

**UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**AN ASSESSMENT OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN  
THE GOVERNANCE OF MAGANISE J.S.S. IN LIBODE MEGA DISTRICT: A**

**Case study.**

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**MASTER THESIS IN EDUCATION**

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Hare.**

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I thank the **Lord Almighty** for giving me the life that I'm living, and for all the blessings that He has given me through out my life. Now I give thanks and praise to him for affording me a chance to thank all those who have made this work possible. My gratitude goes first and foremost to the 35 informants [parents and educators] who participated in this study and granted me access to the details of their lives. I hope that the final results of this project honour their contribution.

My sincere gratitude goes to **Professor MJ Matshazi**, my supervisor, for his patience and guidance towards the completion of this thesis. Without him, this would not have been possible. Professor Matshazi allowed me to work independently, while providing external perspective on the work and constantly suggesting methodological improvements. His meticulous, thoughtful reviews of my work kept me sharpened and intellectually invigorated. Further, his demands were uncompromising, but all placed against his empathetic support framework. All these were challenges greatly appreciated.

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## Dedication.

I dedicate this work to my husband **Bedford Mandla Mduze Sikweyiya**, my late parents **Isaac and Sarah Memela** and my **children** who have stood by me all the way. To them I say thank you for your unwavering support and encouragement throughout this journey. You kept me going and lifted me up when I was down. Your love and support saw me through this essential task. I dedicate this work to you.



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## Abstract

Before the attainment of democracy in South Africa, formal education was regarded only as the responsibility of the formally trained educators (Hartshorne, 1999). Parental involvement and participation was very limited and in some areas, especially in the black areas, it was non-existent. However through the enactment of the South African School's Act (SASA) no 84 of 1996 a change was observed in the education system of the country. In terms of section 16 (1) of the SASA (1996), parents are provided for to become equal partners in the governance of schools. The Act stipulates that School Governing Bodies (SGB's) should be formed and provided with skills and knowledge that would enable the SGB's to share joint responsibility of school governance with the school management team. Researchers like Clase et al. (2007) have however posited that after the SASA law was passed in 1996, studies that looked at how SGB's, School Management Teams and Department of Education in South Africa work together, have reported tensions between these three organs.

In order to assess parental involvement and participation at Maganise Junior Secondary School in the former Transkei region, the researcher planned and executed a qualitative case study. This study used scientific methods to answer;

the questions that were asked such as; do parents play any role in the governance of Maganise Junior Secondary School? What type of relationship exists between parents and the school management team at Maganise Junior Secondary School? Four data collection techniques were used to collect data to answer these research questions. The researcher used a structured questionnaire, qualitative in-depth interviews, observation and document analysis.

A content analysis and interpretation yielded findings that suggested that to some extent, parental involvement and participation existed at Maganise Junior Secondary School. However this study also found that parental involvement and participation at Maganise Junior Secondary School was facing a lot of factors that militates against it. Such was the effect of these militating factors, that parental involvement and participation at Maganise Junior Secondary School did not seem to yield the benefits that were reported in other studies.

## Declaration by the researcher



I, Mrs. Miriam Nongwekazi Sikweyiya solemnly declare that this research project is a product of my original work. I have conceptualized, designed, and chose the methods to be used in the study. I have collected the data using acceptable research techniques and analyzed the data following a scientific approach to data analysis.

In the conduct of this research, I adhered to the ethics of collecting information on human research participants and have acknowledged the works of others that I have used in this report.

Signature.....*M. Sikweyiya*.....Date.....*14 - July 2009*.....

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.

**ANC:** African National Congress

**DoE:** Department of Education

**JSS:** Junior Secondary School

**SASA:** South African Schools Act

**SGB:** School Governing Body

**SMT:** School Management Team

**UN:** United Nations



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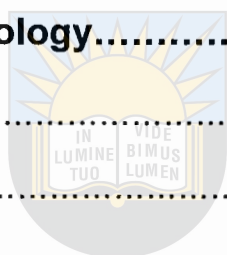
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# Chapter 1

## Introduction to the study

### 1.1 Background of the study

In the pre-democracy era in South Africa, education was regarded only as the competence of educators. Parental involvement and their participation in school matters were rather minimal or non-existent (Squelch and Lemmer, 1994:19). To a certain extent there were certain laws that required every school to appoint a school committee. Such committees were to work hand in hand with the school management team (SMT) formulating school policies and ensuring that such policies are implemented. In reality these laws were never fully implemented, especially in rural areas of the country. The election of the school committee did not serve its intended purpose. Still parents were not fully incorporated into the school system i.e. in the management and governance. Predominantly the elected persons to these committees were illiterate or having few years of schooling. This was more evident in rural black areas. Additionally there were no statutory laws governing such an election. The literate or affluent persons for example educators, lawyers, and doctors were prohibited by the obnoxious laws of the then apartheid regime to become members of school committees (see Tamer, 2005; Bureau of African Affairs, January 2009). As mentioned above this

situation was extremely worse in the rural areas; this was exacerbated chiefly by the patriarchal system dominant mostly in rural areas, and gender disparities. Another contributing factor was the migrant labour system; mostly young men were out in places like gold mines in search of work. Despite the fact that women were making the majority in meetings that were called for election of school committees, they were not elected because of the custom based prejudices against them. This made it difficult for women to be elected into offices. The elderly people, both men and women, were not at all concerned about these elections, saying that they have their own multiple roles in society. Mothata and Mda (2000) illustrate that this situation resulted in principals becoming the highest authority, having unassailable power and control over all the activities in their respective schools. The principal could make unilateral decisions on both professional, management and governance matters like school fees, staff recruitment, admission policy, selection and employment, staff supervision, as well as learner discipline. The school committee was rather directed and dictated to by the principal with the result that they were completely alienated from school governance.

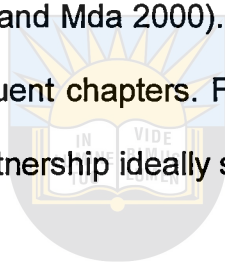
Long before 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) strongly called for education reform where they argued that among other things, school governing bodies were needed to give power to govern schools in the communities (Clase et al. 2007). A paradigm shift was experienced in the 1990's and saw an end to the apartheid regime to the present democracy. The new dispensation changed the whole scenario of the education system in South Africa (Clase et al. 2007).

Among the efforts of the Department of Education, the introduction of the school governing bodies (SGB) through the establishment of the South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996 (SASA) can be noted. In terms of section 16 (1) of the act, the governance of all public schools is vested in the governing bodies. Also provided in section 16 (1) were functions the SGB's were to perform in schools, these included, inter alia;

- To adopt a code of conduct for the learners.
- To administer and control the schools properties, buildings, grounds and all other school resources.
- To make recommendations regarding the very appointment of educators and non-educators to the head of department.
- To be involved in policy making and implementation.
- To be involved when crafting vision and mission statements for the school community.
- To support the principal, educators and other staff in the performances of their professional functions (Department of Education 1996).

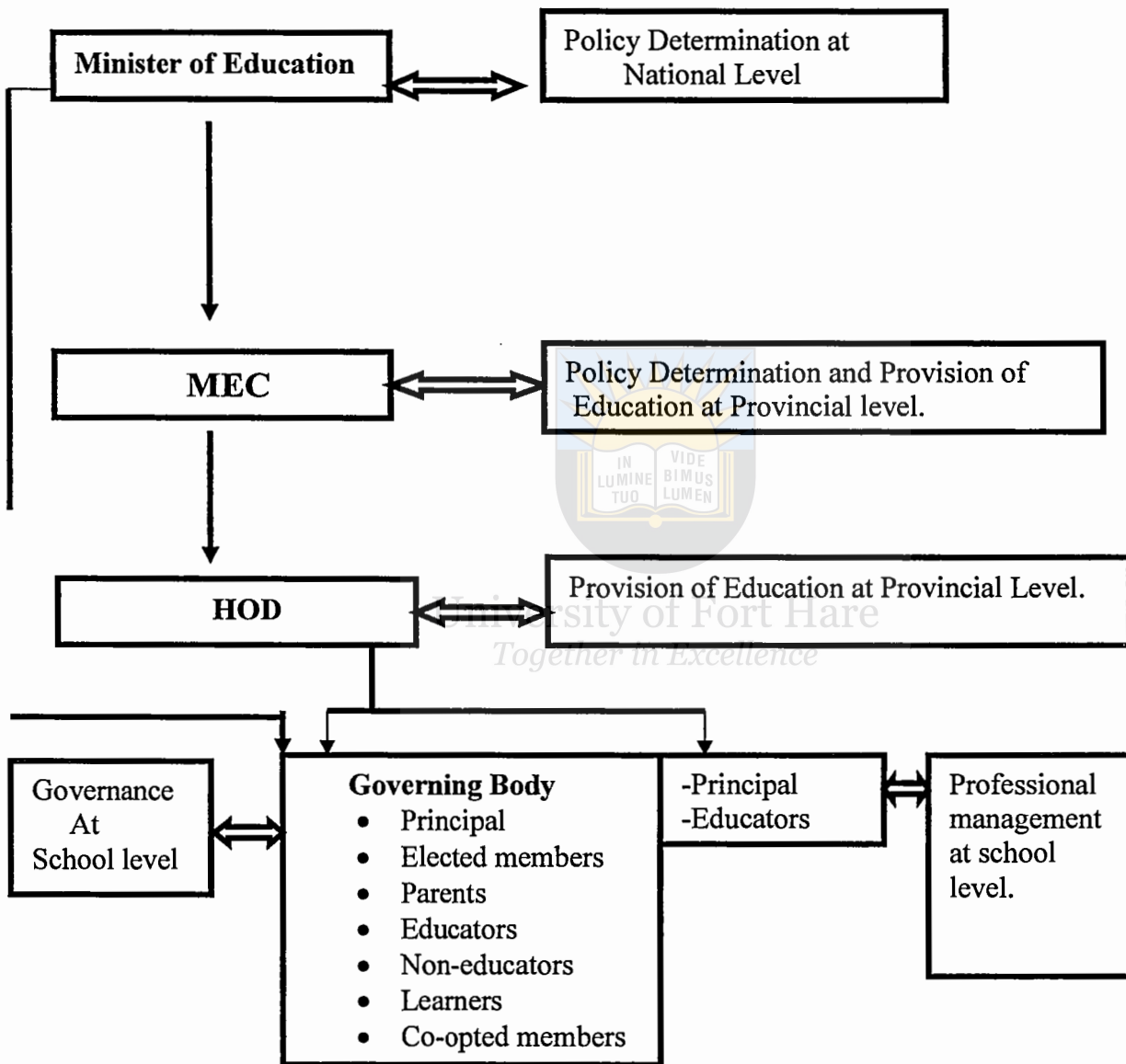
This Act vested power to parents to have a say in the governance of schools. Section (29) 2 of SASA provided that only a parent member of the SGB may serve as chairperson of the School Governing Body (Nelushi. 2006). It was further provided by the Act that school principals and parents should support each other (DoE, 1996). Accordingly the elected parents and school

management are accountable to the entire school community with legal responsibility to report annually to the parent body and to provide information about learner's progress through a written annual report. These newly formed partnerships were to share joint responsibility for strategic planning including the setting of the school literacy targets. Challenges that persist in this partnership (Van Wyk, 2004) include the lack of necessary training of educators to meaningfully participate in this partnership, the asymmetry of power between educators and parents (Clase et al. 2007) and the low levels of literacy of parents to perform their roles (see Mothatha and Mda 2000). These challenges are going to be dealt with in details in subsequent chapters. Figure 1 below illustrates the ways and channels by which this partnership ideally should work.



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**Figure 1. FLOWCHART ILLUSTRATING THE PROCESS BY WHICH HEADS, EDUCATORS AND SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES WORK TOGETHER ON STRATEGIC PLANNING.**



**Source.** Republic of South Africa, Department of Education 1997:15.

Ndzimande (2001) posited that the circuit and district offices remain the weakest link in the management chain and they desperately need quality training in their

various disciplines. The need for functional school governing bodies was reflected in the speech by Nzimande (2001:13) when he was addressing the SADTU conference (July 2001) he stated that “in addition, we need to resuscitate the notion of Parent-teacher-learner alliances, through the building of strong governing bodies. We need to empower governing bodies so that they are able to understand and relate their roles in the day to day administration of schools to the broader challenges of education transformation”.

It became imperative to define terms that would form the core of the subsequent chapters of this research project.



## **1.2. Definition of terms**

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### **Parent**

In the context of formal education, a parent is someone who is interested in the child's education and therefore has to go to an extent of devising means to get the child educated. The parent is also expected to provide all the necessary wants and needs for the child, like buying school uniforms, paying for school fees, buying books for the child to learn or to increase the vocabulary and also see to it that the child has enough pocket money for the lunch box.

In this study, a parent is defined as biological, guardians and grand-parents, single as well as foster parents of learners. In the ideal society, parents are

expected to take the responsibility to attend to all school matters concerning the learners.

### **Parental involvement**

Parental involvement and participation in school governance encompass a broad spectrum of activities. One common theme is that parent involvement and their participation in school, seek to bring together the separate domains of home and school. The phenomenon of parental involvement is illustrated by the interest of parents of school learners, by participating in school programmes i.e. sport activities, home work, more so getting in touch with educators to discuss important issues concerning the learner's work.

This is mostly pronounced by active involvement of parents in the formulation and monitoring of the effective functioning of the school policies, their total co-operation and involvement in school events such as fund-raising and occasional curriculum evening studies.

Of paramount importance, parental involvement seeks to attain effectiveness and efficiency in functioning of different organs that make up the school community.

### **School Governance**

School governance is concerned with the governing body's functioning in a particular school. This includes the ways in which this component determines policies and laws that govern the institution of learning. The South African Schools' Act (Republic of South Africa 1996) stipulates that "school governance, as regards to the governing body's functions, means determining the policy and

rules by which the school is to be organized and controlled. It also includes ensuring that such rules and policies are not only honoured, but also effectively carried out in terms of the law and budget of the respective school”.

### **School Governing Bodies**

As provided in section 16 (1) of the South African School Act of 1996, the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body. By South African standard, this body is composed of learners, parents and educators. Its primary purpose is to formulate the school policy and implement it. This was introduced through the SASA of 1996 by the post apartheid government.

### **Community**

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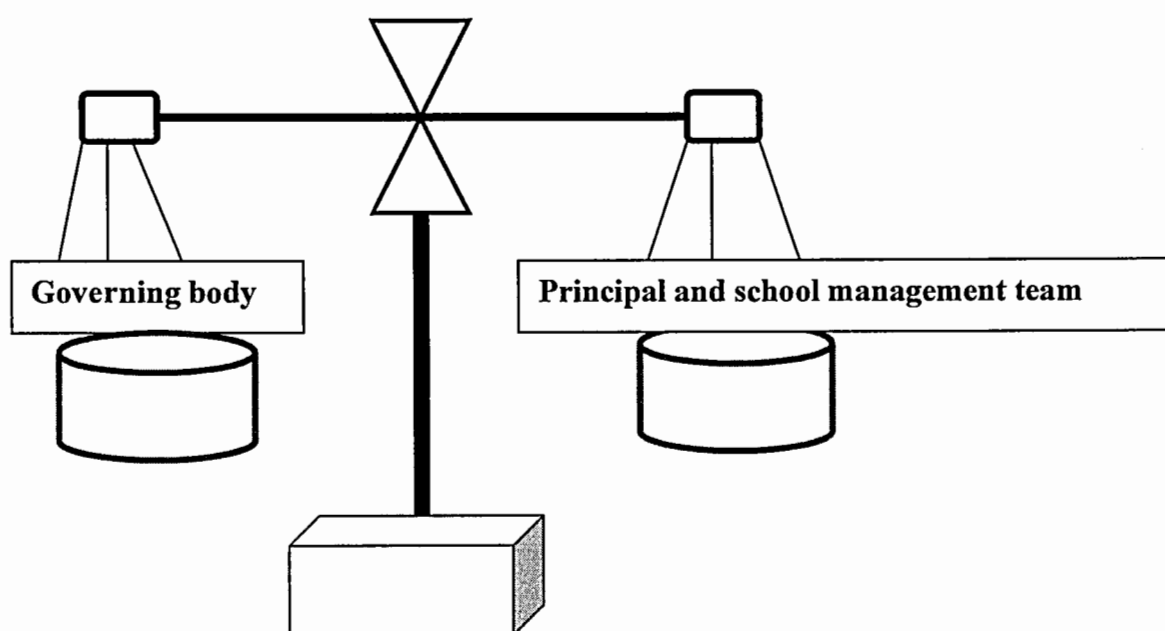
In the context of formal education, a community consists of people in whose area the school is situated. These people are anticipated to take an interest in the education of their children and contribute meaningfully to its improvement.

#### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

Parental involvement and participation in the governance of Maganise Junior Secondary School seemed to be ineffective. This was based on the researcher's observation throughout the years she had been an educator at the school. With her observation, the researcher wanted to scientifically interrogate her

observation. For the effective management and smooth governance of the school, the principle of partnership and co-operation between the principal and the parents should receive high priority. There should be a rigid and constant co-operation between parents, governors and managers in the education institutions to create harmony and effective education (Department of Education 1997:11). Based on feedback from both community members and educators during parents meetings in schools, co-operation between parents and the school management team was lacking in most academic institutions of the Libode Mega District and Maganise Junior Secondary School was not an exception. Consequently there was little or no progress towards school development. An ideal balance in co-operation between parents, principal and school management team is illustrated in Figure2

Figure 2. Diagram showing a balanced partnership and co-operation in formal education.



## 1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to assess parental involvement and participation in the governance of Maganise Junior Secondary School. This information was sought to describe the situation at Maganise Junior Secondary School regarding parental involvement and participation. It was hoped that this information would be useful in identifying gaps and barriers and to propose strategies that could be used to promote parental involvement and participation at the school.



## 1.5. Main research questions

The questions that the study sought to provide answers to was:

- Do parents of learners play any role in the governance of Maganise Junior Secondary School?
- What type of relationship exists between parents and the school management team at Maganise Junior Secondary School?

The researcher planned to answer her research questions through having the following specific objectives.

## 1.6 Objectives of the Study

*Specific objectives:* the specific objectives of this study were:

- To assess the roles being played by the parents in the governance of Maganise Junior Secondary School.

- To identify the specific tasks that were expected to be done by parents in order to achieve the set goals in developing the school and contribution to the progress of learners.
- To assess the educators' opinions about the involvement of parents in the education of their children.
- To assess how the school management team involves parents in school governance and programs.
- To assess whether parents who serve on the SGB know what their responsibilities are and whether they are able to function those responsibilities.
- To identify factors that militate against parental involvement and participation at Maganise Junior Secondary School.



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### **1.7 Assumption of the study**

The study started with the assumption that parental involvement and participation in the governance of the school enhances the effective and efficient functioning of the school and that this yields towards the development of the school.

### **1.8 Significance of the study**

A review of the literature (chapter 2) revealed that parental involvement and participation is of paramount importance in the governance of schools. This study sought to describe the situation at Maganise Junior Secondary regarding the topic at hand and also to contribute by generating knowledge on the

effectiveness of parental involvement and participation in the governance of the school or lack thereof.

### **1.9 Rationale of the study**

This study was informed by scientific evidence that showed the importance of parental involvement and participation in school governance. Nevertheless a number of important questions needed to be addressed from the South African context, as argued below (chapter 2). Scientific knowledge about the effects of parental involvement and participation in a South African black school is inadequate to affirm that partnership between parents and educators translates to better and improved education for learners and the development of schools. This study was designed to contribute to this body of knowledge.

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### **1.10 Delimitation of the study**

This study sought to focus at Maganise Junior Secondary School, its current SGB component and parents; this was in order to assess, presently, the parental involvement and participation in the governance of the school. The study therefore was only conducted at Maganise Junior Secondary School. This was done by sampling educators and parents, those on the SGB component and those who never served in the school governing body.

### **1.11. Ethical considerations**

The research protocol adheres to the ethical principles provided by the World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki and the Belmont report (see CIOMS

2002) which emphasizes respect for person's autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice. Ethical oversight for the study was requested from the University of Fort Hare, Faculty of Education Research Ethics committee, which granted approval for the study.

### **1.12. Limitation of the study**

The study acknowledges that at the time of the study, she was an educator at Maganise Junior Secondary School. Thus she may have been biased in data collection and interpretation of the findings.



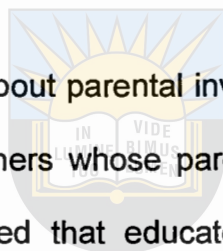
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## **Chapter 2**

### **2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Parental-school partnership is according to Skiba and Petersen (2000) a co-operative process of planning that brings together school staff, parents and children to enhance children's accomplishment and development. This partnership has been viewed as an important tool in advancing education globally. Provided in the South African School (Act 84) of 1996, Subsection 2, is the stipulation that all stakeholders in a school are entering into a partnership with the government, thereby accepting and assuming the responsibilities for the organization, governance and funding of the school. Together with learners and educators, parents form the core part of the said stakeholders (SASA no 84 (2)). The implications of this Act are such that parents are not only morally obliged but legally compelled to actively participate in school governance. Skiba and Petersen (2000) further argue that parental involvement encourages a healthy and dependable learning environment, by establishing communal goals between parents and educators, and developing activities that link home and school. Zill and Nord (1994) concur with the above researchers that parental involvement in schools is a significant component in enhancing learner performances in schools. They advance this argument by stating that parental involvement provides a platform for parents to monitor both the school and classroom activities, thereby coordinating their activities with educators. Similarly Beck and Earl (2000) posit

that schools do not and cannot conduct their work alone being secluded from outside influences like parents and entire community. Partnership between parents and school is important. It should be perceived as a symbiotic relationship between parents and the school as both will benefit from each other. Research has indeed shown that parental involvement and participation in school has a strong association with improved educational efficiency and effectiveness (Henderson and Mapp, 2002). This therefore advances an argument that as the standard of education improves, parents, learners and educators in turn benefit.



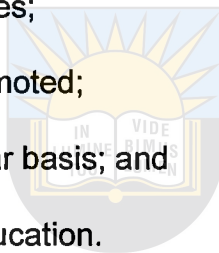
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Zill and Nord (1994), in their study about parental involvement in schools (USA), noted an added advantage for learners whose parents were more involved in school. Zill and Nord (1994) posited that educators of learners with highly involved parents were more likely to pay more attention to them than those learners whose parents were not involved in school matters. Educators tended to identify problems that had a potential to inhibit learner's learning in earlier stages. Literature constantly stresses that parents have a major influence on their children's achievement in school and throughout life (Henderson and Berla 1994, Zill and Nord, 1994). Researchers like Henderson and Mapp (2002) have also argued that when schools, parents and community groups work cohesively to support learning, children tend to do better at school, have a lower school dropout rate, lower suspension rates and make learners like school more. Other researchers such as Henderson and Berla (1994) have found that learners with parents who are more involved in their schools tend to curb behavioral problems

in their children, and as a consequence their children tend to obtain better academic grades (Wherry 2003). Chances increase that those learners complete secondary school compared to learners whose parents are not involved in their school.

This view is supported by Brown (1989) who points out that when parents are fully involved, irrespective of their income or socio-economic background, learners are more likely to:

- earn high grades and test scores;
- pass their classes and get promoted;
- attend school on a more regular basis; and
- advance to post-secondary education.



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The poverty or socio-economic status and literacy level are vexing issues in parental involvement and participation in schools. The Child Trends Database [www.childrensdatabank.org](http://www.childrensdatabank.org) in 2003 found that in the USA, parents with higher levels of education and income were more likely to be involved in their children's school. Statistics reported by the above organization show that 80% of learners whose parents had a Bachelor's degree attended a school event, compared to 42% of learners whose parents had less than a high school education. This is a challenge for the education system in South Africa where most parents in black townships have very low socio-economic and literacy levels.

The University of Illinois Extension (<http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/>) identified benefits that accrue to learners whose parents are more involved in their children schools. These include the following:

- i. Long term academic achievement;
- ii. positive attitudes and behavior;
- iii. higher grades and test scores; and
- iv. more successful school programs

Clearly one finds in these an agreement with Brown (1989), and such theorists like Herman and Yeh (1983) who recommend that parents must play an integral part in assisting in their children's learning. All these theorists encourage parents to be actively involved in their children's education at school. To these may be added such theorists as Levin and Belfield (2003) who maintain that parents are full partners in their children's education who should be included as appropriate participants in decision-making and indeed as advisory committee members at school level whose task is to assist in the education of their children. Achievement at the highest levels possible for any child requires that parents and the education system work together as a team (Levin and Belfield, 2003).

What is continually stressed is that neither parents nor educators can drive a learner to higher achievement when each component is working on its own. Literature on parental involvement and participation in children's education is clearly shows that the strongest and most consistent factor influencing a child's

educational performance, among other things, are the goals and aspirations that the parents have towards the child. For example, the University of Illinois Extension noted above, stating that all parents have ambitions about their children, which includes believing that they can succeed in life and become better and caring adults. Likewise many parents, who ever they may be, want to be involved with the formal education of their children. But, in certain cases, they do not know where exactly they should start, and how they should go about making the necessary positive linkages with the school. Thus, barriers to parental involvement in school are numerous and these are extensively discussed in page 26.



Formal education is a complex issue and researching parental involvement and participation is even more complex. The complexity is brought about by many factors. These may include the context in which research is being undertaken, the definition used by different researchers and the study design used. Extensive research on parental involvement in schools have mainly been done in America and Europe (see Izzo, Weissberg, Kaspro and Fendrich 1999); Astone and McLanaham (1991), and rarely and in adhoc in Africa (Mothatha and Mda 2000; Clase et al, 2007; Heystek, 2006). There are various factors to be debated that may have contributed to this, which this review of literature may not address.

## **2.2. Parental involvement and Participation in schools in South Africa**

This section briefly reviews the pre and post apartheid eras of the South African History, and their implications to the present educational system of the country. In pre 1994 South Africa, education was regarded as the competence of educators. Only formally trained educators were expected to form part of the education system, as a result of this, parental involvement and their participation in school matters were rather minimal (Squelch and Lemmer, 1994:19). The laws that governed the country during the apartheid era made school managers sole proprietors in their respective schools. School committees had limited or no say in educational matters. It was not until the democratic era that essential reforms in the education system were made. After 1994, democratic laws such as the South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996 were enacted. Primarily this was for augmenting the education system to be responsive to contemporary issues in the education system of the country. As stated in the previous chapter, the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) introduced a new approach whereby parents had a role to play. Provided in this Act together with educators, parents were placed on an equal level to act in partnership with school managers in the governance of the school. Further, SASA 84 of 1996 granted that parents, along with the principal of the school, were to share joint responsibility for strategic planning including the setting up of the school literacy targets.

Critics of the SASA document raised concerns that this document was flawed, and deemed it inconsiderate of the circumstances to which the majority of the population negotiated their lives under. To substantiate their criticism, there are claims that predominantly in the black population; parents were finding it hard to exercise their rights as governors of the education institutions (Mothatha and Mda, 2000). . This results from various factors but paramount among them was the low literacy level in these communities, socio-economic and the educational background of the elite. Those few parents who were educated were only a few who had benefited from Bantu education (Mothatha and Mda, 2000). Clase et al. (2007) and Heystek (2006) have also reported that tensions exist between School Governing Bodies, School Management Teams and the Department of Education. The reasons that they gave for the existence of this tension were not in contrast to those highlighted by Henderson (2006)

These factors proved to be catastrophic to the parents being active in the school matters in their communities. As well, this is consistent with the findings of the Child Trends Database (2003) stated above. Yet the education policy of South Africa continues to challenge the parents to meaningfully contribute to the education of their children (see SASA 84 of 1996). Nevertheless, it remains a critical question whether the factors stated above are the primary causes of parents being generally passive in the decision-makings of their schools. However without scientific evidence, one can never make a conclusive statement in this regard. Research studies as noted in this review have shown the

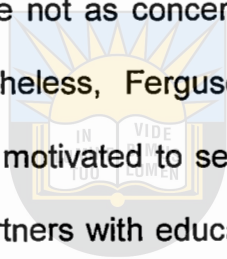
importance of parental involvement and participation in school matters (Measuring up the state of Texas Education, 1999, Henderson and Mapp, 2002). Therefore, anxiety emerges as it has been noted that in South Africa, predominantly in black communities parental involvement and participation is deficient (Mothatha and Mda, 2000). Similar experiences have been reported in other studies from poor resource areas (Moles, 1999).

In a nutshell, as discussed in this literature review above, it is evident that parental involvement and participation in school, and fulfilling that responsibility is greatly confounded by socio-economic status and literacy levels of parents. More research still needs to be done in order to investigate and understand these variables more and build evidence based programs to enhance parental involvement and participation in schools. Presently, the dearth of research information concerning parental involvement and participation in South African schools remains scanty. Researchers such as Squelch, Lemmer (1994), Mothatha and Mda, (2000), and others, have attempted to address this problem. However, there is still a need for more research, to adequately understand and be informed about effects of parental involvement and participation from the South African urban and rural context. Furthermore, it is appropriate for one to add that the South African history has greatly contributed to this insufficiency of parental involvement and participation, as Collins, Cooper and Whitmore (1995) maintain. Critics of the SASA such as Mothatha and Mda (2000), relate closely to the theorists from the USA Michigan department of education (2001) who

identified factors that were critical for parental involvement in children's education and school matters. These were (1) the parents' beliefs or a perception on what is important, necessary and permissible for them to work with their children. (2) The extent to which parents had confidence on their impact on their children's education and (3) parents perceptions on whether their children do actually want them to be involved. The above findings are interesting, although not conclusive. Other important factors such as low literacy levels, low socio-economic status, dominant culture, were either not researched or not included in the analysis. The latter factors are still to be researched in South Africa, especially from a rural perspective. Admittedly, involving parents in their children's education remains a difficult task because some parents are not in the least conversant with the education system affecting their children. To highlight the importance of context specific research, one can make as an example the University of Michigan study (2001) which in their findings makes no mention of parents feeling inferior to working with professionals. This is understandable as this study was done in North America, a developed country in which parent's general level of education is fairly high. Data from South Africa however has shown that this is an important factor in parental involvement and participation in schools (Mothatha and Mda, 2000).

Though others may argue this, generally, parents in developed Northern Countries differ significantly from Southern developing countries in terms of developments and their effect on socio-economic practices. What may be a

common practice in a Northern country may not necessarily be that in a Southern one, especially in a rural community (Mothatha and Mda, 2000). High illiteracy levels and its associated factors like inferiority complex, may act as barriers to parental involvement (discussed in page 26). In addition, parents may feel that being involved in education system diverts them from their normal daily schedules i.e. others may be more interested in commercial and subsistence farming rather than wasting time attending meetings at their children's schools. Besides, as Ferguson and Rodriguez (2005) note, it may be because educators have an assumption that parents are not as concerned or as interested in the education of their children. Nevertheless, Ferguson and Rodriguez (2005) strongly recommend that parents be motivated to see themselves as experts in their children's education, and as partners with educators in the maintenance of the educational system.



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Indeed where reforms have been made to improve standards of education, not much appears to have been achieved without the added involvement of parents in schools (Levin and Belfield, 2003). It has been noted that parents need to be invited to partake in various educational activities so as to work collaboratively with educators in various ways (Henderson and Mapp, 2002). This is in recognition that the educators' negative attitude towards learners' parents is a barrier to parental participation in educational matters, that the educators' failure to understand or to recognize themselves as parents of their learners is yet another mistake (see also Heystek and Louw, 1999). The question is who can be

happy when denied the opportunity of participating in his/ her children's education? It is evident that understanding one another regarding the capacity of parents to help their children will create effective partnerships between home and school domains. Further, parents are morally obliged to act as educators' partners in the education of their children. As such, they should be included in decision making, act as advocates for the school, and supporters towards educational goals as perceived by the school communities (Mothatha and Mda 2000). The SASA (1996) underpins this understanding as highlighted in the responsibilities and legal obligations of the Department of Education of Michigan (2001).



