in the other provinces) is the result of ongoing reorganization since 1994. The transformation goals required that the reorganized educational bureaucracy has new posts and new personnel with a different combination of characteristics, capacity and values. New appointments from national to districts were expected to create a new institutional and administrative culture that would promote the values of democratic participation, collective responsibility and accountability, non-hierarchical relationships, and a commitment to personal empowerment and organizational learning (de Clercq, 2001). These expectations have fallen short of by far. Almost all districts face severe shortages in qualified personnel and a serious overload of existing staff. Most district officials have succumbed to the pressure to concentrate narrowly on ensuring that legislation and regulations are followed, with little serious reflection on the justification for official policy statements, let alone any redefinition of policies in practice. They simply wait for the directives from above and pass them down the line, very seldom acting on policy creatively. In a review of education districts for the National DOE, Malcolm (1999) found that educational districts in South Africa are largely bureaucratic structures with a hierarchical relationship to schools as well as a role to control – passing down policies from Head Office, distributing resources and conducting inspections and audits.

Nevertheless, the district officials as the first line of contact between the school/SGB and the education administration have some influence on how official policy signals are conveyed. The district, despite the decidedly narrow focus on implementation, still has significant influence on the operations of the SGBs through the explicit and implicit messages it sends to schools and communities about the role and functions of SGBs. This takes place in formal training sessions and through other interactions among officials, school staff and SGB members. Hence how district officials view governance and their role is critical. In general most district officials are adopting a narrow role. Mr. Senye, a GDE district IDSO described the IDSO role: "*We have to implement policy, not formulate it, make sure schools and SGBs are implementing department and government policies, and train the parents on how to govern schools according to the government policy".*

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30. At the time of this research, there were 8 regions, but in the latest reorganization (2004) the regions were reduced to four. In Gauteng there are between 75 and 435 schools per district, and 12 to 20 schools per circuit or ward. In KZN, there are approximately 800 schools per district and 25 to 35 per circuit/ward (DOE, 2003). A reason for the different configuration is the difference in the size of the two systems. The KZNDEC has 2.8 million learners in 5,968 schools, distributed over four regions covering 184,606 square kilometres (KZNDEC, 2003a). The GDE has approximately 1.5 million learners in 2,204 schools, spread over an area that is the smallest of South Africa's nine provinces, measuring 18,810 square kilometres (SRN, 2000).

While some districts are responsible for ensuring that SGB members are trained and understand their responsibilities, the extent to which the district is discharging this responsibility varies. Furthermore, where training is provided, attendance is often poor, with "*not more than 40 per cent of parents attending workshops*". Many privileged schools generally feel that their district can offer it little in developing their management or governance skills. A KZN district official complained: "*The ex-HOD and Model C schools believe they know it all and there is not much we can do for them. When we have workshops to tell governing bodies how to run their schools, they are not there. They simply don't attend these meetings".* However, some officials sanction such exit by these schools. The principal of Beach High explained: "*Our district manager, without having ever said it, recognizes that we have a certain level of expertise. When they have workshops on governance, we haven't gone, but we haven't been rapped over the knuckles".*

The relationship between the schools and the district is affected by factors such as administrative procedures, the capacity of the districts, the nature of accountability, historical relationships, experience with governance, channels of contact and the relative influence of the principal at each school. Power is unevenly distributed throughout the system, but is still very much top-down in structure and operation. While the use of political/administrative authority is still very hierarchical from national levels down to schools, there is growing evidence of negotiation and the accommodation of schools that set strong boundaries. Yet at the same time, provincial and national efforts are underway to rein in these schools. From the school's side, the assertion of boundaries is particularly strong in the more privileged ex-Model C schools, which regard themselves as self-sufficient. Sometimes boundaries arise by default because officials are overburdened and limit their interaction with schools. The tendency is to interact less with schools that they perceive as having the capacity to carry out the stipulated governance functions. Even so, the interaction is quite minimal across all the schools and appears to take place mainly in response to crises in the schools.

For most schools, the relationship is not a negotiated one in which experiences and capacity are shared. Rather it is all about, in the words of a number of officials: "*telling governing bodies how to run your schools".* This is reflective of the general pattern that operates at school level where the principals and other professionals are telling parents and learners what governance is about. Clearly within the administrative chain, from national down to districts, there is the prevailing view that, as one official said: "*with governance, the law says this and whether you like it or not you have to do it".* Although many policy statements hint at expanding democratic decision-making, in practice, the approach is still one where the authorities try to directly influence the work of SGBs as well as shape the nature and substance of school governance. While central policy signals are key influences, much depends on local officials with lower-level discretion as a constructive element of policy delivery (Elmore, 1979).

Furthermore, district officials leave principals a free hand to shape the direction of the SGB, as long as they conform to the law. The power of principals to shape governance policies in practice is further reinforced by the fact that the principal remains the main intermediary between the SGB and the district (and all other levels of the administration). One provincial official recognized that in "*some schools, it is a 'one-man-show' where the principal does everything*".

Another provincial official pointed out: "*Principals deliberately withhold communication from the department and from the SGB to keep the members of the governing body ignorant and in the dark so that they can manipulate the system".*

Since most district officials see management support and development as their prime responsibility, governance and SGB development is an adjunct. Some district officials recognize that in following the prescriptions of the law, they are failing to expand democratic decision-making. But the general response is to rely on a rational training approach or to complain that they are unable to alter the situation because of a lack of resources. The situation is compounded by a failure to monitor the situation adequately or take action. Schools are guided to follow the formal prescriptions, and they simply attempt to do that.

Training and capacity building of SGBs

The provision of training by provincial DOEs is mandated by SASA; Section 19 states that for the enhancement of the capacity of governing bodies, out of funds appropriated by the provincial legislature, the Head of Department must establish a program to:

> *(a) Provide introductory training for newly elected governing bodies to enable them to perform their functions; and (b) provide continuing training to governing bodies to promote the effective performance of their functions or to enable them to assume additional functions.*

Principals and other officers of the department of education are required to render all necessary assistance to governing bodies in the performance of their functions in terms of the SASA. While the Act specifically refers to training to ensure that the SGB carries out its functions, numerous policy statements present a broader view of capacity building as the means to empower SGB members, particularly parents to participate fully in SGB operations. In practice, however, capacity building has tended to take a very narrow instruction oriented form linked to ensuring that SGBs perform their functions. The principal of Zulu High described the practice: "*At workshops they are telling the governing body where they fit and where they don't fit. They are told what to do and not to do, and what powers they have".* A review of training manuals and other training materials, as well as reports from learners and parents, suggests that the content of much of SGB training has a limited focus, confined to making sure that SGB members understand the stipulations of the SASA, draw up school plans and engage in budgeting. Given the narrow focus of training, one has to question whether training is committed to altering past patterns of power and encouraging democratization and authentic participation in decision-making.

Whatever the purpose as officially defined, the actual training is variously received and interpreted, and may not often align with expectations. Most stakeholders stressed the need for more training, with school personnel and departmental officials emphasizing the need to ensure that parents obtain required skills. Almost all parent representatives felt that the training they received was necessary for them to have a better understanding of SGB operations and school affairs. Parents' perceptions indicate that there is a need for better training rather than just more. Many parents, even the illiterate ones, valued democratic participation, and brought valuable skills, expertise and experience, which were sidelined by current training practices. These

findings suggest a need to reconceptualize training as capacity building and capacity sharing that takes into account the skills, experience and knowledge that participants already possess. SGB training falls short of real empowerment, as it has a limited technocratic focus, in which the achievement of governance objectives is a matter of learning the rules. Little attention is paid to democratic deliberation, negotiation, power and influence, and building collaborative relationships.

Nevertheless, some parents regarded the provision of training, even so narrowly focused training, as empowering. As one parent explained: "*In the workshops, we learnt how to handle money and write papers on school plans. I learnt a lot of things, including what powers we have"*. However, while the training helped develop necessary skills, in many instances, it did not instil parents with the confidence to assert their authority. Moreover, it did not empower parent SGB members to make independent decisions or question the decisions of the principal or management. Rather than truly empowering parents to participate effectively in democratic governance, such training encouraged, what Thody (1994: 3) refers to as "covert managerialism, legitimation, consent and protection". The kind of training provided sends the message that the prime responsibility of parent members and of the SGB as a whole is to ensure that greater support is accorded to the school, the SMT and to the principal specifically. SGB members are encouraged to consent to principals thereby legitimating the principals' power to direct the school. At the same time, SGB members come to provide protection for the principal from the stress of school management. The principal can always blame unpopular decisions on collective governance. In this way, the training contributes to creating a climate where the principal can continue to frame and justify decisions in the name of achieving the efficient and smooth functioning of the institution.

