

**PRACTICES OF SCHOOL GOVERNING
BODIES IN SELECTED GRASSY PARK
SCHOOLS: A CHALLENGE TO
DEMOCRACY**

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for a degree.

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ABSTRACT

One of the major features of the democratisation of education in South Africa revolves around the decentralisation of school governance. In this regard, important decision-making responsibilities have devolved from central government to “self-governing” school communities, incorporated into School Governing Bodies. This study explores the current practices of School Governing Bodies in selected schools in the Grassy Park area. It seeks to demonstrate that there seems to exist a dichotomy between the ideals of democratic policies as espoused in the South African Schools Act, and the manner in which these policies are implemented.

The promulgation of the South African Schools Act of 1996 heralded the beginning of a new phase in the governance of schools. However, the promulgation of policy does not necessarily imply the effective implementation thereof. This thesis argues that despite the existence of the South African Schools Act, school governing practices do not seem to be conclusively democratic. Unless school governing practices are reconceptualised and restructured akin to a notion of deliberative democracy such practices would continue to remain less democratic.

KEYWORDS: Disadvantaged South African schools, governance and democracy

UITTREKSEL

Een van die uitstaande kenmerke in die demokratisering van die onderwys in Suid Afrika, wentel rondom die desentralisasie van skoolbestuur. In hierdie verband is die belangrike besluitmakings-verantwoordelikhede oorgedra vanaf die sentrale regering na “selfregerende” skool komitees, ingelyf tot Skool Beheer Liggame. Hierdie studie eksploreer huidige praktisering van Skool Beheer Liggame in geselekteerde skole in die Grassy Park gebied. Dit beoog om te demonstreer dat daar waarskynlik ‘n splitsing bestaan tussen die ideale van demokratiese beleid soos voorgestaan deur die Suid Afrikaanse Skole Wet, en die manier waarop die beleid geïmplementeer word.

Die proklamasie van die Suid Afrikaanse Skole Wet van 1996 het die begin van ‘n nuwe fase in skoolbeheer ingelui. Nietemin, die afkondiging van beleid beteken nie noodwendig die effektiewe uitvoering daarvan nie. Hierdie tesis voer aan dat ten spyte van die voortbestaan van die Suid Afrikaanse Skole Wet, die praktyk van skoolbeheer neig om nie uitsluitlik demokraties te wees nie. Ofskoon die uitvoering van die praktyk van skool beheerliggame gerekonseptualiseer en geherstruktureer word, verwant aan ‘n begrip van beredeneerde demokrasie, sal sulke uitvoering minder demokraties bly.

SLEUTEL WOORDE: Benadeelde Suid Afrikaanse skole, bestuur en demokrasie

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CHAPTER ONE

ANALYTICAL DISCOURSE AND SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

1.1 INTRODUCTION

During the 1980s, while South Africa was still in the grip of apartheid, the cry from the oppressed masses was, “the people shall govern”. This became a rallying phrase, which gave the politically excluded majority a sense of belonging. It is my contention that the majority of those who rallied around this slogan might not have fully comprehended its meaning. The 1994 democratic elections gave real meaning to what may be termed the first phase of “the people shall govern”. During the same period (1980s) schools provided a foundation from which the anti-apartheid struggle was fought. The general populace of South Africa utilised this base from which it organised a part of the anti-apartheid struggle. The first semblance of local school governance, therefore, had its origin within the framework of this struggle, that is, within the confines of the school environment. In this way the national “Education Crises Committee” was formed. The name of this committee presupposes that there was a crisis in education at that time and rightly so. Most of the pupils were on the streets challenging the forces of apartheid oppression. By then, the cry was “liberation before education”. Education was, therefore, the catalyst for a broader struggle against apartheid and it took much of the “Education Crises Committee” (ECC) to try to convince pupils to get back to school. Just by assuming this leadership role within the framework of education, gave legitimacy to the ECC.

Against this background it was essential that South Africa's newly found democracy initiate an education system grounded in principles of democracy. This goal of the new government, regarding educational transformation is reflected in the White Paper on Education and Training of 1996. The promulgation of the South African Schools Act (Act No. 84 of 1996) also had as its aim to "advance the democratic transformation of society" (Schools Act 1996: 2). The Schools Act, therefore, makes provision for democratically elected community-based school governing bodies (SGBs). School governance was in most cases, a new terrain for the overwhelming majority of South African communities. Peters (in Aspin 1995: 56) states that: "Citizens of a democracy do not simply arrive at political maturity and stand ready, willing and able to run its institutions". Implicit in Aspin's statement is the need for training, for those governors who are to serve on school governing bodies. For the elected governors to function effectively they should have a fair understanding of what the principles of democracy entail. For school governing bodies to function effectively, it is of paramount importance to ensure that those most affected by the decisions, be included in the decision-making processes. If I interpret Aspin, I deduce that for any structure to function democratically, its participants should have a fair understanding of what democracy is. This does not materialise naturally. On the contrary, participants need to be educated and empowered regarding the principles of democracy.

1.2 RATIONALE OF STUDY

As an individual who has been a teacher in South Africa since 1980, I have been part of many changes, which impacted on education in schools. Prior to 1980, in fact during 1976, I was a student at Oaklands Senior Secondary school (i.e. historically disadvantaged school under the previous apartheid legislation). It was during this year that I became politicised to the extent that my interest in education, in particular, became much more consolidated. My years as a student at the University of the Western Cape further reinforced my political convictions and perceived social responsibility. It is in this vein that I embarked on a career in teaching, hoping to use my newly acquired skills to impact on the mindset of many learners. My interest in the process of democratic transformation particularly in education, therefore, is embedded in a desire to actuate real change in South African society. I subsequently developed a specific need to understand the current processes, which guide democratic transformation in schools, including the functioning of SGBs.

The notion of collective or participatory decision making guided by individual rights gained considerable momentum with the advent of a constitutional democracy in South Africa. It was inevitable that South Africa's schooling system would at some stage need to reflect the impact of the political changes which influenced South African life in general. In fact, the schooling system offers the practical foundation to transform South African society, thus giving meaning to the concept of "nation building". This renewed emphasis on collective decision-making aims to enhance nation building as South Africa

endeavours to break with its apartheid past. Given the practice of participatory involvement, school structures had to transform in order to accommodate such practices. The transformation of the Department of Education also brought with it a different form of school governance attuned to democratic transformation as prescribed by the Constitution and Bill of Rights of 1996.

Embedded in the practice of collective or participatory decision making with regards to educational governance in schools is the notion that school governing bodies (SGBs) need to function according to principles of democracy as espoused in the South African Constitution of 1996. This view is corroborated by Potgieter, Visser, Van der Bank, Mothata & Squelch (1997) who claim that, since 1996, the Republic of South Africa has a democratic Constitution which also implies that SGBs have to function democratically. The new education system encourages community participation, meaning that it discourages isolation, mistrust and non-cooperativeness, evident in the previous political dispensation. Whereas community participation prior to 1996 has considerably been undemocratic, it was statutorily changed into what Hendricks (2000: 1) refers to as bodies that encourage participation, consultation, cooperation and partnership - all features of democratic decision-making. My concern, however, is that it seems as if SGBs in disadvantaged schools do not necessarily adhere to tenets of democracy as accentuated in the South African Schools Act of 1996. This is evident from my engagement at school with teachers, learners and other stakeholders represented on SGBs. Problems seem to arise when the South African

Schools Act and the implementation thereof are at variance with each other, that is, the practice of school governance particularly in disadvantaged schools seems to be contrary to what the Act purports. It is in this context that this thesis attempts to address the question as to whether SGBs in disadvantaged schools necessarily enact democratic principles as advocated in the South African Schools Act of 1996.

The promotion of democracy invariably involves securing the legitimate interests of all people whether as individuals or as a community. I shall argue that certain SGB practices regarding teacher appointments and promotions in disadvantaged schools do not necessarily secure these legitimate interests and might, therefore, potentially pose a problem for democracy. In other words, my investigation aims to clarify and explain what members of SGBs at selected historically disadvantaged schools in the Grassy Park area understand and experience vis-à-vis notions of democracy, governance, community and transformation and their concomitant link with teacher appointments and teacher promotions. I shall explore these notions in chapter three.

1.3. SCOPE OF STUDY

Literature on the link between SGBs and democratic principles abound. Hendricks (2000: 2) claims the following: "For the democratisation of school governance to take place, it should become the preserve of the ordinary lay person". Policies promulgated in the Act create spaces for the application of

democratic principles. These spaces need to be filled or utilised with the distinct purpose of contributing towards sound school governance based on the principles as provided in the Act. Hendricks (2000: 25) posits that: "... Participation in school-based governance has the potential of contributing in (sic) the democratic transformation of whole school communities".

However, Waghid (2001: 1) argues that:

... effective policy initiatives driven by functional or instrumental preoccupations are not only conceptually flawed but also deprive education of its wider human purposes.

This presupposes that by simply participating in the system of SGBs would not necessarily lead to democratic transformation as Hendricks claims. On the contrary there are many variables which impact on SGBs, which have to be considered to determine whether their practices contribute towards principles of democracy. Although the Act theoretically provides spaces for democratic transformation, it is when the Act is transformed into practice that problems seem to arise. This might be because democracy is not an inflexible system with built in mechanisms to distinguish between "right and wrong".

Torres (1998: 425) posits that democracy is a messy system, but it survived because there is a sphere for debates and a set of rules (eg. The Constitution of 1996) that people follow even if they do not benefit from them. Waghid (2001: 83) interprets this by stating that this definition of democracy

accentuates three interrelated aspects central to an understanding of democracy. He also claims that democracy comprises three aspects: a system of government; a sphere for debates; and a set of general principles. My primary aim is to investigate whether the implementation of the Act, in disadvantaged schools are commensurate with principles of democracy as comprising a set of general principles.

Furthermore, democracy embeds constitutive principles such as participation, community engagement, rationality, consensus, equality and freedom. An understanding of some of these constitutive principles of democracy is essential because if these principles are undermined in any way, it brings the democratic function into dispute. Although I aim to address the concept of democracy in detail in chapter 3, I need to briefly explore conceptual meanings of some of the constitutive principles of democracy.

1.3.1 Clarification of Concepts

- *Participation* - Without individuals (citizens) wilfully and actively supporting, or being party to a particular practice, such a practice cannot lay claim to being democratic. This means that citizens have the implicit right to influence in those social spaces, which impact on their lives. Participation can either be direct, or through representation. I further expound on the notions, direct and representation, in chapter three. Participation is a critical prerequisite for democracy, for without community or mass participation, a system could hardly claim to be

democratic. Participation is, therefore, a constitutive principle of democracy.

- *Community engagement* – A preparedness by a group of individuals (with the same general goals) to agree to interact with each other in such a manner, that the result of their interaction is for the common good of the group. Such interaction has a built-in understanding that the final outcome shall be binding on all those who are party to the interaction. This relates to an inference that there is a certain responsibility on the community to act in good faith, with the aim of working towards this common good. Each individual who claims to be part of the “community” has a certain obligation to ensure that actions (such as planning, discussion, debate and negotiation) are of such a nature that it places the individual in a subordinate position in relation to the “group” (community). It is precisely at this level that SGBs function. The emphasis is on the movement toward a “common good”. The inference is that settlements or agreements are deliberated, contemplated and negotiated, rather than strictly voted for. This brings to the fore an idea that discussions within the group (community) aim to reach consensus, thus satisfying most of the participants in the “group”.
- *Rationality* - Waghid (2001: 83) claims that rationality is linked to sincerity, freedom of thought, clarity of meaning, impartiality, non-arbitrariness, consistency, a sense of relevance and respect for evidence and people. All of these relates to the notion of man/woman being a “free agent”. Free agency from this perspective is linked to the notion of

autonomy where the individual can reach his/her own conclusions. Peters (1973: 123) claims that “being a chooser is a standard expected from anyone – which is related to the norms of rationality ... “. He further argues that rationality includes making rules for yourself, and abiding by them. Rational reflection is when the individual is aware of rules and conventions as alterable, continually subject to change. These changes which people effect critically, impact on their constructions of “ways of lives” (Peters 1973: 123). It is this construction of a particular “way of life” which determines the level of rationality, for it should include a sense of reasonableness, that is, some form of justification and degree of logic.

- *Consensus* - A prior commitment to arrive at conclusions generally agreed to by means of unanimity. The final agreement must be acceptable to most of the participants who have a legitimate interest in matters. It would be unreasonable to expect that outcomes should satisfy all participants. The fact that we are human, each with our singular personality, would make a final agreement, which satisfies every individual almost utopian. Democracy’s rationale hinges on the degree to which its processes can resolve conflict. In this regard, Barber claims that human relations are by its nature an arena of conflict. He further argues that the object is to resolve or find ways to live with conflict (Barber 1994: 49). Consensus is, therefore, the more appropriate means of reaching outcomes, thus ensuring that a situation does not result in a stalemate.

- *Equality* - This principle lies at the heart of the concept democracy because it emphasises an equal position for all individuals of the group (community). No one within the group (community) can or should be allowed to assume a position of superiority over the others. This does not necessarily mean that all individuals in the group are equal, especially when the concept relates to SGB's. The different stakeholders such as parents, learners and teachers inevitably have certain areas of authority and/or superiority which the other groups might not have. This notion of equality is, therefore, not in terms of power or authority. On the contrary it refers to individuals having equal access to information, or equal opportunity to defend a particular position. In democracy the term equality generally refers to, "equality before the law". This translates into every individual having the right to due process of law, that is, being considered innocent until proven guilty. I further elaborate on this concept in chapter three.
- *Freedom* - The *Longman Compact English Dictionary* (1988: 241) defines freedom as enjoying civil liberties without being subject to the control or domination of another person; decisions are spontaneous or voluntary and not determined by external influences. This is a rather general and simplistic interpretation of the term. In reality this view of freedom will be problematic because it suggests that individuals can do what they want, without external influences having some form of impact on their actions. Peters (1973: 120) posits that "freedom only prevails, if there is a general system of regulation which safeguards against

interference from others. The emphasis on a “general system of regulation”, suggests that individuals cannot simply do as they choose. Gould (1988: 96) reinforces this interpretation when she argues that democracy is a system of political rule where freedom is at its utmost, and where constraints to reasonably ensure social order are by mutual consent. Again the understanding is that individuals cannot do what they want, but should in fact abide by “constraints” to ensure “social order”.

In chapter 3, I shall further expound on these constitutive meanings of democracy in relation to the practices of SGBs. To understand the constitutive principles of democracy, and how these meanings might be undermined by individual governors serving on SGBs are of interest to me in the quest to determine whether SGBs in disadvantaged schools necessarily *enact* democratic principles as advocated by the South African Schools Act of 1996.

I shall argue that the manner in which SGBs give meaning to the Act has the potential to lead to undemocratic practices. I also explore some of the implications of seemingly undemocratic school governance practices in general, and school ineffectiveness in particular. To appreciate how the system of governance in schools had to transform, I shall now proceed to briefly clarify the situation prior to the implementation of the SGB system. I shall give a general overview of education transformation prior to 1990, and from there proceed to the different phases in policy development regarding education transformation. These phases are distinguished by the “clear shifts

of perspective and circumstance that followed the apartheid era (Young & Kraak 2001: 7). These phases in policy development were developed over an extended period of time and can therefore be linked to specific timeframes.

They can be described as:

The positioning phase, which refers to the period 1990-1994, the frameworks phase, refers to the early work of the first ANC-led government from 1994 and, the implementation phase from 1996 till present (Young & Kraak 2001: 7).

1.3.2. Education Policy Developments in South Africa

Until 1990 education policy in South Africa was heavily centralised. The state maintained control of education in ways that were bureaucratically centralised, racially exclusive and politically authoritarian. This pattern was firmly established up to 1990 (Jansen 2001: 42). Notwithstanding this fact, the demand for democracy and participation in education in South Africa has a long history, reaching a peak of intense and bitter student struggles in the 1980s. Central to these struggles were that decision-making in schools and school governance structures should include all legitimate role-players. The upshot of this was that greater representation would ensure educational accountability, legitimacy and democracy (Carrim & Sayed 1997: 91). The development and growth of Parent, Teacher and Student Associations (PTSAs) concretised these demands, giving political voice to the then disenfranchised. As structures contesting the state, PTSAs operated parallel to state structures such as School Management Councils (Carrim & Sayed

1997: 91). The School Management Councils were apartheid state organs, considered to be illegitimate by the oppressed communities. From the state's perspective PTAs were illegitimate bodies which had to be vigorously repressed. This repression, together with other operational tensions caused the collapse of most PTAs. Carrim and Sayed (1997) posit that "an endemic problem of PTAs was that they did not necessarily possess the required skills to manage schools". They further claim that in spite of a number of training programmes, many PTAs collapsed. Despite the challenges to, and the disruption of state schooling in the 1970s and 1980s, there was only one hegemonic policy player within South African education: the apartheid state (Jansen 2001: 42). Changes in South African politics in the 1990s led to a focus on PTAs, culminating in the production of various policy documents, such as the Education Renewal Strategy (ERS), the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) Report and the African National Congress (ANC) Education and Training Framework Document (Carrim & Sayed 1997: 92). The ERS (1991) was an attempt by government to move away from apartheid education. However, this report was criticised specifically for its vagueness about school governance. The NEPI (formulated policy alternatives via the National Education Crises Committee) Report was in response to the government's ERS. Karlsson *et al.* (in Hendricks 2000: 60) posit that "the NEPI report ... discussed the issue of the centralisation/decentralisation of educational governance in the context of a critique of the National Party's ERS document and provided policy options for the mass democratic movement to consider". The Education and Training Framework was released as a draft discussion document (January 1994), which proposed among other

things, that “institutional governance within the school system has been one of the weakest and least coherent aspects of education” (ANC 1995: 24).

The early 1990s is, therefore, characterised by the “race for policy position” (popularly called the “positioning phase”), while the next period could be described as the “race for policy frameworks” (Jansen 2001: 42). The Minister of Education initiated the most important policy framework in 1995, focussing on the work of the Hunter Committee (named after its chairperson, Professor Peter Hunter). Part of its framework of reference was to unify the education system of South Africa. The fragmentation of education presented the new government with a particular challenge. Nineteen education departments based on race and ethnicity had restricted space within the democratic ethos of the South African Constitution and the Bill of Rights. New norms needed to be established to bring coherence into the system of education in South Africa. New legislation was critical to transform not only the racially divided system of education but also the governance and financing of schools. This was imperative in the light of the goals of equity and democracy as established by the first White Paper. To this end the Hunter Committee was instituted. “The commission report was submitted to international consultants for comment on the funding component” (Fleisch: 24). This “national framework would govern the organisation, funding and management of education” (Jansen 2001: 44). The Hunter Committee report provided the framework for the White Paper on organisation, governance and funding of education. This led to the production of the South African Schools Bill (April 1996), which later became the South African Schools Act of November 1996.

Although the Act emphasises the notion of participation, it also supports the task of equity and redress. In this regard Carrim and Sayed (1997: 97) posit that “equity and redress have been central claims in policy development in South Africa”. From the outset it was clear that school governance was a politically volatile issue and that the prime function of the policies was to ensure that hegemonic consensus could be engendered (Carrim & Sayed 1997: 92). In fact Jansen (2001: 49) claims that “the result is that policy makers have worked more diligently on appearing to improve schooling than on actually doing so”. So, despite the “flurry of policy” since the first democratic elections, the Minister of Education late in 1999 acknowledged that there still remains a crisis in education. This then resulted in “Tirisano” or his “Call to Action”, meaning a race for policy implementation (Jansen 2001: 51).

The appointment of a new Minister of Education in 1999 had as part of his agenda to expedite policy implementation in order to fundamentally change an education system which was in a serious state of dysfunction (Jansen 2001: 51). Jansen questions whether the current political and bureaucratic machine can in fact “deliver”. He argues that the instrument of choice (to speed up the delivery process) for the new minister is “policy review”. Implicit in the concept “review” is an idea that something is wrong or missing. Conversely, if everything was fine and acceptable, a review becomes unnecessary. To clarify this point I turn to Jansen who claims:

Merely to call for a review is to concede the possibility of failure.

A review, by its very nature, carries the threat of exposure. In the case of a weak state – by which I mean a state with limited bureaucratic and political capacity to change the practice of education ‘on the ground’ – reviews are particularly dangerous (Jansen 2001: 52).

By “exposure” is meant that the shortcomings or what is perceived to be wrong with the original policy becomes public knowledge. In the public domain these “mistakes” are then scrutinised and criticised. The ruling party, and governments in general would want to be seen as making decisions out of a position of strength. Exposure or admitting to making mistakes could be perceived as operating out of a position of weakness, something that the government would want to avoid. Furthermore the process of policy review is in itself a time consuming exercise, putting another strain on implementation. A case in point is the controversy surrounding the Curriculum 2005 review, where the scope of the proposals for change was so extensive that it was interpreted as “replacing the Bengu legacy”. What this eventually translates into is an inactive period of non-implementation, because of “an investiture in political symbolism in Curriculum 2005 in the late 1990s, which means that any attempt to change the curriculum would be fiercely contested” (Jansen 2001: 57). The current developments surrounding Curriculum 2005 bears testimony to this interpretation. Grade nine according to Curriculum 2005 was established as an exit point where the learner shall receive a school-leaving certificate. This certificate would be the entry requirement for technical college, however, the reality in the Western Cape is that this shall not materialise, resulting in a reversal towards the “old subject system”. The

upshot of this is that the current group of learners who participated in the “Outcomes Based Education (OBE) system shall not receive this certificate. In fact if they progress without fail, they shall not make contact with the “learning areas” to which they were introduced in the lower grades. The other hurdle which these learners will have to overcome, is the system of exams, something for which the OBE system did not prepare them. It seems as if the implementation phase are still negotiating many obstacles, to the detriment of the first crop of OBE learners. I only touch on the magnitude of the problem for it is not within the scope of this thesis to critique Curriculum 2005. I only expose the inherent difficulties to give some insight into the space that exist between policy legislation, and its implementation. It is, therefore, my view that since the early 1990s, from the positioning phase through the formulation phase and ultimately to the implementation phase, the road to securing a new education system for South Africa has proved to have had many pitfalls. In fact, the space for securing the educational needs for the future of this country is a space of fierce and protracted struggle. This struggle will eventually impact on the manner in which schools are governed given the fact that the individual governors must ultimately implement the contested policies.

1.3 SUMMARY

In this chapter I have briefly outlined the situation which prevailed during the 1980s when South Africa was governed by apartheid-rule. I alluded to the impact that this form of undemocratic government had on the education

system in South Africa, and how it gave rise to the movement towards greater participation in the governance of schools. Furthermore, I gave some insight into my reasons for attempting this research, highlighting my position within the education system and hinting as to how I got there.

I pointed out that my aim is to explore whether the implementation of the South African Schools Act in disadvantaged schools are incompatible with principles of democracy. I raised the view that the manner in which School Governing Bodies (SGBs) give meaning to the Act has the potential to lead to undemocratic practices. I then went on to give some background as to where the system of SGBs originated and also alluded to the phases of policy enactment, outlining some of the difficulties which face those who bear the responsibility of changing the face of education in South Africa.

1.4 PROGRAMME OF STUDY

In this chapter I gave an introduction, as well as orientation in terms of scope of this study.

In chapter 2, I shall explore the research methodology and methods, in particular the eclectic framework of inquiry I intend using, as well as the case study method. I shall give a detailed description of the distinction between method and methodology. I shall further analyse the interpretive and critical frameworks of inquiry with the distinct view of clarifying its meaning in terms of their use in this study. I also elucidate my reasons for not employing the

positivist research methodology. I then explore the case study method with the distinct purpose of positioning this study in terms of insight rather than overview.

Chapter 3 firstly attempts to interpret the key concept for this study, which is democracy. I argue that this concept is to a large degree undefinable, proceeding onto a critical analysis of what democracy is not. The study then touches on particular types of democracy, namely, direct democracy, parliamentary democracy and participatory democracy. I then move on to explore the constitutive meanings of democracy with specific reference to freedom, power, dialogism and rationality.

Chapter 4 attempts to focus on the evaluation of the role and involvement of the key role players, vis-à-vis the construction of information (data) regarding certain school governing body practices. My attempt is to let the “voices” of the governors be heard, meaning I let SGB representatives speak for themselves. I do this primarily through informal discussions and semi-structured interviews together with observation. The objective is to uncover whether SGB practices further or retard the notion of democracy as developed in chapter three. I particularly refer to teacher appointments and promotions at selected schools in the Grassy Park region, working towards whether representative governor practices, in securing these appointments and promotions, are in line with democratic principles.

In chapter 5 I analyse the constructed information in relation to SGBs with the intent to show how their practices might be at variance with the democratic ethos as espoused in the South African Schools Act, as well as with the notion of democracy as argued for in chapter three. I attempt to identify gaps within this conception of democracy with the aim of developing a more tenable understanding of democracy. This I do in the context of charting a possible way forward, beyond the current malaise within the functioning of the SGB system. I emphasise the role of poverty and its relation to freedom and its subsequent impact on democratic governance in selected disadvantaged schools.

Chapter 6 highlights a personal reflection on my journey through this thesis with the intention of identifying possible inadequacies. This chapter concludes with some of the challenges facing SGBs in their quest to promoting democratic practices in school governance. Finally I attempt to determine spaces for further exploration in the field of SGBs.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

At the start of this study my understanding of research methodologies and methods was minimal. I did not understand the distinction between the notions of research methodology and research method. I begin this chapter by exploring the difference between the two notions.

It is my contention that knowledge of different research methodologies helps us to theoretically locate our research, and at the same time exercise the appropriate methods. Cantrell (1993: 84), however, claims that learning about methodologies informed by different research traditions (positivism, interpretivism, critical and post-critical discourse), is not intended for researchers to “cement our (their) own philosophical entrenchments” or to parochially make their research fit a particular theoretical orientation. Instead, she argues that an understanding of research traditions provides us with the “philosophical goggles which enlighten our view and, in turn, lead to an acceptance of the array of methodologies” together with the appropriateness of method.

This chapter deals with an analysis of the notions research methodology and research method. It further engages in the specific methodologies to be used in this study, which is the interpretive and critical theoretical frameworks of

inquiry, as well as the case study method. The objective is to clarify the underlying meanings, which constitute these notions vis-à-vis their use in this research study. Simultaneously, it also aims to justify as to why the positivist educational framework of thinking is not an appropriate research methodology to be used in this thesis.