### **2.3. Types of Parental involvement in school**

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The University of Michigan Department of Education (2001), noted that there are different types of parental involvement in their children's education. They propose that families whose children prosper in school show evidence of the following forms of involvement.

#### **(a) Establishment of a daily family routine**

Providing for children a conducive place for studying without interrupting the provision of home chores. The strongest predictor on this type of involvement being the teacher's encouragement towards parents to assist with school work at home.

### **(b) School and District Leadership**

The schools putting outreach initiatives towards homes, in assisting them in changing the home environments, assist in improving quality of life. This has been seen as having a positive effect on the learner's performance at school.

### **(c) Monitoring out-of-school activities**

Educators assisting in drafting up a study time-table at home, assuming responsibilities of checking up on learners whose parents are not home or those children who are orphans are of critical importance.

### **(d) Expressing high but realistic expectations for achievement**

Parents setting high but realistic expectations on their children. Forwarding compliments for good work done, and equally putting positive criticism where it is due, praising children on their achievements. Showing confidence on the child's abilities has been seen to have a positive effect on the children's performance at school. Informing friends and family about the progress and success and rewards from them is motivating.

### **(e) Encouraging children's development/ progress in school**

Creating and maintaining a warm home environment and showing great interest in children's work is critical in the child's performance. Supervising learner's home work, discussing about career options are equally critical, just

as it is for parents to create and maintain a good relationship with school educators.

**(f) Modeling the value of learning, self-discipline, and hard work**

Having good communication with the child, conversing with him or her about life in general, making an example of success stories as well demonstrating that hard work pays, these elements are crucial to the child's success.

## **2.4. Barriers to parental involvement in schools.**

As noted above, research has shown that when schools and parents work together cohesively, children are inclined to succeed not only in academic careers but throughout life. It has been further stated by Local Education Agencies Archived information (April, 1996) that such participation of parents is crucial not only in the beginning of the child's life, but throughout the academic life. Positive effects of parental involvement and participation are well documented.

Nonetheless, there are factors which act as barriers for such participation. It is very important to understand why it is like that. Despite the positives of parental involvement and participation in schools, parents are still reluctant to get involved. For example, various studies have found that family members and parents don't extend their care-giving role into their children's schools (Mothatha and Mda 2000). Parents tend to be reluctant to become involved in their children's education or in their school activities. Some obstacles or barriers have

been identified by Brown (1989) and Mothatha and Mda (2000). These include parents low literacy levels, negative attitude of educators towards parental involvement and lack of proper communication between parents and educators. These barriers are discussed in detail below. Brown (1989) proposes that necessary measures ought to be put in place to tackle the challenge (of barriers). Among many possible solutions, he proposes that the school should help the parents to be more involved in schools. Moles (1999) posited that autocracy in school management is a significant barrier to parental involvement in schools. This involves the manager viewing the institution as his personal turf where outside influence is not welcomed. Other challenges include when parents are being threatened by educators as they perceive themselves as specialists who have no need for parental contribution (Safe Healthy schools organization 2006, [www.safehealthyschools.org](http://www.safehealthyschools.org)). Yet another barrier is that parents lack confidence when it comes to helping their children with their school work (Heystek and Louw, 1994). This is more so with parents whose own school experience, during childhood was horrible or unproductive. These parents may still view school-based education in a negative light (Heystek and Louw, 1994)

On the other hand school educators and administrators have their own misapprehension. Educators may feel their position as threatened and their space invaded by parents and thus dread that parents are trying to undermine that authority (Safe Healthy Schools Organization 2006, [www.safehealthyschools.org](http://www.safehealthyschools.org)). Further still, educators may communicate to

parents in an abstract language trying to discourage them from having valid input and discussing concerns about the education of their children. One may add that some educators presuppose that some parents are reluctant or incapacitated to help their children academically. Educators have also cited lack of training and time on the part of parents as barriers to involving them (Brown, 1989; Mothatha and Mda, 2000)

In an attempt to understand the lack of interest by parents to involve them in their children's education, Collins, Cooper and Whitmore (1995) have tried to come up with explanations to this and identified some potential barriers (Measuring up the state of Texas Education, 1999). These obstacles include the following:

- conflict of ideas between educators and parents on what constitutes involvement;
- lack of parental education and skills to play their intended role;
- job pressures and language barriers;
- a less than welcoming atmosphere from the school management towards parents;
- insufficient training of educators on how to reach out to parents and work better with them; and
- being a single parent.

Writers such as Collins, Cooper and Whitmore (1995) stress that these barriers need to be directly addressed if parental involvement and participation in schools

is to be enhanced. If left unattended, the partnership between schools and parents will, for sometime to come, not yield positive returns and children will suffer.

## **2.5. Mechanisms on involving parents in school matters**

Of fundamental importance to researchers, if parental involvement is to be successful, is harmonization of the educators' expectations of parents and parents' view of what constitutes involvement. As such the above argument highlights the importance of perception. As long as these two stakeholders have negative perceptions about each other, this partnership gets badly implemented; as a result it will not contribute to the ideal. It is important to create such an environment where the above two parties sit together draft standards of operating procedures on how to work together, setting priorities, objectives and goals for that particular academic season.

For educational researchers it is imperative that the stated barriers of parental involvement in schools be tackled in order to augment learning capabilities of all children. This particularly holds true for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Henderson and Mapp 2002). Writers such as Collins, Cooper and Whitmore (1995) have emphasized that of utmost importance is to address the misunderstanding and negative perceptions that educators and parents are having of each other. Furthermore, it is often evident that parents become

unenthusiastic about being involved because they dread negative criticism from the school management while on the other hand the educators feel that parents have no place in the academic aspect of the school (Measuring up the state of Texas Education, 1999).

Brown (1989) puts a compelling argument when he says that some parents may have other grounds for not being willing to be involved with their children's school. This, according to Brown (1989), may once again, be due to the parents' illiteracy status, and lack of perceived necessary skills, thereby feeling inadequate to communicate with educators. He also highlights cultural differences as parents may not be familiar with the adopted culture in that particular school. Further, Brown (1989) mentions other reasons that contributes to lack of parental involvement in schools, these include old age, transport and baby sitting costs. He, Brown, (1989) then argues that, the time for involvement may sometimes be inconvenient for working parents.

The Safe Healthy schools organization, [www.safehealthyschools.org](http://www.safehealthyschools.org) (2006) concur with Brown (1989). They argue that necessary procedures have to be followed to curb non-participation of parents, or their absenteeism in parents meetings due to their employment obligations. The Safe Healthy School Organisation (2006) when they point out that "Events at the school will draw more families if they are of informal tone. It has been argued (Hornby 2000) that if food, child care and necessary transportation are provided and if learners are in good understanding with their parents" this will promote parental participation in school governance. Hornby (2000) goes further to include that provision should

be made to mitigate against financial constraints and human resources that tend to impede the attendance of parents at meetings. For him this provision could be useful in facilitating high levels of parental involvement and participation in meetings, as they would cater for parents' transportation and food.

As noted by Dauber and Epstein (1993), parents often complain about the lazy educators who do not know the work they are paid for. Parents complain that teachers place too much work on the shoulders of parents, forgetting that they are tired from their own jobs. The rest of parents in the school community prioritize illiteracy as an excuse; that because of illiteracy, they are unable to help learners with homework. Nonetheless, Dauber and Epstein (1993) maintain that some information may require general knowledge whereby the parent may assist by organizing apparatus for assignments or projects. Hornby (2000) suggests involvement of learner's parents in shared reading sessions every night or after school.

Parents'–school cooperation brings the strengths of the home and the expertise of the school into a working partnership. Arguing further Berger (2000) asserts that educators and parents should work collaboratively and effectively to contribute in the formulation of a prosperous generation. Recent literature on parental involvement and participation in schools put emphasis in increased opportunities for children's success when parents and educators are working together as equal partners responsible for different components of the education

system, sharing the same vision for the successful goals of learners (Berger, 2002, Hornby, 2000). Educators are professionals who have an important duty to manage a variety of instructional resources. On the other hand parents are an important resource in the planning process of the child. This should be clearly defined in this partnership so as to avoid unnecessary conflict between the educators and parents.

Stern (2003) highlights the importance of including law and policy in formal education. He maintains that education is a complex profession and needs accountability. Legal structures, policies and formal rules may seem to be annoying distractions from the real world, but in the true sense they are the correct tools that lead us to move in the correct channels and also give everyone the rights and responsibilities to be parents, educators and citizens of a country. For him, educational policies enable educators to do their work within a system of regulations that support and encourage education of learners.

Regulations in education (Republic of South Africa, SASSA Act of 1996) stipulate what should be good practice if teaching and learning are to create a relationship between school and community. In the South African Schools Act of 1996, it is provided that by virtue of being parents, parents are morally obliged to be involved in the formulation and implementation of school policies for the good of their children's education and the development of their communities. A school without a school policy, vision and mission or a year plan is like a ship in a sea without a navigator where no one is to blame when things go wrong. School policy as discussed by Henderson (2006), embraces a number of issues needed

by parents for their children in a school such as the language policy which is a unanimous opinion from parents; admission policy, and code of conduct for both learners and educators.

Henderson (2006) further notes that some schools use home-school liaison book to interact with parents whereby parents are expected to read the information from educators and sign. This is a good idea when written in simple understandable language to literate people, but becomes ineffective to parents who have reading difficulties, because they may not effectively access information. A literate person may be needed in this regard.

Stern, (2003) further states that policies on special events should comprise of being inclusive, being regular and being broadly educational. Parental involvement in formal meetings has not always been as effective as expected. For example in South Africa, in order to promote effective partnership between parents and schools, parents have been given a right of access to a parent partnership service. Parent partnership services generally cover local authority areas. As such their inclusion serves purposes of advising and representing the wishes of parents of the entire community with respect to formal proceedings and around the educational needs.

## **2.6. Highlighted developments and positive effects of parental involvement**

As regards the positive effects of parental involvement in schools, it may be important for South Africa to conduct a situational analysis in order to identify where South Africa is in terms of involving parents in schools. Although the Republic of South Africa is a developing country, South Africa can draw and learn from the experiences from other countries like United States of America and Britain, where parental involvement has been a success. However, when doing so it will need to carefully determine what resulted in success in those areas, and what could be beneficiary in the South African context. For instance from the literature we have been able to learn that the most notable development in United States has been that parents are becoming involved in the education of their children and that this has shown a positive effect on the performance of children at school. Parental willingness to be involved in their children's education has been seen as also associated with educators being more accommodative and appreciative on working in synergy (unity) with parents. This is further supported by the Epstein and Sanders (2001).

## **2.7. Summary**

Parental involvement and participation in governance of schools has been greatly supported by scientific evidence. As revealed by this review of literature, researchers have emphasised that parental involvement and participation is

fundamental to the development of the school at large. Researchers have continually stated that there are benefits that directly accrue to learners. These include high pass rates, with better grades, low school drop out and high chances of success in life at a later stage. Literature stresses that efforts should be made to develop activities that link home and school in order to facilitate a better working relationship between the two institutions for the child's benefit. The literature highlights scientific based evidence that partnership between the parents and school is a significant component in enhancing learner performances in schools. It reveals that parents have a major influence on their children's achievement in schools. Recommendation from research studies that investigated the impact of parental involvement and participation in school is that parents should assume the responsibility for their children's success and actively play the role of participating in most school activities and thus enhance involvement in the education of their children. Even though most of these studies are conducted in developed countries like the United States of America, they have as much bearing on the under developed situations like that of South Africa. Parents and children's emotions are alike, regardless of where they are. There is all the reason to hope that similar studies will increase on this side of the equator as researchers like Mothatha and Mda (2000), and Singh, Mbokodi and Msila (2000) have set the ball rolling.

The following chapter will look at the research that was conducted in a rural Eastern Cape school to assess parental involvement and participation in the governance of Maganise Junior Secondary School.

## Chapter 3

### Research methodology

#### 3.1 Introduction

The methodology adopted for this study is informed by the interpretative paradigm. Generally, qualitative research is viewed as an act of interpretation. Interpretation in itself is seen as an important and meaningful way of accessing and reasoning about the meanings of people's actions, and viewpoints about their own world. Therefore interpretation is viewed as an effort to dig up meanings from observation. This paradigm believes that realities are multiple, complex, and social bound (Dahlgren et al. 2004), and also takes a point of departure in believing that realities and experiences are subjective and relative to the people being studied.

#### Research paradigm

Since this study falls into the interpretive paradigm, only interpretivism will be looked at in detail. However it may be appropriate to briefly explain the difference between the two popularly used paradigms i.e. positivism and interpretivism. In positivism objectivity is seen as a guiding principle. Central in this paradigm is that the researcher should remain neutral and disinterested in relation to what is being researched. Practitioners of this paradigm put emphasis that it is "fact" they are after. Meanwhile, the researchers who accept interpretivist ontology usually adopt an intersubjective and empathic epistemology (Creswell, 1998; Dahlgren et al. 2004). These researchers use qualitative interactional methodologies. This

means that they rely on the relationship between the researcher and the research participant to reveal the subjective reason and meanings that lie behind social action (Terreblanche and Durrheim, 1999:6). What is commonly shared by the interpretivists are the beliefs about the nature of knowing and reality. For example, the relative ontology assumes that reality is constructed intersubjectively through the meanings and understanding developed socially and experientially, and subjectivity epistemology assumes that we cannot separate ourselves from what we know (Terreblanche and Durrheim, 1999:6). The researcher and the object of investigation are linked such that who we are and how we understand the world is a central part of how we understand ourselves, others and the world. Angen (2000) stated that the positions of the interpretivists are grounded on the theoretical belief that reality is socially constructed and fluid. Angen (2000) further argues that what we know is always negotiated within cultures, social settings and the relationship with other people. This is consistent with the viewpoint that realities are multiple, and context and socially bound. Research findings therefore are a result of a unique relationship between the researcher and the research participant (Dahlgren et al. 2004). This suggests that another researcher may not necessarily find the same reality with the same participants in a different time (fluidity of reality and evolution of time).

The epistemological stand of interpretative research is that knowledge is generated between people. This means that the researcher and respondents are inseparable and interrelated; therefore the generated knowledge is the result of

such unique interaction. The interpretative paradigm further takes a point of departure in believing that realities and experiences are subjective and relative to the people being studied (De Vaus, 2004). In most cases, researchers who follow this approach in doing scientific research attempt to access the tacit (silent) knowledge of the people under study. This is deemed as critically important, and can only be acquired through the interpretivist qualitative paradigm and not through quantitative methodology. Creswell (1998) states that "*Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem*". Mouton (2006) explains that qualitative research takes its point of departure as the insider perspective on social action. This assertion is in agreement with the views of Dahlgren et al (2004), that qualitative researchers always attempt to understand a phenomenon from the views and or actions of those being studied. In this research paradigm, the researcher build a complex, holistic picture, analyse or interpret words, report detailed views of informants. Most importantly it is advised that the researcher should conduct the study in a natural setting of the participants (Creswell, 1998). Other researchers such as Kirk and Miller (1986) have also highlighted the importance of conducting research in the natural setting of those being studied.

According to the interpretivist paradigm, the scientific method of studying the social world is partial, because human activity involves beliefs, values, intentions and goals, which give activities meaning. The methods one employs to anticipate

knowledge of reality, flow from beliefs and values one holds about the very nature of reality (Rist, 1977). To understand human interaction within a society or community requires that meanings be placed within a social context whereby the interpretations of human action can be contextualised socially and historically (Tunmer, Prochnow and Chapman, 2003:90). Interpretive qualitative research facilitates a more intensive examination of the phenomenon and their deeper meanings, leading to a thick description (Rubin and Babbie, 2001:125).

One finds Bernard (1998) as being consistent with the above authors. He argues that qualitative interpretive research is greatly characterized by an approach which seeks to describe and analyze the culture and behaviour of humans and their groups from their view point. Kirk and Miller (1986), state that "*Qualitative interpretative research is a particular tradition in social science that fundamentally depends on watching people in their own territory and interacting with them in their own language, on their own terms*". Clearly, to a large part, there is consensus on what qualitative research is, and what it can provide for the scientific world. This interpretive research paradigm was therefore deemed appropriate and relevant to the investigation of parental involvement and their participation in school matters. Following the qualitative methodology helped in building the understanding of complex issues existing in school communities. It provided an in-depth understanding on how parental involvement or its lack of impact on the education system, governance and day-to-day running of some schools contribute to the culture of teaching and learning. On what does one

base this claim? Interpretivists argue that if researchers desire to understand people's actions we have first to recognize those actions in the way that the participants do. The researcher has to take the position of those people being studied to try to see what meanings they assign to their actions, why they act the way they do, what purposes they think are provided by their actions (<http://www.rouncefield.homestaed.com>). This requires the researcher to keep a close relationship with the research participants.