Although most SGB members were uncertain about the district's role, almost all indicated that there needed to be greater support and training from the district and provincial department. Only Beach High felt the training was not necessary because they had the requisite financial management skills, and they felt that the trainers were not good enough. The Principal of Beach High explained: "*Some workshops presenters, who are district superintendents, are totally incompetent and don't know much. They go strictly according to the law. If they were asked a question that goes beyond that, they can't answer it"*.

Training provided is largely through didactic mass lectures by educational professionals, departmental officials, academics and other service providers. Mr. Zuma described the KZN training: "*We use cascade training with master trainers who are mostly SEMs*[31] *and principals. Training is done in groups of sixty or more."* Such lecture-based vocational training which involves the dispensing and receiving of the wisdom is dependent on SGB members understanding written materials. There are few opportunities for SGB members from one school or across schools to meet and share views and experiences, and to explore issues of democratic participation in any substantial way. In addition, the logistics of meetings held during the

31. In KZN, the Superintendent Education Management (SEM) plays a similar role to the IDSO in Gauteng. In the official job description, the IDSO is expected to monitor and support school management and administration and monitor and support school governance. The SEM is expected to provide management support to schools; coordinate training, development and support of school principals, SMTs and SGBs; monitor the circuit; and, is responsible for community liaison (DOE, 2003).

working day also discourages participation. An SGB member of Umdoni explained: "*We have to take time off work to attend meetings. Quite frankly, of the five or six SGB meetings in the last two years*, *I think they were attended by only one to two members"*. Others are discouraged because the training was often inadequate and not geared to the needs of SGB members from disparate contexts.

In these circumstances it is unlikely that parents and learners will go beyond applying narrow management defined roles required of them. Such training overlooks a key feature of SGBs: all are at different stages. Governors come and go, bringing with them different biographies and theories of action, skills and knowledge. Governing bodies have their own history and culture, principals and teachers have a range of views about governors and their abilities, and no single training method can satisfy all needs. Recently in Gauteng, there have been some attempts to develop more in-depth, locally embedded training. A day-long Saturday training session was held at South West that involved all SGB members. Although some training at this session was still provided by experts, the structure allowed for collective self-help and training was led by SGB members themselves. Even with effective training for parents, teachers or school leaders, SGBs may still not function well. Perhaps one alternative to explore in the future will be the benefits of whole school SGB training that really deals with internal SGB processes. Such training could go beyond a perfunctory focus on meeting procedures or rules to address how decisions are actually made, who initiates the agenda items and on what basis, and what the nature of consensus is.

A number of officials from national to district level identified the high illiteracy rate among many SGB members, particularly in the rural schools as a major challenge. A KZN official stressed that parents' experience and literacy impacts on their role in decision-making: "*It affects the relationship between the school and its teachers and the community, especially as many teachers feel that illiterate parents have little to contribute to school governance or to the education of their children*". However, while literacy among parents, especially in rural areas, is critical, it may not be such a serious problem as is made out in relation to governance. In fact, adult illiteracy rate in South Africa is 14.4 per cent (UNDP, 2003). This is not to suggest that issues of literacy should not be tackled within governance development and capacity building. In tackling illiteracy, however, officials may need to challenge the deficit model that is prevalent which equates parental illiteracy with a lack of intelligence or life skills.

To meet the challenge of illiteracy, a national official who said that "*SGB parent members should be encouraged each year to go for the ABET classes"* suggested there was a need to link the SGB training to a qualification. He described some current approaches they were planning on taking, and the rationale behind it: "*We are discussing with the ETDP (Education, Training and Development Providers) SETA(Sector Education and Training Authority)*[32] *that there should be some kind of learnership or qualification attached to being a member of a SGB, linked to some sort of community leadership qualification".* Although this may reflect a genuine commitment to empower members of the community, it is still very much a technicist top-down approach, reflecting the general approach to problems by many officials in the National DOE. It is what Mhlambo calls a "centralist solution" that avails of official structures only. He suggests

32. The SETAs are organizations that have been established by South African labour legislation to run, monitor, assess and accredit the implementation of training in specific sectors.

an alternative "communalist solution" that involves negotiating new social agreements in which community groupings themselves provide tutorship and share experiences (Mhlambo, 1994). The SGB together with members of the community could set up classes for adults with school buildings and facilities being used for this purpose.

Multiple capacity building programs that take into account the level of development, needs and the perspectives of all participants in governance, are needed to sustain parental and community involvement in democratic school governance. Such a reconceptualization will help challenge the deficit model of parents that underpins much of current SGB training efforts and in the official governance discourse in general in South Africa. Real empowerment has to be the goal of capacity building, because, as the principal of Eastern High said: *"If SGB members are not empowered and come to an understanding of what governance is all about, it will not be a very effective vehicle to promote democracy"*.

Other institutional linkages

In addition to the education department, within the administrative context, the SGB has linkages with other entities, including the teacher unions and national SGB associations which may impact governance processes in practice. Educators and parents may have primary affiliations to these respective groups, sometimes taking their policy cues from these organizations. Some SGBs have direct contact with these organizations, which may be stronger or weaker, given the circumstances in particular schools. For example, the links between educators, the SGB and the teacher union are fairly strong at Eastern High, given the local SADTU branch's role in establishing the school. In Beach High, there is only a tenuous link between the teacher unions and educators. On the other hand, there is greater contact between the Beach High SGB and the Federation of Associations of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (FEDSAS)[33]. Besides direct contact with the SGBs through membership links, the teacher unions and the SGB associations influence the broader policy discourse at each level, and often regulate exchanges of information and resources.

Non-profits (such as SGBs) experience a certain degree of conflict as a result of these diverse linkages, the diversity of membership and the degree of constituent participation on the board (Middleton, 1987: 141.). The teacher unions, for example, find themselves in a dubious position with regard to SGBs – they represent and have to protect teacher interests, but at the same time, they do not want to be seen as resisting democratic participation of parents in decision-making. Mr. Shezi, a senior SADTU official explained their dilemma: "*We were initially vehemently opposed to the SASA provision that parents be in the majority. However, given the history of the struggle, we had to be sensitive to parental representation and therefore*

33. The primary national SGB associations are: the National Association of School Governing Bodies (NASGB), whose membership is mainly from the 'Black' schools, and the Federation of Associations of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (FEDSAS), which represents mostly ex-Model C, ex-HOR, and ex-HOD schools. The largest teacher unions are: the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) with an estimated membership of around 140,000, mostly from the 'Black' schools, and some ex-HOD and ex-HOR teachers; the National Professional Teachers' Organization (NAPTOSA) which claims to represent about 80,000 teachers, and the Suid Afrikaanse Onderwysers Unie, SAOU, representing mostly teachers from the ex-Model C schools. Discussions with some NAPTOSA representatives and NAPTOSA public statements indicate that NAPTOSA policies on school governance are focused squarely on educator rights.

we embarked on a campaign to encourage our members to accept this provision". He added that SADTU realized that to make SGBs and school governance work, they had to establish better relations between teachers and communities. As part of its advocacy program in support of school governance, SADTU was involved in the efforts to establish a representative national association of governing bodies.

SADTU also appears to be committed to the new school governance model, in accordance with the general discourse that emphasizes the functionality of the school as the main objective of cooperative governance. However, there appears to be some recognition that the larger democratization goals of new governance policies are not meeting expectations and as currently framed, may even negate the *"rights, responsibilities and abilities of parents"*. SADTU is committed to challenging the deficit model of parents that prevails in governance discourse in South Africa, but is hampered in its efforts because many of its members continue to view parental participation as a threat.

NAPTOSA's position regarding the SGB focuses much more on how the SGB can support the school and ensure better working conditions for its membership. In a report on teacher morale, it suggests that the SGB should: campaign at district, regional, provincial and national level to improve educators' conditions of service, salary packages and security of employment; ensure that schools are physically well-resourced and maintained by motivating the school community to provide support; and, assist the SMT in ensuring that educators have minimal evening and weekend duties (NAPTOSA, 2002).