2.2 DISTINCTION BETWEEN METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

Harding (1987: 2) posits that there exists a distinction between methodology and method. According to her, method refers to techniques for gathering empirical evidence (facts which can be observed and tested / verified), while methodology involves the theories of knowledge. Fein (1992: 2) corroborates this claim by referring to the notion of methodology as the philosophical framework that guides research activities. Implicit in his interpretation is the idea that research activity or method is found within a broader framework, which he terms methodology. Method is, therefore, the technique which you employ to construct the data for your intended use. This may include observation interviews, document analysis and questionnaires. Le Grange (2001: 72) supports the idea of Fein and Harding, when he states that methodology should generally be viewed not merely in technical terms of method, but rather be concerned with the theories behind the method. Therefore, it seems plausible that one has a basic understanding of conceptual frameworks in order to learn more, and ultimately make sense of educational research.

Le Grange (2001: 73) sounds a warning when he says that these conceptual frameworks should be viewed as dynamic and ever changing. He further states that a specific conceptual framework should not be used to parochially locate our work. This view by Le Grange might conceive an interpretation that a particular study or research should not necessarily be confined to one specific framework. This thesis draws on this notion as articulated by Le Grange: to use both interpretive and critical theoretical frameworks of thinking to frame the inquiry. The upshot of this argument is that my thesis is located within two different theoretical frameworks (methodologies). Hence, I refer to the theoretical frameworks or methodologies used as constituting an eclectic paradigm. Le Grange quite significantly point out that it is possible for a research study to initially loosen itself from a particular framework, and later be placed within a methodology best suited to promote its aim. In the context of this study, I initially commence my inquiry within an interpretive paradigm, but later on adopt a more critical theoretical approach compatible with my area of investigation. The point is, whereas interpretive inquiry is used to explain or understand events, I later on use critical theory in order to contribute towards enacting transformative change. This is so, for the reason that critical educational inquiry has, as I shall show later on, an emancipatory interest concerned with empowering people, in this instance, school governors.

The question arises: What constitutes a methodology or theoretical framework of thinking as used in this thesis? Kuhn (1970) interchanges the terms conceptual framework, methodology and paradigm, suggesting that

they are synonymous and, therefore, have the same meaning or leads one to the same understanding. He posits that paradigms are frameworks that serve as maps or guides for research communities, determining important problems and issues for its members to address, and determining acceptable theories to solve the identified problems / issues. This Kuhnian view reinforces my understanding that methodology refers to a broad framework of thinking or paradigm. According to Kuhn (1970) a paradigm shift occurs when dominant paradigms are questioned and a community of researchers accepts new paradigms. Paradigm shifts, therefore, relates to a different methodology of looking at, and interpreting world phenomena.

In this thesis, I shall attempt to interpret my own and others' experiences and the way concepts such as democracy unfolds in their SGB practices. In order to do this, I shall use both an interpretive and critical theoretical framework of thinking or paradigm (methodology). This brings me to a discussion of these two types of methodologies.

2.3 INTERPRETIVE INQUIRY

The interpretive research framework is concerned with understanding the daily occurrences which confront people, as well as the meanings these people give in order to show how they perceive and interpret these occurrences / phenomena. The two pivotal issues within the interpretive framework are therefore: the self-understanding of the individual (the basis for all social interpretations) and as Waghid (2001: 50) states, that human

consciousness remains transparent, meaning that human explanations, as they appear, do not conceal any deeper understanding of events. Interpretive theory stresses the notion that analysis involves more than observation. In this regard Danner (1995: 223) explains social interpretation as “hermeneutic understanding” which aims to make meaning explicit, to explain, to understand and to interpret meaning. He posits the following:

We can say that when we deal with *human beings* and *human products* we are involved in a hermeneutic process. In the educational field it is especially important to recognise this wide range of hermeneutic potentiality and reality ... (which) must be “understood”. Hermeneutics cannot be reduced to interpretation of texts without misrepresenting its real and full content; interpretation of texts is a special, and important, case of hermeneutics. Hermeneutic understanding happens every time a person encounters another human being or human artefact (1995: 223).

The crucial point which is being made is, according to Fay (1975: 74), to reach the self-understanding of the person acting in the situation, analysing and understanding his or her reasons for their actions. In other words, actions cannot just be observed but it has to be explained. We need to know the reasons for performing the action, or self-understanding for performing the act. Fay (1975: 71) argues that the interpretive approach to social science is comprised of action concepts, the term which he employs to describe “doings as opposed to happenings”. This analysis involves describing behaviour

which is done purposefully, as opposed to behaviour, which occurs without intent. An action concept is, therefore, a distinct act for which the actor had a definite aim or intent. The interpretive theorist's goal is to unearth the rationale behind the reason or desire of the person to perform this particular action. The actions (behaviour) should, according to Fay (1975: 71), not only be observed, but also be interpreted. It makes sense that one cannot interpret any act without giving a description of that act. It is with this in mind that Fay (1975: 72) argues for a link or relationship between interpretation, and the description of an action, which he claims cannot be divorced from explanation. My understanding of Fay in this regard, leads me to believe that together with observation there should be analysis. This translates into reaching the self-understandings of those acting in the situation, analysing and understanding their reasons for acting. For example, one person gently hits another person on the arm. How does one interpret this action? Perhaps the one was trying to attract the other's attention; or she was intent on swatting a fly on the other's arm; or she was attempting to warn the other of impending danger, or she was simply being malicious. The action needs to be explained. One needs to know the reasons for performing such an action; one needs to know the self-understanding. Fay (1975: 74) warns that concentrating on the action should not lead to the omission of what he terms the "social element", which means the set of social rules that provide the criteria for the action. He further posits that rules mean all those shared assumptions, definitions, and conceptions which structure the world in certain definite ways. I understand this to mean that an individual can only have an understanding of an action, if he is privy to certain rules (social context) within

which the action occurs. It is this manner of understanding which informs the concept of what is referred to as a “social practice”. I am therefore inclined to support Fay’s argument which states:

An interpretive theory is one which attempts to uncover the sense of a given action, practice or constitutive meaning; it does this by discovering the intentions and desires of particular actors, by uncovering the set of rules which give point to these sets of rules or practices, and by elucidating the basic conceptual scheme which orders experience in ways that the practices, actions, and experiences which a social scientist observes are made intelligible, by seeing how they fit into a whole structure which defines the nature and purpose of human life (1975: 79).

Taylor (1985: 17) corroborates this understanding when he argues that a successful interpretive theory is “one which makes clear the meaning originally present in a confused, fragmentary, cloudy form what is strange, mystifying, puzzling, contradictory is no longer so, is accounted for.” He emphasises that interpretation appeals throughout to our understanding of the “language” of expression (rules), which understanding allows us to see that this expression is puzzling and that these difficulties are cleared up when the meaning is expressed in a new way”. The interpretive model, therefore, asserts that social conflict is the result of misunderstandings, which if reconciled could restore the order. The upshot of this is that the interpretive model would want to lead the participants “to change the way they think about what others are doing”, rather than provide them with a theory which could

change what “they and others are doing”. It, therefore, does not really seek to change behaviour, meaning it stops short from real empowerment, something that the critical social model purports to do. It is for this reason that I shall now discuss critical inquiry.

2.4 CRITICAL INQUIRY

According to Fay (1975: 93) critical inquiry is characterised by three main features. Firstly, that it accepts the necessity of interpretive categories. This means that it supports the arguments as presented in the interpretive model. Secondly, that it recognises that the actions which people perform, are caused by social conditions, some of which are not under their control. Critical theory, therefore, aims to expose conditions which determine behaviour, as well as clarifying the consequences of such behaviour. Thirdly, it has at its foundation the explicit recognition that there is an inextricable link between theory and practice. Fay (1975: 92) claims that critical theory analyses “a social situation in terms of those features of it which can be altered in order to eliminate certain frustrations which members in it are experiencing.” Waghid (2001: 54) interprets this by stating: “By far the most important dimension of critical theory is the fact that it is driven by the emancipatory interest; its purpose is to contribute to change in people’s understanding of themselves and their practices and thus free them from constraints of society”. In order for people to understand themselves, as well as understanding the situation they find themselves in, Fay (1975: 96) argues that it would involve an attempt to develop an historical account which reveals how it is that the

relevant actors came to be what they are. Critical theory therefore involves articulating an explanation as to how actors within a given situation, came to find themselves in such a situation. Fay (1975: 96) claims that explanations from such an approach would always be in terms of the *felt* needs and the *experienced* sufferings of the agents involved. Therefore, I contend that the agents should be made to understand the reasons for their perceived discomfort, with the distinct intent to overcome the causes of their discomfort, in such a way that it leads the agents onto a path which is perceivably more comfortable. In this regard Carr and Kemmis (1986: 197) argue that a critical approach “aims to generate critical actions in others and gives rise to conditions to replace one distorted set of practices with another, hopefully less distorted set of practices.” Again, Fay (1975: 96) corroborates this understanding within his “historical account”, when he posits that a critical social science “is one which attempts to account for the sufferings and felt needs of the actors in a social group by seeing them as the result of certain structural conflicts in the social order, and it seeks to explain these conflicts - and hence the sufferings and felt needs - by giving an historical account “.

Moreover, Peters (1998: 224) argues the same issue from a slightly different perspective when he posits that critical reflection or rationality implies that one not only acquires knowledge and understanding, but also provides justification for the ends to be achieved in individual and collective practices. This makes rationality a matter of skill and judgment in quest of developing new possibilities for individual and social actions. I equate my interpretation of Peters’ “reflection” with the “historical account” of Fay, since one cannot

reflect on something without indulging in an evaluation or justification of acts, which had previously (historically) transpired. Peters' quest for new possibilities underscores the emancipatory concept which I am attempting to enhance. Fay (1975: 97), however, cautions that an historical account is not sufficient to fulfil in the practical requirements of critical theory. He argues that the theory must also demonstrate how discontent can be eliminated, by removing, in some specified way, the structural contradictions which underlie it. Again the essential rationale is to move the actors towards understanding themselves in order that they may impact on their situation with the distinct intent of creating a better condition. This enhances the argument of an emancipatory element within the critical framework – an element essential to this study in view of my intention to chart a discourse out of the “current malaise”.

In addition, Velazquez (in Waghid 2001: 56) strengthens this understanding when he claims that, “transformative ... (that is critical discourse) stimulates critical awareness of power relations and empowers researcher and participants with the knowledge to change power relationships”. This understanding is crucial in this study particularly by virtue of the understanding of power relations within the SGB environment.

2.5 THE UNTENABLE NATURE OF POSITIVIST EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH FOR THIS FIELD OF STUDY.

Positivist theory is based on the assumption that all knowledge in the world is objective, with no scope or space for any kind of value judgements. According to Taylor (1985: 19), the highest ambition is to build knowledge from such building blocks which could be anchored in certainty beyond subjective intuition. Fay (1975: 20) builds on this view when he posits that only a scientific study can lead us to truly objective knowledge “of how events or properties of systems are related ... for the task of social control”. This drive toward certainty beyond question is based on the positivistic principle of verification. The technique it employs is of such a nature that the specific outcome is experimentally reproducible, because it accepts explanations only when they predict outcomes which are verifiable. Taylor (1985: 19) claims that verification must ultimately be grounded in “brute data”, that is, data whose validity cannot be questioned by offering another interpretation or reading, data whose credibility cannot be founded or undetermined by further reasoning. Morrow (1989) proposes that the underlying assumption of positivism is that there is fundamentally only one mode of understanding. For this reason only scientific interpretation based on the verification principle can give true and correct explanations in this world. In this regard Morrow (1989: 41) posits “that unless a statement was in principle verifiable it must be rejected as meaningless”. Underlying the verification principle is the notion of a “causal explanation”. Fay (1975: 31) explains it as follows:

Say that E is a state of affairs that the scientist wants to explain; how does he accomplish this task? It is generally said that he does so when he is able to indicate the determining factors or causes which produced E.

Fay, therefore, argues that by exposing the causes for “E”, it would of necessity explain why “E” resulted; “E” had to happen, given the causes. Also implicit in this argument is the understanding that given the experimental control of the causes, “E” would inevitably result. The result is therefore reproducible, which is a distinguishing feature of the positivist theory. This understanding raises the question of a precise form of explanation. Waghid (2000) responds to this by claiming that, to say that all science has the same logical form implies that there is only one true form of explanation, referred to by positivists as the Deductive-Nomological (D-N) model of explanation. Waghid (2000) claims that the D-N model contains “a nomological statement (validated, universal, reliable, objective, factual, empirical) or general statement applicable at all times, and a deductive argument.” He posits that in a deductive argument the nomological statement logically entails the conclusion. Fay (1975: 33) asserts that the D-N explanation, of the causal variety can easily be reformulated into the language of necessary and sufficient conditions, in the same way it was presented since J.S. Mill. Fay (1975: 33) explains this as follows:

When someone asserts that X causes Y, what he is asserting is that X is of the type A and Y is of the type B, and that A and B are related in such

a way that whenever A occurs B occurs (such that A is a sufficient condition of B, or that without A, B could not have occurred (such that A is a necessary condition of B).

Put differently:

1. Whenever A then B;
2. A occurs; and
3. Therefore B happens.

For example, whenever the sun rises (A), light and heat is the result (B).

The D-N analysis of causality and its emphasis on verification leads to the understanding that the given situation is under control, precisely because the outcome is predictable. It also leads to an understanding of manipulation, for if (A) can be controlled, (B) could be manipulated. Hence, three main features of a D-N model is subsequently discernible:

- (a) Control;
- (b) Manipulation; and
- (c) Prediction.

Whenever you kick (A) a stationary ball, the ball would be displaced (B).

- (a) Control: The kicking action is under the control of the kicker;
- (b) Manipulation: The harder you kick, the further the displacement;
and

- (c) Prediction: The ball would be displaced when kicked.

In summary, the positivist theory with its D-N model has according to Fay (1975: 33) been called the “structural identity” of explanation and prediction because the terms of prediction and explanation, as well as the relations between them, are similar. In the case of prediction, the statements of the relevant general laws and the particular facts are given and the statement describing a particular event not yet known to have occurred is deduced from them. I understand Fay to mean that an explanation is not complete without it being able to function as a prediction.

The question that could now be asked is, what is so wrong with a positivist theory for the purpose of this study? Revisiting the concept of “brute data” as proposed by Taylor (1985: 20), he claims that the surplus meaning in a theory which cannot be rigorously coordinated, should be considered as outside the logic of verification. This type of epistemology gives rise to all sorts of problems. Again Taylor (1985: 21) asserts that an empiricist (positivist) orientation must, therefore, be hostile to a conduct of inquiry, which is based on interpretation (a framework within which I choose to work). He points out that a positivistic notion about the science of human beings is sterile, and that we cannot understand the important dimensions of human life within the bounds set by this epistemological orientation. I concur with this line of reasoning and, therefore, it is my contention that a positivist theory would not do justice to my thesis. Furthermore, Fay (1975: 49) argues that the whole notion of a policy scientist choosing the best means to a prescribed end, is an

incoherent one; the idea of deciding the best means to a given end without invoking the particular values of the policy scientist (interpreter) rests on certain logical errors. Fay (1975: 50) goes further to claim that if a policy scientist were to advocate the adoption of the most efficient means to a given end, one would be forced to inquire, efficient in terms of what? Whatever answer one gives will reflect a judgment that cannot be scientifically made, for it involves reference to the values of the scientist. This in itself goes against the grain of the positivist view, for values are not rigorously verifiable.

In addition Waghid (1999) argues that positivist theory leaves no room for metaphysical value judgments and, therefore, removes itself from the domain of ethical and political commitment. It does not take human values into consideration and therefore leaves no scope for intersubjective human action to occur. Positivism wants to reduce humans to quantifiable and measurable objects of investigation. Therefore, a positivist sees human action as something to be determined or guided by specific events. Humans, according to positivism, do not act from a sense of reason and moral conviction. It is this kind of interpretation which reinforces my position that a positivist theory cannot adequately explain the complexity of human thought and action, simply because humans have a self-consciousness which allows them to set goals, which they can rationally pursue.

Fakier (2001: 23) argues that “thought and action of humans cannot be limited to the regularity and predictability of objects whose behaviour is guided and explained by the universal laws of science. The conduct of humans

varies too much and is subsequently too complex and specific to be influenced by the invariant uniformity of universal laws.” By its very nature, the SGB system is a product of social interaction, and cannot be guided by the laws of natural science, such as suggested by positivism. It is because of this that I conclude, that because a positivist theory does not adequately explain human behaviour, it is consequently not a suitable methodological framework for this thesis.

2.6 THE CASE STUDY METHOD.

Now that I have expounded on the implausibility of a positivist framework, and subsequently elucidated on the two research methodologies I shall use in this thesis in relation to the practices of SGBs, I need to explore the notion of method, specifically the case study method. Cantrell (1993: 87) claims that methodology guides choices concerning methods. Patton and Cantrell (in Le Grange 2001: 75) further argue that although interpretive research studies do not rely exclusively on methods that produce qualitative data, they are the methods most typically used. Interpretive theory is a methodology used in this study, therefore it makes sense to employ the case study method, for as Patton and Cantrell posit, it is the most typically used method within this framework. The term “typically” leads to an understanding that it is not the only method available to interpretive inquiry. I therefore realise the need for further exploration of the case study method, to frame the context of this thesis.

Merriam (1988:1) posits that although case study is a familiar term to most people, there is little agreement on what constitutes case study research. Stenhouse (in Le Grange 2001:76) suggests that even though quantitative indices are used (generally descriptive), case study research should be viewed as a response to research done within the psychostatistical paradigm. He writes as follows:

Case study may be seen as a response to the need for a return to close natural observation, or as a reaction against positivist epistemology implied in the psychostatistical paradigm. Case study methods are often described as naturalistic, qualitative, descriptive, responsive, interpretive, hermeneutic, or idiographic by way of contrast to the abstracted, quantitative, nomothetic approach of psychostatistical methods that strip observation to indices.

Green and David (in Gilgun 1994: 371) claims that case studies are useful to study problems in depth, to understand the stages in processes, or to understand situations in context. Building on this, Garmezy (in Gilgun1994: 371) posits that case studies have provided the basis for the development of the science of human behaviour. According to Cohen and Manion (1991: 125) case studies are based on observation, the purpose of which is to probe deeply and to analyse intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitute the case study unit. They claim that this offers the advantage, of being firmly embedded in reality, with attention to the subtleties and complexities including rich detail. Gilgun (1994:373) supports this view, and in addition argues that

case studies are not linked to any particular type of data or data collection method, for methods include participant observation, various types of interviewing ranging from unstructured to structured, questionnaires and checklists. The use of multiple methods is common. He also claims that case studies can serve many purposes, including, but not limited to description, explanation, prediction and hypothesis generation. For example, case studies can describe the subjective meanings an individual attributes, to life events, identify themes in individual lives, and investigate causal relationships between variables. In this regard, Merriam (1988: 11-13) recognises four features of the interpretive case study: *particularistic*, *descriptive*, *heuristic*, and *inductive*. *Particularistic* means that the case study focuses on a particular situation, event, programme, or phenomenon. *Descriptive* means that the final case study report is a rich, "thick" description of the phenomenon under study. As full a description as possible is given of the incident or entity being investigated. *Heuristic* means that the case study illuminates and extends the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study. *Inductive* means that the case study relies on inductive reasoning: data are grounded in the context itself.

A distinguishing aspect, which also doubles as the area most open to criticism, is the issue of generalisability; as Vulliamy *et al.* (1990: 72) argue when they claim that the research could use the micro to illustrate the macro. I interpret this to mean that the case study could be used to interpret other cases, which have the same underlying features. Put differently, research which has no apparent meaning beyond its own boundaries, has limited

appeal, and even less potential for the application of the findings. In moving from the “micro to the macro”, researchers address combinations of some of the issues of selection, verification, cumulation, generalisation, and application. All of these criteria could be seen as essential and dependent on the others in a linear way (Crossley & Vulliamy, in Schweisfurth 1999: 333). I shall now attempt to depict how some of these criteria are related and why it seems to be unsuitable for this study.

- Selection is an essential dimension of case study. Cases have to be chosen, in terms of who or what should become the object of study. Choosing the case unit, in this instance the SGB is a vital first step. Schweisfurth (1999: 333) argues that within each case, decisions must be made about which issues to raise and what to observe. For my purpose I shall select one or more individual governors at each of the schools under discussion, with the intention to ascertain the type of practices, which they exhibit within the confines of the rules which govern them. Furthermore Schweisfurth claims that the researcher will discriminate among the data collected, attributing greater significance to some than to others. He posits that it is not possible to include every detail which makes selection an inescapable aspect of case studies.
- Verification is an aspect of case study, which holds some merit. One needs to be able to retain a position where readers or observers have the opportunity to test the information that is presented. It is obvious that statistical means of verification would be unsuitable, but

Schweisfurth (1999: 335) flirts with the idea that the respondent (school governor) could verify the findings or the impression of the researcher. Another means at the disposal of the researcher is to verify his findings with other similar case studies and the theories generated by them.

- Generalisation is one of the goals of the case study method. This means that if the case study is left in isolation, with no attempt to generalise or compare with other similar studies, the study will according to Schweisfurth (1999: 335) remain an idiosyncratic “one-off”, neither seen in the light of related research, nor contributing to the wider discussion. He (1999: 336) further resourcefully warns that it should be recognised that given the epistemological foundations of the case study, although the findings are used to challenge certain assumptions currently held, no attempt is made to extrapolate general laws or universally applicable recommendations in a positivistic sense. Rather at its broadest level, the study attempts to offer new insights and critical perspectives on the processes (within the SGB system), to generate increased awareness and understanding of the factors that influence the functioning of such School Governing Bodies.

Although I have indicated that selection, verification and generalisation could play a role in case studies, it is my contention that these are the tools more suited to a positivistic framework. Schweisfurth mentions that one should not “attempt to extrapolate general laws or universally applicable

recommendations in a positivistic sense". It is for this reason that I would argue for the implementation of description rather than verification and generalisation, because they are intrinsically connected to positivism. I contend that the case study method could be utilised, notwithstanding the absence of these positivist notions. I, therefore, disagree with Crossley and Vulliamy who argue that verification and generalisation are essential to the case study method. I further contend that the case study method would not be impoverished without these criteria, therefore, I choose not to utilise them rather opting for description to drive the case studies. I focus on the descriptive research framework precisely because it is linked to interpretive theory. I now give some insight into descriptive research as this thesis predominantly relies on this form.

2.7 Descriptive Research

To solve problems about children, school organisation or the teaching of a subject, information or facts must be gathered about what exists. The nature of the prevailing conditions and existing attitudes must often be determined and the activities, objects and persons described (Lovell & Lawson 1970: 29). I draw on this understanding of descriptive research because it specifically includes the problem of school organisation, where existing attitudes must be uncovered and explained. This understanding is in line with interpretivist thinking. Descriptive research does not consist of routine fact gathering, it also seeks to determine the degree to which underlying factors (attitude and perceptions of individuals, socio-economic conditions) exist and estimate their

relative importance. Lovell and Lawson (1970: 30) argue that research of this nature may not answer basic questions, it does not involve the use of experiments, it rather seeks to uncover the nature of factors involved in a given situation. It involves an element of interpretation of the meaning or significance of what is described. They conclude by stating that, "Descriptive research describes and interprets what is. It is concerned with conditions that exist, practices that prevail, beliefs and attitudes that are held, processes that are ongoing, and trends that are developing" (Lovell & Lawson 1970: 31).

The emphasis of this thesis is, therefore, on insight rather than overview. This relates to the notion that this thesis aims to explain what is actually happening as opposed to what ought to be happening. Taking into consideration the foregoing arguments, I choose to use the case study method as a means of research for this thesis. I further explore case studies, in terms of the production of information, and particularly the instruments interviews and observation, in chapter four.

2.8 SUMMARY

In this chapter I described the methodological orientations of my research. I illustrated this study as being post-positivist. I contend that interpretive and critical theoretical frameworks are appropriate for explaining SGB practices. The method used in this research is the case study method. In this chapter I described what the case study method entails. I emphasised key features of case study with the distinct intent to show that this thesis has the possibility to

do justice to SGB practices by employing this method. I then gave a brief insight into the descriptive research method claiming that this thesis relies heavily on this form of doing case studies. In the next chapter I shall firstly, attempt to interpret the key concept for this thesis, namely democracy. I emphasise the understanding of the consensus notion, because it has particular bearing on SGBs. I further explore the constitutive meanings of democracy, with specific reference to freedom, power, dialogism and rationality.

CHAPTER THREE

CONSTITUTIVE MEANINGS OF DEMOCRACY AND SGB's

3.1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa has witnessed remarkable changes during the past ten years (1992 – 2002). As a country it moved from an authoritarian, undemocratic, racially segregated society to a more inclusive constitutional democracy. Education had been a central arena within which the pathway towards this democracy has been charted out. The uprisings in 1976 is seen as a pivotal juncture, a point which can be described as “turning the corner”, in terms of redressing inequities and segregation in education. One should also bear in mind that the education arena was utilised as space for school improvement and political transformation. Consequently there exists a demand for democratic participation in the governance of schools. Grassroots movements such as the Soweto Parents Crises Committee spearheaded the cause, “ ... and the whole movement of People’s Education from 1985 onwards” (Taylor 1998: 69). Taylor (1998: 69) posits that through alignments with internal and external structures of the liberation movement, this committee was able to provide the intellectual underpinnings for the emerging plans about education in a post-apartheid South Africa. There was a subsequent synthesis between this committee and the populist aspirations of the mass democratic movement. The enduring demand for democratic participation in the country in general, and education in particular, have been realised in the establishment of school governing bodies.

Since the basic call was for democracy, it makes sense to visit this concept with the distinct intent of clarifying its meaning. Reference is made to this concept in the title of this study, and within the first two chapters I have alluded to this term within the context of a transformational process through which this country had moved. Before I proceed with a clarification of the concept “democracy” I first give some insight into the South African Schools Act (hereinafter referred to as the Schools Act), by drawing on certain sections of the Schools Act that have a bearing on this study. My purpose is to ascertain whether SGB practices are in accordance with stated policies. In the preamble to the Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) the following is stated:

... this country requires a new national system for schools which will 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, ... and promote the acceptance of responsibility for the organisation, governance and funding of schools in partnership with the State (ELRS, 1999: 2A-3).