Dahlgren et al (2004) concur with other authors like Bernard (1998) and Best and Khan (1993) when they argue that interpretive research methodologies can be used when doing research as they look into ways we acquire social meanings through observations and peoples' descriptions of their experienced social conditions.



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Interpretivist inquiry has many variants including hermeneutics and phenomenology and is generally viewed as central to qualitative approaches to research. Further, the interpretivist epistemology and ontology is thus seen as having greater explanatory power in this study, as it regards dichotomies created by modernist and positivist paradigms as unsuccessful historical attempts to legitimise partial truths. Interpretivist epistemology demands that intense reflection is an integral part of the process, but above all the primacy of the subjective experience is deemed to be crucial. Initially, the goal of interpretivism is to enlarge and deepen the understanding of the range of experiences, with the

assumption that the working relationship between the educator and the parents is socially constructed and the experiences in both parties interrelate meaningfully. Interpretivism sees relationships as more complex and fluid with directions of influence being mutual and shifting rather than unidirectional and fixed. Relationships within the social world, such as language i.e. between parents and educators are not seen to be external and independent of our attempts to achieve the intended goals. Thompson (1998:129) points out that it is important to recognise that human existence has some text like qualities. He advocates part to whole analysis of participant accounts by proceeding through the interactive process involving the policies and acts in order to gain a sense of understanding the whole picture. This strategy is essential to assist the researcher to arrive at a holistic interpretation of the working relationship between educators and parents of Maganise Junior Secondary School in the Libode Mega District. Within the broader interpretative paradigm the researcher adopted a case study research design.

### **3.2. Research Design**

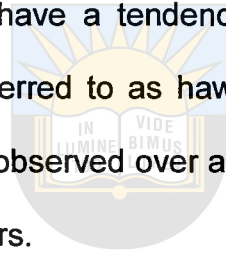
The study adopted the case study method. The case study method falls under the paradigm of the qualitative interpretive methods (de Vos et al. 2005). De Vos et al. (2005), citing Creswell (1998) states that a case study can be regarded as an exploration or in-depth analysis of a bounded system bounded by time and, or places, a single or multiple cases over a period of time. The case being

investigated may well refer to a process, activity event, programme, an individual or multiple individuals (de Vos et al. 2005). Choosing the case study method was to a large part, influenced by the research question, the number of respondents required for the study and most importantly, by the nature and the epistemological position of the study. Using the case study method was seen as affording an opportunity to provide an in-depth description of the nature of the study problem.

Mouton (2005) mentions that analyzing the phenomenon or its situation is essential in the conduct of research, because descriptions of that phenomenon are embedded in the life-worlds of the actors that are studied to provide insider (emic) perspectives. In this study, the Case study method afforded an opportunity for the researcher to study the actions and practices of educators and parents of learners towards the governance and development of the school community.

Case studies are detailed investigations of individuals, groups, institutions, or other social units according to Polit and Hungler (1983). These authors further state that, the researcher who is conducting a case study attempts to analyse the variables relevant to the subject under study. The principle difference between the case studies and other research studies is that the focus of attention is the individual case and not the whole population of cases (Yin 1984). Most studies search for what is common and pervasive, while in the case study, the focus may not be on generalisation but on understanding the particulars of that case in its

complexity. A case study focuses on a bounded system, usually under natural conditions, so that the system can be understood in its own habit. As a research method case study is particularly useful in describing holistic picture about a case at hand. In this research, the educators and the parents of learners of Maganise school community were studied as a case through their personal narratives in face to face interviews, observations, document analysis and by completing questionnaires. Further, the researcher observed them while holding school meetings. Writers such as Dahlgren et al. (2004) point out that when people are observed and know that they are; have a tendency of acting best behaviors appropriate for that time. This is referred to as Hawthorn effect. However they (Dahlgren et al 2004) further state if observed over a lengthy period of time, they [people] revert to their actual behaviors.



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Case study method is renowned for its strength to be able to interrogate scientifically a complex issue or object within its real life context. According to Yin (1984), the “case study method is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. Above all, the most important purpose of choosing the case study design for this study was influenced by the research question, the number of respondents required for the study and most importantly by the purpose and the epistemological position of the study.

Using the case study method in the current study, the researcher looked at providing a descriptive analysis on the unique features of Maganise Junior Secondary School and how those features impact on the participation and involvement of parents in the governance of the school. Giving contexts of the research is critically important in qualitative studies like case studies. This is because this allows readers to decide for themselves whether the findings of the study fit the situation the readers are familiar with. This does not claim that case studies are generalisable but researchers who use this method always aim to provide a thick description of the phenomenon under inquiry and leave the findings to the hands of the beholder to decide for themselves if this would hold true in the environments or context in which they live. As such this points to the importance of case study as a research method.

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### **3.3. Study Population**

The study was conducted at the Maganise JSS in the Eastern Cape Region. The school is physically situated in the former Transkei region, in the district of Libode. For this study, the researcher sought the participation of educators, principal and parents of learners at Maganise JSS. Most of the parents had no or only few years of schooling. They all resided in the Ngobozi Administrative Area, in which Maganise is situated. The area is characterized by a low literacy rate, with high levels of poverty. All persons who reside in this area and have or have had in the past five years child(ren) enrolled at Maganise were eligible for the

study. Educators who participated in the study teach various grades in the school and have been at Maganise JSS for more than three years.

### **3.4. Sampling**

For the questionnaire component of the research all educators who have been at Maganise Junior Secondary School for the past five years, prior to the commencement of the research, were invited to participate in the study. A total of ten educators agreed to take part in the study. The same ten educators also gave consent to be interviewed using one to one qualitative interviews with the researcher.

The researcher then invited parents of learners to participate in the study. This was after she had fully explained the study to them, its purpose and what will be required of them. A number of participants volunteered for the study. Further on, a snowball sampling technique was employed to find other parents whom the researcher, through the help of other informants, identified as having the information that could be helpful in answering the research question. Purposeful sampling is one strategy of selecting research participants according to pre-selected criteria relevant to a particular research question (Mack et al. 2005). In this study this was done with the help of other parents who were participating in the study. A total 25 parents gave their consent and administered the questionnaire and also took part in the qualitative interviews.

### **3.5. Method and techniques used in the study**

The qualitative techniques formed the larger part of the study. But, in order to get important variables like the age, sex and educational background of the participants and descriptive statistics on the subject at hand, a structured questionnaire was administered. The qualitative part was designed to study in-depth the actions, knowledge and practices of educators and parents of learners towards the governance and development of Maganise Junior Secondary School. School memorandums, minutes of the school meetings, and the researcher's field notes were kept and used for analysis. The research team consisted of only the principal researcher who applied the questionnaire to a total of 35 participants. As pointed out earlier, the participants were educators and parents of learners at Maganise JSS. The age range of the participants varied from 20-40 and a few were above 41 years old. An attempt was made to maintain gender balance in the study; this was done by snowballing and asking male parents to participate in the study. Unfortunately this could not be attained. There were more female educators and female parents in the study sample than males. This could be attributed to teacher distribution at the school, while for parents it was mostly that male parents are migrant workers and do not always stay at home.

The researcher used various instruments designed to complement one another. This was based on the literature on qualitative methods as shown that each research instrument has its own strengths and weakness. Therefore, in this research, there were several data capturing tools, that is, a structured

questionnaire, thematic guide, documents, memorandums, school meetings and observation.

### **3.6.1 Structured questionnaire**

After the informed consent was given by the participants, both parents and educators including the principal administered the questionnaire. A simple process in data collection was followed. The researcher started off by giving out structured questionnaires to prospective participants. The questionnaire was designed in such a way that it was easy for self completion. Using structured questionnaire enabled this study to gather descriptive statistics on the research question.



Participants who had few years of schooling were able to complete the questionnaire on their own, however, the researcher was present during this time to guide them and respond to their questions. There were only few interviews where she was not present. This was because the participants expressed that they would be more comfortable to complete these on their own and return the questionnaire to the researcher's locked box at school. This was respected by the researcher as the participants wanted to ensure that their questionnaires were anonymous. A 98% response rate was attained; all scales in the questionnaire were attempted.

The limitations that were seen when using the questionnaire as a data collection tool was that, some of the questionnaires were returned or others were returned

incomplete. Also during data cleaning, few errors such as, sometimes a participant made double crossing for one question or others had to write words such as No or Yes instead of making crosses or ticks in the spaces provided. But these were not significant as such and could not distort the trend in data analysis.

### **3.6.2 Face to Face interviews**

In addition to structured questionnaires, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with the parents and educators. Due to the sensitivity of the research questions, one to one interviews were deemed appropriate. Small tape recorders were used to capture data. This was done with the approval of the respondents. The researcher asked for such consent and it was granted. Study coded tapes (where a tape containing interview of the participant was given a unique study) were assigned to individual respondents. Care was taken that the tapes were not traceable (through study Id's) back to individual respondents; only the researcher could make such a link.

Because the researcher was familiar with the components of the problem area, the school, and has experience interacting with the learners' parents and fellow educators semi-structured interviews were most useful. The researcher found this interviewing technique very useful as it gave her grounds to probe for information that has appeared to be interesting and useful to answer the research question. Also because the researcher could not fully anticipate the

possible responses to the questions, it was not going to benefit this research if the questions were constructed in a structured way (see Morse, 1992). With in-depth interviews, rich data was captured and the researcher was satisfied with the responses from parents and educators. Use of semi-structured interviews proved to be helpful in the analysis. The data that was gathered was easy to organize as all the participants answered more or less the same questions. However there were weaknesses that were found with this technique. It is important to mention that such weakness could be unique to this particular study. As the researcher is working at the same school in which the research was conducted, and asking people to talk about their views on parental involvement and participation in this particular school, some participants perceived this a sensitive topic. Because the audio information was being recorded, participants were at first uncomfortable with this. The researcher had to assure the participants of guaranteed confidentiality and privacy on a continuous basis.

### **3.6.3. Observation**

Observation as a data collection tool in this study was very useful. It was an easy tool to use. The researcher had ample time to observe educators and parents interacting. Observation was done for six months. This was a structured observation where only the variables of interest to the study were observed. During the parents meetings at this particular school, the researcher kept a close eye and was able to observe the relationship between the two components i.e. the parents and educators. Other variables of interests to the study like the

nature of the relationship between parents and educators were able to be interrogated during these meetings. In total three parents meetings were held during the study period and the researcher observed in all those meetings. After each meeting the researcher would sit and write down notes on her observation. These notes were kept and analysed. Even though the researcher could not observe the interaction between parents and educators as much as she would have wanted, when parents came to attend to problems of learners at school, if she had time and was not engaged in her other school responsibilities, the researcher observed how the interaction or co-operation goes between the parent and teacher(s). This was very interesting and provided rich data for the study. Methodologically, this was going to be very difficult for the outsider, as people do not feel comfortable to act normally when knowing that they are being observed. One wish to mention that there could be bias introduced when doing observations. This could be because the researcher was a teacher herself and might have introduced her biases as a teacher, i.e. how she could have handled a specific situation, how she would have preferred something to be. But the researcher tried to remain focused on her role as a researcher and not necessarily as a teacher in those situations. This enabled the researcher to close up her biases and limit introducing them to her observations.

#### **3.6.4. Documents, memorandums and minutes.**

To complement questionnaires, observations and interviews, in consultation with the supervisor, the researcher secured school documents, memorandums and minutes of the meetings, all of which yielded valuable data. The current situation of the parental involvement and participation in the governance of Maganise JSS was further illuminated. School documents, memorandums, and minutes of school meetings were secured with an aim to include these data in the analysis. This was important as the information derived from these could inform the research on how parents featured in those meetings, how they contributed, whether the issue of parental involvement and participation had ever formed part of those meetings.



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It was not easy to access these documents as they were the school property, thus deemed to be confidential. A strict protocol had to be followed to access these, even when these were accessed, they were incomplete, and sometimes the researcher would find that minutes of the school meetings were not available or sometimes inconclusive of the resolutions that were taken in a particular meeting.

At the end of the data collection exercise, the researcher felt overwhelmed by the amount of data she had collected. This is what Dahlgren et al. (2004) refer to as “drowning in data”. Thus having collected such amount of data, the researcher then proceeded with content analysis to interpret and try to derive the meaning out of the data. That is, the researcher engaged in the process itching to find

meaning out of the parent's lived experiences in the governance of Maganise Junior Secondary School.

#### **4. Validity and Reliability**

Credibility in qualitative research focus on whether the study has grasped the multiple realities they were aimed at in the beginning of the study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This refers to how well the researcher has understood and constructed the way the study informants perceive realities in their own lives (Dahlgren et al, 2004). In this study this was achieved by strictly following proven research methods and techniques. In order to attain validity in this study, the researcher used various tools to collect her data. These data collection tools have their own strengths and weakness (see above), but when used together, they complement one another. This process of triangulating between these data sources helped enhance the validity of the findings of this study. Also the researcher had a prolonged engagement in the field, this enabled her to be able to see if the research is directing her to another direction. This was welcomed as it was understood that qualitative research follows an emerging design, that is, it gets its direction from the data that is being collected. For example if the initial data points that a certain aspect of the study is proving to be important, it is important for researchers to systematically follow that direction and explore it further (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In her analysis, the researcher kept close to the data, this allowed her to get a thick description of the study findings. As a

result the researcher was able to put a thick description of the parental involvement and participation at Maganise JSS. With this, the researcher was assured and confident that her findings are valid and reliable.

## **5. Ethical considerations**

For this research to be ethically engaged, the researcher adhered to various ethical guidelines that regulate the conduct of research involving human participants (CIOMS, 2002, MRC ethics Book1). Through reviewing literature on social science research ethics, the researcher understood that it is important to follow such guidelines. Adhering to ethics guidelines of doing social science research does not only protect the research participants but enhances the integrity of the study as well. The American Education Research Association (2005) stated that: “it is of paramount importance that educational researchers respect the rights, privacy, dignity, and sensitivities of their research populations and also the integrity of the institutions within which the research occurs” . This is provided in their document the Ethical standards. In that same document, it is further provided that when conducting research, especially in an institution, confidentiality must be maintained at all costs, the safety and welfare of the participants must be central in that research and it must be ensured that informed consent is obtained. Another issue that was important in the present study was establishing the social value of the study, that is, how this study will benefit Maganise JSS. In order to pursue that, it was ensured that the means to attaining that are morally and ethically correct. It was imperative that as a researcher, one

is sensitive to locally established institutional policies or guidelines for conducting research at Maganise Junior Secondary School.

To ensure that compliance with the ethical requirements when conducting education research, the researcher followed this process. The current school governing body at Maganise JSS gave approval for the researcher to conduct the study in the school. Further approval was granted by the school manager on behalf of the school management team (SMT). The researcher wrote a letter to these two organs of the school, detailed in the letter was the study aim and the purpose of the study. The researcher explained how the study will be of benefit to the school and the risks to the school that could result from this study. It was important to explain that findings of the study may or may not be favourable to the current management approach at the school and that the findings of the research may have implications to the school. This was viewed as an attempt to conduct an ethical engaged research as the persons giving approval would be fully informed of both the possible benefits and risks that the school could accrue from the findings of the study. After obtaining the approval, the researcher approached prospective participants; fully informed them of the study and its purpose. Prospective participants were approached individually and the researcher asked them to participate in the study. A total of 35 participants gave their informed consent and signed a consent document. It is important to note that the participants signed the consent document willingly and voluntarily, this was without undue inducement of any kind.