In contrast to the government and SADTU's emphasis on the SGBs as a vehicle for ensuring the efficient and smooth running of the school, the FEDSAS representative stressed that his organization saw itself as an "*agitator for parental control and ownership of education*". He pointed out that the SGB was the key vehicle for achieving this goal. FEDSAS is involved with its membership on an ongoing basis through training, assisting with SGB elections, legal advice and assistance with interpreting regulations. While the majority of its membership is from the ex-model C, ex-HOD and ex-HOR schools, there has been a concerted effort by FEDSAS to attract township and other Black schools. One of FEDSAS' biggest campaigns is to promote consultative forums in every province to advise the minister on issues of school governance. Representatives of teacher unions and other organizations as well as individuals appointed by the respective MECs, are on the provincial Education and Training Councils and appear to be active in advising the respective ministers on educational matters. For example, the Gauteng Education and Training Council meets regularly and submits reports to the Minister and the Gauteng Provincial Legislature[34]. While consultative forums have been set up in Gauteng and KZN at lower levels of the system, the extent of their operational effectiveness is debatable.

In contrast to FEDSAS, which represents mostly ex-Model C schools, the National Association of School Governing Bodies (NASGB) has representatives from governing bodies in mostly the Black schools and includes members from the South African Democratic Teachers Union, the Centre for Education Policy Development, Evaluation and Monitoring, (CEPDM), the Wits Education Policy Unit and the Department of Education. The NASGB sees itself as playing

34. For example an "Annual report by the Gauteng Education and Training Council for the period 1st April 2002 to 31st March 2003" was submitted to the Gauteng Provincial Legislature (GPL, September 2003).

a key role in the transformation of education, by supporting parents to play a greater role in educational governance. According to a senior national official, Mr. Molefe, "*one of its greatest concerns is minimal or non-involvement of parents in real decision-making at schools*". The NASGB has been particularly vehement in its attack on the governance discourse that regards parents as deficient. The NASGB argues that while the majority of black parents may not have formal education (reading, writing and numeracy), it does not mean that they cannot think logically, conceptually and contextually. They point out that many communities across the country have always participated in community activities that involved intellectual inputs, defining traditional laws and value systems, provided leadership and participated in life decisions (Mathosi, 2001). Although the NASGB recognizes the value of parents, it too seems to fall prey to the dominating and prescriptive discourse that democratic governance is about participating in decision-making according to rules determined by a higher authority (viz. the government). This is laid out in a statement by a NASGB official: "*parents can make informed decisions provided they are assisted to understand what is expected from them. They can develop policy if there is proper guidance"*.

The nature of the influence of the administrative context to an extent depends on whether the school is an ex-Model C school, ex-HOR, ex-HOD or a township school. In general the ex-Model C is often left to its own devices by the district, receives much support from the SGB association that it belongs to, and teacher union influence is minimal. In the ex-HOR and ex-HOD schools a similar situation exists but to a lesser extent. In the township schools, a lot more depends on their particular institutional context and the personal relations between individuals in the schools and the district, the unions and other bodies. In the case of the rural school, while contact with the district appears to be fairly strong, it mainly takes the form of directives from the district office. The teacher union and SGB associations seem to be a non-factor when it comes to its SGB.

Chapter 8
From democratic participation to efficiency

The SASA, which was expected to create "*space for a new landscape for schools and their governance*" (DOE, 2003), has in theory, granted schools and their communities, a significant say in school level decision-making. In examining SASA in practice, this research lends substantial support the following thesis: What school governance policy means for implementing agents is constituted by their *theory of action* (espoused and in-use), the context of the school and policy signals; and how SGB members understand and enact school governance is defined in the interaction of these dimensions. Paradoxically, there is little variation among different types of schools in the implementation of governance policies; and there is surprisingly great congruence between governance practices and the SASA's theories-in use. Governance in practice and SASA's theory-in use equate successful local school governance to parental (SGB) support for the school in order that the school functions efficiently. This is not to suggest that practices are exactly as conceived or uniform across the schools – there are differences, but they are less than one would have expected. The differences that are evident across the schools are explained by the variation across the schools and communities in (1) the history of governance and ex-department control, (2) racial make-up, (3) geographical location, (4) level of resources and (5) education and socio-economic level of parents.

Direction of local school governance in South Africa

Conceptions of school governance

While the SASA and its impact is a product of a particular set of historical, economic and political forces, the role of individual actors in this process cannot be denied or wished away. Individuals bring to bear their own theories of action, cognitive maps, attitudes and values in operationalizing governance in practice, although particular discourses have a dominating effect. Currently, new participants in governance, especially parents and learners, more often interpret their roles in similar ways. The lack of conflict and negotiation seems odd, if we accept: (1) that implementation of educational reforms (including new governance processes) are subject to the "micropolitics" and conflicts and characteristic of schools (Ball, 1987; Blasé, 1998 & 1991; Bowe and Ball, 1992;); and, (2) the notion of "policy as practice" which suggests that laws and other mandates are authoritative statements or guidelines subject to interpretation by a variety of actors, and that in the "context of practice" local realities may vary according to social geographies, institutional configurations and individual interpretations (Sutton, 2001; Grace, 1995).

The lack of conflict and the congruence with official policy statements represents a denial and suppression of contestation and difference. This owes much to the fact that at all levels of the system, a core theory-in-use is that "the SGB is working well and that democracy is being achieved if people reach decisions by consensus". As this expectation is signalled continually, the SGBs make extreme efforts to conform to this norm. Certain key actors play a dominating role,

while the official discourse on governance takes on an unquestionable commonsense correctness. There is little contestation of the authority and leadership of the principals, the strongest and most effective micropolitical actors, who have enormous influence and frame how governance is practiced. In effect, most SGBs defend and legitimate the policy prescriptions and practices developed by leaders of the educational system, and offer no real challenge to the existing structures of power.

The limited involvement of parents and learners in school governance casts doubts on the espoused theory behind SASA that elected SGBs would automatically lead to greater community participation. Throughout the system, there is a gap between the espoused theory with its focus on democratic objectives and the prevailing theory in use, which is that the primary purpose of the SGB is to ensure that the efficient functioning of the school is maintained. Governance in practice is affected greatly by this dominant conceptualization, a theory of action that is shared by different individuals and groups and reinforced at each level of the system. Individual theories-in-use often align with discourses supported by the state that emphasize the value of participation for efficient management. The social norms and values to which school communities are expected to adhere are strictly prescribed by state policy, reinforced by provincial and district level actors, and supported by the most powerful actors in the school community. Consequently, little space is left for communities themselves to define the nature of governance; and government calls for greater community voice, stakeholder participation in decision-making and democratic citizenship appear rhetorical.

The theory in use in SASA, and that of administrators responsible for implementing SASA, is based on strengthening the relationship between constituent stakeholders and the organization and management of schools. Participation is interpreted in terms of bureaucratic or legalistic notions based on a procedural view of governance. In this theory, good governance and effective SGBs are those that make sure that rules are beings followed and specified functions are carried out. Given the dominance of this view, all the SGBs in the study are committed to following the rules. In addition to the power of the principal, and the influence of "official governance discourse", a prevailing organizational or institutional "logic of action" (Bacharach and Mundell, 1993: 427) also influences individual decisions and organizational procedures and governance practices across schools. The bureaucratic logic, which is stronger in some schools and diluted in others, assumes successful school governance can only be achieved if they follow the rules and procedures in the Act. In doing so, it is assumed that they are promoting the schools' interests and ensuring democratic governance.

Despite the over-powering state conception, the dominance of principals, and the institutional logic that demands conformity, there is evidence of discordant and contradictory interpretations of governance. The SGB structure has opened up some space for democratic participation and multiple governance discourses among actors though limited are beginning to surface. While official discourse dominates, individual attitudes and capabilities are beginning to play some part in the way stakeholders are interpreting their governance roles. These spaces remain opportunities as yet unexploited in the progress towards greater democratization of local governance. Most SGBs are interpreting their roles in a predictable way; namely, to ensure efficient management and to provide support. Yet, some are making attempts, however small, to experience SGB membership in distinctive ways, reflecting varying individual "theories of

governance" at play as different stakeholders attempt to impose their own conception of what school governance means. This has resulted in tension in some schools, contributing to uncertainty and messiness in governance in practice.

Efficiency and support

Most SGBs are operating less as the ultimate governing authority in the school and more as a support structure whose prime purpose is to ensure that school management (principals and teachers) can undertake the day-to-day running of their schools efficiently. SGBs have not assumed the power, as anticipated by government and central policy-makers, to govern schools and in most cases they have also failed to operate on expected democratic lines. The SGBs range from those like Zulu High, which are relatively inactive, fulfil only a minimum statutory role and delegate most responsibilities to the professional staff, to those like Beach High, which are substantially involved in determining school policy and actively participate in school management and governance. In the former, the SGB is involved in an advisory or consultative capacity, generally focusing on fund raising or helping with learner discipline problems. In the latter, Beach High, an ex-Model C school, reflects a pattern that exists across the country where the SGBs of more privileged schools have assumed the degree of authority envisaged by central level policy-makers.