My interest for the purpose of this study is in reference to “advance the democratic transformation of society and to combat “all forms of unfair discrimination”. One of the major intentions of the Schools Act is to advance

the concept of democracy and to transform South African society from a racially oriented society towards a more democratic one. The democratically elected SGB will be part of the cause in this regard, particularly when it comes to the appointment and promotion of teachers. In direct reference to appointments the Schools Act states the following:

In the making of any appointment or the filling of any post on any educator establishment under this Act due regard shall be had to equality, equity and the other democratic values and principles which are contemplated in section 195(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (ELRS, 1999: 3A-9).

To further clarify this provision I quote from the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, section 195(1) which states that "Public administration must be governed by democratic values and principles enshrined in the Constitution" (Act 108 of 1996:107). Here the reference to equality and democratic values again comes to the fore. My contact with the Schools Act brought me to the realisation that it is incessant in its reference to principles of democracy. It continually refers to the South African Constitution (and the Bill of Rights) of 1996, and the democratic ethos which inspire this constitution. I shall now proceed to clarify the notion of democracy, making specific mention of consensus. I shall later on explore the constitutive meanings of democracy particularly the concepts of freedom, dialogism, power and rationality.

3.2 DEMOCRACY

Defining the term democracy is problematic, for according to Stromberg (1996: 3), “democracy is a fuzzy term.” He further claims that the word is constantly “... used to define our culture and to shape our policies toward others, who are said to be delinquent if they are undemocratic. It is presented as a cure-all for troubled peoples and lands, but its failures or inadequacies are also frequently deplored.” Torres (in Waghid 2001: 83) reinforces the “fuzzy term” of democracy when he claims that: “Democracy is a messy system, but it survived because there is a sphere for debates and a set of rules ...”. Le Grange (2001: 72) supports this view when he posits that democracy is a polysemous term. He explains democracy as a complex area of human understanding that cannot be reduced to a simple, fixed, unambiguous definition. This leads me to an understanding that there is much confusion about this term. There seems not to be an absolute meaning of what constitutes democracy. In this context I tend to agree with the Stromberg’s depiction of “a fuzzy term”. I shall first give a glimpse regarding the origin of the term, after which I shall analyse, the concept.

Democracy is a term, which has its origins in the language of the ancient Greeks. It is derived from the Greek word “demos”, (meaning “people”) and the word “kratos” (meaning “to rule / to govern”). Literally, democracy means “rule or government by the people”. Put differently, it is a system of governance in which supremacy of interest is vested in the people. Dahl (1989: 13) explains that during the fifth century B.C., a transformation occurred

among the Greeks and Romans, which reflected a new understanding of the world and its possibilities. City-states were transformed from undemocratic oligarchs, monarchs or tyrants, into systems in which a substantial number of free, adult males were entitled as citizens to participate directly in governing. This entitlement led to the term, “democracy”.

Although Dahl confirms the origin of democracy and also alludes to “people participation”, this is still a rather simplistic understanding given the fact that “life” and / or societies have undergone radical changes since the concept democracy emerged. Because of the complexities of modern life, the concept of democracy has evolved into several different meanings. In fact, literature on this concept abounds, often according to the user’s political purpose. It is for this reason that Sartori (1987: 4) quotes Orwell’s claim that, “In the case of a word like democracy not only is there no agreed definition but the attempt to make one is resisted from all sides ... The defenders of any kind of regime claim that it is a democracy, and fear that they might have to stop using the word if it were tied down to any one meaning.” Stromberg (1996: 6) reinforces the view of non-definability when he argues that democracy like many other terms have shifting meanings. He quotes the philosopher Max Scheler who observed that “there is not ... an acceptable definition for mathematics, physics, ... not to mention biology and the human sciences.” These, together with democracy he claims, is what W.B Gallie called ‘contested concepts’, “the nature of which is to be essentially undefinable.” Gough (in Le Grange 2001: 72) supports this view and argues that we cannot provide a definition for democracy, much as we cannot define “love” or “justice” – these are terms

that will always be the subject of exploration, speculation and debate. Stromberg (1996: 4) further posits that there is much confusion regarding this term, for, “democracy is confused with liberalism or constitutionalism or social equality or national independence; it may be taken to mean majority rule or minority rights.” He states that, “everybody invokes it, even tyrants.” Stromberg (1996: 5) argues that, “using the word so indiscriminately risks turning it into a nonsense syllable.” Although there seems to be sufficient evidence pointing towards the difficulty in defining the term, it remains a concept, which is in general use. The word is familiar to most people and it invokes a strong emotional response even though the term does not have a clear, single meaning. The question should, therefore, not only be about the meaning of the concept, but also what it stands for. The literal meaning that the people shall govern, does not help towards an understanding of what democracy actually entails. Sartori (1987: 7) claims that what democracy is, cannot be separated from what democracy should be. This seems to be the fundamental principle, which should be considered when coming to grips with the concept of democracy. Sartori emphasises that: “A democracy exists only insofar as its ideals and values bring it into being.” Therefore, my aim is not to try to pin down a specific definition of democracy, but rather to attempt to give a broad understanding of what democracy can mean, in the context of Sartori’s claim, “that a democracy exists only insofar as its ideals and values bring it into being”. I shall do this by firstly delimiting the concept, that is, by establishing the opposite, namely, what democracy is not. It is my contention that this approach will clarify the notion of democracy. Sartori (1987: 182) claims that to delimit a concept, one simply has to find a “good opposite”. For

democracy this is an oversimplification because the actual question should be “to what extent is a political system not a democracy”. The answer according to Sartori would be in a “manner of degrees”, meaning one system could be further from democracy than another. There are numerous systems of counter-democracy, such as tyranny, despotism, absolutism, dictatorship authoritarianism and totalitarianism.

For the purpose of this study I shall give some insight into totalitarianism, since this system had its origins in more modern times (after the First World War), and also, it is assumed to represent, according to Sartori (1987: 185), “the fullest negation of democracy”. He argues that totalitarianism can be regarded as “the imprisonment of the whole of society within the state, an all-pervasive domination over the extra political life of man” (Sartori 1987: 198). Finer (1970: 75) reinforces this claim when he posits that “... if private areas of life still survives, they do so ... on sufferance, ... from the government which at any time and for any reason may control, invade or take them over”. A preliminary conclusion which could be drawn from this type of reasoning, is that the State has the capacity, through its technological instruments, to appropriate any outcome, as it deems necessary; to enforce a required result. According to Nisbet (in Sartori 1987: 198), this could be viewed as “the ultimate invasion of privacy”. It is precisely this capacity, which distinguishes totalitarianism from other varieties of dictatorships. This gives the indication that the totalitarian regime is founded on the potential of an all-pervasive State, to create fear through brutally repressing whatever cannot be handled by means of persuasion or “ideological indoctrination” (Sartori 1987: 199).

There is thus little space for groups of autonomy or areas of independence, for the totalitarian system have, as Sartori (1987: 202) claims, the force and the motivation for pursuing the utter destruction of all subsystems. It should, therefore, be clear that in terms of Sartori's "differing degrees", totalitarianism is the furthest away from democracy. The other systems, such as despotism, absolutism, dictatorship and authoritarianism, although not democratic, are nearer on this "continuum of degree", to democracy. This is not to say that these systems are close to democracy, on the contrary they are closer to totalitarianism. These are the kind of systems which democracy is at pains to explain, it is not. I now touch on the afore-mentioned systems, in order to illustrate why I claim that they are nearer to totalitarianism than to democracy.

Authoritarianism refers to an abuse of authority, an oppressive authority that crushes liberty. Authority on its own, however, is "power that is accepted, respected, and recognised as legitimate" (Sartori 1987: 187). It is important to note that power is generally associated with coercion or force, meaning those in power has the power to inflict deprivations. "Thus, power orders; and state power issues commands sustained by the legal monopoly of force" (Sartori 1987: 187). This understanding is not foreign to democracy, in fact, to have the legal monopoly to use force is acceptable in a democracy. What then makes authoritarianism less democratic? Authoritarianism as a political system abuses authority and "leaves little, if any, room for freedom" (Sartori 1987: 190). Freedom in a democracy acknowledges authority, to the extent that it can be said that a democracy is flourishing, depending on the degree to which authority is accepted. Power as used in authoritarianism, is an act of

enforcement, meaning a use of power without the authority. In this regard Sartori (1987: 188) claims that power without authority is oppressive power. The inference could be drawn that democracy aims to transform power into authority, while authoritarianism relies on power without considering authority. Following such an argument brings me to conclude that authoritarianism is nearer to totalitarianism than to democracy. In much the same way absolutism relies on power which is limitless or “unbounded by law”, meaning that power holders are not restrained by a system of checks and balances (Sartori 1987: 192). Finally, dictatorship is less democratic and more totalitarian because in modern times it is the system that came to replace tyranny. Dictatorship is in fact a negation of government by consent. Sartori (1987: 205) posits that a dictatorship is when “the rulers make a sham of a pre-existing constitution or they write a constitution that empowers them to do whatever they wish.” It should be clear that the systems mentioned plays havoc with notions such as freedom, consensus, equality and social justice; all principles of democracy. It should be reasonable to infer that these systems are nearer to totalitarianism than to democracy.

Having given some insight into what democracy is not, or will not claim to be, I now proceed to offer some idea of what democracy can be. According to Le Grange (2001:72) it may be argued that the term democracy could be rendered meaningless if it becomes so fuzzy that it cannot convey anything useful. Although I agree with the understanding of democracy as a “fuzzy term”, or as a “messy system”, I also contend that democracy must mean something. Put differently, democracy cannot mean “nothing”. It cannot stand

meaningless. Again I turn to Torres (in Waghid 2001: 83) who posits that “Democracy is a messy system, but it has survived because there is a sphere for debates and a set of rules that people follow ... “. From this interpretation one may infer that democracy draws attention to three central aspects: democracy as a system, democracy as a sphere for debates and democracy as a general set of principles (Waghid 2001: 84). The first two descriptions of democracy may be coupled to two extensive “general ideas” of the concept. Firstly, democracy as a representative system of political decision making and, secondly, democracy as a sphere for social and political life in which people enjoy equal opportunities and are engaged in self-development, self-fulfilment and self-determination (Waghid 2001: 84). Democracy as a sphere for social and political life is constituted by values of positive liberty (freedom of self-development) and political equality (Carr & Hartnett in Waghid 2001: 84). I want to accentuate the notion of democracy, as a sphere for social relationships, for this is precisely what SGBs are about. The different stakeholders serving on the SGB will inevitably relate to each other socially. Social democracy as posited by Birch (in Waghid 2001: 85), undermines class distinctions and advocates equality of opportunity for all citizens. This understanding of social democracy may arguably include equality in class, free from racial and gender discrimination. Pateman (1979: 27) on the other hand sees social democracy as emphasising participation on the grounds of equality and liberty. In this respect it means that people have the right to control their lives, and they may become competent at self-management and self-governance. It is particularly the reference to self-management and self-

governance that informs my understanding of democracy with specific reference to SGBs.

Regarding democracy as a representative system of government, I turn to Macpherson (in Waghid 2001: 84-85), who distinguishes between three models of representative forms of political decision-making:

1. Western liberal democracy, which was brought into being to serve the need of the competitive market society – a product of successfully developing capitalist market societies. Liberal representative democracy created by capitalism relocates power and domination from the state to civil society, to private property and the compulsions of the market. It is a kind of liberal democracy that accentuates the predominance of individual rights over collective rights, power of the people over any other regulatory institution and equal rights for all citizens;
2. Non-liberal Communist democracy, whereby a class state was created by the proletarian revolution. It had the job of holding down the old ruling class while transforming the whole society in such a way that there would be no more basis for exploitative classes and no more need for class state, thus paving the way for a fully human society; and
3. Non-liberal, non-Communist democracy in the Third World States, which rejects the competitive ethos of the market society and sees no need for the competitive system of political parties. It sees the

possibility of a classless society and state (Macpherson in Waghid 2001: 85).

Stromberg (1996: 169) posits that, “ ... democracy insists that every citizen must be directly involved as an active participant in decisions affecting the community, otherwise it isn't democracy, but a travesty of it.” I agree with Stromberg insofar as involvement and participating in decisions are concerned. My understanding of the “insistence on participation on the part of every citizen”, differs from Stromberg in the sense that this becomes extremely difficult to achieve. For instance, if a serial rapist, mentally retarded, institutionalised psychotic or delusional schizophrenic, who are all inhabitants of a country, participate in order to declare the system democratic, it becomes problematic. In this regard, a specific definition of what constitutes a citizen is required. This, however, is beyond the scope of this study, since citizen might refer to all those who have the right to vote. This does not mean that those who cannot vote become non-citizens. On the contrary, they still enjoy representation and in specific circumstances can influence decisions. For example a seventeen year old learner-representative serving on a SGB. For the purpose of this study citizens “are men and women who have learned to live freely and in common under rules they make for themselves” (Barber 1994: 49). Barber argues that a democracy is “about common decision-making and action, about doing things in common, in the absence of truth and in the presence of conflict – even ignorance” (Barber 1994: 44).

It is essential to explore the issue of consensus, as an integral part of democracy, for one cannot describe democracy without referring to consensus. If I interpret Barber (1994) correctly, the process of democracy operates within a domain of conflict where common decision-making becomes the rule. If this is the case, consensus is forced into play. According to Sartori (1987: 90) the general defining property of consensus is a sharing that somehow binds. I understand "sharing" as referring to a general agreement among the members of a community on fundamental issues which affect them all. Sartori (1987: 90) draws on Easton who posits that consensus could be distinguished on three levels: "consensus at a community level or basic consensus, consensus at the regime level, or procedural consensus and consensus at the policy level, or policy consensus". Sartori further argues that consensus at a community level is not a necessary condition for democracy, although he refers to it as a facilitating condition. In my view democracy can survive without community consensus, but it would be in the interest of government to extract this type of consensus, for the reason that it could only improve or enhance the democratic system. On the procedural level the issue revolves around what is commonly referred to as "the rules of the game". Sartori mentions that "one paramount rule of the game that must precede all others, namely, the rule that establishes how conflicts are to be resolved" (1987: 90). The claim that in a democracy "we agree to disagree" has its roots in such an understanding of consensus. Again Sartori (1987: 91) explains that:

- (a) We must first agree on the rules of disagreement; and

(b) Disagreement within such rules is the disagreement that democracy protects and furthers.

Procedural consensus or the conflict-solving rule is according to Sartori (1987: 91) “a prerequisite of democracy”. It is apparent that consensus is not only an integral part of democracy, but that the system cannot function meaningfully or appropriately without it. Therefore, democracy needs to create space for criticism and even dissent within the context of consensus or according to the rule of “agree to disagree”. In this regard Sartori (1987: 92) claims, “a dynamic processing of consensus based on the principle that whatever claims to be rightful, or true, must hold its own against, and be revitalised by, criticism and dissent.”

Having given an insight into what democracy is not, as well as what democracy can be (notwithstanding Barber’s claim of what democracy is), without exhausting the subject, I shall now give a cursory account of some different types of democracy. I shall also expound on the notion of representation as alluded to earlier.

3.2.1 TYPES OF DEMOCRACY

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to give a comprehensive account of types of democracy. Instead, I shall explore four types of democracy which have a direct bearing on the operations of SGBs.

Sartori (1987: 11) posits that political democracy is the superordinate sovereign democracy, whereas other democratic systems, which may fall within the ambit of this “superordinate democracy” are, inevitably, subordinate ones. He argues for the notion of “microdemocracy”, instead of “macrodemocracy”. If the overall political system (superordinate state) is not a democracy, there is little chance, if any, that the subordinate entities can survive and prosper as democracies. The converse of this reasoning also holds, meaning if the “superordinate state” or “macro political system” is a democracy, the chances of the subordinate systems functioning along democratic lines are improved. In line with this argument, I contend that principles such as equality, rationality, deliberation, representivity, social justice and freedom have little chance of flourishing, if a democratic political system is absent. I shall now explore types of democracies which further explains Sartori’s notion of subordinate sovereign democracy.

3.2.1.1 Direct democracy

The major requirement here is that all the enfranchised citizens have the opportunity to take part in the decision making process. At first glance this seems to be what democracy should be, meaning that every individual has the right to participate. In practice within the modern State, this system is seemingly impractical, if not improbable. Certainly in an ideal democratic system every citizen is informed regarding decisions which should be taken. These citizens would then have a direct influence on political decisions, while in the final analysis minority viewpoints are not only respected, but also

protected (Sartori 1987: 170). With such a qualification, government would be efficient and prompt to react to all emergencies, and able to identify and respond to the sincere popular will. The question is: Does the modern world have a country where the conditions are of such a nature that all its citizens are equally informed on all issues of interest? Can we find a situation where all inhabitants are homogeneous, meaning each individual citizen has equal access to all available resources? Surely not. Direct democracy as an overall political system (superordinate state) therefore seems impractical. Bobbio (1987: 44) posits that if by direct democracy is meant the participation of all citizens in all the decisions which concern them, the proposal is absurd. He further claims that in modern industrial nations this would be physically impossible. Stromberg (1996: 169) reinforces this understanding when he claims that, " ... direct democracy is utterly impractical in a large nation and that any serious attempt to apply it beyond an extremely local level must lead to a repressive dictatorship." He further claims, that one might go on describing the ideal democracy, while increasingly realising how improbable such a utopia is (Stromberg 1996: 170). Whilst this may be the case, forms of direct democracy is evident within democratic systems. According to Stromberg direct democracy is best suited to issues on a local or micro scale. An example of a micro-scale level of direct democracy could be a SGB. Even then, it presupposes that all the role-players participating within the SGB has the same level of understanding, and the same chance of convincing others to their particular points of view. While this is not actually the case, it could be something to strive towards, meaning that individuals serving on SGBs could be trained and empowered to reach the level of understanding required. In

this way, they may acquire the skills of argumentation, the skill of convincing others to their point of view. A direct democracy on a micro level is attainable, whilst as an overall political system for a whole country it is as elusive as it is utopian.

3.2.1.2 Representative and parliamentary democracy

I choose to link these two in order to simplify the clarification between the two. The first stumbling block is the tendency of many scholars to combine the two, speaking of a parliamentary state, and a representative democracy as if they are interchangeable. Bobbio (1987: 45) speculates that it was almost taken for granted that if someone criticised the parliamentary state, it was the same as criticism against representative democracy. The two are not synonymous and interchangeable. Representative democracy on the one hand, generally means that collective deliberations concerning the whole community are taken by people elected for this purpose and not directly by members of that community. The parliamentary state on the other hand, is a particular manner of application of the principle of representation. Bobbio (1987: 45) brings clarity to this point when he posits that “a parliamentary state is a state in which the central representative body to which all petitions are addressed, and from which all decisions emanate, is parliament”. He further notes that a presidential republic, like the United States, is not a parliamentary state but is still generically a representative state. One may safely claim that there is not a single representative state worldwide, whose principle of representation functions exclusively in parliament. We claim a

country or state to be representative because it functions on the principle of collective decision-making via elected representatives, who may also operate in smaller areas within the state, namely, provincial or local government. A representative state is a state whereby in Bobbio's terms (1987: 46), "... the main political decisions are taken by elected representatives, irrespective of whether the body they form is parliament ...". This leads to an understanding that every representative state is not a parliamentary state, conversely a parliamentary state is not necessarily a representative state. Birch (1993: 56) states that the majority of writers define parliamentary democracy in institutional and procedural terms "... as parliamentary government with free competitive elections and a wide franchise." He also maintains that representation is the norm. Birch reinforces my understanding in terms of the parliamentary state being, a particular manner of applying the principle of representative democracy. This he does in his claim that "parliamentary democracy", is founded on institutional and procedural terms. I now turn to participation, and later on in this chapter, further explore the question of representation as a constitutive element of democracy.

3.2.1.3 Participatory democracy

Although I expound on participatory democracy separately from the previous democratic types, I must emphasise that this does not translate into participatory democracy being a completely separate system. Both direct and representative forms of democracy invoke a notion of participation, meaning that a representative or parliamentary form of democracy cannot exist without

participation. I shall now briefly explore how participation manifests itself in these distinct types of democracy.

Two requirements are of paramount importance in the participatory system of governance. On the one hand, in a representative democracy, all citizens will not take part in the final decision-making process, although they will be allowed to submit their concerns directly to the final decision-makers. On the other hand, a participatory democracy is also a form of direct democracy. This stems from the principle that individuals have the right to air their views on the final decision prior to the decision having been made. Individuals are afforded the right to impact on the final decision. In this regard Pateman (1970: 41) posits that: "Participatory (direct) democracy ... is built round the assertion that individuals and their institutions cannot be considered in isolation from one another ... ". She argues that the development of democratic attitudes and qualities in the individual, depends on "maximum participation" in all spheres of society because, the development of democratic attitudes and qualities, "takes place through the process of participation itself" (Pateman 1970: 42). I need to mention my emphasis on "all spheres of society", for it brings to the fore an interpretation that participation is a movement towards the protection of, and respect for individuals in spaces other than national politics, or what was earlier referred to as Sartori's "superordinate sovereign state". The right to participation can therefore afford one the opportunity to impact on the "sovereign state", be it through direct participation or via representation. Participation can also influence outcomes at regional (provincial) and local (municipal) level, including those at institutional and

community level, such as individual schools and SGBs. In a participatory democracy it should subsequently be possible for communities to impact on decisions, which affect their lives, be it through representation, or direct participation. Pateman further claims that each individual member of a decision-making body has equal power to determine the outcome of a decision (Pateman 1970: 7). The inference is towards rational debate (as a means of determining a particular outcome), which brings into play the idea that participation is irrevocably linked to notions of freedom, power, dialogism, rationality, deliberation, tolerance, responsibility and accountability; all constitutive features of democracy. The next section deals with some of the constitutive meanings of the notion democracy. The overall intention is to show that although reference was made to democracy being a “fuzzy” term, democracy as a principle does relate to particular forms or meanings.

3.2.2 CONSTITUTIVE MEANINGS OF DEMOCRACY

In order for democracy to succeed it is imperative that its basic qualities or principles not only be kept intact, but also nurtured. Conversely, a violation or negation of these principles (constitutive meanings), would be tantamount to undermining the concept of democracy which could possibly lead to undemocratic practices. Although it is arguably a very difficult task to determine what all these qualities or principles are, for the purposes of this thesis, I shall attempt to explore the concepts of freedom, power, dialogism and rationality, as constitutive features of democracy. In doing so, I shall refer to other relational meanings such as, tolerance, deliberation, responsibility

and accountability. My purpose for doing this is directly related to determining whether SBG practices necessarily enact principles of democracy as espoused in the South African Schools Act.

3.2.2.1 Freedom

If we say that a man/woman is not free to do something, we are suggesting that there is something or somebody that is stopping him/her. His/her options are curtailed by laws and regulations and he/she is being subjected to a variety of social pressures (Peters 1973: 120). Freedom only prevails, if there is a general system of regulation that safeguards against interference from others (Peters 1973: 121). Traditional theories have viewed the democratic form of governance as the condition for human freedom, where this freedom is conceived principally in terms of the liberty of individuals to do as they choose without external constraints (Gould 1988: 31). In terms of this understanding of freedom, democracy is a system of political rule where freedom is at its utmost and where constraints to reasonably ensure social order are by mutual consent.

To explain the relationship between “freedom” and “constraint”, Birch (1993: 96) posits: “The inherent importance of liberty to human beings arises from the fact that they are essentially choosing creatures, constantly taking decisions about how they want to act. The limitations on liberty arise from the fact that human beings are also social creatures, constrained in their choices by all kinds of social pressures.” Berlin (in Gould 1988: 35) asserts that: “I am

normally said to be free to the degree to which no man or body of men interferes with my activity. Political liberty in this sense is simply the area within which a man can act unobstructed by others.” Benn and Peters (in Gould 1988: 35) suggest that, “in general, when we say that a person is free, we mean that, if a person wants to do something, he will not be impeded by some kind of constraint or limitation.” The terms liberty and freedom are used interchangeably, giving the impression that they are synonyms. This stems from the fact that most dictionaries define each term in terms of the other. For the purpose of this study, I also use the terms “liberty” and “freedom” as synonyms.

Arend (in Birch 1993: 95) however states: “that in a political context the terms are commonly used in slightly different ways, with liberty more likely to be used when the writer means the absence of restraint and freedom more likely to be used when the writer means the opportunity to engage in some activity, such as political participation.” Pitkin (in Birch 1993: 95) observed Berlin’s use of these terms as, “ ... liberty when referring to what he called the negative concept of liberty, and freedom when he gave examples of what he called the positive concept of liberty.” What is evident in this observation is an understanding that there is a distinct difference between Berlin’s negative and positive liberty. Birch (1993: 96) elaborates on this interpretation when he claims that: “On the one hand liberty has been defined as freedom for the individual to do whatever he or she wants to do; in short, that liberty is the absence of restraint. This is the negative concept of liberty. On the other hand, liberty has been asserted to be freedom to do things that are worth

doing, to engage in self-development, to have a share of the government of one's society. This is positive liberty." I am more interested in the understanding of Berlin's positive liberty, for it includes the idea of "self-development".

To further expound on the meaning of "self-development", I turn to Gould (1988: 32) who argues that the concept of freedom should be understood more broadly than the absence of external constraints. She argues, "not only for the absence of external constraint, but also for the availability of social and material conditions necessary for the achievement of purposes or plans." She further claims that although the traditional view of freedom captures an important aspect of what freedom is, it fails to address two key features. Firstly, it ignores the contemporary requirement that the means necessary for the realisation of a choice should be available. By this she means that the social and material means for realising purposes are essential to freedom. She refers to these social and material means as "the enabling conditions" for freedom (Gould 1988: 35). Secondly, it leaves out of consideration the development of a person over time, meaning the realisation of long-term plans. In this way Gould contests the "negative freedom" concept, claiming that a person can only be free if he/she possesses the requirements, or what she refers to as "enabling conditions" to make a specific choice. I quote her example to illustrate this point:

Thus if a person *A* chooses some particular course of action *c*,
we presuppose that *A* is capable of making choices in general

and that *A* could instead have chosen some alternative course of action *c*. In this context, negative freedom signifies that there is no external constraint on *A*'s doing *c* if *A* so desires or wills (Gould 1988: 36).