## 5.1. Anonymity and Confidentiality

Researching parental involvement in Maganise JSS challenged the researcher in various ways. These challenges were grounded in various sources. As it was stated earlier in this chapter (observation), the researcher is an educator at the same school she conducted the study. Because of this, it may be argued that the issue of anonymity and confidentiality which is central in doing social science research was greatly endangered. As much as this was seen as a challenge, it provided an opportunity for the researcher to learn of ethical ways of dealing with this challenge.

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This required extraordinary sensitivity from the researcher (Mo Hume 2007). Thus, the experience derived from this research was that, research participants are willing to answer in this type of research if they are approached in a respectful manner, assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Together with the researcher, the participants chose the Study Identity numbers themselves and this assured them of the anonymity. What also proved important in the interviews was when the researcher informed the participants of their right not to answer the questions they are not comfortable with. This gave the participants some grounds to feel in control of the interview process.

## **5.2. Privacy**

Due to the nature of the research questions, the study proved to be a very sensitive one. Prospective participants showed anxiety on talking about their feelings about the parental involvement in the governance of Maganise JSS. This was because the researcher was also their colleague. It may be that they were not sure of their protection after they have honestly reported their views. The researcher dealt with this concern by assuring privacy to the prospective participants, if they agree to participate in the study. The participants were given control over the timing and circumstances of sharing this information (Amdur 2003) in the interview process. They were approached individually and informed that their names will not be written anywhere in the data. That all identifiers that could link the information they have given to them will be removed. Furthermore, the prospective participants were informed that their information will be anonymously processed into a report. Because the interviews were audio-recorded, the researcher exercised great care in storing the data so that no person other than her would have access to the data.

## **6. Generalizability**

It was never an aim of this study to generalize the findings to other areas. The researcher aimed at putting a thick description of her findings. This would explain in great details the problem area being studied to the readers. It was thought

that, with this the readers would be able to see if these findings would hold true in their own settings or in a similar context elsewhere (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, Dahlgren et al 2004).

## **7. Summary**

Following interpretative paradigm was very helpful in this research. Methods that are found under the umbrella of this paradigm, discussed in this chapter helped answer the research question in a satisfactory way. Using a content analysis helped the researcher to derive a meaning out of the lived experiences of the parents and educators in the governance of Maganise Junior Secondary School. In chapter 4, a comprehensive presentation and analysis of the data is provided.



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## Chapter 4: Data Presentation and Analysis

### 4.1. Introduction

As noted in chapter three of this study, the focus of the research was the case study of Maganise Junior Secondary School. Various research instruments, as noted in chapter three, were used. These included semi-structured interviews, structured questionnaires, observations, and document analysis. Thus, in this chapter, the presentation and analysis of data was arranged in the order and sequence that sought to provide better clarity and understanding of the flow of responses. Numbers and percentages were used in some instances to compare parents and educators responses on various items. As such, the researcher's assessment of parental involvement and participation in governance of Maganise Junior Secondary School was undertaken against an understanding and acceptance that when parents are fully involved (as noted in chapter two) in their children's school activities and how their children's school is run, their children will be more likely to achieve the following:

- Earn Higher grades and test scores
- Pass their classes and get promoted
- Attend school on a more regular basis and
- Advance to post secondary educations (Wherry, 2003)

## **4.2. Presentation per data collection instrument**

As noted in chapter 3, the researcher confined herself to the use of the four instruments cited above, the semi-structured interviews, the structured questionnaire, observation and document analysis.

### **4.2.1. Structured Interviews**

In chapter three, it has been stated that questionnaires were given to both parents and educators to administer.



A structured questionnaire is one technique in which the questions asked are precisely decided in advance. When a structured questionnaire is used as an interviewing method, the questions are asked accurately as they are written, in the same sequence, using the same style, for all interviews (Dahlgren et al, 2004)

### **4.2.2. Interviews with Parents**

Although the parents' interviews were structured, consisting of ten questions, in most cases, the researcher asked follow-up free response questions. The first question sought to find out how long the responded had lived in the catchment area of the school. Of the twenty five parents interviewed, five said they had lived in the area for less than ten years, while twenty said that they had been there for

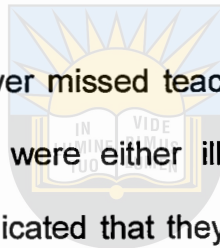
over twenty years. In some way, this did show that parents had known several people that had come and left Maganise Junior Secondary School, either as principals or educators. As such, it further revealed their knowledge and experience of various forms of school governance that have over the years, affected the school. This is both prior and after the institution of the democratic dispensation.

The second question focused on whether the parent had ever had any of his/her children attend Maganise Junior Secondary School, and if so, how many had. All the respondents said that their children had over the years attended Maganise Junior Secondary School. Fourteen of them indicated that their children were still at the school, whilst eleven indicated that theirs had passed through Maganise to other schools for further schooling. This finding, in a way further showed the parents' familiarity with Maganise Junior Secondary School, both in terms of governance and the curriculum.

Asked in which of the four school activities each of the parent respondents had actively participated in, namely sports organization, school building improvement, teacher/parents meetings, and school prize giving events. Ten respondents said that they had been active in school sports organization; three indicated they were in the school buildings sub-committee of the School Governing Body, and that as such, they took a keen interest in those issues relating to school building renovation, including school buildings extensions.

When the researcher probed why they took a keen interest in school governing issues, one of the three parents said:

*“it is a very interesting activity for the parent to be involved and demonstrate full participation in the school...this will contribute to the improvement of the morals of the learners in the school as a learner would realize that my parent is interested in my education and is willing to contribute to it”*

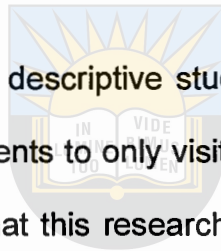


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Nine parents indicated that they never missed teacher/parent meetings except when these took place when they were either ill or away on some family business; only three respondents indicated that they did not take part in any of these activities. What seemed to come through was that, on the whole, there was keen interest in the affairs of the school among parents. The parents reported that ill-health was a major barrier to their participation in school governance. According to these parents, this was unfortunate as they feel it robbed them of an opportunity to be fully involved in the decision making of the school to which their children were attending. As such they felt that had they not suffer from ill-health, they would have immensely contributed to the development of the school.

As regards the number of visits to the school by parents was concerned, thirteen of the parents said that they visited the school once a week; five said they did so once in every month; four said that twice a year; while three said that they did so

once every year; specifically to attend the end year school prize giving ceremony. A close examination of the responses showed that the frequency of visits to the school was closely related to participation in school activities. There was a higher number (thirteen) of those that visited the school once a week as there was that of those (ten) who were active participants in the school's sports organization. The number (three) of those that only visited the school once a year, compared favourably with that of the three who never participated in any school activities noted above.



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As this study was designed to be a descriptive study, it does not have data to explain what causes these three parents to only visit the school once a year and specifically on prize giving days. What this research found is that these parents had no interest in other matters of the school. As they have reported above that they only visit the school once a year, and specifically for the prize giving ceremony, this analysis reveal that these parent availed themselves not necessarily to attend the ceremony, rather it was because, in the likelihood, during the prize giving ceremony, there was a chance that school reports for learners could be given to parents. Therefore these events presented to them an opportunity to receive their children's reports first hand, and thus be able to engage with the educators if they were having any concerns or queries regarding what they observe in the learners reports.

On who they frequently visited at the school, all the respondents except three indicated that whenever they paid a visit to the school, it was to see their children's classroom teachers. That they only saw the school principal only when their child's classroom teacher referred them to her. This response helped the researcher to realize that these parents were actively involved and interested in the welfare and governance of Maganise Junior Secondary School, and that were conversant with protocol observance. Whatever issues they felt they had about their children concerning their being in the school, they knew that the starting point was the child's classroom teacher. As such, they did not create conflicts or misunderstanding between the child's classroom teacher and the school principal. The researcher, therefore, noted that an easy flow of information existed between the school and parents. According to the parents, this created a relationship that was a foundation for a better communication between them and educators. The parents stated that because they constantly met with the same person for the whole year, it was expected that a form of rapport will be created. As such they felt that they could discuss issues with educators that were not necessarily school related but had a potential to indirectly affect the progress of the learners at school. Some parents went further and gave an example; they stated that because of the existence of a close relationship with educators, they were able to promptly deal with learner delinquency when it occurs.

In addition to this, the researcher learnt that because of the continuous engagement between parents and educators, these two school stakeholders

learnt how best to communicate with each other. The researcher also learnt that the educators knew the parents individually and also understood different means of communicating with individual parents. This form of relationship enhanced the mechanisms of dealing with delinquent behavior of learners and other pressing issues at school.

On the question of whether or not they, as parents, took a keen interest in helping their children with their homework, fifteen said that they did, six indicated that they did not because they always got home late from work, and four said that although they could do so, they felt that it was the business of educators to monitor the work of their learners. When asked the question why each cluster of the respondents did what they said they did, the fifteen who said that they assisted their children with homework, observed that they, as parents, needed to complement the work done in the classroom by their children with the teacher. They maintained that it was important for their children's success. The six that indicated that they did not do so because they always got home late concurred. The four who disputed parental involvement in children's homework effort, remained unconvinced that parents had a role in their children's homework. One of the four parents gave the following narrative:

*"...I do not understand why I am expected to do a job which is supposed to be done by the educators...children often come home asking me to help them with their homework. Doing homework with my children instead of resting after a long*

*and busy day...this is killing me...I send my children to school to be taught by educators who were trained for that”.*

This observation by this parent shows that she recognized that there is an expectation that she should assist her children with homework, but she did not feel adequate to do this because of strenuous days she often have. As such she felt that this is one responsible she cannot be able to meet or provide. Further, she felt it was not correct that she should do the job that should be done by educators. On the other hand, the issue here could be that parents have no time to perform this function and not necessarily that they do not want to.



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For the researcher what seemed to be the picture was that most of the parents were very interested in their children's school performance and progress. That given time and space they were willing to assist educators, in whatever way, to help educate their children. Hence, they strongly felt that it was a good thing for parents to help their children with homework.

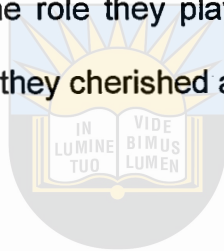
The following narratives from two parents are illustrative:

*“I contribute a lot in their school life, because they come with their homework, and I'm compelled to help them... I am always interested to be present in meetings which involve their education”.*

Another parent had this to say:

*“It is a very interesting activity for the parent to be involved in the school life of his/her children because the motive behind is to boost the morals of the children so that children should consider education as their responsibility and a key to success”.*

To the researcher, this illustrated that when parents are available, they are enthusiastic about the meaning of the role they play in the school life of their children, and this was a responsibility they cherished and embraced.



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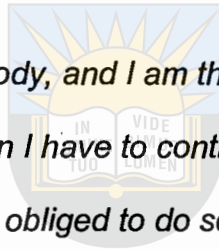
Only five of the respondents interviewed indicated that they were or had been, in the past, members of the School Governing Body. All the five said that they attended school governing body (SGB) meetings all the time. Although these parents served as members of the school governing body at different times, they reported that they all served during the tenure of the current school principal. As such, their experiences in the SGB component were through their engagement with the current principal and the majority of educators that are still present at Maganise Junior Secondary School. Through the responses given in the questionnaire, the researcher found all the five parent SGB members were sufficiently informed of their SGB responsibilities. On being asked whether they had played a role in policy formulation and implementation, all five indicated that

they made contributions in policy formulation and implementation. Three respondents gave the following narratives regarding their contribution in policy formulation and implementation.

One parent said: *"I have had a contribution in the governance of the school, especially on the policy making at the school, this I have been able to do because, I have been a member of the School Governing Body of Maganise Junior Secondary School.*

Another parent said:

*"I am part of the school governing body, and I am the deputy chairperson of the committee... as a deputy chairperson I have to contribute and vote for the adoption of the school policy... I am obliged to do so because of the position I am holding in the SGB component".*



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On further questioning, they, however, tended to suggest that their participation in policy formulation was minimal. The parents who served in the SGB reported that the principal and educators did not often consult them on some issues. This did not go down well with the parents as they felt this was done on purpose to alienate them. They, nonetheless, indicated high levels of participation in policy implementation as regards to school safety and security, including monitoring out of school learners in school uniform who, from time to time, got mixed up with street kids and such like misfits. On the basis of information provided, the five SGB parent members, the researcher appreciated that there was a significant

level of parental involvement and participation in the governance of Maganise Junior Secondary School.

The researcher ended her interview with the question whether it was important that the school sends parents regular written reports about school activities. Responses to this question varied. Eighteen of the parents answered “yes”, while seven said that was not necessary. Those who answered “yes” argued that regular reports about the school helped to keep parents in the school’s catchment area well informed about the developments at the school. The eight parents stated that, since, in a way, parents were the school’s ambassadors, it was important that they be kept in the picture about the school’s failures and successes. The seven that said they did not see the necessity of regular written reports simply argued that the role of parents in school decision-making was negligible. That whether or not they were informed of the school’s failures and successes, there was little or nothing they could do about it. Nevertheless, to the researcher, an indication of a considerable level of parental interest in the affairs of the school; its failures and successes was highlighted.

#### **4.2.3. Structured questionnaire for Educators.**

As indicated in chapter 3, structured questionnaires were administered to the educators, on the basis of their level of literacy and to allow sufficient scope for the “why” Question. The questionnaire consisted of five (5) questions only. They

were distributed on Monday, with the request that they be collected on Friday, that week. Thus, allowing a day for each question. The return was one hundred (100%) percent.

Asked whether they considered the level of parental involvement and participation in school governance to be adequate. Six educators' response was that parental involvement and participation was adequate they gave, as the reason for their response, the usual high turn up at school events such as sports tournaments, general parents/teacher's meetings, and school prize givings. Two of the six respondents went as far as stressing the low level of absenteeism among parent members of the SGB. Four of the educators saw the level of parental involvement and participation as inadequate.

One of these four educators stated:

*I have never seen other parents; I don't know whether they are scared of educators or what. Parents would come to school meetings but not in good numbers".*

The four educators argued that participation, in the form of coming to watch sporting events was, in their opinions, not contributing to school governance. They further argued that even their presence as parent members of the SGB did not amount to anything, because their contributions to policy making was minimal. What these educators seemed to lose sight of was that school

governance and control goes beyond participation in policy issues in SGB meetings. Sporting activities contribute greatly to the smooth running of the school.

Responses relating to the question on specific areas of parental involvement and participation, all the educators related the activities in this order: sporting activities, school prize giving, teacher/parents meetings, and school building improvement. Clearly, the love for sports among parents seemed to be something they grew up enjoying, and any opportunity to watch their children in action seemed to be an always welcome development. Meetings called to discuss school building improvement were, according to the educators' responses not always well attended apparently because it was always at these meetings that levying of funds for school improvement was done.

One teacher gave the following narrative when explaining the lack of parents attending school meetings:

*"...they [parents] don't show any interest towards school development...they don't bother to attend meetings called specifically to discuss problems at school, and this thing jeopardizes the school progress."*

The educators stated that because the responsibilities relating to the handling of various tasks, certain tasks were given to parents at these meetings. This was

the actual reason for the low level of involvement and participation. The educators believed that parents were not willing to take responsibility for their own school; rather they thought it was the responsibility of the principal, educators and to a certain extent parents, serving in the school governing body, to be involved in such issues. One educator serving in the school governing body had this to say about the low level of involvement and participation from the parents:

*“...The whole school community’ parents should be involved in the decision making of the school and not only the SGB members, this practice is abusive to those parents serving in the school governing body...because they are not representing themselves there but the whole community.”*

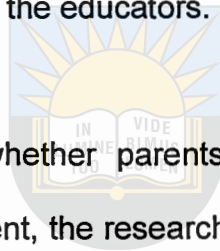
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On the question regarding parents assisting with learners’ homework, all the educators saw that as a good thing, and stressed that they found that helpful both to the educators and parents alike. They noted that through parents’ involvement in their children’s homework, they were able to keep track on their children’s progress. At the same time, the educators felt that this accorded the proper guidance and supplementary tuition. For them, the act of parents assisting with homework was good for the school and for the parents.