Understanding the role different stakeholders are playing in school governance in practice involves several issues: how elections are run; how fees are set, how schools manage the (supposed) overlaps in the roles of SGBs and SMTs; and whether SGBs have increased community involvement and ownership of schools. SGBs have the potential to shape their own role, but this is not happening substantially or uniformly. In practice, the ability of the SGB to shape its role and purpose depends on what considered important, by whom and the strength of particular interests in the SGB and the community.

Despite uniformity, schools are developing some distinctive patterns, given their unique experiences, the specific issues they have to deal with, the varying capacity of SGB members, and the nature of the relationship between parent members and the principals and educators. At Zulu High, the SGB's role is limited to support, while at Beach High its primary function is to oversee the activities of the school in order to ensure that resources are used appropriately, reflecting its *accountability role*. At Noord and Umdoni, in addition to its supportive role, it also plays an *advisory role* in that the SGB provides a forum for reporting the school's activities to stakeholders. At Eastern High and South West, the SGB also acts as a forum for expressing the interests of stakeholders and promoting consensus, reflecting its *mediating role*. The above characterization is a working typology and does not necessarily capture all the nuances of governance in practice.

In general there is a fair degree of uncertainty about governance and what the purpose and role of the SGB should be, resulting in an ongoing concern to ensure that the SGB is acting appropriately. In this context, the operations of school governing may be seen as having two dimensions, namely a public curriculum[35] or an explicit theory of action, and a hidden curriculum

35 Thody (1993) used the concepts of hidden and public curriculum in relation to school governing bodies in England. These concepts are in alignment with the idea of theory-in-use in this study.

or an implicit theory of action. In South Africa, the public curriculum or overt functions of the SGB, the explicit theory of action as codified in SASA, places responsibility on parents to be in charge of decision-making by virtue of their numerical majority on the SGB and delegated power to decide on school policy, budgets and such. However, the hidden curriculum or actual practice (theory in use in policy signals and actions of actors at all levels), and the SASA's designation of the "management function"[36] as the domain of professionals limit their authority. The SGBs' hidden curriculum of covert roles predisposes them towards being supportive and protective of principals and educators, and allows the existing elites – namely principals – to co-opt or dominate parent members, preventing them from assuming real power to govern. Thus, the hidden functions or theories in use reflect the actual activities of SGB members and involve consent and support of principals in the pursuit of efficiency resulting in "illusory democracy" (Thody, 1994: 2). So while some governing bodies are fairly active, as in Beach High and Eastern High, no extension of real democracy has occurred because the SGB is not really responsible for making key decisions. The role of the SGB remains focused on support or ratifying decisions already taken by school personnel rather than, for example, taking the lead in formulating school policy or making critical executive decisions.

Token participation

The SASA and the election of SGBs have had some positive effects in affirming parents' rights and, to a limited extent in encouraging democratic participation in decision-making at school level. On the other hand, the devolution of responsibility to individual schools has left many schools (especially in the previously disadvantaged sector) without the collective support structures they need; and it has led to an increase in bureaucratic regulation rather than in autonomy and involvement of parents in governance at these schools. Nevertheless, in general, parent and wider community involvement in schools in South Africa has increased following the promulgation of the SASA. In Beach High, involvement is significant at both policy and operational levels – participation and decision-making of the SGB covers planning, budgeting, and input on some curriculum issues. However, the extent of increased participation is not that much more than the level enjoyed by the previous governing structure under the Model C dispensation. In the other schools, there is clearly greater participation, as evidenced by the election for the first time of a governing body having some say in school decision-making. However, participation of parents and learners in these schools is still at superficial levels and falls far short of official expectations. Like Cranston's findings in two studies in Australia[37], this study also identifies that not only is there considerable variability in the nature and extent of the involvement of learners, parents and teachers in decision-making in schools, but there is a gap between the rhetoric of policy intentions and the reality of governance across schools (Cranston, 2001: 5).

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36. Section 16.3 of the SASA, states unequivocally, "Subject to this Act and any applicable provincial law, the professional management of a public school must be undertaken by the principal under the authority of the Head of Department".

37. The first longitudinal study on the impact of school-based management on principals in Queensland identifies challenges for principals in terms of their skills and capacities in moving to more collaborative and inclusive decision-making regimes. The second follow-up study of two primary schools operating under school-based management examines in more detail how, and in what areas of the school (its planning, operation, curriculum), parents and teachers are actually engaging in school-level decision-making (Cranston, 2001).

Creating new school-based governance structures has not resulted in significant empowerment of parents or learners to participate effectively in decision-making across different types of schools and communities. While parent stakeholders are participating effectively in some schools, it is occurring mostly in the ex-model C school (Beach High), which already had an established governance structure that had developed certain understandings and practices over time. In the other schools, parent participation in decision-making is minimal, peripheral and limited to a consultative role, in which parent members merely ratify decisions taken by the principal and/or educators. While parents are consulted and informed about decisions, they play a very small role in the formulation of school policy and the general running of the schools. This remains the domain of the principal and school management teams, which do not include parents or learners.

Most SGBs are token bodies, with parents lacking executive power where, for the most part, they are required merely to rubber-stamp decisions already made by school authorities. The SGB has done little to reallocate power in favour of parents. Perhaps an unintended paradox of new governance policies is that parents are experiencing greater estrangement "simply because the loci of power within the school system has not become overtly collectivized, but is also effectively obfuscated" (Bacon, 1978: 197). This may be contributing to the apparent apathy of parents when it comes to attending school meetings.

While parent participation in decision-making is quite low, that of learners is virtually non-existent. Learners serve on SGBs, but they are effectively invisible when it comes to actual participation in decision-making. Learner representatives are tolerated but excluded from discussions on substantive issues. Adults on the SGB also tend to underestimate the competence of learners to make a meaningful contribution to school governance, leading to token involvement of learners in decision-making. In Hart's *Ladder of Participation for Children*[38], token participation is when children "are given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about the subject or style of communicating it, and little or no opportunity to formulate their own opinions" (Hart, 1992: 10). Besides the undervaluing of learner input by other SGB members, some learners are overwhelmed at being the only young person in a formal meeting of adults.

The token involvement of learners (and other stakeholders) in governance poses a real long-term threat in sustaining a democratic society. The inability to translate learners' membership of SGBs to authentic participation in decision-making could very well lead to expressions of cynicism about organizations, participation, democracy, and the trustworthiness of adults (Capper *et al.*, 1993). At its root, learner participation in school governance should, therefore, be about more than just being a part of the SGB. It's about a real involvement in school governance, including participation in decision-making on most matters. Authentic participation of learners in governance entails their real engagement, according to age and ability, in all stages, and includes the confident expression of views, perceptions, feelings, ideas and reactions. As with parents, learner participation needs to go beyond consultation and include opportunities to express views and opinions, and be a more active involvement in deciding which issues are important enough to be consulted in the first place (Carnegie Young People Initiative, 2001). The scale of opportunities for children to participate in the governance of schools is a reflection of the

38. Hart's Ladder is based on Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (See *Chapter 7* for details on this).

real participatory opportunities for adults. How learners experience their involvement in the SGB is linked to the authenticity of parent and community participation in governance. If parents feel involved, have opportunities to learn, develop and make real decisions over all school matters, learners are likely to be more encouraged to participate.

Community participation in governance continues to be an act of faith based on three tenets: (1) participation is intrinsically a good thing; (2) getting the techniques right is the principal way of ensuring the success of such approaches; and (3) considerations of power and politics should be avoided as divisive, obstructive and dysfunctional. The espoused theory and theory-in-use of most stakeholders appear to ignore the reality of dispersed and contingent power relations, and the exclusionary as well as inclusionary nature of participation and democratic decision-making (Cleaver, 1998: 597-98).

The initial image of SGB decision-making in which there is little conflict and disagreement, and where stakeholders work together and make decisions by consensus in the interest of the school, gives the false impression that the nature of democracy is not contested, and that democracy in its abstract form is embraced by all. Issues of school politics, diverse and competing interests, values, and demands of parents, learners and educators appeared not to be a concern of the participants in governance. The dominant theory of action (espoused and in-use) is that if formal procedures are being followed, and if there is representation of stakeholders on the SGB then they are involved in democratic decision-making and governance. Following the rules, reaching decisions by consensus is equated with democratic school governance.

Despite some variations, most SGB members consent to principals governing and managing their schools. This occurs more often in schools that are most disadvantaged, but also where parents are quite active and possess substantial human and social capital. Consensus decision-making is a key tactic used to reinforce principal power. Although a motion may be shaped and directed by the principal by ensuring that decisions are reached following discussion and consensus, the impression is given that it is a collective decision. This is especially critical in decisions regarding the use of funds. Although many parent members serve as treasurers, most decisions seem to start and end with the principal.