Negative freedom according to Gould, is not identical with the ability to make choices, for someone could freely make a choice to do *c* and yet be prevented by external impediments from carrying it out in action. One may be free of external constraint by others and yet not be free to realise one's chosen purposes because the necessary conditions or means are not available (Gould 1988: 37). Put differently, although I am free to make the choice to live in Constantia (an upper-class residential area in Cape Town), I cannot act on this choice without having the financial resources to pay for a property. In terms of Gould's understanding, I lack the necessary condition to enact on my choice. She argues that concrete freedom requires not only the absence of external constraints, but also the availability of the "enabling conditions" (Gould 1988: 38). It should be noted that even Berlin recognised that liberty may be ineffective without the presence of the "conditions to realise it". He notes that poverty or lack of education may render liberty useless (Gould 1988: 39). Birch (1993: 101) reinforces this understanding of freedom when he posits that "... an abstract freedom to do something, is meaningless to a person who lacks the capacity to do it. Freedom, to be meaningful, must involve real opportunities, not just theoretical ones." Gould (1988: 40) further argues: "I think that Berlin is wrong to separate these conditions, *the positive and negative*, (my italics) from the meaning of

freedom, which I would argue, in its full sense requires not only negative liberty as the absence of constraining conditions, but also positive liberty as the presence of or access to enabling conditions.” In this sense freedom could be interpreted as “self-development”. This type of self-development presupposes that people have the capacity for free choice, and that they have access to the conditions enabling them to make the desired choice. Gould (1988: 41) claims that part of the “enabling conditions” should be “social conditions”, which include “cooperative forms of social interaction, reciprocal recognition of each one’s free agency, and access to training, education, and various social institutions”. This understanding of freedom does not dispense with the notion of negative freedom. On the contrary, she argues that negative liberty is not only compatible with positive freedom, but is in fact part of the meaning of self-development or of positive freedom in the full sense (Gould 1988: 41).

The conception or understanding of freedom as self-development as espoused by Gould, is critical to the functioning of SGBs, precisely because this form of governance is new to the South African parent community. Being the majority on the SGB, parents have to adapt to this new role. In fact all the stakeholders, be they parents, teachers or the principal, have acquired the authority (via the South African Schools Act) to make decisions in an environment which is unfamiliar to them. One cannot presuppose that by serving on the SGB will automatically lead to democratic practices. On the contrary, self-development in Gould’s sense is essential to enhance freedom, and with it keep this principle of democracy in tact.

Of particular significance to this understanding of freedom, which relates directly to SGBs, is the notion of “cooperative forms of social interaction, access to training and reciprocal recognition of each other’s free agency”. “Free agency” in this respect can be linked to the notion of autonomy, where the individual can reach his/her own conclusions. Peters (1973: 123) posits that: “Being a chooser is a standard expected of anyone – which is related to norms of rationality ... “. He proposes three criteria for autonomy which are, authenticity, rational reflection and strength of will. Authenticity refers to the individual making rules for himself, thus adopting a way of life that is distinct from one being dictated to by others. Rational reflection is when the individual is aware of rules and conventions as alterable, continually subject to change. These changes which he effects critically, impact on his construction of “a way of life”. Strength of will refers to the ability of the individual to stick to his/her principles which he acquired through rational reflection (Peters 1973: 123 -125).

Also implicit in the interpretation of freedom as, “cooperative forms of social interaction”, is an understanding of power relations, and an adherence to tolerance for opposing points of view, as well as transparency. These conceptions are central to the notion of freedom, and a disregard for any one of them would translate into less freedom. This interpretation of freedom is critical to ensure that SGBs function democratically. Conversely, a disregard for freedom in this sense would inevitably lead to less democratic practices.

3.2.2.2 Power

While power is analytically a difficult notion, historically and in the history of political thought it is a fairly straightforward one. Power is a political and not an ethical concept (Sartori 1987: 28). Sartori further claims that power is not freedom, for the reason that power is the force and capability of controlling others. Implicit to such a depiction of power, is the idea that force comes into play, when power is used to “control” others. In a democracy, however, using power to control others, does not automatically translate into inducing force. The first criterion towards the achievement of power should be the legitimate attainment thereof. In most cases this legitimate power is realised through free and fair elections. This leads to an understanding that elected representatives gain (political) power in contrast to assuming it. The elected representative is answerable to those who elected him/her. In this regard Sartori (1987: 30) makes the point that: “If he who is elected is not regarded as the representative of those who elect him, the election simply creates, per se, an absolute ruler.” There is a subsequent linkage between what Sartori refers to as “a normative expectation (that is also, via removability, a sanctionable expectation) of responsiveness and accountability of the person elected to an electorate. This implies that the people as a whole actually wield power. Put differently, if the elected representative misrepresents “the people”, mechanisms exist to remove him/her. However, Bobbio (1987: 47) claims that the mode in which representatives are representing have a direct bearing on power. He asserts that “... the age-old debate on political

representation is dominated by at least two issues ... which lead to diametrically opposed political positions. The first issue concerns the powers of the representative, the second what representation involves.” I am more interested in the issue concerning power, meaning how is the electorate being represented. Bobbio (1987:47) further argues for two types of representation. I quote his theory at length to clarify this point:

How does A represent B? A can represent B either in the role of a delegate or in the role of “fiduciary”. If it is a delegate, A is purely and simply a spokesman, an ambassador, an emissary, a messenger of those he represents, and thus the scope of the mandate is extremely restricted and revocable *ad nutum*. If on the other hand, A is in the position of a fiduciary, this confers the power to act with a certain independence in the name of and on behalf of those represented.

In the second instance, the elected representative as a fiduciary may use his discretion to interpret the interests of his electorate, meaning that he operates without a binding mandate. Bobbio (1987: 47) refers to this as representation without “mandation”. Implicit in this interpretation is the fact that the representative has to represent and be answerable to his/her constituency. In terms of the SGB, this seems to be a recipe for conflict, for each representative is almost forced to “deliver” to his/her own constituency. Bearing in mind that different groups are represented on SGBs, conflict in terms of group interest seems inevitable. Even though mechanisms for removal on non-delivery exists, power still remains a means or measure for

control. This notion of control as mentioned earlier, may easily lead to conflict. The issue therefore should not relate to what power is, or who has it, but much rather how it should be utilised. I shall now tease out this notion with specific reference to SGBs.

School based decision-making has become the lynch-pin in school restructuring efforts in South Africa. Membership to SGBs are predetermined by the South African Schools Act and include the principal (ex-officio member), teachers, parents and learners (in high schools). By bringing these “voices” together, power and influence are distributed to individuals who traditionally had a previously curtailed voice within school governance. It should also be evident that each representative grouping would want to push their own interest which could possibly occur at the expense of another group’s interests. It is precisely this type of manoeuvre, which causes the decision-making process to be an arena of strife, struggle and conflict. The manner in which this conflict is handled fits comfortably into the approach in relation to the utilisation of power. A specific type of power is what Rahim (in Johnson & Scollay 2001: 49) identifies as leadership power. He claims that, leadership power is “the ability of one party to change or control the behaviour, attitudes, opinions, objectives, needs and values of another party”. French and Raven (in Johnson & Scollay 2001: 49) identifies five leadership power bases:

- 1) Legitimate power. The legitimate right of the leader usually by virtue of the position that the leader holds to prescribe or control behaviour;

- 2) Coercive power. The leader's control over punishment;
- 3) Reward power. The leader's control over reward;
- 4) Expert power. The leader's special knowledge or expertise; and
- 5) Referent power. The subordinate's desire to identify with the leader.

The school principal (leader) utilises one or more of these power bases to influence subordinates (Johnson & Scollay 2001: 49). The term "subordinates" used in this sense is significant, for it assumes degrees of authority. If this is so, then one might reasonably presume that the representative groups serving on SGBs are not equal. Sartori (1987: 30) enhances this understanding when he claims that within the people as a whole (all the representatives on the SGB) some people count more, while others count less. I understand "counting" to relate to the individual capacities that each governor brings into the SGB system. If this interpretation makes sense then the notion of "subordinates" can comfortably fit into the notion of democracy without alarm bells ringing. It would be ridiculous to expect that teachers, learners and parents must all be equal in terms of the skill-levels they possess. Rahim (in Johnson & Scollay) found that the utilisation of legitimate, expert and referent power bases were positively associated with compliance, while reward and coercive power is associated with resistance. Because resistance is a form of conflict, it stands to reason that the principal should be in a position to identify the outcomes of the utilisation of the power bases, prior to its utilisation. In this way some forms of conflict can be avoided. It should, however, be noted that principals "leadership power" is not the only source of influence, but that all governing body members should at

least have the potential to influence decision making processes. Each of the representative constituencies on SGBs brings its own basis for influencing decisions.

Continuing with my argument on how power could be utilised to manage conflict, I now use power as the ability to influence others in the social environment of the SGB. This translates into influence on a social level. Social influence is “simply a special instance in causality, namely, the modification of one person’s responses by the actions of another” (Cartwright in Johnson & Scollay 2001:50). Marsden and Friedkin (in Johnson & Scollay: 50) claim that when one has influence, the effect on a decision seems to be without apparent exertion of force or direct exercise of command. It includes what Lippitt *et. al.* (in Johnson & Scollay 2001) refers to as “behavioural contagion”, which means involving “the spontaneous pickup or imitation by others ... (persons in the group) of a behaviour initiated by one member, where the initiator did not display any intention of getting the others to do what he did. It also includes what they claim to be “direct influence”, where “the actor initiates behaviour which has the manifest objective of affecting the behaviour of another member in the group.” It should by now be clear that power or influence is not inextricably linked to force. On the contrary there are many ways in which power can be positively employed without relating to force. It is this kind of operation of power that I argue, should be the manner in which SGBs apply the concept.

Furthermore, with power comes responsibility. In this regard Morrow (1989: 3) posits that, "A person can be held neither accountable nor responsible for something which is not under his/her control". Alternatively a person cannot be held responsible for something over which he/she has no power or influence. The South African Schools Act codifies the power in terms of how the SGB should function. I cite two examples to show that the responsibility mechanism is directly linked to power. Firstly, every SGB must operate within a binding constitution, thus limiting their sphere of influence and power. Secondly, SGB members/governors are legally recognised as juristic persons, meaning they can be sued. Yet, elected representatives are responsible and answerable to their electorate. This form of "built-in" checks and balances curtail the misuse of power and could act as a deterrent. In this sense it discourages irresponsible representation.

3.2.2.3 Dialogism

According to Habermas (1987: 310) "the furious labour of deconstruction" will have identifiable consequences only when the paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness will be replaced by the paradigm of "mutual understanding", in other words, the paradigm of intersubjectivity. The argument here is for a movement towards symmetry as opposed to asymmetry. The asymmetrical notion of dialogue contradicts the concept of what dialogue actually is, for asymmetry stands for single directional action. What this means is that asymmetry refers to a one-way process in which meaning is transferred. Contrary to this situation, a symmetrical relationship opposes the one-way

process and actually emphasises a co-constructive process in which meaning is constructed. Let me clarify this point by means of an example. Verbal interaction presupposes an understanding that there is a speaker and a listener. The speaker might influence the thinking of the listener through what he/she says. If there is no feedback from the listener, this translates into asymmetry, meaning one-way communication or single-directional. If on the other hand there is feedback, verbal interaction becomes communication. In this regard the speaker might influence the thinking of the listener and vice-versa. This is symmetrical communication or multi-dimensional interaction.

Furthermore, in Habermas' statement, the ultimate goal is "mutual understanding". It is the notion of mutual understanding, which has a bearing on this study especially in terms of its influence or role in democratic practices. Implicit in the concept of mutual understanding is the notion of deliberation. Put differently, one cannot move towards mutual understanding without indulging in what Bohman (1996: 23) refers to as "shared practices with others". According to Bohman these shared practices include debate and discussion, which are both inherent principles of deliberation. Only those who can deliberate can maintain self-government although, like direct democracy, the Aristotelian deliberative ideal presupposed a small and homogeneous political community (Bohman 1996: 23). In terms of this ideal as a prerequisite for direct democracy, I claim that the SGB is such a small community, in which deliberation might be possible, notwithstanding the constraint of homogeneity. Bohman (1996) further posits that deliberation via the avenue of dialogue with others creates an opportunity for many diverse capacities to

be exercised jointly. "Public dialogue is possible, even with those with whom we disagree (Bohman 1996: 24). Deliberation in this sense is interpersonal; it concerns the process of forming public reason – one that everyone in the process finds acceptable. In other words, all citizens are equally empowered and authorised to participate in deliberation and reasoning about decisions that affect their lives together (Bohman 1996: 25). It is this understanding of coming to deliberatively agreed upon decisions, which is referred to as dialogism.

Furthermore, citizens deliberate in order to find and construct what Scanlon calls "informed, unforced general agreement," or alternatively, what Habermas calls "uncoerced consensus" (Bohman 1996: 26). Fletcha (1999: 151) strengthens this interpretation when he posits that "the dialogic approach fosters different people's living together according to rules agreed upon by all through free ... dialogue." In the words of Jones (in Waghid 2001: 99) "Citizens of different ethnic, national and cultural backgrounds can participate in an investigation of one another's acknowledged prejudices (in particular their feelings about the sort of life they want to lead) with the aim of arriving at compromise to which all participants can acquiesce without resentment and which aims at the optimal satisfaction of the conflicting prejudices of all participants." The dialogical process is therefore deliberative, a means of what Bohman (1996: 27) terms, exchanging of reasons for the purpose of resolving problematic situations that cannot be settled without interpersonal coordination and cooperation. The ultimate aim is to an agreed means of settling differences. In order to reconcile differences or manage conflict, one

is left with the option of either using power claims (including force), or validity claims as a basis for action (Habermas in Fletcha 1999: 153). In essence they must choose between violence or dialogue (Giddens in Fletcha 1999: 153). Giddens additionally argues that power claims impose actions on people, while validity claims seek a consensual basis for action through argumentation, meaning dialogism. In contrast to a relativistic approach which do not differentiate between these two types of claims (because they argue that all claims are generated by power), the dialogic approach rejects power claims and instead promotes validity claims (Fletcha 1999: 154). The dialogic approach works so that people from different ethnic backgrounds can live together in the same educational system, using rules that result from dialogue among them (Fletcha 1999: 154). Concerning multicultural relations, Fletcha (1999: 164) identifies three main characteristics of the dialogic perspective, which include, equality of differences, sharing territories and radicalisation of democracy. In relation to what is meant by “equality of difference”, I quote Fletcha at length.

1. Unlike relativism (post-modern racism), the dialogic perspective emphasises the need for equal rights among ethnicities as well as among diverse social sectors and people;
2. It aims to promote a transformation to principles such as equality and freedom. Under this view, difference is simply part of equality – the equal right of everybody to live differently;
3. The dialogic approach aims for an equal position for all ethnicities, groups and individuals, especially in education; where equality is

important in allowing everyone to acquire the competences that allow them to transcend their present societal barriers; and

4. Difference is necessary to promote the maintenance and development of one's own culture and identity, whilst equality is necessary to prevent marginalization and exclusion (Fletcha 1999: 164).

What makes dialogism an acceptable instrument of attaining conciliation? Dialogism generates pluriculturalism (living out your differences) and interculturalism (people share new forms of living and new cultural hybrids) (Fletcha 1999: 166). In other words, dialogism extends and radicalises democratic discourse whereby it is possible for different human beings to share and live together in solidarity, in the sense that individuals want their actions to be directed by the community of which they are members (Waghid 2001: 100). To further corroborate this kind of dialogism, I turn to Jones (1998: 150), who argues as follows:

This is not the usual debate about truth and who is right or wrong. It is an attempt to understand others and ourselves as people from different backgrounds and is the basis for a compromise aimed at allowing us to live together as a functioning and unified social unit rather than as a collection of warring factions living together in geographic proximity.

As I have argued earlier SGBs join people from different economic, ethnic, religious and social backgrounds. This is further fragmented into pressure groups (parents, learners and teachers), each pushing his/her own interest.

The consequence of this is that the SGB arena becomes a site of struggle, strife and in all probability, conflict. If the goal is towards harmony and peaceful coexistence, then I suggest that dialogism as a tool for collective action should seriously be considered. To enhance this point I turn to Waghid who argues as follows:

We cannot hope to succeed in achieving a democratic discourse without invoking the concept of dialogism. The alternative to working towards solidarity via the route of dialogism is to accept a move toward fragmentation of society in groups, which is neither desirable nor defensible (Waghid 2001: 101).

Given the fragmented nature in terms of the composition of SGBs, the adherence to dialogism as a constitutive principle of democracy seems a viable option. In fact a failure to invoke this dialogic principle might enhance conflict, which could ultimately result in undemocratic practices. A situation in turn which might nullify the very reason for the existence of SGBs. I now turn to a discussion of rationality as a constitutive meaning of democracy.

3.2.2.4 Rationality

Rationality as described by Peters (1998: 224) is engaging (individually) in pursuit of “various differentiated forms of enquiry ... instantiating ... respect for facts and evidence, precision, clarity, rejection of arbitrariness, consistency, and the general determination to get to the bottom of things”.

Also, rationality is not disconnected from activities (communal or dialogical) of human beings in relation to each other. It is on the level of human actions that one may conclude that something is rational. Dialogical or communal activities in this regard are “not a contingent arrangement of individual persons”, but a practice that creates possibilities for individuals and social groupings to build their patterns of social activities in relation to moral values (Peters in Waghid 2001: 3). Tierney (in Waghid 2001: 65) argues that rationality “constructs our beings and roles in relation to others, over and over again through engagement with others in meaning making. Contained in this understanding of rationality is the recognition that it is a requirement to clarify our reasons for choosing a particular point of view. In another way it means that rationality acknowledges the individual’s willingness to express and provide reasons in support of his self-interpretations and judgments in a lucid, coherent and logical manner (Waghid 2001: 86). Taylor (in Waghid 2001: 86) supports this view when he states that: “Rational articulation seems to involve being able to say clearly what the matter in question is ... (in such a way that) we have a rational grasp of something when we can articulate it, that means, distinguish and lay out the different features of the matter in perspicuous order”. One has to supply good reasons in support of one’s claims. Also embedded in the concept of rationality in quest of attaining the “moral good” (with earlier reference to Peters), are notions such as truth telling, rejection of arbitrariness, impartiality, a sense of relevance, consistency and a respect for evidence and people. I now briefly describe some of these notions in order to clarify their role in the concept of rationality.

- *Truth telling*

Rationality implies that participants have to be sincere and truthful when they interact with one another. Truthfulness implies honesty in your engagement with others, specifically exhibiting a willingness to afford the other an opportunity to state his/her point of view. By implication, if such a view is in conflict with your own, it invites patience and tolerance towards one another precisely because the expressed views are diverse. One may therefore reason that even in the wake of conflict and acute differences of opinion between participants, the probability of confrontation might be ruled out, by the willingness of both parties to engage one another truthfully (Waghid 2001: 65-66). Olivier (in Waghid 2001: 66) corroborates this when he claims: "What makes of our discoursing together a conversation (form of engagement), as opposed to a confrontation, is the fact that even the most resolute defence of each participant's view is regulated by the courtesy-principle of give and take, of allowing the other his or her rejoinder." Regarding the sense of "willingness", participants should enter the discourse with a mind-set of openness, meaning either should not enter the discourse whereby agreement is a prerequisite. One person should not coerce another into accepting his views before embarking onto the next point of discussion (Waghid 2001: 66). Olivier, drawing on Rorty's version of a rational discourse sees this as "a conversation (engagement), which presupposes no disciplinary matrix which unites the speakers, but where the hope of agreement is never lost as long as the conversation lasts" (Waghid 2001: 66). Therefore, agreement should be a desired goal, rather than a prerequisite.

Regarding the “courtesy principle of give and take”, one may reasonably infer a reference to consensus. Consensus is not actual consent, meaning it does not imply the active consenting of each to something (Sartori 1987: 90). According to Sartori (1987) the general defining property of consensus is a “sharing” that somehow binds. Sharing in this way refers to a possible agreement to values such as truthfulness, honesty, equality and respect for others. In short, those values which structure your belief system. It also refers to an agreement on the “rules of the game” or procedures. Sartori (1987: 90) identifies this as “procedural consensus” of which the paramount rule is “how conflicts are to be resolved”. In this way, being truthful to your agreed “values” and honest to the “rules of the game”, could possibly enhance the concept of rationality. Conversely, a negation of these “values” and a contravention of the “rules of the game” could possibly be interpreted as irrational.

- *A rejection of arbitrariness*

Through rationality human beings individually build their praxis (morally committed action), which rejects arbitrariness. Through rationality one’s movement is away from unpredictability, randomness and uncertainty. This does not automatically imply a movement towards predictability and certainty. On the contrary, what it means is a striving towards a “morally good life”. When one engages in morally committed action, one does so as a bearer of a particular social identity, cultivated through shared experiences (engagement), which causes one to reject bias, prejudice, discrimination,

intolerance and injustice (Waghid 2001: 72). In this way rationality is strongly linked to critical arguments that emphasise differences among viewpoints and explanations of social events, rather than those types which assume the value of only one right, arbitrary (absolute) interpretation. In other words one has to search for other voices, other interpretations (Waghid 2001). The opportunity created for individuals to let their voices be heard, can according to this line of reasoning positively contribute towards what has earlier been described as a “morally good life”.

- *Impartiality*

Discussing the concept rationality customarily raises some reference to impartiality, loosely translated as being unbiased or unprejudiced. In this sense rationality could relate to a discussion of objectivity, as opposed to bias or prejudice. Schwandt (in Waghid 2001: 74) identifies several interrelated senses of objectivity:

1. In traditional social scientific parlance objectivity is often taken to be synonymous with “methodological”, “scientific”, “rational”, and regarded as a quality that comes from being procedural, rule following and algorithmic. Objectivity in this sense avoids human judgment which is regarded as subjective;
2. Objectivity has also been defined in terms of conditions of accurate representation of reality, that is, something is objective if it mirrors, reflects, or represents social reality;

3. Objectivity is also associated with a metaphysical and epistemological separation of subject and object, that is, what is “out there” is independent of human beings;
4. It is also used as the quality of being unbiased or unprejudiced; and
5. An “objective” statement or fact is also commonly used as a statement that all reasonable people would assent to or agree with.

Elliot (in Waghid 2001: 77) posits that if we want our discourses to be objective, we should consider fostering rationality “free from all arbitrary constraints” through social, intersubjective construction of meaning. Put differently, developing objective meanings is a practice of social relation whereby individuals in a society or community do not just have a given set of ideas or goals to which they subscribe (Waghid 2001). These ideas or norms are not the property of individuals in a community, but are “constitutive of the social matrix in which individuals find themselves and act” (Taylor 1985: 36). This translates into those in a society, having a common discourse, shaped by the right and equal chance to initiate and to question, shared social practices. Having “the right” and “equal chance” subsequently refer to impartiality. It should be clear that impartiality rejects notions of bias and prejudice. Participating in practices with prejudice or bias would subsequently violate the principle of impartiality, in which case the practice becomes less democratic.

- *Consistency*

Rationality through morally committed action (or what Waghid refer to as praxis), is associated with articulations which are clearly expressed, free from inconsistency. Taylor (1985: 137) corroborates this interpretation of rationality when he claims that “We have a grasp of something when we can articulate it, that means, distinguish and lay out the different features of the matter in a perspicuous order (that is, clearly expressed articulations devoid of inconsistencies). Waghid (2001: 80) interprets “perspicuous order” as a particular form of engagement of people by which they articulate their views and opinions about problems in a consistent and coherent way, their articulations make practices transparent and illuminating. In other words, rationality represents the capability of humans to verbalise expressions in a consistent spirit, where consistency refers to the articulation of points of view in a non-contradictory manner. Consistency in this sense counters the possibility of unrelated meanings, which could possibly lead to confusion.

- *Respect for evidence and people*

Olivier (in Waghid 2001: 81) claims that Rorty’s “ethical-pragmatic” approach refers to an approach which should not be of the type where “any power or institution (or its agents) ... arbitrarily and irrationally silences, terrorises, eliminates or excludes certain justifiably interested parties from dialogue merely because the latter introduces a new vocabulary into the discourse – one which is incommensurate with the prevailing dogma”. To exclude people

or by denying them the possibility of participation, is to disrespect them and in the process “stifle rational deliberation of competing conceptions of good lives and good societies” (Gutman 1998: 34). Respect for people is an important virtue of rationality, for, according to Gutman (1998: 34), “ ... it prevents the state, and all groups within it, from denying anyone an educational good on grounds irrelevant to the legitimate social purpose of that good”. One aim of rationality, as opposed to scepticism, “is to foster in future citizens the ability to defend their personal and political commitments, and revise those that are indefensible” (Gutman 1998: 35). Future citizens in this regard could possibly refer to learners serving on SGBs. Finally rationality is a commitment to follow through on the “best judgment”, that is, showing respect for evidence (Waghid 2001: 82). In this regard rationality is based on the capacity to prove your point, to produce your argument, to produce your evidence. It is ultimately a negation of wild unsubstantiated statements.

3.3. SUMMARY

In this chapter I explored the concept of democracy, without pinning it to specific definition. I explained why the system is referred to as “fuzzy or messy”. I further referred to two different democratic systems of government. I concluded the chapter with a clarification of some of the constitutive meanings (freedom, power, dialogism and rationality) of democracy particularly those which I claim has a direct bearing on the functioning of SGBs. Finally, I have shown how rationality invokes an understanding of truth-telling, rejection of arbitrariness, impartiality, consistency and respect for

evidence and people. It is my contention that these notions, and its impact on the functioning of SGBs, deserve serious consideration if the latter want to secure their status as democratic bodies. Before I explore whether SGBs in the Grassy Park area actually operate according to such constitutive meanings of democracy, I shall firstly examine the “voices” of selected governors vis-à-vis practices of SGBs. As mentioned earlier on I revisit the case study method in order to give some insight as to how the data was produced.

CHAPTER FOUR

IDENTIFYING SOME “VOICES” WITHIN SGB PRACTICES IN SELECTED GRASSY PARK SCHOOLS.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Merriam (1988: xi) claims that in the late 1960s and early 1970s the merits of case study research were first recognised in education. Since then, case studies in education offered useful insights into educational practice and contributed to the development of educational policy. Case study reports may be presented in different ways (Le Grange 2001: 77). In this study it will assume the form of narratives. Although case study reporting has traditionally not been regarded as storytelling, Stake (1995: 127) argues that we are increasingly hearing references being made to the writing of case study research as telling stories. This study will, however, not simply be storytelling, for it will incorporate two other elements as identified by Stake (1995: 127), those being:

- A chronological development of the case; and
- A description of the major components of the case.

Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis (in Le Grange 2001: 77) identify two broad conceptions of a case, which include the case as one instance of a constellation of such instances. An example in this regard could be a case study of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) at a particular school. The other

conception refers to a case as a singularity, meaning the case as a bounded system in which boundaries have common sense obviousness. An example in this regard could be a case study of a single school, an innovatory programme or SGB. The understanding of case study as depicted by the mentioned authors raise a concern pertaining to the tension between generalisations made from case studies, and the uniqueness of case studies. It is not the intention of this study to interrogate this tension, however, I consider it necessary that one takes cognisance of it. The other reason for not exploring its influence on generalisations is because it would move me into the realm of positivism, something that I want to avoid

Before I relate some of the “voices” of the individual school governors I need to refer to the production of data as well as the constraints to such a production.

4.2 DATA PRODUCTION

The commonly used term “data collection” creates an understanding that the data is somehow “out there”, at a specific geographic location, and one merely has to collect it. This Le Grange (2001: 80) argues is erroneous, for data is rather constructed, through a specific human will and intention. Similarly, the researcher has to employ a variety of skills and rely on certain levels of expertise in order to construct his or her data. This negates the notion of data merely having to be collected. Gough (1999: 264) posits:

(W)e *produce* data by our own acts of will and intent. While this does not preclude treating data with at least some of the moral connotations of the “gathering” metaphor – that is “with all the love and care with which we gather the fruits of the earth,” – data most assuredly *are not* “fruits” of anything but our own invention. Many fruits of the earth are not our own creation and are produced as effects of causes that do not include human agency, but this is *never* true of “data”, which are always already fashioned by human purpose and action.

Harding (1987: 3) distinguishes three ways of producing data: by listening to and/or questioning informants, by observing behaviours and by examining historical records and traces. In line with the (interpretive and critical) research orientation used in this thesis, as well as the case study method, I rely heavily on the semi-structured interview (via audio recording) and informal dialogue as a means of producing data. For the biographical details of the school governors I used a simple questionnaire. I also need to mention that observation during these sessions played a significant role in interpreting the data.

The first step in the production of the data was to make contact with the schools in order to access information on the functioning and current practices of SGBs. This initial introduction I did by telephonic contact with each of the principals of the five high schools in the Grassy Park region. I then made an appointment to personally meet with each of the principals. In my first contact with each of them, I presented several copies of a formal

letter outlining in detail what my intentions were, and what the study entails. Together with the letter I presented proof that I am registered for this research study at the University of Stellenbosch. A copy of the letter and proof of registration were to be given to each of the school governors serving at the five schools. All the principals agreed to grant me the opportunity to conduct interviews. I made an appointment for a week later in order to give them the time to relate my mission to the governors who served on their respective governing bodies. At the second round of meetings I made contact with representatives of the five different governing bodies. Each meeting was held at the respective school. I took the occasion to relate to each of the governors what my intentions were.

The next step was to work out the logistics and time schedules for the individual interviews. At this round of meetings I was fortunate to secure the participation of the following representatives at each of the schools:

- The school principal;
- The chairperson of the respective SGB;
- A teacher representative;
- A parent representative and
- A learner representative for informal discussion.

The principals at two of the schools also gave me the assurance that they would not take offence if I discussed SGB practices with other teachers, who do not necessarily serve on the present SGB. The rest of the respective

school governors at those schools were also comfortable with this arrangement. I was delighted, for this whole process would, I assumed, have taken less than a month. I was to get a rude awakening as to the constraints involved in securing the interviews. I found, to my dismay, that individual governors did not see an adherence to the agreed upon time-schedule as important. The interviews were spaced in such a way that I would complete the exercise within a period of two months. This, in terms of the logistics, suited me. I wrongly presumed that it would suit the school governors as well. Interviews with the principals were scheduled during school hours, while interviews with the teacher representatives were scheduled for after formal school hours. Governors specified that they would feel more comfortable if the interviews took place at their respective schools. I organised to see the parent representatives at their homes, while some of them also preferred to have the interview at the school which they served. Each individual parent decided on the time and date, which would be most convenient to them for their respective interview. In theory, everything was in place, but when it came to the practice the interviewing process became a tedious affair. At each of the five schools I had to reschedule interviews on at least three occasions. Three reschedules at five schools translated into fifteen rescheduling attempts. This played havoc with my own time schedule, which I pre-arranged with my supervisor. I would be dishonest if I do not mention that this became an extremely frustrating moment in my quest to complete this study. After rescheduling interviews with two school governors at two different schools on four occasions, I decided to go the route of informal discussions with teachers who did not serve on those particular SGBs. This must have had an effect

because within that same week both those parents contacted me for their respective interviews. I thankfully obliged. The twenty individual interviews took fifty-two days to complete, and was spread over a period of close to three months. I now proceed to detail the techniques used in the data production for this case study.

The major interest of this study is to understand aspects of SGB practices as they relate to the concept of democracy. Put differently, it aims to determine how democratic SGB practices are implemented. I drew on aspects of the grounded theory method to assist me in the production as well as analysis of data. Strauss and Corbin (1990: 23) explain grounded theory as follows:

A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data *production* (my italics) and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data *production* (my italics), analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge.

Glaser and Strauss are regarded as the pioneers of grounded theory, which they claim is a qualitative research approach (Strauss & Corbin 1990: 31). Strauss and Corbin (1990: 26) also argue that grounded theory can be used by many disciplines but "... what counts are the procedures as they are not

discipline bound". I should, however, qualify my reason for drawing only on aspects of grounded theory. Firstly, grounded theory as proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990), emphasise that the theory is "discovered and developed" as the study progress. Secondly, it is my understanding that the notion of grounded theory has at its foundation the idea that the theory should be allowed to "emerge". I, however, have consistently alluded to placing this study within the interpretive framework. I have earlier argued for this and, furthermore, refuted the positivist paradigm as untenable for this thesis. There is therefore no possibility for an emerging, inductively derived at theory, precisely because this thesis started by locating itself within a specific paradigm.

4.2.1. Observation

Cantrell argues that the purpose of observation is to give the researcher direct, first hand experiences of the phenomena under study. Observation is often inextricably linked to participation and therefore appropriately referred to as participant observation (Merriam 1988: 87). Participant observation represents a continuum ranging from "pure" participant to the "pure" observer (Guba & Lincoln in Le Grange 2001: 81). The inference is that either of the two mentioned forms of participation is complicated to achieve. At the very least the researcher inevitably become both observer and participant. Le Grange (2001: 81) argues that it is the context of the setting and/or the purpose of the study that will determine the degree of observation and participation. Merriam (1988: 93) quotes Gans when she claims that "one who

participates in a social situation but is personally only partially involved, so that he can (still) function as a researcher”, is called a *researcher participant*. In terms of this research I was both participant and observer. Initially, I tried to be a pure observer but the nature of a semi-structured interview compelled me to participate. Merriam reinforces this development when she posits that “in the real world of collecting data, ... interviews and conversation are often interwoven with observation. The terms *fieldwork* and *field study* usually connote both activities (observation and interviews) and, to a lesser degree, documentary analysis”. My observations as Merriam (1988: 98) suggests, were recorded as “field notes”, which included a description of the setting, my own reactions to verbal as well as body language.

4.2.2. Semi-structured interview (see appendix A)

The interview is an important source of data production in interpretive studies (Le Grange 2001: 82). The purpose of the interview is to provide descriptive data in the interviewee’s own words and to access that which is unobservable (Cantrell in Le Grange 2001: 82). In the words of Merriam (1988: 72): “The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective”. The semi-structured interview allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic (Merriam 1988: 74). This form of interview is flexible in the sense that the interviewer may change the mode of questioning if the occasion demands. If responses given by the subject are unclear, questions can be rephrased. It is also useful for collecting personal information,

attitudes, perceptions, or beliefs by probing for additional information (Sax 1979: 233). Lovell and Lawson (1970) reinforce this understanding when they argue that the interviewer is permitted to deviate from the set questions, as the situation appears to demand. They further posit: "He/She can change the wording of the questions and the order in which they are presented, follow up unexpected clues, and even alter the direction of the inquiry" (Lovell & Lawson 1970: 177). Hence, I used the semi-structured interview throughout this research study for its flexibility and because I required in-depth information not provided by other sources. Throughout my contact with the research participants I attempted to develop good relationships and went out of my way to interview the respondents in surroundings which were familiar to them in order to diminish a measure of discomfort. This I did on the basis of Nisbet and Entwistle (1970: 42) who claim that the main task is to establish rapport and to allow the subject to be at ease. They were also assured of the confidentiality of the information given by them. I shall therefore use fictitious names when I refer to the "voices" which were heard. In certain instances I shall refer to neutral titles such as "chairperson or principal". I shall address the responses of individuals whom I approached for possible interviews later on in this chapter.

4.2.3. Informal Discussions

Informal discussion or dialogue is a useful means of producing data. In this case, most of the discussions transpired directly after the interview and in the follow-up sessions. During these sessions, school governors had an

opportunity to verify the interview information, as well as using the session for supplementary comment. I got the impression that the informal discussions provided insights into school governors' perceptions easier than under the formal interview. At this stage my perception was that the governors felt more familiar not only with the topic under discussion, but also with me as a person. I also got the impression that individuals gave more information if they are not required to answer a specific question. These conversations provided valuable feedback and often corroborated what I had observed or clarified in greater detail what governors had shared in the interview. "It is important that we do not underestimate the significance of informal data sources. Informal sources of data have been one of the best ways to learn about environmental education *and SGBs* (my italics) in the Southern African region" (Janse van Rensburg in Le Grange 2001: 82).

4.3 Case Study Report – Some of "The Voices"

The names of the individuals who participated in my data production are deliberately fictitious and bear no resemblance to their actual identity. The inclusion of names is to emphasise that I dealt with "real people", who actively participated. However, I shall also refer to neutral terms such as chairperson or principal. I refer to the schools according to the first five letters of the alphabet. This again is to ensure, as far as practically possible, a semblance of confidentiality. As stated earlier, the report will take the form of narratives. Bogdan and Bicklen (1982: 154) emphasise that "analysis involves working with data, organising it, breaking it down, synthesising it, searching for

patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others". Patton (1990: 372) supports this view by stating:

... there are no absolute rules except to do the very best with your full intellect to fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveals given the purpose of the study... This does not mean that there are no guidelines to assist in analysing data. But guidelines and procedural suggestions are not rules.

Cantrell (in Le Grange 2001: 89), however, argues that although there are no rules of thumb for data analysis in interpretive studies several approaches to analysis exist in practice and are supported by the field. She claims that the most typical and widely used method is the development of coding. This involves identifying categories or themes based upon patterns and ideas that emerge from the data (e.g. words, phrases, behaviours and events). Le Grange (2001: 90) challenges this view when he posits:

This approach to analysis is underpinned by positivist assumptions. Firstly, reducing data (representing human actions and interactions) to its small components, such as words, phrases, behaviours and events is little different from reducing data to numerals. Secondly, using only information that emerges as part of a pattern or trend ignores what is not part of the pattern/trend (empirical anomalies).

Embracing Le Grange's interpretation, I intend as far as possible to represent some of the "voices" in a holistic manner, meaning writing the report from the interview and informal discussions as broadly as possible. I subsequently give the detail representing the reality as closely as possible. The provision of detail includes the accounts of human actions and experiences, as well as the uniqueness and idiosyncrasies of the individuals. This means that much of the information that was constructed would be given verbatim, which is in consonance with the narrative form. This does not mean that I do not discriminate between the data. I do acknowledge that my attempt to describe events cannot be done free from human agency and will inevitably involve the selection of particular events or instances and issues to be raised in preference of others. This, according to Schweisfurth (1999: 333), is the norm in case studies, for it is not possible to include every detail. I also feel that the target group is small enough to include most of the data. I have, however, considered the coding system as proposed by Merriam, as well as by Strauss and Corbin. However, I feel that the size of the sample may distort the picture if categories and sub-categories are used. This does not translate into abandoning the coding system. On the contrary I continually referred to this principle when I analysed the information that was produced. This helped me a great deal in making sense of the data as well as affording me with the necessary tools to sift and collate the information. I utilised the coding system in what might be referred to as an "abridged sense". Giving the data verbatim also affords one with some insight into the language usage of the SGB representatives. I now proceed with a discussion on some of the "voices".

4.3.1 The Setting and its “voices”

4.3.1.1. School A

The Role players

Mr. Anderson	principal
Mr. Bloem	parent representative
Mr. Delft	former chairperson
Mrs. Hartley	former teacher representative
Mr. Mullen	teacher representative

School A is flanked by “middle class” housing (detailed explanation with school B) on its western border, while the eastern side is occupied by an informal settlement which has recently been upgraded. These new houses are extremely small. Therefore, almost every house has an informal structure adjacent to the house. The southern side is open space (bush) which I was told is earmarked for accommodating the rest of the informal settlers. On the northern side we find a sprawl of sub-economic houses, built during the Apartheid era. These houses have no ceilings, and those that have, have been installed at the occupants’ expense. Services such as water and electricity supply are available. These houses are rented and are commonly referred to as “council dwellings”. Most of the homes are occupied by an extended family, meaning the parents with their children as well as the grandparents or an uncle/aunt, and the child or children of one or two of the daughters. Most of the homes are overcrowded and most have separate quarters built of zinc and cardboard, while those who can afford, have a

wooden structure on the property. The school itself has brick and mortar columns with water resistant pressed board panelling. The overall impression is that the structure is in a good condition, but one double storey section remains unused. The building was originally erected to accommodate one thousand learners. Currently, there are six hundred and twenty four learners. The school is situated in an area where gangsterism is rife and some 59% (I am told) of the surrounding population are unemployed. Shebeens are littered across the area where drug-merchants are seen as role models because of their seemingly affluent lifestyle.

At this school one parent representative as well as the chairperson are retirees. They left school after completing standard six. They, together with the other representatives are generally of the opinion that the SGB is here to stay and therefore they want to make the most of it. However if they had a choice, they would have preferred this system of governance, minus the financial burdens that the SGB has to bear. Notwithstanding this, they perceive themselves as coping reasonably well, given the circumstances of the community that they serve. None of them, including the principal and teacher representatives, attended any course in terms of the functioning of SGBs. They learned as they went along. The principal and the teacher representatives are rather pessimistic but also conclude that for the survival of the school they have to carry on. In fact the teachers feel that they are the reason why things had not completely fallen apart. The principal, who was appointed in 1992, comes from a rural background and became urbanised because of a lack of educational facilities in his hometown.

Mr. Anderson and the rest of the governors find it extremely difficult to convince parents to serve on the SGB. According to Mr. Anderson (principal):

The only way of securing a parent to serve on the SGB is when I have a personal meeting with the parent. I then have to convince the person that it is not that demanding, and that they don't have to have the degrees which they think a governing body must have (sic). The parents also sometimes don't have the time to serve. Also I think they don't want to get involved because they will expose themselves and their shortcomings will become visible. Other parents have problems as far as their work is concerned. People don't do anything for nothing anymore, they want to be paid (sic). I arranged three parent meetings before I had a quorum to elect parent representatives. This is frustrating because it inconvenience (sic) the person who must serve as the returning officer. Even then, only those with whom I had a private meeting, made themselves available for selection. I think the majority are not interested. They pay for their children's schooling and that is where it stops. I feel so jealous of the former "white" schools which have competent people serving on their governing bodies. I just don't get the people. It will take some time I suppose where people will realise what democracy is. Unfortunately as far as I am concerned, on my governing body, parents talk about their rights, but their responsibilities seem to be the problem.

Mr. Anderson felt that the SGB places too many responsibilities on him as an individual. He says that ultimately he has to shoulder everything the SGB is

supposed to do, even to the extent that he has to inform parents of what transpired at SGB meetings. If he does not see to it that correspondence are sent to the parent community, information will not get to that constituency. He consequently claims:

I want to say from the outset that the SGB system is a burden. I am quite honest if I say that, because my experience with the old School Committee was that the principal was the secretary and he did all the work. With this system my experience is that nothing has changed. As far as I am concerned the principal is still the person who must see that, for instance, the notices be sent out. In a SGB meeting they will remind me to send the notices of the next SGB meeting. This should not be the case. Everybody must have input, and by this I mean they must share the work. They fought for democracy but they do not want to do the work. Maybe I am also to be blamed because I tolerate these things. The point is that if I don't do it, nobody does. We do not access the structures that are available to empower school governors. The SGB was the idea of the government and they should see to it that school governors acquire the skills to function properly. Therefore, it is not my responsibility to empower school governors, especially the parents. If they initiated the SGB system, they must see it through, which means they must ensure that every parent representative has the knowledge to do the job.

Mr. Bloem (parent representative) explains that the community has other more important things to see to and therefore they are reluctant to serve on the SGB. He claims, in a unique Cape-dialect of Afrikaans:

You see, this is a sick community. There is no money and people struggle to feed themselves. The same people are expected to serve on the SGB. Their main priority is to make ends meet, and this alone, drains all their energy. Kan ek ma Afrikaans praat? (May I speak Afrikaans). Ek mien, hoe kan 'n ou wattie sy eie family kan maintain nie, nog nik om te help ommie skool te lat function? (I mean, how can a person who cannot even maintain his own family, be expected to help with the functioning of the school?). Die parents kommie nare nie because hulle het anne goed om van te worry. (The parents don't want to participate because they have other things to worry about). Die is 'n groot problem. You see, djy kan nie die skool los maak vannie community nie. (This is a major problem. You see, you cannot divorce the school from the community). If the community is sick and need help, then you can expect the school and the governing body to be sick. Ons need help. Assie department genoeg geld gie, dan sallie skool baie bietere function. (We need help. If the department gives enough money then this school will function better). Ma daars nog 'n ding. (But there is another thing). Die parents oppie governing body ken nie die rules nie. (The parents on the governing body don't knoe te rules). I mean, if you want to play soccer you must know the rules, so if you are on the SGB

you must know the rules. We don't, but we listen to Mr. Anderson because he knows.

Mr. Delft (former chairperson) concurs when he explains that parents would readily make themselves available to serve on the SGB if they can earn some money in the process. In his opinion the school would function much more effectively if the SGB had access to better financial resources. He explains:

The government is draining our pockets. Parents must assume more and more responsibilities notwithstanding their financial position. They are supposed to give of their time and money without any consideration to whether they can afford. The other day, a teacher who is at this school for sixteen years wanted leave, or how do they call it, furlough, for the first time in his teaching career. You know, his father has cancer and he want to look after his father. The WCED refused his leave and said he may get leave if the SGB make an internal arrangement. This mean that we, the SGB, must pay for a substitute teacher (sic). We don't have the money, and this mean that the teacher cannot get leave. I feel very bad because this is a committed teacher, who always help with fundraising. I mean how can we employ somebody, if we are unemployed. This is how the department treat teachers, and we sit with the problem. This is very unfair. We are not employers. This is the government's job. It all boils down to finances. This community cannot afford to make improvements, if anything they would first improve their own lives. There's no money in the community to spend so even

fundraising efforts yield poor returns. Raising funds is like taxing the community who already struggle to pay school fees.

Mrs. Hartley (former teacher representative) feels that there is no democracy within their SGB. During her term of office as teacher representative, she always felt as if discussions had taken place prior to the issue being brought to SGB level. In this way the principal, the chairperson and some of the parent representatives manipulated the outcomes that were reached. According to her, decisions were already made before the meeting. Because most decisions are reached by voting, the principal's influence over the other governors meant that he always got what he wanted. This is because the parents say that the principal knows best. Even the learners don't contribute (sic), they just sit in and vote with the principal. "You see the chairperson would sort of intimidate the learners. Another thing is, what the principal says is law." Issues are rarely debated and everything is shrouded in secrecy. She further explains:

The chairperson would always conclude the meeting by stating that whatever happens here remains here. This statement is intended for me, and the learners on the SGB. One day I asked the principal if I could schedule a meeting with the staff in order to report to them. He said it is not necessary because they did not need to know. I took it upon myself to inform the staff of developments at SGB level. For this, I was privately reprimanded by the principal (sic). You see, the story is like this. A post became available, but Miss Jones already occupied that post in a temporary capacity. She was delighted to hear that there is a

chance for her to become permanent. The principal wanted to advertise the post in such a way that Miss Jones would not qualify. When I objected and asked why he wanted to do this, he said Miss. Jones did not want to stand in for him at a "Safety and Evacuation" workshop. I then asked him what this had to do with her teaching. His response was that she must first learn to obey orders before she can teach. When the staff learnt about this there was heated debate at staff level, and ultimately Miss. Jones got the post. My position on the SGB became so uncomfortable after this episode that I resigned as teacher representative. I also want to say that I personally feel that the teachers at our school carry the school. I don't think that the governing body contributes anything. It is my personal view that we are in fact functioning without a governing body. I volunteered to serve on the SGB hoping that I would be able to make a difference. You see, in the way things were being done. This "kragdadige" (heavy handed) approach of management and the chairperson fazed me (sic). Obviously I could not make a change. It did not happen. I must also mention that I learnt about finance while serving on the SGB, but nobody taught me. I learnt as I went along. I was the treasurer, you know.

Mr. Mullen (teacher representative) is despondent about how the SGB functions. He is of the opinion that the school can function effectively without a SGB for the following reasons:

They don't do anything constructive for the school. Perhaps Mr. Bloem is an exception. He supervises classes if a teacher is absent. Other than that the SGB does nothing. In fact they don't even know the teachers. At the beginning of the year the chairperson addressed the staff and told us that we need not worry about fundraising anymore. The SGB has a fundraising committee to raise funds. Our task is to teach the children. He explained that they organised a film show at a theatre in Wynberg. A week later he distributed the tickets among the teachers and told them to motivate the learners to sell the tickets. He instructed another teacher to collect all moneys. I had to send the money of ticket sales for my class to this teacher. Ultimately the teachers had to make this venture a success. The same happened with our annual "Surf and Turf". The staff was responsible for everything. Governing body members were nowhere to be seen (except Mr. Bloem of course), but on the day of the outing they were all lining up at the bus, ready to enjoy the outing. The SGB decides on a fundraiser then all they do is pass it on to the staff. You see we first have to get a functional SGB before we can determine whether it endorses democratic principles. Look, decisions are reached in a meeting but a day later you find the decision is changed. You know, Mr. Anderson thinks he has the authority to do this because he is "die baas van die plaas" (the boss), but this is because of the system. Kragdadigheid (Heavy handedness) was the manner in the old system and people are still steeped in that style of management. Listen here, they cut their teeth in that system, and it's difficult to get that out of them. No, don't ask me about democracy because it does not exist here.

Democracy at this school reminds me of the founder of Ford Motor Company. He said my Model T Ford you can get in any colour as long as it is black. Anything can be said, as long as Mr. Anderson agrees. That is how democracy is practiced here. You know, the SGB here is under the impression that basically everything that happens in the meetings is confidential. I am slowly trying to change this now that Mr. Delft is not in charge anymore.

Mr. Mullen (teacher representative) says he was disappointed in the manner in which the new chairperson was forced out of his post. He claims that things were starting to improve because Mr. Konrad (new chairperson after Mr. Delft) did not allow Mr. Anderson (principal) to operate in his usual “kragdadige” manner. Issues were debated where everyone had a chance to influence a decision. When this happened, Mr. Anderson (principal) started throwing tantrums. He explains:

A meeting was called for the election of the executive of the SGB. Mr. Konrad was ill at that time, besides he did not instruct the secretary to call a meeting. Mr. Anderson, knowing full well of Mr. Konrad’s illness called the meeting. Elections then took place and Mr. Konrad was obviously voted out, because he was absent. I explained that elections could not take place because there was not a quorum. The following day Mr. Anderson called me in, and told me that I am still the treasurer. I presumed that all office bearers retained their positions. To my surprise, the following week a new chairperson was introduced to the staff at an

assembly. This is how we lost Mr. Konrad. I think this was deliberate because Mr. Anderson did not like the democratic management style of Mr. Konrad. Mr. Konrad valued discussion and debate while Mr. Anderson wanted things his way. Listen here. The man throws a tantrum and concludes that, "dit is my skool" (this is my school). Mr. Konrad explained that the SGB is not here to satisfy one person, but must do what the parents, teachers and learners want. This did not go down well with Mr. Anderson, so he conspired to get rid of Mr. Konrad. Its such a pity.

In terms of teacher appointments and teacher promotions, Mr. Anderson seemed anxious and uncomfortable with the type of questions asked. At one point he enquired whether it was necessary to answer the questions. I informed him in no uncertain terms that he could refuse to answer any question. I got the impression that this made him suspicious. Ultimately he decided to answer all the questions. Mr. Anderson determined how a post is to be advertised. He also explained the criteria to the parent and learner representatives. The other governors endorsed this point. He claimed that governors do not posses the skills to interview qualified professional people and this led to disputes being declared on two occasions. This meant that the posts had to be re-advertised and the whole process repeated. After the staff had voiced its dissatisfaction in the manner in which posts were advertised, and after heated debate the selection committee now determines the criteria to fill a post. Mr. Anderson further explains:

I was lucky because the person who declared the dispute found another job, so our problem was solved. I am scared for the future. We have a vacant post and the chairperson and his executive are uninformed. I distribute all the information that I receive from the department, to the governing body members, so there is no secret. My only problem is that I suspect they don't read it. I sent out the documentation of the selection process and interviewing, but I must again stress they don't have the skills of interviewing, selecting and short-listing a candidate. I try to explain to them in the interest of my school and because of my human nature, although this is not my job. You must understand that they don't all read so well, and those who do have reading skills cannot interpret so well. The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) must make the resources available to properly train governing body members, particularly for appointments. You must know that they were not empowered to do this work. It is easier now because all the information is given step by step in the vacancy list.

The problem of teachers in excess is dealt with in the same manner as done by school B, meaning that the present staff members are considered first. Only if no one qualifies, or no one on the current staff applies for the post, would somebody from "outside" be considered. Mr. Delft claimed that it is only natural to employ somebody that you know and who has been at the school for more than a year, rather than to employ somebody that you are not familiar with. "Why must I go hunt for a needle in a haystack", he asked. Mr. Bloem (parent) agrees with this line of reasoning.