One female teacher talked about this [parent assisting with homework] illustrating how helpful this is to both educators and learners. She said:

*“...it is really something beautiful and encouraging when you as a teacher look into the learners’ homework book and see that the parent has signed that he or she has checked the homework book of the child. This ensures that the child is always on top of his or her work...with that assistance, the child can only do well in his or her studies. This really encourages us as educators”.*

The responses from the educators showed that educators saw a great value in parents’ involvement in the education of the learners. They clearly saw this not only benefiting the learners but also the educators.



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Before getting to the question whether parents should be involved in the curriculum planning and development, the researcher felt it is important to give a brief mention of the key components of the school curriculum. This will assist in understanding what curriculum planning and development would entail. The key components of the curriculum include “the style and pace of teaching and learning, what is taught, the manner the classroom is managed and organized, as well as materials and equipment which are utilized in the learning and teaching environment“(Mbengashe 2008; 31).

In the questionnaire, when educators were asked whether it would be a good idea to involve parents in school curriculum development issues, the educators totally dismissed the idea. They argued, among other things, that the parents’ level of education differed. That as group, it would be difficult to gauge what they

understood, and what they did not, as regards curricular issues. That even for the better educated, curriculum development was a specialized skill which did not necessarily become better understood by those not trained in the art. They felt it was better left to the experts.

The following narrative was extracted from an interview with one teacher who emphasized that curriculum development was one area that parents should not be involved in. In her narrative, one would note that the issues she raised as reasons for not involving parents were illiteracy of parents and technical nature of curriculum development. She posited:



*“...the issues related to curriculum development are very technical especially for parents who, after all lack the necessary education to handle such issues...curriculum development require people who have received formal training...”*

The most interesting and perhaps far reaching for the study was the question on what the educators saw as the level of parental involvement and participation in the school's policy making and implementation. For the principal and educators, policy making was a difficult proposition for parents. They noted that despite the provisions of the South African Schools Act (1996), parents appeared to be reluctant to be involved in policy-making issues. They pointed out that this was evidenced by their poor attendance whenever they were called to meetings, both for general meetings and for the election of a new School Governing Body. That

in most cases the few that usually come, do so hoping to be elected into the School Governing Body. That as a result, the serving School Governing Body ended up reelecting the same parents for successive terms. Admittedly, however good and capable someone might be, he/she eventually loses the interest or energy to do something. Hence, the educators advocated for a continued injection of fresh parent membership blood into the School Governing Body.

Unfortunately, this was difficult to attain at Maganise Junior Secondary School, generally, parents were uninterested in such issues, and this troubled the educators.



Three educators gave narratives showing their disappointment with parents in this school community regarding their lack of interest in involving themselves and participating in school matters.

One teacher said:

*"...learner's parents at Maganise J.S.S do not involve themselves in the governance of the school. They turn a blind eye to the school..."*

Another teacher had this to say about this matter:

*“...Parental involvement in school matters, especially their involvement in the school governing body is very important, but in our school they are not involved... for example whenever there is a parent's meeting, parents will never turn up, only very few would.*

A male teacher stated:

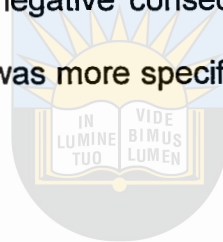
*“...parental involvement in curriculum planning and in decision making about matters concerning the school curriculum development will never be fruitful for this school”. He went on and explained that this was because: “...parents here do not want to involve themselves in educational matters; also they perceive educators as fearful people whose decisions cannot be opposed or challenged. Interestingly, this educator also came up with the possible reason for this, He stated: “...educators have a wrong perception of seeing parents as an illiterate entity whose opinions cannot be considered in formal education processes.*

Despite the fact that the educators were overwhelmingly not in support of parents to be involved in school curriculum planning and development, few (2) parents who were among those who said parents should not be involved in curricular issues, however warned of the negative consequences of this if it is not done in a proper and systematic manner. They warned that it could be that the present picture at the school regarding lack on parental involvement and participation is a

direct result of the act of disregarding parents' views in meeting situations by the principal and the school management. One teacher said:

*"...if the school management team continues to disregard the ideas of certain individuals in a meeting situation, the act itself discourages people from getting involved during discussions in school meetings, therefore the disappointed individuals could be reluctant to be involved in the decision making of any kind".*

Another teacher spoke about the negative consequences of not fully involving parents in school governance and was more specific on curriculum planning and development. She said:



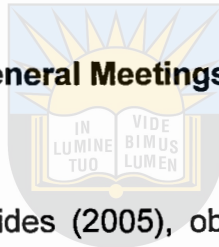
*"...sidelining parents in the curriculum planning, without having evidence to establish if parents could contribute or not, is wrong, ...and this could prove cumbersome for the future of the school".*

Further focusing on the SGB, the educators' responses noted that, on an average, parent SGB members often disrupted the structure and smooth functioning of the governing body by their midway withdrawals. They felt that it would be only fair for parent members to strive to serve their full terms in office to facilitate the smooth running and stability of the governing body. However all the educators admitted that such mid-term or early withdrawals were not always the fault of parents per se, but that of the prevailing economic conditions. Because of

high unemployment, parents were continually on the move in search of jobs. They further noted that the situation improved somewhat whenever a parent secured a job locally, particularly from roads construction companies and such related employment providing agencies.

All said and done, the educators cried for continuity and stability of the school governing body, as a crucial policy-making and implementation organ, not only for their school, but every school in the country.

#### **4.2.4. Observation of SGB and General Meetings.**



According to Jewkes and Christofides (2005), observation as an approach to collecting data is very useful when one wants to gather information about a specified social group, how it interrelates, what is important to them and how they go about in their daily lives. The process of observation is thought to permit a deeper understanding of cultural meanings and the social structure of the group being studied.

The researcher had the opportunity to observe both general and school governing body meetings. At both meetings, the focus was on the level of parental participation in the deliberations. What emerged at both meetings was the higher number of female attendance than that of male attendance. Because of the not so being rigidly structure of the general meeting, the researcher, as

regards both structuring and focus issues of governance, concentrated on the observation of the school governing body process.

What the researcher noted was that the school governing body female members' participation tended to be limited to simply endorsing decisions suggested by the few male members and the principal. While they rarely participated in the discussions of burning issues, these female members gave an impression of being apologetic in their interaction with, in particular, the educators and the principal. With her understanding of the study setting, the researcher observed this with interest and with an understanding that this was largely because of the culture of this setting. In the Ngobozi area, because of the patriarchal nature of the society, females are expected to submit to males with males taking decisions about important issues in the community. Thus, the researcher believes that the conduct of the female parents in the meeting situations could be a result of observing this unwritten rule.

In some instances, the researcher observed that the principal seemed to affect the trend of discussions. Because of her position, the principal was able to dictate the direction of the meeting and the level of engagement with certain issues. Those issues that she was not feeling comfortable with, she tended to influence that they be dropped and not discussed further. Parent members tended to be cut short in their statements as the discussion flowed. As a result, an input on policy issues seemed to be tabled only at the whims of the principal,

and by the principal, with very little debate or interaction on the matter. However, the SGB chairperson, being a parent, seemed to often attempt to seek to carry on with the debate, despite the principal's uncompromising attitude. Of a total of three (3) meetings held over a period of six months that the researcher attended, she observed that in all the meetings, the proceedings seemed to follow the same pattern. De facto, the principal always seemed to adopt the role of the SGB chairperson throughout the meeting. This was noted by some parents and it was apparent that they were not happy with this. The researcher noted that the principal was very strategic about this and would not provide parents a platform to voice out their grievances. This created a rift between parents and the principal. An element of mistrust developed. Parents were aggrieved and felt that there was no point in attending these meetings, as such, the researcher observed a decrease in the number of parents who attended the general meetings, and especially the SGB meetings.

Policy issues discussed at the general meetings were budget issues, finances, school safety and admissions. These included the status of the admissions of quota, the status of school fees in the following year, the building fund. the researcher noted that all these were proposed by the principal, with the SGB chairperson, educators and parent-members simply supporting the motion. No member disagreed with any of the proposals, nor refrained from supporting any principal initiated motion. What was apparent with how the parents were engaging with the principal was an element of fear. The researcher noted that

parents tended to agree with everything that the principal was saying. Through her observation, the researcher noted that this was because of fear of reprisal if they oppose the principal.

No reference was made to any existing policy in policy discussion in the planning for the following year. As such, there was no attempt to review school policies and no invitation for contributions from parents. In her observation of these meetings, the researcher came to the conclusion that SGB meetings tend to be mere presentations or report giving to the governing body by the principal.

One other issue that was noted as very important by the researcher was that of time for meetings. The issue of time proved to be a contentious issue between parents and educators. As noted above, very few parents were attending the meetings. However, the few parents who attended the meetings were stating that the reason for poor attendance was, among other things, the time the meetings were being held. The parents were blaming the principal and the school management team for calling and holding meetings at times convenient for them, but not for parents. They claimed that because meetings were mainly held during school hours, parents were unable to attend these meetings, even if they would have wanted to. Parents proposed that meetings be held after school when parents had returned from work or during weekends. The researcher noted that such suggestions were met with great resistance. The educators and principal were opposed to those suggestions claiming that they were staying far away

from the school and it was not possible for them to remain after work to attend the school meeting. For weekends, educators stated that they had other commitments to attend to; therefore they would not be available to attend to the meetings on weekends.

What was interesting for the researcher was how this was dealt with. The principal and the school management team were not interested in entertaining this issue. To them this was an issue that did not warrant further discussion. This left parents bitter and feeling that the principal had no regard for them, the researcher observed.



#### 4.2.5. Analysis of Documents

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Balingar Sanghera (Undated) (<http://uk.geocities.com>) posited that for interpretivists, documents (indeed, minutes, news, school documents and crime reports) are representatives of *practical* requirements and *constructed* for that purpose, that is as a source of information. According to Sanghera, in this contexts, documents are seen as 'accomplishments' that construct what happened, based on a form of practical reasoning that renders the social order accountable and comprehensive, and yet also open to negotiation and manipulation by interested parties (Balihar Sanghera) (<http://uk.geocities.com>)

Data was also collected through document analysis as pointed out in chapter three. The focus was, once again, mainly on the minute books of the School Governing Body meetings, and general parents meetings, as well as from the school policy documents. In securing these documents, the researcher had to follow a strict protocol as these documents are categorized as confidential documents as provided in the school policy.

Document analysis greatly helped to strengthen data secured through the other above mentioned sources.

### **I. Minute Books**



Data from the minute books boosted that collected through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and observation. The analysis of school minute books strengthened the observation that no meetings were ever set aside specifically for policy-making or policy implementation even though these were indicated in agendas of meetings. The researcher also learnt through the minute books that certain issues decided upon in the meetings were never pursued, especially those that were not necessarily of interest to the school management team (SMT) and the principal. For example, one important issue was that of the school reaching out more to the community they are serving. This was one of the issues raised by the parents and agreed upon by the educators. According to the parents this was going to create a better relationship between the outside

community and the school, but this was never taken up by the SMT. To the researcher, this highlight that the SMT was selective on which issues were important and to whom. The issues that were discussed in the meetings, agreed upon for implementation, it seems the SMT thought these issues were not important to them; they were ignored and never followed up on or implemented.

Some special and scheduled meetings simply discussed maintenance of buildings, school sporting activities, and transportation of learners and SGB members, burglaries and reimbursements. Although these were, in essence, policy issues, the researcher noted that discussions around these tended to be of a general nature, and not focused on some specific policy issues and resolutions that could, in some later date, be referred to. As the researcher noted during document analysis, when reviewing the school documents, she could not find any policies regarding how to deal with such issues as school community outreach programs. Lack of focus in policy issues during school meeting could be the reason why; the researcher could not find any references to policy when there were deliberations around these issues.

Cases of learner misconduct appeared in the minute books of the school, but these did not amount to resolutions, nor were they linked to specific school policy issues. It is generally known that every school should have a clear policy on how to deal with learner delinquency. The policy is there as a guideline for among other things, to define what an acceptable behaviour is for learners, i.e. how the

specific school expects the learners to conduct themselves, to guide how learners are punished when they have misbehaved and also is to protect both the educators and learners in case of litigation, should it arise. In essence this provides a resource of reference for everyone concerned. The researcher noted that such policy does not exist in Maganise Junior Secondary School. What is there is not clearly stated, not harmonized, appearing incoherent and clearly open to various interpretations and exploitation.

The attendance at each of the SGB meetings constituted a quorum and, as such, this validated whatever decisions were taken. When the researcher focused on who were taking decisions in SGB meetings, most of those were members of the school management team; very few parents would form part of the quorum. On school records, the parents were members of the SGB, but because of the issues discussed above (observation technique), very few parents were actually attending the SGB meetings. And because of the quorum, even in their presence they were viewed as voted for the majority and endorsing the decision taken by those present.

## **II. Examination of school policy files.**

The examination of policy files revealed that policies were available at the school, and were safely kept. The following policy documents were found in files.

### **a) The SGB Constitution**

As highlighted in chapter 3, this basic policy document guides the formulation of all other policies in the school, and therefore directs operations of the SGB (DOE, 1996). The SGB constitution in Maganise Junior Secondary was developed informed and guided, as well; by the South African Schools Act (1996). As such it provides that SGB members are equal partners at school. One of the prominent features of this policy is the power given to SGB members, especially the chairperson. This is to enable the chairperson to function at the same level as that of the principal of the school. However, as reported above, this study has found that at Maganise Junior Secondary School, there is a little consultation or reference to this constitution when handling such matters that needs reference to it.

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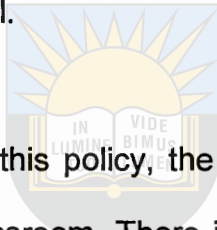
### **b) The admission Policy**

A policy that stipulates conditions of intake of learners into the schools was available even though in some cases, the documents were handwritten by the principal, endorsed with a school stamp, and signed only by the principal. As noted earlier, policies so handled had not gone through the SGB before their implementation. As such, they would not have been approved by the general parents' body, as the law required. Of equal concern was the incongruence between policy and how admissions were conducted at the school. It was clear

that the policies did not serve as a guide, but that they were just documents kept for compliance.

As a consequence of this, Maganise Junior Secondary School is often

confronted with a problem of intake of learners, where there will be many learners that are admitted at the beginning of the year, while there is no capacity within the school to be able to provide quality education to these learners. This stems from lack of clear guidance as in how many learners can be admitted at school and which procedures to follow before one can admit a learner to the school.



As such due to non-adherence to this policy, the school is always confronted with the problem of shortage of classroom. There is also shortage of educators and material to provide to the learners. This is a pattern that is observed each and every year at Maganise Junior Secondary School.

### **c) Finance Policy**

Policies guiding income and expenditure were available. But these were not crafted according to the financial guidelines as stipulated by the Department of Education (DoE, 1996). The school policy did not highlight whether the school had been or had not been declared a “no fee” charging school. Further, they failed to tabulate the process of implementation of fee exemption. These were supposed to be effected whenever the school fees were charged. As such, it was difficult to establish how funding to the school was to be handled.

This problem often results in delays in the provision of education at the beginning of the year. Further, during the course of the year learners are often disrupted in their studies by being sent home because they have not paid their tuition fees.

#### **d) Learner Code of Conduct**

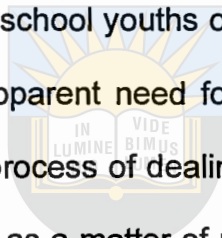
The code of conduct was not well crafted. It just listed the expected learner behaviour. As such, it failed to indicate the consequences of misconduct or of a transgression. Because of these poorly formulated policies, learners were sometimes suspended or even expelled, without following procedures required by law.

This has resulted in conflicts between parents and educators because there were instances (observed by the researcher) where similar cases of learner misconduct were treated differently by certain educators. This did not go well with learners and parents and thus, they accuse the educators of being bias and of treating learners differently. Further, this lack of a clear policy on learner code of conduct has presented difficulties for the school management team and the principal on how to intervene when cases of misconduct are presented to them.

#### **e) School Safety Policy**

There was no crafted safety policy on record. Worth noting though were safety control measures that were practiced. Nevertheless, the SGB ensured that safety measures were practiced. Due to the lack of a well written and clear policy on safety at the school, it is not clear how to act, for those concerned, when

confronted with a situation that is deemed to present a health risk for the learners. As an example, out of school youth normally visit and wander around the school during school hours carrying dangerous weapons and drugs. Because of this, there have been few cases observed over the years where such youth wanted to physically or had physically assaulted a learner inside the school premises. This is worrying. Recently in South Africa, through media, it has been reported that there is a lot of violence that happens in South African schools. We have witnessed crimes ranging from robbing, stabbing, raping and killing of learners by fellow learners or out of school youths or other learners coming from other schools. This highlights an apparent need for a clearly crafted policy on safety at school that will guide the process of dealing with risky situations at the school. This needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency in an effort to create safe school for the learners.



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#### **f) HIV and AIDS Policy**

The school had an HIV and AIDS policy formulated through the life skills programme. This included running awareness campaigns within the community. But these failed to indicate the implementation process within the school, because of poor coordination. The amount of work put on developing this policy, the researcher however noted that the content of this policy was not well articulated and developed. There was a clear indication that it was adopted elsewhere and not necessarily adapted for the context of Ngobozi area. Even the basic understanding of the subject was not adequately reflected among learners

who tended to make jokes about the programme. This was an indication that there was no consultation with the learners and school community on what this policy should entail when it was developed. As a result there was no sense of ownership of this policy from the learners and the outside school community. Thus whenever there was an HIV/AIDS event at the school, there was no support from the community members. The SGB role and endorsement of the policy, however, remained fuzzy.

On the whole, the researcher discovered that school policies did not have clear endorsement of the SGB chairperson, therefore, there was an indication that these policies did not go through the SGB full meeting. This leaves one with a conclusion these policies were developed piecemeal, simply as a matter of compliance with requirements. As such, they lacked authenticity, and did not qualify to be referred to as departmental documents.

#### **4.3. Summary**

Chapter 4 presented the data and outlined its analysis. It further presented how the data was collected, that is through interviews with educators (and principal), and parents using a structured questionnaire and open-ended questions. The information gathered from the questionnaires was buttressed by that gathered through observations and through document analysis. It was through these data sources that the researcher was able to assess and describe the situation at Maganise Junior Secondary school as far as parental involvement and

participation is concerned. The concluding chapter provides a summary of the study, an outline of findings, conclusion and recommendations.



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## **Chapter 5: Summary, Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations.**

### **5.1. Summary**

This was a descriptive study that used scientific methods to assess parental involvement and participation at Maganise Junior Secondary School. This study employed various qualitative techniques for collecting data, also a structured questionnaire which is a quantitative technique was also used to collect the demographic data of the participants. The study also followed an approach in data analysis that is used to analyze qualitative data and quantitative data. Participants in this study were parents (25), educators (10). This study used four instruments to gather data; there was a structured questionnaire with nested open-ended questions (for educators (appendix 1 and parents appendix 2). There was also document analysis where school documents were studied and analysed, also the researcher used observation technique. This process of triangulation in data collection was used to ensure that this study gather rich and reliable data. The participants were interviewed in private places and confidentiality was maintained throughout research. Data in this study were anonymously processed into this research report.

In summary, this study report that, to some extent, parental involvement and participation do exist at Maganise Junior Secondary School. However this study also learned that parental involvement and participation at Maganise is facing a lot of factors that militates against it. As a result, parental involvement and

participation at Maganise Junior Secondary School does not seem to yield the benefits that were reported in other studies. The following section presents the findings.

## **5.2. Findings**

This section presents what seems to emerge from the study, guided by the responses of the population under study, buttressed by document analysis and the researcher's observations.

Most of these findings have been presented briefly in Chapter 4. This final chapter turns to addressing significant issues which have not yet been given explicit attention. As this chapter presents findings, it also highlights the implications of the findings for South African education system regarding parental involvement and participation in school governance. It then turns to provide conclusion for this study and give a broader discussion of study limitations, it further identifies and puts recommendations for future research and lastly presents conclusion for the study.

As indicated in the beginning of chapter 5 and in the previous chapter (4), this study interviewed twenty 25 parents and ten (10) educators and principal; the focus was on parental involvement and participation in the governance of Maganise Junior Secondary School. All the parents' respondents in this study indicated that over the years their children have been learners at the school.

From the data presented in chapter 4, in the in-depth qualitative interviews conducted with parents it was learnt that poor socio-economic status of people in Ngobozi area proved to be a factor and strongly affected whether parents were able to fully involve themselves in the governance of the school. Parents blamed their lack of participation in school governance and education of their children on lack of time due to job seeking activities. Further on illiteracy as an indicator of low socio-economic status is rife in this community.

From the questions about parents' backgrounds (age, literacy levels and income) that were asked in the questionnaire, this study has found that in the Ngobozi Area, people are living in extreme poverty. One thing that stands out is high levels of illiteracy. Participants in the study, those who were parents in the sample reported high levels of illiteracy and poverty and they linked that to ill health, and loss of jobs due to ill health. This study has found an association between ill health and lack of parental involvement and participation in school matters. This study found that parents were unlikely to fully involve themselves in the education of their children and amongst other things (see Collins, Cooper and Whitmore, 1995), the primary reason they gave for this was ill health. This was either the participant was ill herself or was busy caring for others who were ill within the family or the community. Indeed, parents had to make a choice between attending school meetings and caring for sick family member, the latter always prevailed.

Even with the challenges parents face, they make an effort to involve themselves and participate in the governance of the school. Well over half (22) of the parents interviewed indicated that they had participated in one school activity or the other, only three reported that they had never participated in any. This finding highlights that there was a keen interest from parents to form part and fully participate in the affairs of the school. A number of studies have shown a strong association between parental involvement and participation, school development and growth (Wherry, 2003, Levin and Belfield, 2003, Henderson and Mapp, 2002). This research also reports that some parents were, in some way or the other, not keen to involve themselves in the governance of the school. A similar finding has been presented elsewhere. A study by Nicolau and Ramos in 1990 found that, due to certain reasons, parents may be reluctant to become involved in either their children's education or in school activities. As stated above, in the current study, the reasons that were given by the three parents who reported that they never participated in any school activity, gave varied. But largely they reported illiteracy, lack of time and ill health as primary reasons for this. A similar finding has been reported by Collins, Cooper and Whitmore (1995) who reported that parents were unlikely to fully involve themselves in the education of their children and amongst other things the reason they would give was ill health. This study agrees with this finding. However, this research study has also presented data (chapter 4) that suggest that when parents are available, and not suffering from ill health or other commitments, parents display willingness to participate in school activities and actually do participate in school activities. This willingness

was shown by parents by the information they gave in the interviews. For example, parents were asked to estimate how frequent they visit the school. Although parents reported wide frequencies, many (13) reported that they visit the school weekly and the others (5) said they visit the school monthly and the other four (4) said twice a year and the remaining three (3) said they only visit the school once a year. It is important to report that this research found that the three parents who reported visiting the school less frequently were having very few years of schooling. This finding expands the argument that illiteracy can militate against parental involvement and participation in school matters. As stated by Henderson (2006), parents who have few years of schooling or none tend to feel inferior and thought that they have no role to play in school governance and that they find it hard to exercise their right and become full partners in the education of their children. Further, this finding is consistent with the results presented by Mothatha and Mda (2000). In their study Mothatha and Mda (2000) presented findings that parents who had few years of schooling and were in their years of schooling exposed to Bantu education tended not to think they had no role to play in school governance. This study agrees with the above finding, similar information was gathered and thus this research argues that the educational background of parents could factor in their willingness, or lack of enthusiasm to participate in school governance.

The other finding was that, classroom educators were found to be quite an important tool for promoting parental involvement and participation in the school.

From the data presented in chapter 4, parents who frequently visited the school reported that their first contact at school was classroom educators. The parents reported that whenever they go to the school they first meet with the classroom teacher and it is after that, that they will be referred to the principal only if there is a need for that. With this finding, this study has learned that if classroom educators could be made aware that they are a vital organ and that they occupy a very strategic position within the school as far as parental involvement and participation in school activities is concerned, they could utilize this opportunity much better and to the benefit of the school and learners.



In the previous chapter, this study presented data that showed that parents and educators believe that a more close relationship between parents and the school yield positive results for the learners and the school. Levin and Belfield (2003) reported similar findings arguing that this is critically important for the learners as they benefit from such a relationship. Further, Henderson and Mapp (2002) argued that, to date, there has been no research that has shown that parental involvement and participation in the school has negative effect on the education of the learners. Furthermore Epstein (1991) as cited in the U.S. Department of Education, National Centre for Education Statistics (1998) posited that researchers on school-family partnership have concluded that schools which encourage family members to be involved in the school matters leads to motivated learners.

Another finding that this study presents came from a question which asked whether the parents were keen on helping their children with homework. Notwithstanding the four (4) parents who indicated that they were not keen on helping their children with home work, this study found that the majority of parents represented by twenty one (21) parents were keen to do this, and further, they saw this exercise as critically important for the education of their children. Other studies that researched effects of parental involvement and participation have consistently reported that if parents are more involved in the education of their children and are monitoring their children's school work, such children were more likely to perform well at school and progress in their grades (Henderson and Mapp, 2002; Wherry, 2003).



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This study reports that the system of school governing bodies, provided for by South African Schools Act (1996), proved to be an effective tool in Maganise Junior Secondary School in ensuring that parents are involved in the governance of the school. This research found that five parents who were respondents in this research have at one stage been members of the School Governing Body at Maganise Junior Secondary school. The five parents reported that they made fundamental contribution to the school in general. As much as they raised issues with their involvement in the policy formulation, by and large, they felt that they have had an input in the formulation and implementation of the school policy that is currently in use to govern the school. According to these parents, it was

critically important as they feel that they have had a say in the type and quality of education that is consumed by their children.

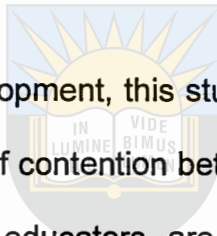
This finding is in agreement with the argument put by Levin and Belfield (2003). These scholars posited that parents are full partners in their children's education and therefore they should be included in decision-making in schools and as advisory committees to assist in the education of their children. Considering that the system of School Governing Bodies has been implemented in all the public schools in South Africa, this finding is critically important and stands as evidence that this system works. Furthermore this research emphasize that this finding has policy implications for the education system in South Africa.

This research also found that communication between parents and educators at Maganise Junior Secondary school was another critical area that deserves urgent attention. What this research found as pertinent was that the means of communication between the school and parents need to be interrogated to ensure that they are the right ones to use. This study found that there is poor communication between parents and educators at Maganise Junior Secondary School. Data in this study has shown that poor communication between the school and parents has devastating effects in the development of the school. In this study the results of poor communication led to loss of contact with parents, this in turn led to parents feeling ignored and neglected by the school. This was largely because of the technique used at Maganise Junior Secondary School to

communicate information to the parents. The school management was using written reports as a way of communicating with parents. As much as this way of communicating was appreciated by many (18) parents, seven parents viewed this as a way of alienating them as this exercise won't provide them grounds to discuss the contents on the reports with the school.

The finding of this study that educators at Maganise Junior Secondary school were enthusiastic about the adequate parental involvement and participation they were observing in their school is encouraging and is also consistent with the findings that were reported by other researchers (Skiba and Petersen, 2000; Beck and Earl, 2000; Zill and Nord, 1994) who stated that a close collaboration between school and parents always yield positive effects to the school (Epstein, 1999) and should be encouraged. However, this study reports that its data did show that there were some parents who saw no benefit for them or their children if they get involved in school governance. This finding agrees with that of Nicolau and Ramos. Nicolau and Ramos (1990) argued that some parents may not perceive any benefit from parental involvement and participation and may see it as insignificant for their children's education. The present study therefore argues that this finding is a salient reminder that not all parents may view parental involvement as neither essential nor significant for them or their children, and thus, this study argues that this should be interpreted as highlighting a presence of a problem in Maganise Junior Secondary School.

This study has found that, in one way or the other, parents are not happy with the way things are done at Maganise Junior Secondary School, particularly how the principal and the school management team treat them. With this problem noted, it is essential that the root cause of the problem be identified and attended to as a matter of urgency and be corrected. This study strongly suggest that if parents are fully incorporated into the school governing body and encouraged to function fully , Maganise Junior Secondary School will develop at an accelerated speed than it is now and that learners will benefit hugely from it.



On the question of curriculum development, this study has found that curriculum development seems to be an area of contention between parents and educators. Data in this study revealed that educators are totally against the idea of incorporating parents to participate in the curriculum development for the school. This was despite the interest shown by some parents to form part of these processes. Consequently, this often resulted in conflict in the school, between parents and educators. Noteworthy, the source of this problem was that parents and educators were using a different definition of parental involvement and participation. For educators, their definition was limited and excludes certain aspects that they believe are too technical for the parents to be involved in. However this study found that parents were using a broader definition of parental involvement that encompasses involvement in every aspect of the school. Some parents, those who had many years of schooling, reported that they were aware that it was their right as parents to be fully involved in the education of their

children and thus were not prepared to be deprived of this. The right for parents to be fully involved in the education of their children is provided for in the South African School's Act of 1996.

Another interesting finding is that there were various factors that were found to be militating against parental involvement and participation in Maganise Junior Secondary School. These included poor communication and mistrust between parents and the school management team and principal, illiteracy and poor socio-economic status of parents, autocratic style of management and gender discrimination. As some of these issues were briefly discussed above, a more focused discussion is presented below showing how these factors militate against parental involvement and participation at Maganise Junior Secondary School.



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### **5.2.1 Poor communication and mistrust between the parents and SMT and principal**

This study has found that poor communication between parents, SMT and principal is one of the strong barriers for parental involvement and participation in the governance of Maganise junior secondary school. The analysis of the data revealed that this finding is ingrained in the misunderstanding and mistrust that currently characterizes the relationship between parents and the school management team, including the principal at Maganise Junior Secondary. This

research has found that parents at Maganise Junior Secondary School do not trust that the school management team, principal and educators have the best interest of the learners at heart. What is interesting is that educators, on the other hand, were of the view that parents were disinterested in the education of their children. Educators at Maganise Junior Secondary School believed that parents only come to school for issues that directly benefit them and not for the betterment of the school. This shows that educators at Maganise Junior Secondary School perceive parents of learners as selfish and not having the best interest of the school at heart. Literature on parental involvement and participation in school have consistently shown that in most cases, in schools, educators would have their own misapprehension; they may feel that their position is being threatened by the presence of parents at school and if parents question their decisions, they may believe that parents are trying to undermine their authority (see Mapp 1997; Lazar and Slostad 1999; Tinkler 2002; Keane 2007). An analysis of the data in this study revealed that the mistrust resulted from the poor communication between the educators and parents at Maganise Junior Secondary School.

### **5.2.2 Illiteracy**

Another strong barrier for parental involvement and participation was illiteracy of parents at Ngobozi community. Parents of learners at Maganise Junior Secondary School felt that because they had none or few years of schooling they

would not be able to assist their children with home works or partake in other matters at school as this needed advanced formal education. Although these parents were few (3), they could be representing a substantial number of parents in the community who feel this way. Similar findings have also been reported by other researchers elsewhere (Nicolau and Ramos, 1990; Collins, Cooper and Whitmore, 1995). These researchers have reported and argued that parents due to lack of formal education, they tend to suffer from inferiority complex and think that they cannot be able to assist in the academic sphere of the school or in their children's education.



This study found this to be true for Maganise Junior Secondary School. This is worrying. According to a recent report by the United Nations Population fund (2008), there is, very high illiteracy rate in South Africa in people over the age of fifteen (>15). With 16% of males and 19% of females over age 15 being illiterate, this has implication for the education in this country and in order to correct this, political will is essential. Urgent response to this problem is important considering that research has shown that learners of parents who are educated tend to benefit from their parents education as their parents are more likely to be involved in their children's education and assist them with school work.

Further, when describing the context of Maganise Junior Secondary School in chapter 3, this study showed that there is high illiteracy rate especially among the elderly women. This study therefore argues that this problem goes beyond

Maganise Junior Secondary School and calls for the attention of the South African government.