Clearly, there needs to be an accompanying restructuring of practices with a focus on changing the theory of action in-use of principals, educators and administrators. Governance reforms that hope to ensure the participation of all stakeholders in democratic decision-making demands not only restructuring, but also a change in the culture (Fullan, 1993; Elmore, 1995). Furthermore, it requires the creation of a community that recognizes and respects differences, but which is also characterized by shared norms and values, collaboration and on-going dialogue. All stakeholders – particularly, learners, parents and other community members – need to be moved beyond a comfortable consensus, conformity and occasional involvement in decision-making. In all aspects of school life, the entire community needs to engage in making real decisions for governance structures and processes to support democratic citizenship.

At present, in the more advantaged schools (ex-model C and ex-HOR/HoD schools), school governance remains the province of the socio-economically prosperous and of particular race groups – Whites in Beach, Coloureds in Noord and Indians in Umdoni. In the other schools,

membership of the SGB is limited to the literate, the educated and the more economically advantaged. According to the policy directives such as the SASA, one of the grounds for the SGB is the extension of democracy. But except for some minimal advances in some schools and structural ones across all, very little deepening of democracy has occurred. In the schools where parents appear to have a greater measure of power, the participation is of the more privileged and the highly educated. People already well served by democratic organs of the society are in office on the SGB (Thody, 1994: 4).

Such limited representation is not surprising given that the discourse on participation in vogue emphasizes homogeneous communities and neutral values and interests. There is a strong assumption in the governance discourse, from official quarters down to most school stakeholders, that there is one identifiable harmonious school community, within which people share common interests and needs. The assumed self-evidence of a community persists despite considerable evidence of the overlapping, shifting and subjective nature of communities, the permeability of boundaries, and multiple cleavages between and within stakeholder groups (Cleaver, 1999: 603). Given the changing configuration of school communities, current notions of school community are too narrowly drawn. Such a notion of community conceals power relations and masks biases in needs and interests based on age, class, race, ethnicity, religion and gender (Gujit and Shah, as cited in Cooke and Kothari, 2001: 6).

Community, defined by stability, closure and agreed-on norms, do not represent the realities of schools in post-Apartheid South Africa. Most schools still consider the old rules in the way they conceive their communities, yet the majority of communities have undergone significant changes in the past decade (DOE, 2001). The languages most spoken by the majority of people are not necessarily what the SGBs perceive them to be. Christianity dominates in all schools despite the religious diversity of the community – all learners are assumed to be Christians. In Beach and Umdoni, it is accepted that learners come from Hindu or Moslem backgrounds, but even in these cases, the allowance made for religious diversity is small. In all the Black schools, African religious practices are neither recognized nor openly mentioned and are not regarded as a concern. A similar homogenizing takes place with regard to socio-economic status. In all the Black schools, there is an assumption that the schools draw all their learners from poor families, with little regard to the diversity in income, literacy and education levels within these communities. In the other schools, while there is some recognition that there is socio-economic diversity, the fact that students pay their fees is taken to mean that they are all relatively affluent to be able to attend these schools.

The ultimate success of school governing bodies in South Africa in fostering democratic school governance that reflects broad representation and authentic participation of all stakeholders in decision-making does not depend on limited technocratic based training or legislating to ensure greater representivity and participation. Nevertheless, according to an official in the national DoE, the government is considering enforcing "*some sort of representivity*" on school governing bodies, such that there is "*a greater linking between the racial composition of the school and the racial composition of the governing bodies*" (Sunday Times, September 2003). Possible new legislative measures on the part of the national government are motivated by concerns that many schools are not implementing the policy successfully. The concerns of the national ministry are based on reports that some SGBs are violating the access to education and language provisions of the Act, while others are not setting

fees or managing their finances in keeping with regulations (DOE, May 2003). While many of these concerns are legitimate, they do not necessarily apply to the majority of schools. In this (admittedly small scale) study of only six schools, there were few problems related to access or language issues. However, the issue of representivity is a problem given the exclusion of poorer parents from SGBs in most of the schools, and of Black parents in the ex-Model C, ex-HOD, and ex-HOR schools.

Legislation or regulation as a solution to the problem of representivity reflects the continuing dominance of a top-down theory of change in South Africa, within government and outside. Many critiques of SASA have contended that the Act does not do enough to ensure representivity. Karlsson, for example, is critical of the SASA as, “the Act provides no mechanism for avoiding and overcoming a re-enactment of the traditional power relations in South Africa in terms of gender, class and race. Nor does it ensure racial heterogeneity when constituencies comprise diverse racial groups” (2002: 331). However, legislating representivity will not necessarily ensure greater representation of the diverse needs and interests of heterogeneous communities, nor does it guarantee that oppressive power relations will change. Structural requirements in terms of membership may be ensured through legislation, but is likely to translate into token participation, as is the case with learner and parent participation in general.

What is really needed are deeper more extensive efforts to build a culture of governance that includes all role players from central policy-makers and officials to learners, educators, parents and other members of the community. This requires that attention be given to power relations among stakeholders and changing the theories of leadership among principals so that there is in practice a real commitment to co-operative governance and management. All actors need to acknowledge that there is a power imbalance between educators and families, particularly when teachers represent one culture and class background and families have lower incomes and are from different cultures. If parents and family members perceive the school as judgmental or condescending, they may feel unheard or intimidated (Naidoo and Rugen, 2003). There needs to be a more complex notion of democratic citizenship which recognizes that citizenship may be interpreted in various ways by different actors, rather than being limited to the unitary version reflected in official governance discourse (Deem *et al.*, 1995: 21-22). However, in creating space for multiple voices, the government needs to put in place a variety of mechanisms and processes that address equity concerns and ensure that the less powerful and marginalized sections of the community are given greater voice to operate schools within the provisions of the Constitution.

Policy signals and theories in use

In spite of the rhetoric that surrounds participatory governance, the reality is that SGBs exist in “a world in which long established centres of administrative, professional and political power are firmly entrenched” (Bacon, 1978: 174). Throughout the administrative system in which the study schools are located, from national down to the districts, various individuals interpret national and provincial government mandates, which are finely defined yet also quite vague. Governance policy in practice involves decision-making by various actors (national level planners, politicians, economic elites, recipient groups and implementers at the local level), the ultimate outcome of which is not determined by the content of the reform alone but by the political and administrative context (Codd *et al.*, 1997). The espoused theory of SASA and

associated policies reflect the expectation that the new governance measures will lead to a significant dispersion of decision-making power and greater participation of all stakeholders, but particularly of parents in decision-making. Paradoxically, rather than a dispersion of power and expanded participation, there appears to be a greater concentration of power at each level of the education system.

From a national perspective, the approach to school governance and educational reform in general represents a top-down, rational and technocratic view of change. The continued faith in legislation to effect change in governance practices indicates that government initiated educational reforms in South Africa are based on a theory of change rooted in reductionism and a linear system perspective. In this approach, there is an assumption that education systems are composed of orderly and predictable environments that can be understood, predicted and controlled. There is also an expectation that schools in the system will display the same outcomes if they are provided similar resources and rules. There is a constant need to establish an equilibrium and stability in the system, and differences are seen as dysfunctional and needing corrective action. Having such a linear perspective in dealing with education systems that are non-linear actually may exacerbate problems (Reilly, 2000). At the same time, such actions from the national government may be expected, since the purpose of centrally determined policies is not always about solutions to problems, but is often about keeping the government in power or amplifying party constituency concerns. Given this situation, centrally initiated policies are likely to reflect multiple contradictions, as governments frame policies that are mainly symbolic and designed to show that the government is doing something in the face of expressed problems (Deem *et al.*, 1995).

Reports that in some privileged schools democratic decision-making is operating contrary to the design of national policy are motivating calls for more regulation of all schools. This provides insight into the theory of change that dominates nationally and points to a national ideology that frames the practical thinking and action (i.e. the theory-in-use) of actors in the education system regarding school governance. Given the legacy of Apartheid and legitimate concerns about continued discrimination and exclusion the national framing of democracy in education is aligned to Gutman's definition of participatory democracy where participants are empowered to make decisions and policies but where such decisions are constrained by the principles of non-repression and non-discrimination (Gutman, 1997).