4.3.1.2. School B

The role players

Mr. Parker principal

Mrs. Crombie chairperson

Mr. Hendricks teacher representative

Mrs. Levine parent representative

School B is situated in what can be termed a middle-class residential area. By “middle-class” I mean that most families in this area are home owners, while those who do not own their own properties, generate enough income to rent the property. Most of the homes have at least three bedrooms, a lounge/dining room, a bathroom/toilet, a kitchen and a garage. The houses surrounding the school mostly accommodate a single family, while a few of the bigger houses have more than one family per home. The school itself is built with brick and mortar, with two sections consisting of double storey buildings. Three prefabricated structures were later added. Although the building structures are old, it is well maintained. This school is situated within the central business district of Grassy Park and accommodates approximately 1400 learners, of whom the majority are from the surrounding area.

At this school the governors were generally optimistic about SGBs and its potential to sustain a democratic ethos. The general perception from the governors was that they are not only coping with this form of governance, but that they have, to a large degree, mastered its system of governance. All the representatives feel that the opportunity that they have for giving input and

ultimately influencing decisions is in consonance with their understanding of democracy. They speak with one voice when they claim that this form of governance is a major improvement on the previous system, which they labelled as “overly prescriptive”. Mr. Parker (principal) feels that the school principal has to be a member of the SGB, simply because there has not been enough capacity building. He explained this as follows:

You need somebody with a bit of experience, even if they do not have the experience, their knowledge of the school situation is very important on the governing body. It is a fact that we did not have input into the development of SGBs, but I think the people who did the development, obviously must have known enough to put together the SGB structure which would benefit school governors.

Mr. Parker did not attend any course on the functioning of SGBs, but felt he was fortunate that this school had a fully constituted Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) since 1985. He posited that this constitution was sent to the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) to help with the development of the SGB structure as we know it today. He also claimed to have learnt the basics of democratic school governance from his involvement with the PTSA. Mr. Parker further stated:

In terms of democracy every member on the SGB has one vote, but we try to avoid voting. You rather go through a laborious, slow procedure of consultation and deliberation, where every governor has the opportunity

to have a say, and impact on the final decision. Although all the representatives are not equally vocal, the opportunity remains the same for all. This protracted process is done in the interest of democracy. If the final decision is not found to be in the interest of the institution, at least the process was democratic, and the issue could be revisited. The experience is therefore a learning curve, I mean mistakes can in future be avoided.

The other governors at this school endorsed this point. Mrs. Crombie (chairperson), Mr. Hendricks (teacher representative) and Mrs. Levine (parent representative) claim that the school has been fortunate in the sense that getting parents and teachers to serve on the SGB has not been problematic thus far. Meetings where parent representatives are to be elected are well attended, and at least twenty nominations were received. From this seven members were elected and the rest were co-opted to ensure a parental base. Mrs. Crombie said that when she started to serve on SGBs she did not have a clue about its functioning, but made it her business to learn. Mrs. Crombie believes that the learner representatives are intimidated by the adult members of the SGB, and therefore do not have much influence on the decisions that are reached. The learner representatives do not always participate in interviews for the selection of a teacher's post, neither do they participate when disciplinary hearings take place. Mr. Parker said that parent representatives do not always represent parents. They are supposed to have regular meetings (once per term) with the larger parent body, but these meetings do not always take place. This he claimed translates into parent

representatives operating without a mandate. When I put this point to Mrs. Levine (parent representative) she said that they have a system in place to overcome this:

We send letters of information with the learners and parents must sign the reply slip. In this way parents know of governing body developments, and the reply slip ensures that we have a mandate. In any case, the minutes of meetings are available, so if parents are interested they can read the minutes.

All the governors, except the teacher representative and Mrs. Crombie, felt that the principal is the most influential person on the SGB because he knows what is in the best interest of the school, and tries to see to it that most decisions are reached by consensus. In this regard Mr. Parker explained:

While democracy is important, the interest of the school takes precedence, and therefore I must lead the discussions to get the desired outcome. On quite a few occasions decisions were reached and recorded at SGB level but when it must be implemented, it is seen by management as not being in the best interest of the school. In such a case the decision would not be implemented and another cause of action is taken. The reasons for this would then later be communicated to the SGB. If management can qualify why they changed the decision, I feel that the governing body should accept it. You must qualify.

Mr. Parker and Mr. Hendricks (teacher representative) felt that a constraint is that with the SGB system came many meetings and responsibilities which had to be met. "This in itself is time consuming. If I take into account the amount of effort and energy that goes into keeping a SGB functional, then my remuneration should have increased commensurate with the extra workload. This did not happen, and it is a sore –point", said Mr. Parker.

Mrs. Crombie (chairperson) also mentioned that serving on the SGB is time consuming and it is a thankless job. She recommended that the department should consider a pay-system for parents who serve on SGBs, especially where parents are expected to travel or asked to supervise classes when more than one teacher is absent on a particular day. "The SGB cannot afford to pay for this," she says.

Management, that is, the principal and his deputies determine how a post shall be advertised in relation to the needs of the school. Mrs. Crombie endorsed this, but claimed that the decision of management must be related to the selection committee who ultimately accepts or rejects it. She further asserted:

I am a controversial person. I don't beat about the bush. I tell it like it is, even if it means that I am not popular. I got 33 years experience in the public service so I know how our organisations operated in the Apartheid era and how it operates now. I am also a union activist who is not politically aligned. I was the chairperson of a governing body of a

primary school for three years before taking up this post. I am the national secretary of an NGO (non-governmental organisation), so I know how things should function. Democracy and how it is put into practice is dear to me, so one of my duties is to be the watchdog for the parents. I have a problem regarding SADTU (South African Democratic Teachers Union). You see I was involved with the steering committee in the formation of the WCAGB (Western Cape Association of Governing Bodies), but to my surprise I found that it was an ANC (African National Congress) initiative, via SADTU. This angered me because they, you know, SADTU wants to dominate SGBs in order to manipulate appointments and promotions. The SGB at this school had a problem with a few SADTU teachers at school, so when we met with them a strange thing happened. Lo and behold, in walked a SADTU delegation from the WCAGB demanding a voice in our meeting. I then realised that they are not for the needs and growth of SGBs, but for the security of SADTU teachers. So in terms of democracy I am bold enough to say that this school functions democratically. We do not play a political game. Ons het nie tyd vir "politics" nie (We don't have time for politics). Our primary objective is to see to the smooth running of the school, where each constituency have a voice. Having said this I still feel a lot of work needs to be done to educate parents in terms of what SGBs are all about, especially those with no reading or literacy skills. We are lucky to have a parent community from whom we can draw individuals who have at least these skills.

For promotion posts “insiders” are preferred. Only if there is no one on the existing staff who has applied for the post, will an “outsider” be considered. Mr. Parker felt a bit uneasy when he shared this information, “I mean, that is being honest now. We know it happens. I must look after my staff.” Mrs. Crombie claimed that the selection committee makes the recommendation in full view of the union representatives, therefore, proving that the process is democratic. As long as the process is followed as determined by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), she felt everything was in order. Mrs. Levine (parent) explained that if an “outsider” is recommended, it might mean that an ordinary teacher’s post is put in jeopardy.

You see, the ratio system determines the amount of teachers. I mean, if the role, you know, the number of learners in the school remain constant, then we sit with an extra teacher. Do you want an ordinary teacher to lose his job? We cannot allow this, that’s why I say we must appoint a teacher on the present staff in a promotion post. Oh no, I’m sorry, not appoint but recommend. The department appoints. I don’t understand why we go through the whole process but we cannot make the appointment. I must say that so far all the people we recommended have been appointed. I think they just rubberstamp. Does this make sense? I mean, oh leave it.

The learner representative with whom I had an informal conversation did not have any complaints. She was rather circumspect and thought I was a school inspector. Notwithstanding the fact that I went out of my way to explain who I

was and what I was doing, she did not feel comfortable discussing her role on the SGB. She actually made reference to the idea that she might say the wrong thing. She, however, felt that it was an honour to serve on the SGB where she was party to decisions together with the most important people at the school (in reference to the principal and deputy). Her most important role is to motivate learners to participate in fundraising ventures. She is particularly proud of the fact that the school secured the winning position in the “Fanta Phat Jam” competition. This ensured a major fundraising venture involving the disc jockeys of “Good Hope FM”. This venture realised R50 000-00. She said that fundraising is an important SGB function and thus far their school has been fortunate, citing a big walk during the same year, which secured R29 000-00. She reinforced the idea that on their SGB everyone gets an opportunity to have their say, although she seldom used her chance. “The main thing is that no one will stop me if I want to speak”, she says.

4.3.1.3. School C

The role players

Mr. Guffey	principal
Mr. Savanna	non-teaching representative
Mr. John	teacher representative
Mrs. Lindsey	parent representative

This school is flanked by a middle class housing settlement on its southern and western borders. On the northern side there is a big open field. Beyond the field is a portion of a sub economic housing settlement. The eastern side

is a continuation of the same type of sub economic housing. The houses are “row houses” connected in groups of five. Certain sections occupy blocks of flats, while the open spaces between the “row houses” have been filled by “maisonettes”. It is the same type of housing as described at school A. One’s first impression of the area is that it is overcrowded. This area is known for its continuous gangster rivalry. The unemployment rate among the local inhabitants is high. Those who are employed have many mouths to feed, while a portion of the inhabitants survives on social grants and the pensions of the elderly. Drug and alcohol abuse is rife. A large portion of the lessees, are in arrears with their rental fees, making it difficult for them to pay school fees. The school itself seems to be in a fair condition. Most of the structure is of brick and mortar, while a few sections are prefabricated buildings. The school seems to be well secured with safety gates on most classrooms. The school is part of the WCED’s “Safer Schools Project”. This means that the WCED is responsible for securing the building structure of this school. The school secretary mentioned that an alarm system worth some R20 000-00 has recently been installed, and the WCED pays for the armed response. The school caters for approximately 1200 learners of whom the majority are from the sub economic section of the surrounding area.

At this school the governors are worried about the system of SGBs because they claimed it might disappear. The reason for this they claimed is because it is extremely difficult to get people to serve on the SGB. Parents think that the SGBs’ major function is to secure funds for the school. The financial burden is of such a nature that the SGB cannot attract individuals to serve on it. The

parent representatives as well as the non-teaching staff representative were not elected, but rather selected or appointed. Mr. Savanna (non-teaching representative) explained:

When I started to work as part of the non-teaching staff, I did not choose to serve on this school's SGB. I did not make myself available for election either. The bursar approached me before she left. You know she represented the non-teaching staff. I had to replace her on the SGB, so I did not choose to serve, but was in a way forced to do so. You must understand that I just started this new job and I did not want to lose it. I mean they can think that I refuse the first thing they ask of me. So I was afraid I might lose my job. When I started I had no idea. I just sat in the meetings in the hope that it would end soon. Now I have some idea of SGBs which means it is a benefit because now I know how the school functions; but I still feel it is a burden to me because I must travel to meetings at my own expense and no one thinks of covering my travelling costs. Once I feel secure in my job, I am going to resign as a member of the SGB.

Mrs. Lindsey (parent representative) said she did not mind being on the SGB. She is used to the school and prior to her decision to help out, she ran the school's "tuckshop" on a voluntary basis. She explained:

I don't mind being on the governing body because I help out anyway. I am at home, and helping at school keeps me busy and also safe. This is

a dangerous area and I am safer in the school during the day. Mr. Guffey taught me how the SGB works. He is a very good man who cares about this school. It is a pity that he must get so many problems from the children. You know the parents don't worry what the kids do. Some can't even control their own children. It's not all, but I must say they must support Mr. Guffey. They don't know how difficult it is. I think things will improve with this "Safer Schools" thing. I felt I had to make myself available because the parents don't want to be on the SGB and we need people to come on board. Parents must be involved in SGBs.

Mr. Savanna said that democracy is difficult to explain and wanted to know if it was proper to expect him to represent the non-teaching staff without being able to get anything. He commented as follows:

Since serving on the SGB I only asked for something, once. The cleaners came to me to complain that they need some type of uniform, like a overall or something (sic). I told the principal in the meeting that we need safety shoes and overalls. I find it often, when it comes to situations pertaining to the ordinary workers here, it just get rail-roaded. It gets dealt with very quickly, so by the way, and I am not able to state how the workers feel. This made me think, what it is that I am supposed to be doing on the SGB. The chairman and the principal will always say there is no money. Everything at this school is about money. That is why the parents are fed up. They must forever be part of this or that fundraising effort. I think this is the government's fault. They expect the

school to function out of the pockets of the parents. Parents don't want to serve on the governing body because it means they must get money for the school. You know, they don't even have money for themselves. In my time teachers had to teach but nowadays they must take care of so many other things which take time. Therefore, they have less time to teach. I must tell you that today's children are dangerous. The other day a woman came to make a noise at the office because she said a grade eleven girl slept with her husband. She wanted to assault the girl. Two teachers had to take the girl away. This is what happens, so I had to supervise that class. No they (referring to the WCED) don't know what's going on. They think it's easy. In the past when I went to school this did not happen, but the new South Africa brings many problems. In terms of democracy, I cannot say because the decisions are made by the principal while the others just go along.

In terms of democracy Mrs. Lindsey (parent representative) said that the principal and the chairman do most of the decision making, while the rest will follow. She further claimed:

The principal knows what this school need, besides he is the boss. The WCED put him in charge and, therefore, he must make the decisions. "Hey", it is always in the interest of the school. No one will challenge the principal or the chairman because they do a lot for this school. We got a alarm system from the department because of their good work. No, I will always support them. If we must do things different then this school will

go down. Mr. Guffey always ask how we feel, but we always agree with him. The learners can have their say but whatever they want must not include money. They had a clean-up operation the other day which the SGB approved. No my friend, if everyone can just say what he wants and we don't support the principal, then this school will look like this neighbourhood. It's because of this that information of meetings are confidential.

Regarding teacher appointment and promotions Mrs. Lindsey does not know who decides how the post will be advertised, although she is part of the selection committee. Mr. John however, said that the principal decides the criteria, and how the post will be advertised. Mr. Guffey (principal) did not dispute this, meaning that he is currently responsible for determining the criteria for posts at this school. He, however, claims that he liased with the governing body chairperson. He further claimed:

They cannot do this because they don't know how. I, together with the teacher representative even have to formulate the questions for the interviewing panel. They will then discuss who will read the questions and if they have their way, I will be saddled with this as well under the pretext that they don't read so well. I am of the opinion that they should not be allowed to determine who gets a promotion post, until such time that they acquire interviewing skills. Individuals with rudimentary literacy skills should not have the power of determining the future of a teacher. This has been a problem for us when teachers on my staff actually ask

what skills school governors have regarding the appointments and promotions of teachers. All that I can do is to make sure that the process is correct in order to avoid a declaration of a dispute. The selection committee have an emotional feeling and the final appointment is not based on any theory. It is a purely subjective exercise, which I feel is grossly unfair on teachers. For practical implementation of the SGB system as a whole, you need somebody who have leadership potential, to give direction to the SGB. The principal should have been given the training to deal with the community. For myself I did not attend such training courses, in fact I do not know of such courses being made available by the WCED. There was talk of getting a committee of principals to be trained, but it never got off the ground. The reason given was that there was no finance available. I don't buy that because this country spends billions on military armaments, but refuses to spend a few more millions on education. I can understand this. Did you know the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) dictate and monitor educational spending? They determined that 22% of the budget is almost too much for education. You must understand that education is not run on sound pedagogical principles, but rather on economic principles. In terms of democracy this SGB cannot function because they do not have the expertise. Let me make an example. I need to take the lead in everything. There is not one thing that I can say I can leave to the SGB and they will be able to run with it. The finances of the school are a SGB prerogative, but I have to do it. In fact I have to do everything, even the development and training of school governors.

Although I feel this is not my responsibility, if I want a relatively functioning governing body I must take this responsibility. If I don't accept this responsibility I will have a dysfunctional SGB. I know this plays havoc with the idea of democracy but for the sake of the functioning of this SGB. I feel I have no other choice. Those who do ultimately serve on the SGB, looks to me when decisions are to be made (sic). They always start by saying "if the principal will allow ... ". They look at me, not wanting to be part of a democratic process. I even have a problem with getting teachers to serve on the SGB because it is a thankless job in terms of remuneration. Organising and running a fundraising venture is a major task, which takes a lot of your private time. The teacher who does not serve on the SGB gets the same pay as someone who does serve. So the question is always "why should I serve?".

Most governors felt that parents seem to reason that their responsibility towards the school is strictly as fundraisers. Parents reason that they pay school fees and, therefore, it should not be expected of them to raise funds. Securing funds and seeing to the economic well being of schools should be the domain of the WCED. Besides President Mandela said education shall be free. Now that parents find that education is not free, they feel betrayed and this might be a reason for not wanting to serve on SGBs. Mr. Guffey further commented:

We are forced to charge school fees, but even this is problematic because of the unemployment rate in this region. People cannot afford the R400-00 per annum. We have currently more than R427 000-00 outstanding in school fees, so we rely on fundraising in a major way. Last year I received a ridiculous circular stating I must ensure that fundraising takes place over weekends and on public holidays, especially the “surf-walks”. Now there is no way that you can organise a surf-walk with this community over a weekend. You will never get the support. You see the department does not know the community, that’s why they make these ridiculous blanket rulings. In fact the authorities are out of touch with developments within schools, especially on the Cape Flats.

Mr. John (teacher representative) felt that training school governors particularly regarding teacher appointments and promotions is essential. Currently at this school the best person does not necessarily get the promotion post. Mr. John explained:

Look if you talk to the parent representatives and you show an interest in them, the chances are that you would stand a better chance of getting a post. I mean better than someone who does not socialise with them. Besides this, there is also the issue of appointing someone from within. I mean even if somebody has a PhD in education and applies “from outside” for a promotion post, he would not even be considered, unless no one from within the school applied for the post. The ratio system

must take full responsibility for this practice, although staff-room politics also play a role. What will happen if someone from outside is appointed? It might mean that one of your colleagues will be without a job. So if there is a person on the staff who qualifies, irrespective if he is not the most suitable from amongst the candidates who applied for the post, he will get it.

4.3.1.4. School D

The role players

Mr. Goodwill principal

Mrs. Maart parent representative

Mr. Colin teacher representative

Mr. Eastern chairperson

This school is surrounded by what I term middle-class housing, but the majority of the learners come from the outskirts of the area. This means that approximately 90% of the learners are from a sub-economic environment. Most of the learners are from Lotus River (council housing), Cafda (informal housing settlement) and Parkwood Estate (sub economic housing). Parents of the immediate neighbourhood prefer to enrol their children in the former “Model C” schools. It is those who cannot afford who would use the services of this school. The school itself is built with brick and mortar, and is in a good condition. This school is also part of the “Safer Schools Project”, meaning that it has an alarm system and armed response. The school caters for 740 learners although the building can accommodate more. None of the serving

members on this SGB had any formal training in terms of how SGBs should function.

The parent grouping who serves on the SGB, together with the principal were of the opinion that SGBs are statutory bodies that are promulgated in Parliament. They, therefore, do not have a choice but to do everything in their power to make it work. Mr. Goodwill (principal) explained:

Look, SGBs are statutory bodies which means I am liable by virtue of the post that I hold. It creates a problem for me personally. I would prefer that SGBs be constituted and that principals are not liable because of the post that they hold. You see the document is clear. SGBs are legal bodies therefore any person who wishes to sue, in event sues the governing body and not the WCED. We will, therefore, be liable to settle the damages. This is my gripe and I have sleepless nights, especially when one of my learners got injured on the school premises during school hours. Thus far I am lucky, but I shudder to think what may happen if one parent at any school in the surrounding area successfully sues. It might just open the floodgates.

Mr. Colin (teacher representative) concurred and claimed that according to him this is the reason why it is so difficult to get teachers to make themselves “available”. Teachers at this school do not mind to participate in any of the activities of the school, but they are reluctant to serve in an official capacity.

For this reason, they have teachers serving on a rotational basis, even against their will. Mr Colin asserted the following:

Your conditions of service are such that you have a teaching load, an extra mural load and any other duties and tasks allocated to you by the principal. So you are virtually forced into a position which you would want to avoid. It is my turn now and I hope that nothing happens. In a legal sense, I mean. One thing I must say. You see teachers at this school are willing, especially regarding fund raising. In fact we raise the funds. The governing body comes with a suggestion and we see it through. Without these funds our cash flow will dry up and I think the school will collapse. The WCED knows this. So we find ourselves in a catch 22 position. If the school sinks we are without jobs, so it is in my interest to try to keep it afloat. You tell me how democratic is this type of glaring exploitation? You must remember teachers are not stupid. They see and experience these things on a daily basis and yet you talk about democracy. Oh yes, another thing. I was coerced to join a union. If I did not I would have been forced to pay triple. How democratic is that. No, this government must realise that the education of this country's citizens is its most valuable asset, and therefore they need to treat teachers better.

Mr. Eastern (chairperson) said that the governing body cannot effectively improve education because of financial constraints. He explained:

We can barely afford to pay the two teachers you serve in governing body posts. The school cannot function effectively without these teachers unless we decide to scratch the subjects. If we do this, it could mean that the children taking these subjects will go to another school. If that happens then our role will drop and we will qualify for less teachers. This ratio system must be done away with. Don't you know that governing bodies are a "loose" group of people? We meet more often to discuss things other than education. In fact most discussions are about how to raise funds for the school. Secondly, not all governing body members are professional people. So we have a situation where somebody has a little bit of time to spare and he wants to do something for his child. These parents are not informed that part of their responsibility is to improve education at the school. Besides this we have a problem with this so-called governing body posts. Why must we take over the responsibilities of the State? In the sense that the SGB must provide for the education of the learners, or to provide sufficient teachers to ensure effective education (sic)?

Mrs. Maart complained about continuity of members serving on the SGB. She asked me to do whatever I can to change this. Mr. Goodwill also alluded to this problem. Mrs. Maart (parent representative) further explained:

You have parents serving only because their children are at the school. As soon as the child leaves school or he passes grade twelve, that parent also leaves. Thus far, the longest serving governor served for

three years. Some members leave after a year. There is no way that the parents can really do something constructive or leave a legacy after serving only one year. New members are hard to find because they know that they must take responsibility for paying the teachers in governing body posts. Would you willingly make yourself available under such conditions? Our very competent chairperson is leaving at the end of the year because his child is in grade twelve. So again we will sit with a problem of trying to convince somebody to take on this thankless job. The last meeting was so poorly attended that we did not have a quorum. We then had to organise busses at the school's expense to get parents to the meeting. Currently we have a general meeting when parents must collect the reports of their children at the end of the term. Now Mr. Goodwill will have to start training new members in the hope that they will serve for at least three years. In terms of democracy, I am honest if I say we don't have time to think about it. Only if it comes to appointments and promotions of teachers in department posts, do we consciously see to it that we follow the rules as expected of the WCED.

Mr. Goodwill (principal) said that the present governing body was elected last year (2001). He had to shoulder the responsibility of training them. A responsibility, which he felt should reside with the education department. He explained:

I have never received any correspondence from the department regarding the training of school governors. I know that principals who

experienced problems, were briefed by circuit managers. What the department now do, is they run a course over a weekend and I feel it is virtually impossible to train them effectively over such a short period. You see as far as WCED is concerned, we have a governing body in place, and that's where it ends. Everything from this point onwards I have to see to. This I feel is not only unfair, but also unreasonable. To be able to function democratically cannot and will not automatically happen. People must be trained and educated as to how a SGB should function. We all have different ideas of what democracy is, but our interpretation might be wrong. Therefore, training is essential. Even the teacher representatives thought that their major purpose was to watch and report anything that the principal does wrong. This initially was an obstacle which I am glad to say has been overcome. Presently we discuss and deliberate democratically where everyone has an opportunity to give input. So I would say we have a fair exchange of ideas. Ultimately we arrive at a decision, but as I said earlier most discussions revolve around economic issues and the best way to raise funds. On this we always manage to reach consensus. So people will not argue against fundraising. They might differ on the most appropriate means. For the learner representatives it is even more difficult because most SGB meetings are held during the evening and it is not always safe for them to travel. So you find many meetings without the learners being represented. If they do attend they have little input. I suspect they are there because it is a requirement by law.

4.3.1.5. School E

The role players

Mr. Smith	principal
Mrs. Van Harte	parent representative
Mr. Gamiet	teacher representative
Leroy Jones	learner representative
Mr. Staggie	teacher representative

This school is situated on the outskirts of the Grassy Park - Lotus River region. On the southern side you find a housing complex of the “self-help” variety. This means that the housing was state subsidised, but the occupants are the owners of the house. On the western side is an open field, while the eastern side consists of sub economic (Council owned) housing. 99% of the learners come from the sub-economic area. This area is particularly known for its gangster activities. The positioning of the feeder schools creates problems for governance at this school. The school structure itself is only four years old and in a very good condition. In fact, in comparison to the other schools in the region, this is a beautiful school. The school is fenced-in with remote control gates. Security seems to be the tightest in comparison to the other schools in this study. According to Mr. Smith, the security system at this school cost the WCED some R 120 000-00 which was spent over a period of two years. The school was built to cater for 500 learners. Most of the decisions are made by the school management team which includes the principal and the heads of department.

I had a particular problem regarding the interviews at this school. At first, Mrs. Van Harte (parent representative) did not seem to have a problem. It was only when I had to do the interview that she explained that she did not want me to audio record her. She explained that she cannot read or write and that she felt ashamed because she did not speak well. After doing what I could to make her feel comfortable, I then proposed taking notes, to which she agreed. After the second interviewing question she stopped and claimed that she had had enough. After some probing I found that the questions were too difficult for her. She then accepted some type of informal discussion. As we became more familiar, I found that she could not relate much in terms of governing body practices. This was because the SGB very seldom met. I, however, received a lesson in the functioning of this gangster-ridden community.

Mr. Smith (principal) claimed that the governing body at this school functions because of his leadership and the commitment of the school management team. The major function of the SGB revolves around appointments of teachers. The school did not qualify for a promotion post within the last five years, so the SGB did not handle a single promotion thus far. Two years ago the first ordinary post became available. According to Mr. Smith, the SGB went through this process in a democratic manner, but the final appointment caused dissatisfaction among the staff. Mr. Smith explained:

This post was occupied by a qualified teacher, from the community. I must say we were extremely proud when we made this temporary

appointment. Mr. Sams is a former pupil of this school. We do not have many pupils who matriculate, and then go on to an institution of higher learning. This was, therefore, one of our success stories. He served in this post for two years on a temporary basis, and did sterling work. It is my belief that he could relate to the learners much easier because he knows where they come from. In the interviews the SGB was of the opinion that another applicant would be a more suitable candidate. In this manner we had to take leave of Mr. Sams. I feel a grave injustice has occurred, firstly because he did good work, and secondly because he occupied the post for two years. He lost his job because the parents on the SGB selection committee, were to my mind, incompetent. I feel as if we took the food out of the mouths of this family. So you see, democracy can only function if its powers are in the hands of competent individuals. I can tell you that this will not happen again.