### **5.2.3 Autocratic style of management**

This research has found that the school management team at Maganise Junior Secondary School led by the principal was rather using an autocratic style of management. This is a style of management where power is centralized and is largely characterized by dictatorship. Further, this style of leadership is, in most cases, very stressful on other stakeholders and creates a difficult environment to work in.

This study found that the parents of learners and educators at Maganise Junior Secondary School felt that because the principal of the school was rather autocratic and not open to suggestions from other people, it was creating an environment where people were feeling intimidated by the school principal. The data provided (chapter 4) showed that parents of learners at Maganise Junior Secondary School did not appreciate this style of management and thus reported that this was a source of conflict between the school and parents. This research found that the principal, in particular, was none engaging with parents in issues that affect the school. She was centralizing the power only to herself.

This research has presented data that shows that the principal was providing little, if any, space for debate or deliberation in issues like policy of the school. This study notes that this is not correct as it contravenes the provisions of SASSA (1996). This act provides that parents should be welcomed as equal partners in the school. Implementation of this act signified the end of the system where power to govern the school was only rested in the hands of the school master or the principal. However, as stated above, at Maganise Junior Secondary school, power is still concentrated to the principal; this is despite the existence of a functioning school governing body. As the principal centralizes the power to govern the school, this result to the SGB component, especially the chairperson, being weakened and stripped off the power to effectively and efficiently perform the duties of the chairperson.

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#### **5.2.4 Gender Discrimination in SGB meetings**

Data in this study has also revealed that there were gender issues that need to be tackled in the SGB component of Maganise Junior Secondary School. In the previous chapter this study presented data showing that during meeting situations female SGB members were in most cases sidelined with their views being disregarded. It was then not surprising for this research to find that female SGB members tended to be apologetic in their interaction with both educators and the principal. This is not ideal as this is a form of gender discrimination and violation of women's human rights.

A modest body of literature has shown the effects of gender discrimination, especially against women. Its effects are gross and leave the women and society with huge scars. In black communities, women are mostly tasked with the caring roles; this includes caring for children and being responsible for their education. It therefore, stands to reason that the effects of sidelining women and disregarding their views will have negative effects for Maganise Junior Secondary School and especially learners of these female parents. This needs to be corrected as it will have huge and negative effects on the education of the learners.

### **5.3 Recommendations from the study**



This study recommends that, through workshops, educators should be educated about their roles in promoting and sustaining parental involvement and participation in Maganise Junior Secondary School. This should involve how to accept parents as equal partners at school.

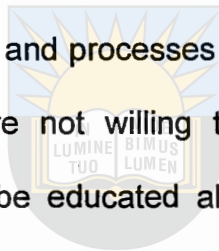
Educators should be provided with the necessary skills to psychologically deal with individual parents with an aim of building a better relationship with parents and to primarily aim for such relationships to benefit the learners.

Specific workshops, about school policies and school finance management are essential and should be conducted with educators, principals, and school governing body members discussing and addressing the issue of parental

involvement and participation in school, identifying a clear definition of this concept that would be acceptable to all stake holders of the schools.

In such schools where school governing bodies have been implemented and are believed to be in function, it is important that the Department of Education (DoE) put mechanisms in place to monitor and evaluate how these organs are working, identifying and dealing with problems that are found to disrupt the functioning of school governing bodies.

It is important that certain measures and processes be put in place to encourage parents who indicate that they are not willing to assist their children with homework. Such parents should be educated about the importance of their involvement in their children's education and be informed of the possible benefits of this.

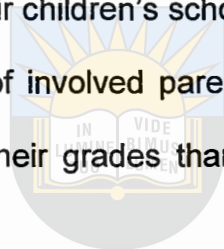


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A holistic approach should be employed to deal and address such factors like, illiteracy, poverty and ill health. These have been found to be militating against parental involvement and participation at Maganise Junior Secondary School. This responsibility however goes beyond the school and requires the attention of the government through local governments.

This study recommends that it would be good to have another study looking at parental involvement and participation using two or more schools with different contexts. Another interesting research would be to involve learners as respondents in the study. This will aid in getting their views on how they feel about their parents getting fully involved in school governance and their education.

More analytical studies need to be conducted in order to identify factors that lead to parents not to have interest in their children's school work. This is important as research has shown that children of involved parents tend to benefit from this and are more likely to do well in their grades than their counterparts of none involved parents.

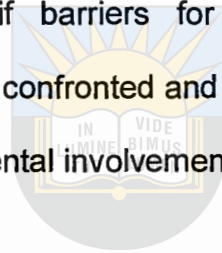


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#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This report has shown that parental involvement and participation is a phenomenon that exists at Maganise Junior Secondary School. This study has, however, shown that although the majority of the parents interviewed in this study demonstrated willingness to actively participate in school activities, there was a number of parents, albeit few (4), who showed no willingness at all. This is important for consideration; the latter parents are definitely representing other parents in the community. This is worrying because to date, there has been no research that has shown that parental involvement and participation in schools have a negative effect on the school and learners. Therefore one can argue that this has implications for the education of the learners who are children of these

parents, as it can be assumed that they are missing out on benefiting from effects of parental involvement and participation. This study concludes that it is crucial that strategies and necessary interventions be set up and implemented aiming to ensure that all parents perceive parental involvement and participation as an important aspect, both for the benefit of the school and that of their children. Specifically for the case of Maganise Junior Secondary School, the barriers (see above) that have been identified by this study need to be attended to. This study has presented findings that are consistent with those of other studies which emphasized that if barriers for parental involvement and participation in school are identified, confronted and tackled, the school stands to positively benefit from effects of parental involvement and participation.



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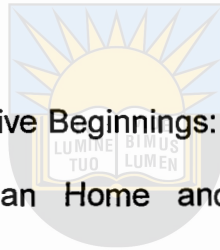
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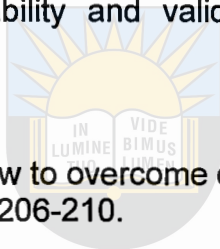
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## 7. APPENDICES



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## List of Appendices

- Appendix 1. : Structured Questionnaire for principal and Educators.
- Appendix 2. Interview Questions for parents
- Appendix 3. Participant Information leaflet and Informed Consent form.
- Appendix 4. Letter to the principal: Request for permission to conduct the research at Maganise Junior Secondary School.
- Appendix 5. Isicelo esiya kumhlali-ngaphambili lequmrhu elilawula isikolo (SGB)



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**Appendix 1: Structured Questionnaire for Principal and Educators.**

1. Do you consider the level of parental involvement and participation in school governance adequate?

Yes

No

Why.....  
.....



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2. In which areas do you find parental involvement and participation?

Sports organization

School building improvement

Teacher/parents meetings

School prize giving

3. Do you ask parents to assist with homework?

Yes

No

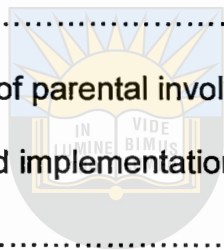
Why.....  
.....

4. Would you like to see parental involvement and participation in curriculum development?

Yes   
No

Why.....  
.....

5. What do you see as the level of parental involvement and participation in the school's policy making and implementation?



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

## Appendix 2: Interview Questions for Parents

NO.	BACKGROUND QUESTIONS	CODING CATEGORIES	SKIP
A	How old are you?	18-20.....1 21-24.....2 25-29.....3 30-34.....4 35-39.....5 40-44.....6 45 or older.....7	
B	What is your level of education	No schooling.....1 Primary school or less.....2 Some secondary school.....3 Matric.....4 Incomplete Bdegree or Diploma.....5 Complete Bdegree or Diploma.....6 Higher Degree more than 4 years.....7	
C	Which race group do you consider yourself?	Black.....1 Coloured.....2 Indian or Asian.....3 White.....4 Other.....5	
D	Please indicate your sex	Female.....1 Male.....2	

1. How long you lived in the catchment area of Maganise Junior Secondary School?

- 1-4 years
- 5-9 years
- 10-14 years
- 15-19 years
- 20 or above

2. How many of your children attended the school?

One

Two

Three

Four and Over

3. Over the years in which school activities have you been an active participant?



Sports organization

School buildings improvement

Teacher/parents meetings

School prize giving

None

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4. How many times do you visit the school?

Once a week

One a month

Once in 6 Months

Once a year

Never visit the school

5. Who do you see whenever you visit the school?

My child's classroom teacher

The sports

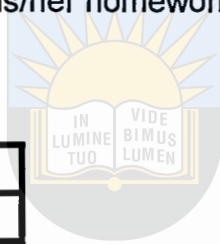
The librarian

The Principal

6. Do you assist your child with his/her homework?

Yes

No



Why.....  
.....  
.....

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7. Do you think it is good to assist your child with his or her homework?

Yes

Are No

Why.....  
.....  
.....

8. you a member of the School Governing Body?

Yes

No

Why.....  
.....  
.....

9. Do you attend SGB meetings?

Yes

No



Why.....  
.....  
.....

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*Check: those who said "Yes" in question 8 should answer question 10 other skip to question 11.*

10. As an SGB member, did you play a role in the policy formulation and implementation?

Yes

No

Please explain why you played a role or not

.....

.....

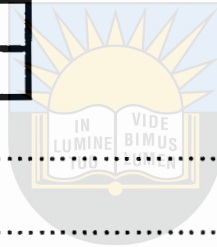
.....

.....

11. Should the school send parents regular written reports about school activities?

Yes

No



Why.....

.....

.....

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**APPENDIX 3: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND INFORMED  
CONSENT FORM.**

.....

**STUDY TITLE**

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AN ASSESMENT OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN  
THE GOVERNANCE OF MAGANISE J.S.S IN LIBODE MEGA DISTRICT. A  
CASE STUDY.



.....

**INTRODUCTION**

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.....

Hi, my name is Mrs. Mirriam Nobantu Sikweyiya. I am a teacher at Maganise Junior Secondary School and also a learner at University of Fort Hare. I'm in the Faculty of Education where I'm doing Masters degree in Education. As a partial fulfillment of the degree, I am required to conduct a research project. You are invited to volunteer for a research study. This information leaflet is to help you to decide if you like to participate. Before you agree to take to part in this study you should fully understand what is involved. If you have any questions which are not fully explained in this leaflet, please feel free to ask Mrs MN Sikweyiya.

.....

**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY**

.....

The purpose of the study is to assess parental involvement and participation in the governance of Maganise Junior Secondary School.

.....

**EXPLANATION OF PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED**

.....

This study involves an interview with the researcher, Mrs MN Sikweyiya. An interview will take up to an hour. There are two components of the study. There is a questionnaire and also an interview like a talk between you and the researcher about parental involvement and participation in the governance of Maganise JSS. I would be happy if you can do both, but if you want to do either the questionnaire only or the talk only, this is up to you.

.....

**RISK AND DISCOMFORT INVOLVED**

.....

There are no risks involved in this study. This study does not require you to talk about personal and sensitive things. However I will ask for information about yourself, that is, your age and income. Some people may not be comfortable talking about those things. But you are free not to answer any questions you are not comfortable with.

.....

**POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY**

.....

There are no direct benefits for you in this study, but the results may help in describing the situation in Maganise Junior Secondary School regarding parental involvement and participation, and also help identify which measures need to be implemented in order to ensure that parents get fully involved in the governance of the school.



.....

**HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?**

.....

The Faculty of Education ethics committee, University of Fort Hare has given written ethics approval for this study.

.....

**COMPENSATION**

.....

Your participation in this study is voluntary. There is not compensation that will be given to participants in this study.

.....

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

.....

The information that you give in this study will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be stored in a locked place in a secured room. No one will have access to it but the researcher. The questionnaire is anonymous and please do not write your name on the questionnaire. Because this questionnaire is anonymous, if you withdraw your consent to this study after you have given the questionnaire back, I will not be able to trace it and give it back to you. When transcribing the qualitative information, all the identifiers will be removed and I will use false names in the report. The information you give us will be anonymously processed into a research report.



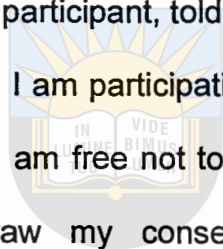
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.....

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY**

---

I have read or had read to me in a language I understand the above information before signing this consent form. The purpose of this study has been explained to me satisfactory, the researcher has explained the procedures involved in this study, informed me of my rights as a participant, told me about possible risks and benefits of participation in this study. I am participating willingly; I have had time to ask questions. I understand that I am free not to answer any questions I am not happy about, or can withdraw my consent any time without any consequences to me.



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I hereby consent to participate in this study.

Participant's name.....(Please print)

Participant's signature.....Date.....

Researcher's name.....(Please Print)

Researcher's signature.....Date.....

Witness's name.....(Please Print)

Witness's signature.....Date.....

## VERBAL CONSENT

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*(Applicable when participant cannot read or write)*

I, the undersigned, Mrs.....have read and have explained fully to the participant the information leaflet. The leaflet has indicated the type of the study, purpose of the study, risks and benefits of participating. I have also explained fully the participants' rights in the study, emphasizing that the participant has a right not to answer any question he or she feels uncomfortable with and that the participant can withdraw his or her consent on this study any time without giving any explanation and without any consequences to him. I have also explained to the participant that because the questionnaire is anonymous, if he or she withdraws his or her consent to this study after she or he have given the questionnaire back, I will not be able to trace it and give it back to him or her.

I hereby certify that the participant has voluntarily and willingly agreed to participate in this study.

Participant's name \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's name \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Witness's name and signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX 4: Letter to the Principal: Request for permission to conduct the research at Maganise Junior Secondary School.**

The Principal

Maganise Junior Secondary School

Po Box 453

Mthatha

5099



Dear Principal

University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

**Request for permission to conduct the research study**

I Mrs. MN Sikweyiya; I hereby request permission to conduct a research study at Maganise Junior Secondary School. I am a master's learner at University of Fort Hare in the faculty of Education. As a partial fulfillment of the degree, I am required to conduct a research project. The purpose of the study is to assess parental involvement and participation in the governance of Maganise Junior Secondary School. I hope the results of this research will benefit Maganise Junior Secondary School.

The execution of this research study may under no circumstances disrupt the normal teaching programme of the learners. It will be ensured that educators are interviewed during break times or after school. Participation of the educators is entirely voluntary. I will explain fully the purpose of this study to the educators and explain to them that they do not have to participate in this study unless they understand its purpose and are willing to participate.

I thank you in advance for your support on this research.

Yours faithfully

Mrs MN Sikweyiya.



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**APPENDIX 5: Isicelo Esiya Kumhlali-ngaphambili wequmrhu elilawula Isikolo (SGB)**

27 Koyana Crescent

Mbuqe Park

Mthatha

5099



Kumhlali-ngaphambili

Ngobozi Administrative Area **University of Fort Hare**  
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P.O.BOX 453

Mthatha

Mhlekezi Obekekileyo

**Isicelo sokuqhuba uphando kubazali bale lali, kwa nabafundisi-ntsapho besikolo sase Maganise Junior Secondary School.**

Mna nkosikazi MN Sikweyiya, ongumfundisi-ntsapho eMaganise Junior Secondary School, ndikwangumfundi kwidyunivesithi yase Fort Hare apho ndenza imfundo enomsila, ndifunda banzi ngezemfundo (Masters in Education).

Njengoko imfuna-lwazi iyinto ephambili kule mihla siphila kuyo, ndicela imvume yokuqhuba uphando malunga nothatho-nxaxheba lwabazali abanabantwana abafunda eMaganise kwimingxilo ngemingxilo echaphazela bona kulawulo lwesikolo. Oluphando luyakuthi lubandakanye nabafundisi-ntsapho base Maganise, nabo ndikwababuza ngalemiba ikhankanywe ngasentla.

Ndiyakuvuyiswa yinkxaso yakho, nokundivumela kwakho ukuba ndiqhubeke nokwenza lo msebenzi obaluleke kangaka. Olu phando ndiyakuqinisekisa luya kuba lulutho kwimfundo yabantwana bakuNgobozi. Iingxelo zoluphando ziyakunikwa esikolweni nakwiqumrhu oliphetheyo kusakugqitywa oluphando

Enkosi

Ozithobileyo

M.N. Sikweyiya (Mrs)

.....