Officials at all levels focus on limited technical training and support to ensure that SGBs meet legislative requirements. There is a tendency, not unexpectedly, for officials to concentrate on building the formal structure of the SGB and institutionalize certain procedures to support the management of schools. Officials help in forming SGBs to render them more capable for the job at hand, which most officials define as the efficient functioning of the school. This generally involves formalization in the interests of functional ends. After all, within the guidelines laid down by the state, national and provincial administrators are responsible for ensuring that education provision is of a uniform quality and that every child has equal access to educational opportunities. SGBs cannot be completely free from regulation or be treated as self-contained units of local democracy. This could reinforce significant differences between schools and perpetuate inequality, and children living in different social, geographic and racially or ethnically dominated areas would continue to have access to different types of educational opportunities.

However, an overemphasis on managerial concerns may be at the expense of facilitating spaces for real democratic participation in governance across all schools. Overemphasis on the functional ends tends to reinforce clearly identified groups and boundaries and encourages sanctions against those who might go against collective rules and the interest of the school (Cleaver, 1999: 601). Hence they emphasize proper and regular elections, meeting schedules, audits and financial reports. The effect is that they appear to reinforce the role of the principal and do little to support genuine participation of the wider community or to develop active citizenship and democratic decision-making.

Many officials and members of teacher unions and SGB associations have succumbed to the pressure to narrowly concentrate on matters of implementation, without any serious reflection on official policies as expressed in legislation and other mandates. They simply wait for the directives from above and pass them down the line. Participants at all levels (school, district and province) are so caught up in the implementation of governance reform that most of their energies are directed towards ensuring that new systems, structures and procedures are in place. There is little or no time to reflect on aims and principles. The focus is on What should be done (as required by SASA and other regulations) rather than on How do we govern in a more participatory or democratic way? or Do we need to govern differently? The focus on ensuring that SGB members carry out clearly defined tasks in terms of budgeting, fund raising, developing codes of conduct etc. also serves to minimize reflection on the constraints within which many of the SGBs are expected to function. This leaves little room for parents and other stakeholders to demand that policy-makers and administrators live up to the ideals contained in policy documents – by providing adequate resources for example (Humes, 2000: 38-39).

The delivery of education services continues to face issues of overload and policy contradictions, human resource constraints within the decentralized framework, restrictive macroeconomic policy and the associated budget, coordination problems between policy making and the budget, absence of overall social consensus on some key policies, and mutual suspicion between stakeholders (UNDP, 2003). In addition, education is affected not only by what is happening in the field, but also by what is happening in the rest of society – the challenge of economic pressures, political realignments and social transformations. The single most important issue facing South Africa ten years after the transition to democracy is breaking the grip of poverty and the ravages of HIV/AIDS on a substantial portion of its citizens. The state has to balance spending among competing priorities like fighting crime, providing education, developing infrastructure, dealing with HIV/AIDS and, above all else, the priority of economic growth (Landman, *et al.*, 2003). The country continues to face enormous challenges with regard to equity across gender, race/ethnicity and rural and urban divides. In this context, South Africa's macro-economic model based on a liberal free market economy, touted by government as the most appropriate, pragmatic approach to the critical challenges facing the country, is likely to impact education transformation in complex ways, with many unforeseen contradictions and side effects. Therefore, there needs to be a shift in focus from the nuts and bolts of implementing school governance reforms to consider the wider dynamics of economic and social change. Education officials need to be more proactive and not act as mere conduits for directives to schools and SGBs. They need to work with individual schools, taking into account local histories and institutional and community contexts and needs. The approach should move beyond a focus on limited institutional and structural aspects of the SGB to a focus on building a community of

practice that provides support and furnishes feedback to SGBs in order to sustain real democratic governance (McLaughlin and Mitra, 2001).

Supporting and sustaining school governing bodies

As South Africa begins to assess the impact of the multiple reforms that have been initiated in the past ten years, more questions will be asked about the actual impact of these reforms on the performance of schools and the life chances of learners. The involvement of communities in decision-making will still have to be confronted, while simultaneously addressing systemic management demands and performance goals.

The cases in which some schools have benefited from the reforms while others have been negatively impacted may be due in large measure to the absence of an integrated infrastructure for capacity-building that takes into account the fact that schools have had to deal with a multitude of changes. There is a need to recognize the reality of SGB operations, including the isolation of SGBs, inadequate support and monitoring, and assumptions about participation. Contact with officials or with other SGBs, training, and general oversight of the SGBs are quite weak. Reporting to the SGB constituencies or to the department was minimal and often left to the principals. Proposed changes in reporting requirements appear to still be very structural and comprise largely of school personnel ticking off requirements in the annual survey of schools conducted by the Directorate for Information Systems in the National DOE and provincial EMIS Units. Checklists are necessary for systemic monitoring, but current instruments are limited by virtue of self-reporting by principals and school personnel and containing questions that offer little insight into actual practices of SGBs. In addition to monitoring reports submitted by schools, other mechanisms are needed to ensure that SGBs are meeting the broader objectives of participation, democratic decision-making and representation and not limiting themselves to support for schools. Democratic governance in practice requires more than turning an initial decision into action. It demands mechanisms of ongoing oversight to the extent that deliberative groups are capable of monitoring implementation of their decisions and hold responsible parties accountable. It requires going beyond the point of executive decision, to initiate and monitor practice, and disciplined review of its effects (Fung and Wright, 2001).

In all cases, participation in the SGB is voluntary and depends on the needs or interests of particular stakeholders. Some individuals serve because they are persuaded to do so by other members or the principal. However, such motives may not be enough of an incentive to get more people involved in governance. Time and other commitments must be considered as factors in the low turn out of parents at meetings, the reluctance of people to stand for SGB positions and the high attrition rate among sitting SGBs members. Ordinary citizens may find the reality of participation increasingly burdensome and less rewarding than they had imagined, and engagement may consequently wane due to exhaustion or disillusionment (Fung and Wright, 2001). Therefore some consideration should be given to incentives for participation, recognizing that these incentives may affect different groups differentially. It should not be assumed that there are always sufficient citizens who want to participate in school governance, or that agreeing to serve on an SGB or attendance at meetings guarantees further involvement (Deem *et al.*, 1995: 63).

Lessons from the South African experience with local school governance

South Africa's experience with local school governance has theoretical, policy and practical implications for efforts in other contexts promoting educational decentralization, democratic school governance and citizenship. In the past decade, education decentralization and management reform in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has become the dominant instrument for improving the provision of public education. SSA countries, from Ethiopia to South Africa, have engaged in some form of education decentralization that includes administrative deconcentration, and more recently efforts have been made to increase school level autonomy by moving to school-based management, providing direct financial support to schools through school grants and by involving communities in school governance. Despite the considerable support for and the near universality of decentralization policies, there are on-going debates about their impact, which makes it imperative to better understand the extent, pace and consequences of education decentralization.

In focusing on the implementation of education reforms, and more specifically governance reforms, this study highlights the notion of policy as practice, arguing that the dichotomy between policy formulation and policy implementation is artificial. It is imperative that we take account of the interacting influences on governance in practice. It suggests that the key interacting influences include: (i) connections between governance structures, the school, administrative structures and the political system including policy signals such as legislation, as well as the theories and actions of officials throughout the system (ii) changing institutional and community contexts with their attendant norms and social relations, which affect the school in multiple ways, and, (iii) individual local level stakeholders with their own particular theories or conceptualizations of governance.

While SGB elections do represent an important structural element of local level democracy, we cannot rely on voting and elections alone as an indicator of whether citizens in general or particular groups of citizens are truly participating in decision-making. Voting figures do not provide a clear indication of all stakeholders' participation in school governance. Reliance on voting alone as an indicator of the achievement of democratic school governance becomes even more problematic when voting turn-outs are so low, or when parents are "mobilized to vote through threat or inducement even when they have no clear choice among competing candidates – and sometimes even when there are no competing candidates" (Anirudh, 2002). Despite problems with elected SGBs, they are a significant form of grass roots democracy and must be nurtured and encouraged.

Pressure for conformity as the measure of democratic participation could be seen as anathema to real democracy. The recognition that citizens have different experiences outside the political sphere, and that these are all equally valid, ought to lead to a more inclusive understanding of citizenship and the conditions required for democratic participation (Smookler, 2000: 8-9). Such an approach exposes disaffection with SGBs (institutional democracy at the school level) yet attempts to look above and beyond its confines. This does not mean that government-orientated school governance reforms have to be shelved or drastically altered. Indeed, instilling a more grassroots community spirit to school governing bodies could logically

facilitate greater participation in school governance by combating patriarchy, elite capture, and the dominance of professionals, the more educated and the economically advantaged.

In a model based on stakeholder representation, the complexity of defining stakeholders in practice must be taken into account. Stakeholder groups or communities at large are hardly ever homogeneous. Different stakeholders groups and individuals (parents, educators, administrators, learners and other community members) affect SGB operations and are in turn affected by the actions, decisions, policies, practices, or goals of the school and the SGB. Different stakeholders interpret their governance responsibilities and have particular conceptions of democracy depending on their theories of action. There may be similarities and differences in the theories across and within stakeholder groups that affect governance practices. The differences and similarities should be accepted and accommodated as an expression of vibrant democracy. At the same time, safeguards including on-going monitoring are necessary to ensure that deep conflicts do not render SGBs dysfunctional or lead to repression, discrimination and exclusion of less advantaged groups.

Linking democratic citizenship to school governance in a real way requires a more realistic view of democracy, participation and community which addresses the nature of inclusion and consensus more critically. In critiquing models of representative democracy in the context of local school governance, we need to recognize alternative views which see democracy in terms other than that of consensus and agreement. Such alterative interpretations pay attention to the essential, constitutive role of boundaries and conflict in a political activity like school governance. Within and across stakeholder groups (parents, learners, and educators), there are likely to be areas of common interest as well as competing values and goals. Therefore, more realistic models of school governance should be designed upon the prospect of consensus across difference and accommodating less optimistic views of the propensity for agreement (Barnett, 2003).

In the current conception of leadership in schools, leadership and governance is to be dispersed through the school community. The kind of leadership displayed by principals in this context is crucially important, as part of that leadership responsibility is to distribute leadership and empower other stakeholders to be an integral part of democratic governance in real terms (Earley, 2003). Therefore, the extent to which leadership and governance becomes distributed through the SGB depends very much on the principals' conceptualization of what democratic leadership and governance mean.

In their espoused theories of governance, the principals recognized that leadership could no longer be the sole responsibility of the principal. However, in terms of their theory-in-use, the principals exhibited little idea of what a more participatory decision-making organization meant in practice. Their statements concerning the necessity for " the SGB to operate so that the efficient functioning of the organization is maintained" and the need for agreement and consensus reflected a theory-in-use that aligned with the theory-in-use at other levels of the system. Their theory-in-use showed little understanding of the need to focus on re-distributing power and the removal of barriers to wider participation in decision-making positions. Most principals did not really understand that participatory decision-making required them to actively engage in managing and facilitating change.

Even if principals accept the need for shared governance and decision-making, how it plays out and with whom it is shared with, is affected by the principal's own theory of governance. Some principals are willing to share such responsibility with their senior management and teachers or with support staff and not with parents; others may not want to share such responsibility with teachers and; some may question the involvement of learners and so on. One principal may regard consultation as participation, while another may feel that they have achieved democratic governance only if all stakeholders are involved in deliberating on decisions and mutually acceptable decisions are reached. Then there is the question of why share governance responsibilities. Some support shared governance as a value in itself, viewing democratic participation in decisions that affect them as a right. Others see it in more pragmatic terms and as a means to achieve productivity, efficiency and other organizational goals. Different rationales reflect the principal's philosophy or theory of governance, which may influence the pattern of participatory governance that is being practiced in the school (Somech, 2002). Attention should be given to reconceptualizing the leadership role of principals. Principals must be recultured to work with SGBs to ensure that they become a central part of the school's governance and management processes.

Training that only focuses on technical, administrative or procedural aspects like how to write up minutes at meetings, and how to read the school's financial statements is actually disempowering, as it does not allow parents to engage in real-decision-making. At the same time, this training focused on administrative functions, defines the role of parents, teachers and students in such a way that it facilitates co-option to the state's mission. While many SGB members require training that provides knowledge and skills to operate effectively on the SGB, it should not be assumed that all are deficient and bring no knowledge to the table. Assumptions that management and governance knowledge is esoteric and completely absent in local contexts, devalues grassroots experiences that is intrinsic to African communities (Welton, 2001: 185).

SGB members need certain basic management skills, but they do not necessarily need to be experts or require advanced accounting and auditing skills to play an effective role in governance. While attention is paid to technical training around procedures, fulfilling legislative requirements, budgeting and financial management, and drawing up school plans, capacity building should also pay attention to issues related to power dimensions and human relations. More important than the various technical abilities championed by officials, administrators and some SGB chairpersons, is the need for SGBs members to work closely with each other and the wider community, and develop a culture of respect of what each individual, professional or lay, brings to the table.

Conclusion

Real progress towards a more authentic form of participatory local governance in education requires policies to transcend traditional assumptions and narrow conceptions of what democratic school governance is. Government actions need to move beyond received solutions, and a reliance on legislation, top-down strategies and limited technical training. What is needed is an acceptance of alternative courses of action and concerted ongoing attempts to stimulate and support a culture of democratic practice which focuses on people and processes rather than on rules and structures alone. This requires a different formulation of school governance that goes

beyond a simple emphasis on managerial objectives based on a professional frame to one based on an understanding of the complexities of democratic governance in practice. Governance reforms need to be linked to a paradigm shift in the way teachers and school leaders are trained, the way the educational hierarchy operates, the way that education is treated by political decision-makers, and the way we characterize and support school communities.

Appendix
Research methodology

This study distinguishes between research methodology – the underlying epistemology of a research project and research methods, that is, the more specific data collection methods such as observation and interviewing (Crossley and Vulliamy 1997). The methodology, which refers to choices about cases to study, methods of data gathering, forms of data analyses etc. defines how we go about studying a particular phenomenon (Silverman, 2001:4). Qualitative research methodology provides descriptions and accounts of social interaction in a natural setting based upon a combination of methods including observation and interviewing of participants. Using qualitative strategies, a collective case study (Stake, 1994 and 1995; Yin, 1994) comprising six schools[39] was undertaken. The collection of cases provides insight into school governance policies and practices in post-apartheid South Africa, noting that there are both trends and variations in school governance practices. Though the SASA requires every public school to elect an SGB, each site is a unique context in which governance is interpreted and acted on by individuals and groups in particular ways.

Despite the plethora of competing definitions and conceptions of qualitative research, it is possible to offer a set of broad characteristics or working definition of qualitative research that informs this study. Qualitative research may be defined as: multi-method in focus, an interpretative naturalistic approach to the subject matter, studying things in their natural settings, and attempting to make sense of or interpreting phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 2). These characteristics of qualitative research are of particular importance since a major focus of this study is the interaction between individuals' theories of action and the school context as an influence on the way different participants define or conceive of school governance.

This study may be seen as a case study, an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident; and, may be used if one wanted to "cover contextual conditions - believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study" (Yin, 1994: 13). One can probe deeply in order to analyze the multifarious phenomena that constitute the case (Cohen *et al.*, 2000), and to gain an "immediate and local meaning of actions as defined from the actors' point of view" (Eriksen, 1986: 119). However, caution must be exercised in generalizing from the case either directly or by implication; one cannot assume that any case in its totality is typical of other cases (Whitley, 1932: 569). Nevertheless, the insights gained in case studies can have an influence on policy, practice, and future research (Merriam, 1988). These qualities make the qualitative collective case study method an appropriate approach to study the process of school governance in South Africa given: (1) the emphasis on policy formulation and implementation since 1994; (2) the wide contextual

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39. Three schools from one district in Kwa-Zulu Natal and three from two districts in Gauteng were selected using criteria described later in this chapter. Descriptions of the school contexts are provided in *Chapter 5*.

variations that exist among schools and communities; and, (3) the subtleties of different stakeholders' perceptions and interpretations of, and reactions to school governance reforms.

Conducting a study of this nature involves a number of intricacies that makes it important that one constantly steps back and critically analyzes situations, recognizes and tries to minimize biases, and obtains valid and reliable data. This requires theoretical and social sensitivity, immersing oneself in the data yet maintaining analytical distance, and also drawing on past experience and theoretical knowledge (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The study is designed from the perspective of learning more about an unfolding process rather than commenting on school governance from the position of an expert. The research was conducted in a number of stages, focused primarily at school level. It included a review of scholarship on the educational policy process in South Africa since 1990, a review of key policy documents and regulations related to school governance policies, and the collection and analysis of new data on schools and districts relating to governance. A summary of the three phases, are provided below.

Data collection centred around four main strategies: observation of SGB meetings and school environment; interviews with selected SGB members, parents, administrators, and other stakeholders; and, documents. Within each case and across the wider system, conscious decisions had to be made about who to interview, which issues to raise and what to observe.