Mr. Gamiel (teacher representative) said that the school does not function with a SGB as other schools do. The school management team performs most of the functions of the SGB. The reason being that the area does not allow people to attend meetings at night. He further posited:

We tried on several occasions to organise SGB meetings but found that it is virtually impossible. You must understand that people are afraid to leave their homes at night. I can understand this, because even the teachers are reluctant to do anything at school after the sun had set. We organised a fund raising event but it was a flop. In fact we ran a loss. It

is for this reason that we do not attempt fundraisers any more. We rely solely on the R300-00 school fees that we charge. I must say that most of the parents or guardians realise that this school will collapse without the school fees. Most of them, therefore, pay their fees.

On the same issue of SGB meetings Mr. Staggie (teacher representative) related the following:

The two feeder Primary schools are situated in such a manner that it falls on two different sides of the gangster drawn border. This means that one group of children comes from the side of the one gang, while the other group comes from the side of the rival gang. This might not mean anything to you, but we had learned valuable lessons from this. You must know the area in order to have some insight. Whenever there are gang fights, it might mean that learners who have to cross the border in order to get home, need a police escort. Notwithstanding this, we are proud of the fact that we managed to gel the learners into one school community. So while they are here they are one, but as soon as they leave the school premises they are forced to separate. The same happens with the parents. You cannot expect them to attend a meeting if it means that they must cross the "border". It is simply too dangerous. This is why the school management team functions as the SGB. Whether this is democratic in relation to the SGB Act, is debatable, but you tell me what alternatives there are.

According to Leroy the learners are organised and they do participate in the decision making process. Most of the work has to do with non-academic programmes organised during school hours. The programmes are partially funded by the “Safer Schools Project”. He claimed that these programmes are of a developmental nature and it helps the learners by representing an alternative lifestyle. This year they had two anti-drug workshops and one on conflict resolution. He explained that those parents who wanted to attend these programmes were free to do so. When asked how this work relates to their representation on the SGB, he said that there was no relation. He explained that the SGB and its functioning had nothing to do with the learners of this school. Their representation is via the learner representative council which had been democratically elected. He emphasised that the SGB is non-functional unless they had meetings without his knowledge. In discussions with other learners I found that the school functions smoothly on a day to day basis without input from the SGB. It was their view that the SGB only exists because it is what the WCED expects. Mr. Staggie (teacher representative) actually confirmed that the SGB exists in name only, and becomes operational when a teacher’s post becomes available.

4.4. Preliminary analysis – Identifying particular instances of less democratic practices

From the case studies I infer that there exist major challenges in terms of how democracy is practiced in schools, particularly in relation to the notion of democracy analysed in chapter three. I now touch on some of these

challenges in relation to my understanding of democracy as argued for in chapter three. I explored constitutive meanings of democracy and concluded that in order for democracy to succeed, these constitutive principles should not only remain in tact, but rather be nurtured. Conversely, a violation or negation of these principles (constitutive meanings) would be tantamount to undermining the concept of democracy, thus leading to less democratic practices.

Firstly, I discussed the issue of a lack of “enabling conditions” for freedom, as espoused by Gould (1988). This is a feature that prevails among all the schools in this case study. Without exception they all refer to a lack of training as a means of empowering school governors to fulfil their respective duties. The deficiency in training and education seems to be overwhelming. Under the heading “Enhancement of capacity of governing bodies”, the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) states the following:

1. Out of funds appropriated for this purpose by the provincial legislature the Head of Department must establish a programme 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 (ELRS, 1999: 2A-18).

The above provisions are clear, meaning that the onus is on the Western Cape Education Department to facilitate the training of school governors, firstly to “enable them to perform their functions” and secondly to promote the “effective performance of their functions”. The case studies clearly reveal training to be a major deficiency. I argued that according to Gould (1988) “enabling conditions” should be “social conditions” which included access to training and education, without which an individual cannot be “free”. This understanding of freedom incorporates a conception of self-development, which I already argued for, is critical for the functioning of SGBs. In chapter three I alluded to the notion that in order to keep the principle of democracy in tact, “self development” in Gould’s sense is essential to enhance freedom. A lack of training to empower school governors (which the case studies glaringly exposes) would, therefore, retard this form of self-development. This might lead to less democratic practices. In this regard Berlin (in Gould 1988: 39) reinforces the understanding when he posits that “poverty or a lack of education may render liberty useless”. This is the second issue that the case studies expose. The findings show that most communities under study are poor and that they lack the necessary education levels to fulfil in the requirements of their position as governors. They possess an “abstract freedom” which Birch (1993: 101) says, is meaningless. In other words, one cannot expect democratic practices to be enhanced when one does not have access to real freedom. In fact this form of “pseudo” freedom may retard democratic practices, an issue which the case studies also exposes.

Thirdly, I turn to the criterion of representation and its relation to democracy. The thrust of my argument in chapter three revolves around responsible representation, meaning that the representative (school governor) is answerable to the electorate. The study shows that there is a break in communication between elected members (of the SGB) and the constituency it represents. This inevitably leads to decisions being taken without a mandate. This according to Bobbio (1987: 47) should not cause major problems, as long as the representative is answerable to his/her electorate. Because of the lack of communication between the representative and the electorate, non- mandation in this regard becomes problematic, leading to less democratic practices. The study shows this to be the case, precisely because the governors of SGBs are not answerable to their constituencies. The case studies describe other problems such as participation, transparency and a misuse of power and authority. I shall attempt to address these issues in the following chapters, with the intent of charting out a possible route towards more democratic practices.

4.4. SUMMARY

In this chapter I expounded on the case study method, in particular data production. I further explored as to why the semi-structured interview was preferred, and that informal dialogue and observation also played a role. I alluded to the coding system and gave reasons why I chose to consult it, but not strictly adhere to it. I then gave a depiction of the setting, and proceeded to transcribing the “voices”. I concluded the chapter by exposing some of the

principles of democracy which I claim was retarded, and thus contributed to less democratic practices. In the next chapter I continue to explore whether actual SGB practices in the schools identified in this chapter enhance or fail to endorse democratic practices in relation to a notion of democracy as expounded in chapter three. This I do in the context of charting a possible way forward, trying to overcome the current restricted form of democracy as practiced in at least four of the five identified schools. In this regard, I shall also attempt to identify gaps in the current notion of democracy, moving towards a more deliberative conception of the concept.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF ACTUAL PRACTICES – A MOVE TOWARDS DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Although the “voices” are explicit in exposing the current practices of SGBs at the five schools under discussion, I have also depicted the particular instances where practices seem to be at variance with the type of democracy as expounded by the South African Schools Act (the Act). This deficiency translates into SGB representatives becoming less free. Because freedom is a constitutive part of democracy, I have shown how this might lead to less democratic practices, and in fact the study itself further elucidates this shortcoming. In this chapter I shall further analyse the actual practices of SGBs in the schools identified and discussed in chapter four. I shall show how SGB practices either endorse or fail to adjust its activities in relation to the notion of democracy as expounded upon in chapter three. I particularly refer to the issue of poverty and how it relates to a notion of freedom, regarding participation. It is my contention that the poor economic conditions of communities have a direct impact on their ability to participate in structures which do not bring about any significant economic gains. I shall then attempt to identify gaps within the notion of democracy I have elucidated upon in chapter three, with the aim of developing a more tenable understanding of democracy which could lead to more democratic SGB practices.

5.2 Do SGB practices endorse or fail to adjust to democratic principles?

The case studies show that in all the schools under discussion, barring school B, the issue of participation is problematic. From the data the impression is created that there seems to be a link between poverty and participation. The participants in school B come from a middle class background where it was shown that getting individuals to participate is fairly easy. The other schools serve a sub-economic community where unemployment, alcoholism, drug-abuse and general violence are endemic. In these schools the surrounding communities have major problems in terms of daily survival. Their main concern seems to be to make ends meet. Under these circumstances it is clear why school managers find it difficult to secure members of the community to serve on the SGBs. In fact, in most cases individuals alluded to wanting some form of remuneration for serving on the SGB. These inherent living difficulties spill over into the school environment, to such an extent, that these schools can only charge nominal amounts for school fees. The economic conditions of the community, therefore, have a direct influence on the school's ability to raise funds. This, in turn, has a bearing on the capacity of the school to function and compete with other schools in more affluent areas. One can also understand why the participation levels are low. I contend that the struggle for daily existence plays a role in encouraging members to serve on SGBs. This continuous struggle in effect curtails the freedom of the community. In this regard Gould (1988: 35) claims that "it ignores the contemporary requirement that the means necessary for the

realisation of a choice should be available". My understanding of Gould's argument is that she is making an inference to the social and material means which, if not satisfied, cannot lead to the realisation of purposes. Following such an argument it leads me to deduce that social, and in particular economic conditions are inextricably linked to realising one's purpose, which in this regard is to achieve democratically functioning SGBs. This short-coming in the four schools that serve their surrounding sub-economic communities, therefore, have a direct bearing on their ability to function according to a type of democratic ethos as espoused in chapter three. Social and economic conditions, impact on a poor community's inability to participate in democratic structures. At this point, I have to make it clear that I am not arguing that poor communities do not have the potential to endorse democratic procedures. I am merely interpreting the data, which suggest that poor communities have less energy to become direct participants in democratic SGB structures. They tend to shy away from participation simply because their energies are geared towards making a daily existence. To overcome this imbalance, and to ensure that the SGB does not become completely dysfunctional, the teaching staff takes it upon themselves to keep the SGB system afloat. This leads me to the next area of contention, which involves the utilisation of power.

The data illustrates that there seems to be a power struggle between the school managers and the educators. This is more evident in school A where teacher representatives alluded to a form of "kragdadige" (authoritative) management. I have argued that the SGB is an arena of strife and conflict,

and the manner in which this conflict is handled may determine whether it endorses or curtails democratic procedures. In this particular case, the utilisation of power curtails democracy precisely because the teacher representatives are not afforded the opportunity to influence decisions. In this regard Marsden and Friedkin (in Johnson & Scollay 2001: 50) claim that when one has influence, the effect on a decision seems to be without apparent exertion of force or direct exercise of command. In a previous chapter I argued for a particular kind of power utilisation, which alludes to a movement away from force and more towards what Lippitt *et. al.* (in Johnson & Scollay: 2001) refer to as “behaviour contagion”. This type of power utilisation seems to be more democratic. When authority is used in a powerful sense, to force individuals to conform to a particular view or decision, it tends to produce less democratic practices. This form of power utilisation also restricts the practice of tolerance. I have earlier in my argument alluded to the deficiency in communication between representatives and their constituencies which translated into misrepresentation. This communication gap also exposes a form of limited transparency. Again this limited transparency invokes less democratic practices.

I now address the issue of what I refer to as unfair responsibility. Notwithstanding the unmanageable economic circumstances of the schools serving a sub-economic community, the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) expects that the disadvantaged schools in the case study must manage and pay the salaries of teachers who substitute for those who apply for “furlough” (accumulated leave). If the schools are not in a

position to do so, the individual educator who applied for leave is refused such leave. From a democratic point of view this is unfair, firstly because the leave is not a privilege but a right in terms of educator conditions of service. Secondly, the educator at the disadvantaged school is actually being punished for serving in a sub-economic community. More privileged or previously advantaged schools have the necessary financial resources, translating not only in them being able to afford such leave, but also appointing extra educators in “governing body posts”. It is my contention that this practice goes against the grain of the South African democratic ethos. It seems as if the government via the WCED is shifting the financial responsibility of educator remuneration (in particular instances) onto communities who cannot afford to assume such a responsibility.

The lack of enabling conditions which translate into less freedom; the problem of representivity; the struggle between power/authority and equality and ultimately poverty, has a direct bearing, not only on effective democratic school governance, but also on school effectiveness. Having to spend much of their energy in trying to impact on these “shortcomings”, might potentially drain the energy of the teaching staff to such a degree that it impacts on their ability to deliver quality education. Although the case study does not reflect this directly, inherent in what teachers describe (particularly school A) makes one want to explore if this could lead to less effective schooling. This is, however, beyond the scope of this thesis. I, however, mention the possibility to demonstrate that the current practices do not exclusively have a bearing on the functioning of the SGBs. On the contrary, implicitly there are other

underlying consequences of poor functioning SGBs which might be further explored.

Lastly, I want to refer to the current practice regarding teacher promotions. Without exception, all schools under discussion fail to comply with the criteria for promotion posts, as espoused in the South African Schools Act. In this regard the Act (Act 84 of 1996) states the following:

... the post must be accessible to all who may qualify or are interested in applying for such post(s) ... the filling of educator posts must be non discriminatory and in keeping with the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (ELRS, 1999: 3C-24).

I have earlier alluded to the notion that the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa is founded on democratic values and principles. Representatives are at pains to explain why they advertise these posts, but would only in exceptional circumstances consider an “outside” application, that is, a person from another school. This means that prior to the advertisement there is agreement that only applicants from within the particular school would be considered. This practice in terms of the South African Schools Act is in direct contravention of the non-discriminatory provision. The practice also seems to be shrouded in secrecy, thus transgressing the transparency provision of the Schools Act. In terms of democratic principles I subsequently contend that this form of appointment is undemocratic. Unless every applicant has the same chance to participate and secure the promotion post, this practice in

fact undermines the basic principles of democracy. Although the argument of a ratio system determining the amount of posts a school may have seems to impact on this practice, it does not excuse the practitioners from implementing their own system. I make this claim because the case studies show that the post is filled before the advertisement has even been placed. This is, therefore, a move toward nepotism, which could be interpreted as an undemocratic practice. This practice, if exposed can lead to serious consequences such as disputes being declared. The SGB is also a legal person (body), meaning that this practice might potentially lead to costly law suites. It is my contention that an analysis of the data illustrates that SGB practices are more at variance with the concept of democracy as argued for in chapter three. It seems as if SGBs in the disadvantaged communities identified in the study, have not yet acquired the skills to adjust their practices towards the type of democratic ethos enunciated in the South African Constitution. I now attempt to chart out a way beyond this untenable position by claiming that a more deliberative type of democracy might enhance the chances of more democratic practices to occur in SGBs.

5.3 Identifying gaps – a movement towards a more deliberative procedure

I now proceed to identify gaps within the notion of democracy I elucidated upon in chapter three, with the aim to develop a more tenable understanding of democracy which could lead to more democratic SGB practices. At this stage, I need to substantiate the fact that my exploration of the concept

democracy represents a growth in my personal understanding of the concept. I found that democracy should not be restricted to majority rule, an issue which I address later on in this chapter. The notion of democracy developed in chapter three ultimately hinges upon a form of majority rule which does not necessarily advance the notion of deliberation. My contact with this more contemporary understanding of democracy, suggests that deliberation is a necessary condition to ensure more democratic SGB practices. Although I referred to deliberation in my discussion of dialogism there remain gaps in this understanding. Firstly, participation does not necessarily translate into engagement, meaning that one might participate in a process without actually engaging its participants. This study shows that most of the SGBs under study, particularly parent and learner representatives participate while their voices are seldom heard. They participate without having the opportunity to influence decisions, meaning they are actually excluded from the process. In one instance in school D, Mr. Goodwill (principal) verbalises the fact that learners are allowed to serve on the SGB only because the law requires it. According to Benhabib (1996: 67) modern democratic societies face the task of securing legitimacy in reference to collective identity. She further posits the following:

... in a well-functioning democratic society the demand of legitimacy and collective identity ideally exists in some form of equilibrium. That legitimacy in democratic societies must be thought to result from the free and unconstrained public deliberation of all matters of common concern.

Thus a public sphere of deliberation about matters of mutual concern is essential to the legitimacy of democratic institutions (Benhabib 1996: 68).

I understand Benhabib as claiming that if participants are not free to actively engage in the decision making process, these decisions cannot stand the test of legitimacy. If this is actually the case then it means that such decisions are illegitimate and, therefore, less democratic. Benhabib (1996: 68) further argues that:

Democracy is best understood as a model for organising the collective and public exercise of power in the major institutions of a society on the basis of the principle that decisions affecting the well-being of a collectivity can be viewed as the outcome of a procedure of free and reasoned deliberation among individuals considered as moral and political equals.

It is her reference to “decisions that affect the well-being of a collectivity” which interests me. The understanding is that decisions taken at SGB level are done by individual representatives elected to serve particular interest groups. These decisions inevitably impact on the whole school community and should according to the argument only be considered when all individuals (representatives) are considered as moral and political equals. Parent and learner representatives should be afforded the opportunity to actively participate “freely and through reasoned deliberation”. Following such a procedure could lead to more democratic practices. Although some of the

school managers claim that within their SGBs space exists for a fair exchange of ideas, this does not translate into the other being able to influence the decision. The “power concept” comes into play, meaning that in most cases the manager on the SGB, by virtue of his/her position of authority has the decisive influence. In most cases his decision holds sway, unquestioningly, because he/she “knows best”.

This brings me to identifying the second gap, which revolves around the concepts of conversation and dialogue. In chapter three I made reference to two forms of dialogue as espoused by Habermas, which relate to the symmetrical and asymmetrical forms of dialogue. I exposed the contradiction which might occur through this verbal interaction which Habermas termed “communication”. It is my contention that communication does not necessarily mean dialogue. You might listen to what the other person has to say and even react to what he says (symmetrical dialogue), but the communication which exists in this verbal interplay might hinge on power. Put differently, the chance exists for the more powerful or the one with more authority to dominate, leading to an acceptance of the dominant view. This might occur irrespective of whether the dominant view is the more rational or plausible argument. I have earlier alluded to the school manager whose point of view becomes acceptable simply because the myth exists that he “knows best”. It is precisely this form of communication that I am referring to. To overcome this state of affairs Benhabib (1996: 69) recommends:

The basis of legitimacy in democratic institutions is to be traced back to the presumption that the instances which claim obligatory power for themselves do so because their decisions represent an impartial standpoint said to be equally in the interest of all. This presumption can be fulfilled, only if such decisions are in principle open to appropriate public processes of deliberation by free and equal citizens.

Once again the concept of legitimacy underpins the notion of democracy. Furthermore, Benhabib (1996) eloquently argues that obligatory power can only be legitimate under specific conditions. She alludes to a principle of open deliberation by free and equal citizens. My interest is in the concept of equality among the SGB representatives. It is imperative for school managers to overcome the notion of “he knows best”, and move toward empowering other school governors in such a way that they become “equals”. In essence, this is primarily an ethical issue. To further clarify this point I turn to Benhabib (1996: 70) who posits that an agreement should follow the general rules and can only be morally binding (valid) if such agreement was achieved through the process of deliberation. To test whether deliberation was actually instituted, such agreement should conform to the following features:

1. Participation in such deliberation is governed by norms of equality and symmetry (all have the same chances to initiate speech acts, to question, to interrogate, and to open debate);
2. All have the right to question the assigned topics of conversation; and

3. All have the right to initiate reflexive arguments about the very rules of the discourse procedure and the way in which they are applied or carried out (Benhabib 1996: 70).

In conforming to the assigned rules, every representative operates within the SGB on the same level as every other representative. In other words, they are equal in terms of their ability to influence decisions. In this way the “power play” inherent in Habermas’ understanding of “communication” could arguably be neutralised. Deliberative democracy in this sense can also be correlated to practical rationality because it potentially leads to a tolerance or leniency to new information. Benhabib (1996: 71) reinforces this understanding by claiming that the deliberative process itself is likely to lead the individual to further critical reflection on his already held views and opinions. In other words, one individual cannot possess all the information deemed relevant to a certain decision, which would affect all. Through deliberation, information is sifted and perceived from different perspectives, culminating in a decision which previously might not have been conceived. Conversely, nobody can convince others of his/her point of view without being able to state why, what appears good, plausible, just and expedient to him/her can also be considered so from the standpoint of all involved (Benhabib 1996: 72). Consequently, one might also argue that no outcome or decision would forever remain fixed, permanent or rigid, on the contrary it should always be open to revision or re-examination. One, however, needs to take cognisance of the warning that deliberation, though a necessary condition, is not a sufficient condition for practical rationality because “it can be misinterpreted,

misapplied or even abused” (Benhabib 1996: 72). I now address the issue of majority rule as the last gap which I have identified in relation to dialogue.

In relation to the appointment of teachers, my interaction with school governors suggests that most appointments are finalised by means of a vote, meaning majority rule. In fact in school E the school principal was appalled by an outcome which was arrived at in this manner. Interpreting this situation after hearing his story, leads me to understand that majority rule does not necessarily lead to the desired outcome. In my reading of Benhabib I find that in many instances majority rule is a fair and sometimes rational procedure to formulate a decision, not because legitimacy resides in numbers, but because if a majority is convinced, and there is no other means of overcoming an impasse, democracy relies on this procedure. So in the absence of consensus, a majority decision-making procedure does not seem inappropriate. It is, however, my contention that problems seem to occur when the voting is not preceded by reasoned discussion and debate, thus undermining the procedure of rationality, which I argued is a constitutive principle of democracy. Benhabib (1996: 72) reinforces this understanding when she argues that the “deliberative discourse model makes provisions against its own misuses and abuses in that the reflexivity condition built into the model allows abuses and misapplications ... to be challenged. No outcome is *prima facie* fixed but can be revised and be subjected to re-examination.” This statement also reinforces Benhabib’s previous warning that the constitutive principle of practical rationality within the deliberative discourse is open to misinterpretation, misapplication and abuse. This leads

me to conclude that a majority decision is valid but space should exist to challenge such a decision. The majority decision remains valid only until it can be challenged by good reason and rational debate. Implementing such a procedure when teacher appointments are considered might be problematic for the “challenge” should occur prior to a permanent appointment being effected. This problem might be minimised if reasoned arguments (rational debate) are produced in determining why a representative votes for a particular candidate. This does not seem implausible if one considers that such a procedure could potentially overcome the burden of staff dissatisfaction, which the principal in school E alluded to. Habermas (1997: 47) supports this interpretation when he posits that:

A majority decision may come about only in such a way that its content is regarded as the rationally motivated but *fallible* result of an attempt to determine what is right through a discussion that has been brought to a *provisional* close under the pressure to decide.

Rationality in this sense, therefore, precedes majority rule where the concluded decision remains fallible, meaning that the space exists for re-examination or revision. Because the decision was made under pressure and the majority rule procedure was implemented simply to overcome an impasse, it therefore remains provisional. Again this leads me to understand that the decision is open to future challenge if, and when, reasoned arguments become available to contest the earlier achieved outcome. Majority rule within a deliberative discourse should, therefore, be interpreted

as a temporary procedure only to be implemented in the face of an impasse. The initial aim should be a movement towards a deliberative form of consensus. Habermas (1997: 47) interprets Fröbel when he claims that “the majority decision is a conditional consensus, as the consent of the minority to a practice that conforms to the will of the majority”. I quote Fröbel (in Bohman & Rehg 1997: 47) at length to explain this interpretation:

Certainly one does not require that the minority, by resigning their will, declare their opinion to be incorrect; indeed, one does not even require that they abandon their aims, but rather ... that they forego the practical application of their convictions, until they succeed in better establishing their reasons and procuring the necessary number of affirmative votes.

Majority rule as currently practiced within the domain of the identified SGBs seems, therefore, to be a less democratic practice. I contend that to move towards more democratic practices, the majority rule concept should be applied in the sense argued for, meaning the incorporation of a deliberative discourse understanding of the procedure.

5.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter I analysed the actual practices of SGBs and illustrated that they fail to adjust to the notion of democracy as expounded upon in chapter three. I further identified the gaps in my earlier understanding of democracy, particularly concerning the concept of majority rule. I employed a more

deliberative procedure in my attempt to transcend this gap. I concluded that a movement towards a more deliberative implementation of democracy creates additional space, thus leading to more democratic practices. In the next chapter I shall reflect on my journey through this thesis, with the intention of identifying possible inadequacies. I then attempt to determine spaces for further exploration in the field of SGBs vis-à-vis deliberative democracy.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION ON MY JOURNEY THROUGH THIS THESIS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

A personal reflection, on the one hand, “draws attention to the view that the self that researches has an autobiography marked by the significance of gender, sexuality, ethnicity and class” (Usher 1996: 38). Disciplinary reflexivity, on the other hand, “concerns moving away from the researcher to the research act so that the focus switches to the communities within which the research as a practice is located” (Usher 1996: 37). In this chapter I reflect on my journey through this research thesis from both perspectives, meaning I draw attention to myself and how my own prejudices informed my research, as well as focussing attention on the communities within which this research was located. I shall undertake this journey in chronological order, meaning a movement from chapter to chapter. Through this act my hope is to establish possible inadequacies, and to open up possibilities for further research regarding case studies and the functioning/practices of SGBs.

6.2 REFLECTIVE INQUIRY

I began this thesis by reflecting on how my years prior to entering the work environment, my experiences of the student uprisings during the late 1970's, and my years at an institution of higher learning informed my political, and perceived social responsibilities. This perceived social responsibility shaped

my socialisation and steered me towards adopting a certain discourse (the teaching profession) rather than others. My interest in democratic transformation particularly in education informed my desire to actuate real change in South African society. This thesis reflects a journey of struggle and growth in learning to do research in education. My analysis of practices in terms of variables such as power, freedom and rationality and the way it works at SGB level does not imply that I am able to situate myself outside of the realm of such (constitutive meanings of democracy) forces. Culler (1990: 4) puts it rather succinctly when he says the following:

Any analysis of, say, the political forces in a society cannot situate itself outside of the realm of political forces; it is necessarily caught up in the processes, affected by the forces it is describing, and itself involves a political move or stance. So that one way to study the political forces at work would be to analyse the analyst's own stance and investigate how his or her analytical discourse is worked by the forces it is analysing.