***Phase one*: Document review and analysis of legislation and national and provincial data focused on structures and processes that support local school governance**

The review of documents was linked to a review of developments relating to formulation of post Apartheid Education policies in general and SASA in particular. The data collection and analysis in this phase was undertaken in order to get a better understanding of the context of government policy. The analysis of existing data and legislation helped deepen understanding of the overall historical and legislative context of school governance in South Africa. This analysis also sharpened the focus of issues needing attention in subsequent interviews and observations.

***Phase two*: National, provincial and district level data focusing on structures and processes that support local school governance**

Data collection in this phase included: (1) structured interviews with personnel at the provincial and district office, and regional non-governmental education organizations including parent and teacher organizations. This phase of the fieldwork provided data to establish the larger context within which school level governance processes were occurring, and provided a picture of variations across schools in terms of socio-economic and historical contexts. This phase included the collection and analysis of quantitative data from national and provincial EMIS units to provide a scan of the system in terms of number of governing bodies in each provinces, schedule of elections, composition of SGBs by province and district. This will give an indication of differences that may exist between say rural and urban, ex Model C and other schools.

Phase three: Data collection in schools

Phase three data collection in six schools (three each) in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal included:

(1) Semi-structured interviews with the principal, educator and learner representatives, the Chairperson of the SGB and other parent representatives.
(2) Observations of SGBs meetings
(3) Observation of the school and its surroundings
(4) A review of school records including SGB election records, minutes of SGB and RCL meetings, SGB Constitution, school policies.

The field visits and collection of some documentary data[40] spanned a year, over two periods in South Africa in the second and fourth quarters of 2002 (a first stint of two months and a follow-up of one month). On average, data collection at the schools took three to four days each. There was additional email and telephonic communication with the principal and SGB chair prior to, during and on completion of the field visits.

Interviews were conducted with representatives from stakeholder groups on the SGB – the principal, an SGB educator representative, the SGB Chair and another parent representative[41] as well as a learner representative in each school. In addition, representatives from national, provincial, and district DOE offices, and from teacher bodies and governing body associations were interviewed. The interviews were the primary source of data and extremely important in the context of a study that focuses on understanding stakeholders' experience of school governance, and the meaning they make of that experience.

Observation of SGB meetings activities was undertaken in order to learn what school level relationships are like and the kinds of participation that exists. In addition to keeping a record of what issues were discussed and the physical setting, an observation focused on the following questions was undertaken: The form of the meeting – who chaired the meeting? How did participants address each other? Who tabled issues and how? How were decisions reached – was there voting and if so, how? Were there any tensions or disagreements? Was there evidence of coalitions or groupings? Did anyone person or group dominate the proceedings? Who spoke about what issue? In addition, observations of the school setting were carried out.

Documents play a key role in this case, since this study comprises a policy review. The review of document sheds light on how mandated policies and regulations from national, provincial and district levels are interpreted at school level. Key national/provincial policy documents analyzed include: SASA and the two Education White Papers; Gauteng and KZN Education Acts; School Finance – Norms and Standards Regulations; other regulations; and available provincial and district memos and directives. School and district documents included: SGB constitutions, minutes, budgets, election records, etc.; SGB communications with parents; SGB; Staff/Site Committee meeting records; school policy documents; Representative Council of Learner records; EMIS Annual Survey and School Tenth Day Survey; school newsletters; and local newspaper articles. School and district documents were analyzed with the goal of

40. Other documentary data was collected over a period of about a year.
41. An additional parent was interviewed in only four schools because of problems of access and availability.

determining in what way they align with national directives or not. These documents give some insight into local interpretations of the official or stated interpretations of local actors responsibilities. The written records helped in understanding governance through documentation of concrete details of practice.

Research question

The central research question formed the basis for a multi-level research - a systemic scan of school governance policy and an in-depth study of the responses to new governance policies and the operations of SGBs in six schools: How do different types of schools construct conceptions of school governance in the context of the South African Schools Act? In terms of this question, the focus is on the interaction among school governance policy, the school and community context, and SGB members' definition of school governance. The central question is informed by a number of *issue and topical sub questions* (Creswell, 1998: 101). The sub questions are the following: (1) What roles do SGBs play in relation to school organization, policy formulation and school practices? (2) How is governance policy interpreted and supported at national, provincial and district levels? (3) What factors, including contextual variations and personal interpretations, influence representation on, and the operations, capacity and status of SGBs as viewed by school stakeholders? (4) What are the lessons from the South African experience with school governance and local participation for the international debate on devolution of governance in education?

Selection of cases

The principal criterion used in selecting the schools in this study is not whether they represent the totality of schools in South Africa or even in one province, but rather that they comprise a collection of types of schools that will help us understand the new school governance processes in a variety of contexts. The six schools - Noord Sekondere, Eastern Township High, South West High (Gauteng), Beach High, Umdoni Secondary and Zulu High[42] (KwaZulu-Natal) – that comprise the collective case study were selected as they are differentially situated along a range of criteria, including level of resources and geographic location. In addition, the schools are differently positioned with respect to school governance and other educational reforms taking place in South Africa. The two broad types are *target* and *better-positioned* schools. In the context of this study, a *target* school is one that has a low level of resources (financial as well as other physical, human and social capital resources) and serves a community where education levels of parents and household income levels are relatively low. A *better-positioned school* is one with a higher level of resources, parental education levels are higher, and household income is higher[43]. The schools ranking in terms of the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSSF) (DOE, 1998) was used to establish the relative wealth of the school and community. In terms of the NNSSF regulations, each province is expected to compile a resource-targeting list, which ranks all schools in the province in terms of the "condition of the school and

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42. All schools and respondents have been given pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.
43. The Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) study of accountability (DeBray and Parson, 2001) was used as a model to develop the criteria for selection of the cases.

the relative poverty of the school community*"* [44]. Typing schools in this way enabled me to identify schools' differing starting points with respect to uniform external governance policies.

Three schools each was selected from two districts, in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng provinces giving us a total of six schools[45]. In addition to level of school resources and poverty of community, other criteria taken into account in selecting the schools include: *Former education administration under Apartheid* (viz. House of Assembly [Whites], House of Delegates [Indians/Asians], House of Representatives [Coloureds], Department of Education and Training [Blacks not in homelands] and Homeland Departments [Blacks][46]); and *Geographical location* (urban, rural, township or suburban/ex-Model C). Although ex-Model C schools comprise less than 10 per cent of public schools it was important to include one of these schools. Generally speaking, these schools represent the wealthiest of public schools and are privileged through advantageous teacher allocations, long histories of effective school governance and successful fund raising. The choice of schools was also limited to secondary schools as learners are represented on SGBs only in secondary schools. Choosing these types of schools made it possible to investigate whether explicit organizational features such as internal policies, structures, strategies, and core values, as well as community contexts influence schools' adaptation to externally formulated policies.

Province, regions and districts were also considered in the selection of the cases. The cases were selected from Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal because they capture the diversity of schools across the country. Gauteng is mostly urban, while KwaZulu-Natal is mostly rural with some significant urban centres. Yet there are major similarities across all nine provinces, which means that any province could have been selected – all provinces have moved forward with resource targeting lists and education legislation, and all have established SGBs. The development of provincial profiles suggested that the most likely provincial candidates are KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, and Gauteng and Northern Province taking account of diversity and representivity. Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal were selected over Eastern Cape and Northern Province because of logistics of conducting the research, including costs and access.

Analysis of data

The transcripts of the interviews and field notes were analyzed using the *ATLAS it* software package. Moving from an initial exploration of the data, the Atlas software was used in text analysis and interpretation, particularly selecting, coding, annotating, and comparing significant chunks of data. Organizers or key concepts used for describing, explaining and understanding the process of school governance in South Africa include: development of policy and practices in school governance since 1994; school culture regarding governance and

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44. The KZN Department of Education Norms and Standards Database and the GDE Resource List for 2001/2002 were obtained from the respective provincial EMIS Directorates for this purpose. For KZN the selection by NNSSF ranking was narrowed down to the Port Shepstone region, and for Gauteng the initial districts reviewed were Johannesburg, North, East, South and Central.
45. Initially 12 schools were identified, six as alternatives. The final six schools for the collective case depended on negotiating access with the principal and/or SGB chair.
46. The racial categories of Black, Coloured, Indian, and White are used, as they are categories that were part of the legal definition in terms of Apartheid laws. In addition, in practice they continue to define residential, educational, and other forms of segregation in South Africa today.

democratic participation; individual conceptions of democratic participation and governance; variations in nature and powers of governing bodies; variation in representativity of governing bodies; variation in interpretation and practices of democratic school governance; relationships of governing bodies with other governance structures; locus of leadership power and its impact on participation in decision-making and; student-teacher-parent relations and their effect on school responses to governance policy.

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