With this in mind I shall, later on in this chapter, describe my journey through this thesis focusing on a theme which I highlight in my study – a theme which dominates current South African debates. I am referring to the theme of democracy. The change from Apartheid rule to a constitutional democracy had real consequences for all South Africans, particularly those who suffered the humiliation of being denied the opportunity to participate in the institutionalised political organs of South Africa. Given the denial of political, and in many cases social participation, it might be expected that a study on

practices within the social realm of South Africa, in the first few years after the demise of Apartheid, would give specific attention to the concept of democracy. By attending to the concept of democracy in my research thesis, should be understandable.

The question that one might ask is why there is a need for reflection? In chapter two I argued for locating this study within an interpretive paradigm, but interpretive inquiry is concerned with reflection. I argued that to understand the daily occurrences which people confront, as well as the meanings these people give to how they perceive and interpret these occurrences, calls for interpretation by the researcher. I contend that one cannot merely interpret without sifting through the constructed data, continually reflecting in order to extricate the self-understanding of people. This goes to the heart of interpretive inquiry, for as Fay (1975: 71) posits, "actions cannot just be observed but it has to be explained". To explain an act is to give reasons for the occurrence of that act. Again this cannot lead to a true understanding of the behaviour, without continually asking why, which translates into reflection. Furthermore, some instances in my thesis involve the empowerment of individuals. In this regard, I alluded to flirting with critical inquiry. Through the interviews and the resulting informal discussions with individual governors I was made to understand that these governors gained new insights into the functioning of SGBs. They subsequently gained an awareness and understanding into the relation between more democratic practices and effective governance, leading me to deduce that a change in

their comprehension had occurred. Peters (1998: 224) interprets this as “the quest for new possibilities” which underscores the emancipatory concept.

Telling this story and reflecting upon my moments in this praxis is not unique. The case studies as related to in this thesis are in essence a form of storytelling or narrative. Fay (1996: 178) responds to this by claiming that human lives are enacted stories. He further posits that:

... at particular times we get the sense that we or others are part of a drama whose plot we can dimly perceive, a plot that provides an underlying unity and meaning to our or others' experiences, relations, and activities.

Fay (1996: 194) refers to these enacted stories as “narrativism”. According to him narrativism occupies a space between narrative realism and narrative constructivism. I now briefly clarify these concepts, after which I shall proceed with my narrative.

Narrative inquiry starts by asking whether the stories of our lives are lived or merely told. There are two perspectives related to answering this question. Firstly, narrative realism claims that narrative structures exist in the human world itself and not just in the stories people tell about this world. Human lives are already formed into stories before we attempt to tell these stories. The narrative structure is already in the material, and we merely reproduce this pre-existing structure (Fay 1996: 179-180). Narratives are therefore within life,

and not merely about life. Secondly, narrative constructivism starts by exposing the shortcomings of narrative realism, those being the omission of causal outcomes and its neglect of the importance of significance. Those significant moments which impacted on the course of a particular development. Narrative constructivism claims that historians impose narrative structures on a formless flow of events (Fay 1996: 190). It is not merely relating the story which already exists in a life. For narrative constructivism stories are constructed rather than merely being told. These stories are “creations after the fact, when one can assign particular roles in particular stories to the various events and relationships of peoples’ lives” (Fay 1996: 190). Narrative realism ultimately hinges on stories which are within life, while narrative constructivism purports that stories are about life. The former insists that the story is the life itself, while the latter claims that that the story is about the life that is being told. Fay’s understanding of narrativism occupies a space between what might be regarded as two extremes, hoping to capture what is worthwhile in both. I tend to be swayed towards Fay’s interpretation simply because he insists on the dual character of narratives. He posits that “narratives are both lived and told” (Fay 1996:196). There is, therefore, not one “true story” to be told about life. To clarify this point I turn to Fay who posits:

Those who come later have the benefit of knowing some of the causal results of particular activities, results which will cast a new light on the nature of the acts in question. Moreover, new paradigms of thought may also emerge which depict human life in a new way. Fresh stories about

the past are an ever-present possibility as new perspectives emerge and new outcomes of past deeds and conditions become evident (Fay 1996: 197).

6.3 PERSONAL NARRATIVE AND POSSIBILITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

By the end of the year 2001 I had no inclination to do any form of research, let alone a huge task of attempting a full masters thesis. A colleague, who has been teaching with me for the past fifteen years, convinced me to attend a recruitment drive by academics from the University of Stellenbosch, at Century City (an upmarket shopping complex in Cape Town). To my amazement a former teacher at our school presented the lecture. Professor Waghid and I reminisced, and during this period I felt some affinity towards the academe. After numerous meetings he convinced me that I possess the necessary skills and academic acumen to attempt doing research. In fact it was after our discussions about the functioning of SGBs (a topic which I initiated) that he suggested that I submit a proposal. He subsequently introduced me to the literature which informed me on the contents of a proposal. I submitted this proposal after having reworked it on no less than four occasions. I then had the challenging and demanding task of having to defend this proposal to three of the academics (Professors Prinsloo, Waghid and dr. Le Grange) in the Department of Education Policy Studies. This challenge almost transformed into what could be regarded as a tragic outcome. I felt thoroughly humiliated and my shortcomings regarding

research and the academe, was viciously exposed. The protagonist in this humiliating process later turned out to become my supervisor. Having narrowly survived this apparent torment I proceeded with my first chapter which in the main came directly from my proposal. This chapter did not present me with major challenges because I had most of the reading material and the inadequacies of the proposal were thoroughly exposed prior to my commencement of this chapter.

After having reworked my first chapter only once, I proceeded with chapter two, brimming with confidence and full of enthusiasm. The library at Stellenbosch University had an abundance of literature on the subject of research methodologies. It was therefore fairly easy to access this literature. I worked diligently and retraced as well as proofread this chapter more than I did the first. I was particularly concerned about this chapter because in my proposal defence my restricted knowledge regarding research methodologies were so brutally exposed that one of the interviewers (on the panel) suggested that I am a classical candidate for course work, meaning that I should not attempt a full masters. When I started chapter two, my understanding of research methodologies was minimal to say the least. In fact I did not realise that there existed a distinction between research methodology and research method. My contact with the vision and thoughts of Cantrell (1993), Harding (1987), Fein (1992) and Le Grange (2001) exposed me to this distinction, therefore, informing my understanding of these notions. My further reading brought me into contact with the ideas of Kuhn (1970) who informed me of the relation between the notions: conceptual

framework, methodology and paradigm, suggesting that they are interchangeable and synonymous. I now realised that methodology refers to a broad framework of thinking or paradigm. At this stage I came to appreciate the suggestion that I was in fact a candidate for coursework. It was important for me to prove that although I displayed characteristics of a course-worker, I also had the capacity to overcome this limitation. I was forced to do my own coursework in the shortest possible time. I consequently spent solitary nights, tenaciously getting stuck into the ideas of Taylor (1985) and Fay (1975). With the help of these seasoned authorities on conceptual frameworks (of thinking), I acquired insight into the interpretive and critical paradigms. Regarding the epistemological orientation of positivism I was informed by Morrow (1989) and the critique by Taylor (1985). By now it was clear to me that the Metatheory (Philosophy of Education) I did as a course in my B.Ed (Honours) at the University of the Western Cape in 1996 was primarily geared towards the positivist paradigm, hence I had some insight into this paradigm. I should at this point stress that not only did I have to research these frameworks and become acquainted with them, I also had to try to memorise its basics, in order for me to be able to justify and argue for my position when in discussion with my supervisor. He had the uncanny ability to lead the discussion and utilize concepts in such a way that it either exposed my limited understanding of such concepts or it forced me into debate regarding these concepts. In hindsight, this, to me was an illuminating and empowering experience. I should mention that this learning curve also consumed some lonely and at times irritating nights. However, its fruits I savoured in the later stages of this study. Notwithstanding this statement, as a novice at research, I

found that navigating the research path is very difficult. I found it particularly taxing to conduct my research in such a way that I remain strictly within the interpretive paradigm. In this regard I tend to favour the thinking of Le Grange (2001: 212) who argues that:

I drew on insights from narrative inquiry, critical inquiry and poststructuralist thought and regarded these insights as not being embedded in oppositional *paradigms*, but rather as ways of augmenting or enriching my interpretive work.

The understanding of not restricting a research study to a watertight framework, but rather utilising the paradigms as having pliable borders, informs my view of dealing with frameworks of inquiry. This thesis reflects characteristics of alternative paradigms (narrative inquiry and critical inquiry) moulded into a more pliable form, thus enriching my interpretive vision. I now proceed with this narrative to chapter three.

Earlier in this chapter I mentioned that the concept of democracy is in essence a theme that pervades current debates in South Africa. It is therefore almost natural that a study of current practices within official (education) departmental institutions would focus some attention on this concept. Given the pervasiveness of less democratic practices (during the years immediately after the demise of institutionalised Apartheid) in various sites of social life in South Africa, one would be curious about how schools are governed. Having been in the school environment for the better part of twenty years, I was at

the cutting edge of how Apartheid policies influenced the system of schooling. I mentioned that my growing consciousness of racial discrimination and its resulting consequences informed my decision to embark on a teaching career. My *raison d'être* then, remains the same today, that being to impact on the system in such a way that I strive towards securing a fair deal for those who were previously disadvantaged by a system that was steeped in unequal treatment based on race. My potential critic might mention that my being from the “coloured” (sic) ethnic group, placed me in a position of advantage in relation to the majority of South Africa’s inhabitants. I readily admit to this, for I had greater access to material resources and educational opportunities than the majority of black South Africans. It is, however, this disparity in access to vital “life ingredients” which informed my choice of discourse (teaching), and my drive for a more practical democratic ethos. In this regard, the democratic ethos which I argue for, affects all and not only a particular group. The attention I gave to the issue of poverty and its effect on the notion of democracy as argued for in this thesis might bear testimony to this. Initially the poverty influence did not form part of what I termed “constitutive meanings of democracy”. Again a potential critic might refer to this, and rightly so. My contact with the reading material was initially only to get to grips with the different perceptions of democracy. The intention was not to address the inadequacies of Apartheid. It is precisely because of my contact with the different views and understandings of what democracy might mean, that exposed the inability of the poor to access and “freely” participate in democratic structures. This also falls in line with interpretive theory, getting to understand the reasons for people’s actions. I have alluded to the view that

putting a “democratic” structure in place does not necessarily transform into democratic practices. On the contrary the case study findings exposes the struggle of poor communities to transform their practices to more democratic principles. This is so, not because they do not possess the potential to function democratically but rather that they have other, more pressing needs which exhaust their energies. I need to mention that my understanding of democracy has undergone a complete metamorphosis after engaging the ideas of such visionaries as Dahl (1989), Sartori (1987), Stromberg (1996), Pateman (1979), Barber (1994), Gould (1988), Fletcha (1999) and others. This was a learning experience which I hope will stand me in good stead in my future practices and dealings with my fellow South Africans. Democracy, I found, is a vast topic and literature on this concept abounds. It was a grind to sift through the reading material in order to make sense of the concept. However, in hindsight this laborious process dramatically changed the manner in which I viewed the concept. I should note that while I explored through the reading material it is obvious that all the ideas on what democracy may represent has not been exhausted. Furthermore, researching the term “democracy” in relation to its constitutive meanings influenced my perceptions and made me more sensitive to how I treat others. In other words, it transformed my practices. In my exploration of the constitutive meanings of democracy, as well as its contextualisation and further development in terms of SGBs, it could potentially open a window for further research. In discussions with my supervisor I tested my “new-informed” ideas on the conceptual meanings of democracy, only to find that “gaps” still occur, to such an extent that I was prompted to research the views of Habermas

(1997) and Benhabib (1996). I address their influence on my journey in my narrative on chapter five. I now proceed to chapter four.

Before I started with chapter four there were many issues of a logistical nature which had to be negotiated first. It was while I was engrossed in this task that I found major gaps in my earlier exploits with case studies. The outline I depicted of case studies in chapter two could lead a potential critic to expose its brittleness. In this regard I revisited the concept not only to cement the brittle exposition in chapter two, but also to acquire the necessary tools to conduct research via the case study route. After having sifted through the relevant information I decided on my route and included the semi-structured interview as my major tool to uncover the current practices within the functioning of SGBs. This, together with informal discussions and observation were utilised to secure the production of data. As I mentioned in chapter four, the case study method is a fairly new way of conducting research in education, however it contributed to the development of educational policy. It is in this regard that I am hopeful that my contribution might impact in some way on policy restructuring regarding SGBs.

Charting my way through this chapter presented me with many obstacles. The one that immediately comes to mind is that of securing interviews at the five schools of this study. The verbal agreements were to a large degree adhered to. However, in a few isolated incidents it caused havoc with my time frames, meaning I could not manage to keep to the schedule as illustrated in my proposal. This initially impacted on my limited financial resources because it

forced me to travel to Stellenbosch (to meet with my supervisor) on occasions which was not included in my initial schedule. The frustration of being bogged down, seemingly making no progress, adversely affected my will to complete this thesis within the prescribed period I had plotted with my supervisor. As I mentioned in chapter four, conducting the interviews became a tedious and protracted affair. In hindsight I am able to look back with understanding and compassion for those who initially were the cause of my frustration. I realised that I should rather be grateful for the time and energy that these “strangers” gave, allowing me to interact with them without any tangible reward. Notwithstanding their restricted resources and their struggle to make ends meet, these parent representatives still regarded my work as important enough, subsequently creating the time and space for me to complete the interviews. I felt guilty, but my contact with the narrativist paradigm of Fay brought much solace, for Fay (1996: 195) posits:

With hindsight we (or others) may come to reassess the nature of the narrative we thought we were living and thereby to redescribe the activities in which we were engaged. Indeed, this is precisely what hindsight is, seeing significance which becomes manifest after the fact.

It is not surprising that I feel compassion and remorse towards those parents who, during the course of the interviews I wrongly presumed, thwarted my progress. At the time of conducting the interviews my selfish quest to fulfil in my obligations blurred my view and my personal responses. I am, however, comforted by the fact that I did not communicate my frustrations with the

individual interviewees. Notwithstanding the many rescheduling attempts I now look back in appreciation of those who afforded me the opportunity to do the interviews. I should also mention that being a novice at utilising the tool of interviewing had an impact on my progress, meaning that as the interviews entered its latter stages I felt I could cope better. By the time I conducted the twelfth interview I experienced less discomfort, showing a confidence that did not exist at the start. Before I move on to the narrative of chapter five I should mention that sifting through the constructed information presented me with the most constraints. It is at this stage that I would caution prospective researchers who are contemplating research via the case study method. Some practical knowledge of the case study method and particularly the role of grounded theory and coding are essential prior to embarking on this course. My mistake was interacting with grounded theory and coding only after completing chapter three. Again the realisation of the blunder came “after the fact”. Organising and making sense of all the constructed data as well as identifying patterns was not only laborious but also complicated. In this regard Patton (1990: 372) warns that:

... there are no rules except to do the very best with your full intellect to fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveals given the purpose of the study ... there are guidelines, but guidelines and procedural suggestions are not rules.

It is precisely in reference to the understanding that they are no prescribed rules, which makes the labour of analysing the data that more problematical.

Pertaining to this Bogden and Bicklen (1982: 154) emphasise that “analysis involves working with data, organising it, breaking it down, synthesising it, searching for patterns ... and deciding what you will tell others”. At this stage a potential critic might detect that during this process I deliberately captured only those incidents and practices which suited this study. This might then potentially lead to being curious as to the type of questions that were posed during the interviews. From the case reports it might filter through that interviewees might have been manipulated into a direction which would potentially give effect to my study. I am not sure whether I can categorically state that this was not the case. Let us for argument sake assume that this actually transpired, leading a potential critic to accuse me of moving into the realm of positivism. This might be so, but the case study method allows space for this. The case study method allows space for breaking down, synthesising and sifting through the data in order to reach conclusions. In this regard, it should be understandable that the selected information would be that which suits the purpose of the study. One should be reminded that the case study method is predominantly interpretive in nature but does not preclude the occasional reliance on positivism, besides I have earlier argued for a moulding of paradigms. This trend was supported by Le Grange (2001: 73) who claims that conceptual frameworks should be viewed as dynamic and ever changing, as well as that a specific conceptual framework should not be used to parochially locate your work. Conversely a study or research should not necessarily be confined to one specific framework. I now move on with my narrative to chapter five.

Chapter five provided me with the most contentment, not only because I could by now see the light at the end of this thesis, but in terms of the opportunity it presented me to produce the evidence according to the findings, as constructed through the case study reports. It was particularly rewarding for the fact that the “voices” spoke, leaving me with only the interpretation and analysis. While the prospect of concluding my thesis informed my drive to complete this chapter I realised that there were gaps in terms of my argument on democracy. I realised that my argument for dialogism, which I critiqued in this chapter as not broad enough to generate enough space for the concept of deliberation as understood by Benhabib and Habermas. My earlier argument might be construed as an impoverished notion of dialogism. This brittle patch in chapter three had to be cemented. Consequently, I focus my attempt at reopening and arguing for democracy from another perspective, which includes the notion of deliberation. The ability to identify gaps is also evidence of my growth and skills development in terms of research. In analysing my argument for deliberation I contend that it creates a potential way out of the currently accepted implementation of majority rule, with its winner takes all scenario. My use of deliberative democracy as a panacea to resolve the problem of “minimal” deliberation within SGBs might not be the answer. A potential critic might argue that deliberative democracy as I presented this notion, is idealistic and extremely time consuming. That consensus is arguably a pipe dream. Considering such criticism, I would concede that yes it is time consuming, for deliberation might take forever, nullifying the potential of reaching a conclusion. Yet, I maintain that the time consuming route is more acceptable than a hasty conclusion, which

inherently has much more potential to lead to a weak, or poorly rationalised outcome. With reference to the criticism regarding “consensus” another inadequacy seems to surface. A potential critic could claim that deliberation inherently hinges upon the art of persuasion and argument, of manipulating language, thus favouring the most eloquent speakers. This might be so and therefore it could potentially create a problem because the case studies reveal that SGB members have problems regarding language. I contend that in reality this should not necessarily be the case. One might not possess the articulation skills but that does not mean that one is incapable of producing a rational argument. The point is that one only needs to be able to get one’s point across in such a manner that others (those participating in the deliberation process) grasp the context of what is being argued for. It is my contention that for this to materialise, language inefficiency should not be a barrier. In this regard, even the representative who speaks in a peculiar Afrikaans dialect can potentially deliberate and therefore influence an outcome. The only prerequisite is that others who are party to the deliberation understand the dialect. . To strengthen my argument in terms of inefficient language skills and its impact on deliberation I quote Miller who posits the following:

It seems to me, in fact rather insulting to disadvantaged groups to suggest that norms of argumentative rationality are loaded against them, because it implies that they cannot give coherent arguments for the changes they want to bring about (Miller 2000: 153).

Diminished language proficiency does not translate into incapacity to formulate coherent arguments. SGB representatives might not be dexterous in utilising deliberation as a tool to lead them onto a path of more democratic practices because of a lack of education and training. I must however stress that this does not mean that deliberation cannot fulfil in the quest towards more democratic practices, on the contrary the skills of the governors should rather to be addressed. In this regard training might enhance their ability to deliberate more effectively. I consequently argue that the minimal realisable conditions should be created in order for deliberation to become more effective.

Firstly, the training of elected governors to effectively function according to the democratic ethos as espoused by the Schools Act and the Constitution of South Africa. I have earlier alluded to this inadequacy and have also shown that the Schools Act is explicit on this issue. I again refer to the Schools Act to reveal that training of SGB members is a requirement by law, for the Act states that:

The Head of Department must provide introductory training for newly elected governing bodies to enable them to perform their functions; and provide continuing training ... to promote the effective performance of their functions or to enable them to assume additional functions (ELRS, 1999: 2A-18).

It is the duty of the Western Cape Education Department to ensure that elected governors are adequately trained in order that they may fulfil in their requirements as elected representatives. The issue of training according to the Schools Act is obligatory, while the language is emphatic when it clearly states that the HOD “must” provide training. The case studies clearly indicate that this training had not been forthcoming. It is not within the scope of this thesis to prescribe the type of training which is required, however, the inadequacies that the case studies reveal could possibly become a guiding tool. In this regard I would want to venture the possibility of working towards a notion of “civic virtue” as espoused by Miller. A life skills orientation course for school governors incorporating an understanding of a “virtuous citizen” could possibly be a starting point for governors serving on SGBs in disadvantaged communities. According to Miller (2000: 82) this “citizenship is less a legal status than a role the citizen assumes as a full member of his or her community. To be a citizen one must think and behave in a certain way ... which includes a set of obligations: to respect the law, to pay taxes, being willing to take active steps to defend the rights of others in the *political* community, and more generally to promote its common interests”. Moreover, Miller argues that this citizen volunteers for public service *to serve on SGBs* (my italics) and that he/she also wants to reach an agreement with other citizens so that what is done is done in the name of all of them (2000: 84). Furthermore the virtuous citizen acts responsibly and above all, “is willing to set aside personal interests and personal ideals in the interest of achieving democratic consensus” (Miller 2000: 85). The acquisition of these skills through education and training could possibly pave the way for SGB

representatives to not only fulfil in their civic duties but more importantly to function more democratically. These skills could also be utilised in other spheres of life, which could conceivably offset the complaint of remuneration, which governors referred to. Put differently, their voluntary SGB services are in a sense remunerated, by them acquiring new skills through education and training. Secondly, the context for deliberation should be secure. In many cases the study reveals that the area where SGB meetings are supposed to be held are not safe. Deliberation or any other form of serious debate cannot occur under threatening conditions, meaning governors cannot be expected to attend meetings when their lives are endangered. I contend that it is the responsibility of the Education Department to ensure a safe meeting place for SGB meetings to take place. If the Education Department fulfil in its obligations towards SGBs as the Schools Act prescribes, then the space exists for more democratic practices (deliberative procedures) to transpire. Conversely, a non-fulfilment of its obligations could conceivably transform into a perpetuation of the currently less democratic practices. I subsequently contend that any institutional structure vis-à-vis political forums, SGBs, departmental structures, university senates, faculties of education and others, would be much more democratic if its function is according to the notion of deliberation. There is, therefore, much scope for further research.

6.4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is imperative that I mention the following. At first it seemed rather demanding to start looking critically at my work, yet reluctantly I

continued, trying to identify the brittle moments. However, my attempt at self-critique might be limited for I must acknowledge that there is limitations in my ability to self-critique. In terms of the demands of this journey, reflecting on my work and critiquing myself, stands out as one of my difficult moments in my quest to complete this thesis. To give effect and to explain my struggle, I turn to Alcoff (in Le Grange 2001: 204) who vividly sums it up when he claims:

The desire to find an absolute means to avoid making errors comes perhaps not from a desire to advance collective goals but a desire for personal mastery, to establish a privileged discursive position wherein one cannot be undermined or challenged and thus is master of the situation. From such a position one's own location and positionality would not require constant interrogation and critical reflection; one would not have to constantly engage in this emotionally troublesome endeavour and would be immune from the interrogation of others. Such a desire for mastery and immunity must be resisted.

My attempt at looking back, reflecting on my study with the intent to identify the brittle moments is not only to cement these moments, but also to open spaces for new research opportunities. This thesis could possibly be a pathway for further interpretive studies, utilising the case study method. According to Le Grange (2001: 209), "case study research holds great promise but it remains a neglected area of research in South Africa". I deduce that this holds true for many areas of research in South Africa, including education. Major education policy changes including a new system of school

governance and the new Outcomes Based Education system pose huge challenges to schools. The manner in which these policies are transformed into practice shall determine whether it is the answer to remedy the previously disproportionately based education system of the Apartheid era. It is my contention that the debate is ongoing and that the divide between policy production and policy enactment is still wide enough for these debates to have an impact. However, much of this debate is on the rhetorical level, meaning that not enough research has been done to provide input on the impact of these policies on the schooling system. Put differently, there is not sufficient research to mediate the relationship between policies on the one hand, and the realities of its practice/implementation on the other hand, in differing school environs across the country. It is at this level where case study research holds much promise.

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APPENDIX A

Semi Structured Interview Questions

1. Who do you think is responsible for changes in education?
2. In relation to School Governing Bodies (SGBs), who do you think is responsible for changes?
3. What do you think they (those behind the changes) have to gain from an SGB system?
4. Whose interests are being served with the SGB system? How?
5. How do you see the SGB system fitting into the larger political picture of this country?
6. How can the SGB system be part of a broader democracy in South Africa?
7. What does SGB mean to you?
8. What has the change to SGBs meant for you?
9. Why have you chosen to serve on the SGB?
10. What do you see as positive with the SGB?
11. What benefits did you gain (as an individual) from serving on the SGB?
12. What do you see as negative with the SGB?
13. Did you experience any difficulties, obstacles or barriers as a participant on the SGB?
14. What are some of the constraints of implementing an SGB system at this school?
15. What creative strategies do you employ to implement the SGB system?
16. Are there any particular resources which are needed for the effective functioning of SGBs?
17. How easy or difficult is it to get parents/teachers to serve on SGBs?

18. What role does learners play, and how do they influence SGB decisions?
19. Can you relate one example of what learners have achieved via their SGB participation.
20. Are there individuals whom you can identify as being influential on the SGB?
21. If there are, why do you think they are influential?
22. How would you describe the relationship between the school governors and the rest of the staff?
23. How are decisions reached on your SGB?
24. In the decision-making process, who has the final say?
25. I shall give you three words. Relate your immediate thoughts on hearing these words. (a) negotiation (b) consensus © deliberation
26. Do you think the SGB system is an improvement on the governing system prior to 1994?

Teacher appointments & promotions

27. Who determines how a post should be advertised?
28. Are school governors informed about policy documents, ie. S.A. Schools Act; Employment of Educators Act?
29. Have you been trained in any way to participate in SGB activities?
30. How did you acquire the skills to interview qualified, professional teachers?
31. Can you briefly explain the procedures which your SGB follow when a new appointment has to be made.

32. How do you address the issue of “teacher in excess”, when considering promotion posts?
33. How does your SGB go about the sharing of information with teachers, learners and parents?
34. Are all information shared? If not, why not?
35. Did you ever feel that in terms of appointments, a wrong decision has been made?
36. How effective do you think the operations of this SGB are?
37. Do you think that you are conforming to the principles of SGBs?
38. After having served on the SGB for some time, what would you say is your attitude towards SGBs?
39. What factors have affected your attitude towards SGBs?
40. What should be done to ensure that SGBs can function well?

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire

1 Biographical details

Name:

Surname:

Age:

Gender:

Marital status:

Highest qualification:

Address:

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Tel: