

Exploration of the Effectiveness of the School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in Secondary School in the Namakgale Circuit

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Abstract:- The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of School Governing Bodies in executing their duties in secondary schools in the Namakgale circuit of the Limpopo Province. The researchers used a qualitative research approach with an interpretive paradigm. The population of the study comprised of SGB members from 17 secondary schools in the Namakgale circuit. Purposive sampling was used to select twelve members of the School Governing Bodies. Data was collected through individual semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic approach. The study revealed that challenges experienced by SGBs such as poor training provided to SGB members, poor relationship between the SGB members and poor participation of parents in the education of their children. The study concluded that members of SGB must be equipped with knowledge to assist them to govern schools effectively. The study recommended that collaborative approach should be implemented as an attempt to bring innovative and creative strategies to improve the relationship between SGB stakeholders.

Keywords: Governance, Instructional leadership, Effectiveness, collaboration approach.

1. Introduction

The passing of the South African Schools Act (SASA) No. 84 of 1996 made provision for the establishment of democratic School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in public and private schools in the country (Quan-Baffour & ArkoAchemfuor, 2014:171). According to Sections 23 and 28 of the SASA No. 84 of 1996, SGB was a governance structure elected in public, private or independent schools in order to govern a school in accordance with the policy of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) (RSA, 1996). The researchers had identified numerous school governance challenges experienced by schools in Limpopo province. Lack of adequate learning resources, infrastructures and facilities are primary problems that crippled the education system (Konte, 2021:1539). The lack of experience and knowledge to manage finances results in an increase in the workload to many school principals who already struggle to manage and perform their duties (Basson & Mestry, 2019:1). Therefore, Letsapa (2021:2) argued that the research conducted by various authors showed that SGBs are unable to exercise the powers given to them as expected and that put the education of learner at a very high risk situations.

The purpose of this study was to look at the effectiveness of the SGBs in executing their duties and also to determine the relationship between the SGB stakeholders in public schools in the Namakgale circuit of the Mopani district, Limpopo Province. The SGB collaborative approach was suggested as an approach that could bring innovative and creative strategies which are in line with the governance and professional public management of public schools as advocated in Section 16(1-3) of the Schools Act. Therefore, this study will contribute to research on duties and factors that may influence the effectiveness of SGBs in schools. The researcher believed that the findings of this study would motivate all the main stakeholders of school governance in Namakgale circuit and intensify their good relationship as members of the SGBs.

1.1 Research Question

The main question of the study was:

How effective are SGBs in executing their duties in public secondary schools in the Namakgale circuit of the Mopani District, Limpopo Province?

1.2 Sub-research Questions

- What aspects may influence the effectiveness of SGB members in public schools?
- How are the relationships between the SGBs, SMTs, teachers and other stakeholders?
- What strategies can be implemented to assist SGBs to function optimally?

1.3 The aim of the study

The aim of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the SGBs in executing their duties and to identify the aspects that may influence the effectiveness of SGB members in public schools in the Namakgale circuit of the Mopani district, Limpopo Province.

1.4 Objectives of the study

- To explore the aspects that may influence the effectiveness of SGB members in public schools.
- To determine the relationships between SGBs, SMTs, teachers and other stakeholders.
- To provide strategies and recommendations that can assist SGBs to function optimally.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the attribution theory which was defined succinctly by Beck (2004:331) as follows: ‘Attribution theory is concerned with (1) how and why people search for the causes of their own behaviour or that of other people, (2) the kinds of causes that are found, and (3) the effects of such attributions on emotion, motivation, and subsequent behaviors.

The term “*attribution*” refers to the processes whereby individuals make sense of the cause of behaviour and events (Kassin, Fein & Markus, 2008:11). According to (Ismagilova, Dwivedi & Slade, 2020:7), Attribution theory is a term in social psychology by which people interpret events and that affects their thinking and behaviour. Therefore, Attribution theory refers to how people make sense of what is happening around them and how this corresponds with their actions and thinking.

The theory of a study was chosen because of its relevance in addressing issues of people participation and representation in the governance of schools. Their focus was on school operation of SGBs and also motivation to SGB members in their activities as school governors.

In this study, the SGB members’ performance outcomes was based on factors, which form the conditions for their success or failure. Heider (1958:83) identify these factors as native ability, effort, task difficulty and luck. Bernard Weiner tries to locate these factors on three continuums of causality: locus (internal/external), controllability (low to high volitional control), and stability (low to high) (Mackay et. al., 2020:16-17). Locus refers to the perceived origin of the cause for the outcome. Controllability concerns the degree of volitional control ascribed to the cause. The last dimension, stability, refers to the perceived persistence of the cause. Heider (1958:83) furthermore distinguishes between two types of attribution, namely the internal (interpersonal/dispositional) attribution and external (explanatory/situational) attribution. Internal attribution relates to the fact that a person is self-diagnostic, behaving to their own internal characteristics and dispositions (Toure-Tillery & Fishbach, 2018:7). For example, if the school performs poorly, SGB members should question their effectiveness of governing the school. External attribution refers to the fact that people see factors facing them (external factors to them) as the cause (Dolnicar, Knezevic & Grun, 2019:242) and as a result, SGB members may identify and blame external aspects and influences as the cause for their ineffectiveness.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research approach

A research approach refers to the plans and the procedures for research that encompass the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:3). The research approach is therefore based on the nature of the research problem being addressed. Therefore, the study is based on qualitative research approach because of its exploratory nature. The reason for using qualitative is that the study took place in the real world of the teachers, principals, non-teaching staff, learners and members of SGBs.

2.2 Research design

The research design refers to the plan or framework for a study, which is used as a guide in gathering and analyzing the data (Pandey & Pandey, 2021:18). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014:6), a research design refers to a plan and procedure for data collection and analysis. McMillan and Schumacher (2014) assert that a phenomenological design is used in a qualitative study to allow for the description and interpretation of participants' experiences in line with a specific event. The study used a qualitative phenomenological design to unfold themes which form theories. This study describes and explores the situation in which members of the SGBs find themselves in. It also provides information about the duties and activities of SGBs in public schools, the challenges experienced and progress made thereafter.

2.3 Research paradigm

A paradigm is a set of presuppositions and perceptual orientations about the nature of reality (Timmermans & Blok, 2021:4638). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2015:157), a paradigm is a set of beliefs that give direction to an action and refers to the ethics, epistemology, methodology, and ontology of a study. The research study followed the interpretive paradigm, since it comprises of the people (SGBs) and their subjective experiences as members of the school governing bodies. The interpretive paradigm is also called the phenomenological approach. The interpretive paradigm was used to explore and understand a central phenomenon. The study explored the relationship between the SGBs, SMT and the teachers as stakeholders at school level in an attempt to find collaborations towards effective school governance.

2.4 Sampling procedure and size

According to Kumar (2011:193), Sampling is the process of selecting a few (a sample) from a bigger group (the sampling population) to become the basis for estimating or predicting the prevalence of an unknown piece of information, situation or outcome regarding the bigger group. This study used purposive non-probability sampling to sample twelve participants from the selected secondary schools in the circuit. De Vos, Strydom and Fouche (2011:392), attested that in purposive sampling, the participants are selected based on the knowledge in the field of investigation. In this study, the participants were chosen on the basis of their availability as members of the SGB and also their experience of serving in the SGBs.

2.5 Data collection instrument and analysis:

Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on targeted variables in an established system that enables one to answer relevant questions and evaluate outcomes (Chumba, Muturi & Olnoch, 2019:45). Data collection instrument in the study was questerviews, and was administered to parents and teachers who served in the SGBs. According to Kumar (2011), questerviews developed trust and are perceived as less threatening to the participants. Questerview questions created an opportunity for the participants to respond on the questions by writing down the correct answers. The participants were given three to four days to answer those questions.

2.6 Data analysis

Babbie and Mouton (2014:490) describe data analysis as a procedure of inspecting and explaining collected information for the purpose of extracting meaning, comprehend and establish empirical knowledge. The

researcher used Thematic Data Analysis for the analysis of the gathered information. The researcher visited the responses uttered by the participants several times in order to find the meaning of the words uttered, then themes and sub-themes were formed.

2.7 Ethical consideration

Ethical considerations are ethical concerns that researchers must take into consideration to protect the participants during the research process (De Vos et al. 2011). The ethical considerations honoured in the study were informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, plagiarism and voluntary participation. Permission to conduct the interview was sought from the Department of basic Education and schools.

3. Data Presentation and Interpretation

Questerviews was administered to collect data from teachers and parents serving in the SGBs and the results were guided by three main themes emerged from the research questions. Main themes and sub-themes:

THEME	SUB-THEME
1. The aspects that may influence the effectiveness of SGB members.	Instructional leadership and school governance
2. The relationships between the SGBs, SMTs, teachers and other stakeholders.	The relationship between teachers, parents in the SGBs. The support provided to teachers, parents in the SGBs
3. The strategies the department can implement to assist SGBs in schools.	Training of SGB members. Support to SGBs from the Department of education.

All the data was presented and interpreted with the focal point based on how the research question was answered.

3.1 The aspects that may influence the effectiveness of SGB members.

An effective school governance structure should have well-defined goals which include all stakeholders, teachers, parents and learners. In the context of the study, instructional leadership and school governance were selected as some of the aspects that might influence the effectiveness in the SGB members.

The participants in the study stated their viewed on their understanding about the type of leadership expected for effectiveness of the SGBs. Both teachers and parents stressed that a leader needs to be focused to the set goals with the aim of improving teaching and learning in schools.

Teacher 1 and **3** shared the same understanding by saying the following:

“Principal and SGB chairperson should concentrates on the set goals to improve teaching and learning by both teachers and learners at school. Learners need motivations to improve their learning”.

Parent 1 also gave his support: *“The principal has to monitor teachers’ lesson plans and be sure that teaching and learning takes place at school. As SGBs, we will put more pressure to other parents so that they monitor their children’s books at home”.*

Parent 4 commented that:

“School governance is about the principal’s involvement in the administering the departmental policies and also guiding the SGBs in the implementation of SASA”.

From the quotations above, not all parents in the SGBs know the instructional leadership and school governance. Therefore, it should be the chairperson of the SGB who is highly involved in administering the departmental policies as stipulated in South African Schools Act.

3.2 The relationships between the SGBs, SMTs, teachers and other stakeholders.

The study revealed that the principal as the head of the school, serves as a central figure to facilitate and coordinate communication amongst different representatives in the SGBs. In this study, the two sub-themes emerged are: The relationship between teachers, parents in the SGBs and the support provided to teachers, parents in the SGBs.

The participants in this study, reported that teachers are elected in responsive positions in the SGBs strategically to strengthen the relationship between members of SGBs. The participants revealed that challenges were experienced to only schools where the SGB is dominated by parents. The responses from teachers and parents indicated that:

“There is a very good relationship between the teachers and other members of the School Governing Body in our school. Teachers are permitted to participate in all the activities of the SGB with respect and some of them are elected into higher positions in the SGB, such as the secretary and treasurer. The SGBs are taken as the parents of our schools and they are treated with respect”.

The participants responded on their dissatisfaction about the support from the SGBs in their school was as follows:

“I surely appreciate how the SGB support the teachers at our school but we still have some challenges which obstruct us as teachers from working effectively. There is no transparency in our SGB, things are just happening in the school yard, e.g. members of SGB will decide on certain issues or projects without sharing the information with teachers and when we re-open schools in January, we find that the project is already completed”.

The study revealed that there is poor support provided to both teachers and parents by the SGBs in many schools. There are few schools identified with good discipline and that is the results of working together between teachers, parents and their SGB.

3.3 The strategies the department can implement to assist SGBs in schools.

From the publication report of the department on strategy to improve school management and governance (DBE, 2018:43), there are challenges reported which are in line with the strategies of this study. There are two sub-themes emerged in the study and these are the strategies identified by the participants: Training of SGB members and the Support to SGBs from the Department of education.

The South African Schools Act emphasizes that the SGB members should be trained before they could start with their duties. It was discovered that the newly elected parents and learners in the SGBs have no knowledge and skills of governance, and as such, secretaries, chairpersons or treasurers are members who have that privilege of attending the organized trainings and workshops in their respective places. The responses by the participants on this issue was as follows:

“Yes, I was trained as SGB member, only secretaries were trained on how to write the minutes. Most of our trains were attended by the top three in committee, namely: chairperson, secretary and the treasurer”.

The participants submitted their views as strategies of support from the Department of Education, and their responses are as follows:

“Every year schools submit their annual budgets to the Department of education so that allocation of norms and standards is done. This is the financial support that schools get from the department, and the money is not enough for the schools’ needs”

From the above quotations, the participants reported about the continuous problems experienced by the SGB members who attended trainings, therefore, the support provided to SGB members by the department is not effective. There are also a lack of commitment to some members of SGBs, particularly parents who are always at work and they never attended any trainings or inductions.

4. Discussion and Analysis of Findings

The study found that SGBs in secondary schools were not effective in the delivery of education as mandated by the South African Schools Act of 1996.

Sub-question 1: What aspects may influence the effectiveness of SGB members in public schools?

Instructional leadership is defined as the leadership that puts teaching and learning in the school as a priority in order to improve the education of a learner (Botha, 2011; cited in Dahiru & Gbolahan, 2022:518). According to King (2002:61), Instructional Leadership is defined as anything that the leaders do to enhance teaching and learning in schools. School governance is about creating, implementing and evaluating policies and rules that are used in the governing of schools (Ramadiro & Salim, 2005 cited in Bayat, Rena & Louw, 2014:354). Leadership is considered very important because it relates to efforts to achieve institutional goals through influencing others in the institution. According to Kristiawan et al., (2020:157) the principal is responsible for influencing, encouraging, guiding, directing, and moving the teachers, staff, students, parents of students and stakeholders to work together and participate in achieving goals. The instructional leadership and school governance were revealed in the study as two different aspects which are influential and important in the effective functioning of schools. The principal as an instructional leader and the chairperson of the SGB were actively involved in the education of learners, and they are both responsible for the effective functioning of schools. The study further identified training as another factor that could bring the effective functioning of schools. Furthermore, principals should help the department in training members of the SGB in their respective schools for skills empowerment.

Sub-question 2: How are the relationships between the SGBs, SMTs, teachers and other stakeholders?

School environment is regulated by pieces of legislation and policy framework that aim to promote and advance the constitutional values and principles, as well as to promote and advance human rights as enshrined in the Bill of Rights (Mampane, 2008:61). The legislative and policy frameworks in the study that regulate the SGBs in public schools are the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996 and South African Schools Act, No. 84 of 1996 as amended (SASA). According to Malatji, Mavuso and Malatji (2018) communication is indeed a vital instrument in building relationships between the SGB, SMT and other stakeholder, as it is stipulated in the South African Schools Act (SASA). Generally, principals initiate and maintain a collaborative relationship between the School Management Teams (SMTs) and SGBs (Basson & Mestry, 2019:2). The findings of the study identified communication as a vital instrument for building the relationship between the SGBs, SMTs and other stakeholders, as it was stipulated in the South African Schools Act (SASA, 1996). It also found that the principal was a central figure who coordinates communication amongst different representatives in the SGBs.

The study reported that in many secondary schools, good relationship between teachers and other SGB members was observed, and SGB members and teachers worked together during school events and functions. The findings of both teachers and parents revealed that poor support was provided by the SGBs in many schools, and principals were delegated in many responsibilities of parent components.

Sub-question 3: What strategies can be implemented to assist SGBs to function optimally?

One of the strategies of improving the effectiveness of School Governing Bodies is the enhancement of the capacity of SGBs by capacity training. Capacity Training could be seen as the assistance or introductory course or continuing training provided to the governors (SGBs) of public schools (RSA, 1996:27). According to Mncube (2009:85), in practice the parents who are members of SGBs are not all able to participate fully because many of them lack the necessary skills required. Parents are considered the main socializing influence on their children and have an indelible influence on their overall psycho-social development (Shrestha, 2021:10). A research by Okeke (2014:1) shows that poor parental involvement is the biggest challenge facing public schools in South Africa, especially schools situated in rural areas. On the other hand, Reynolds, Crea, Medina, Degnan and McRoy (2015: 751) associate parental involvement with learner achievement, parent's self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation, help in building a child's positive behaviour, and not truancy or drop out in schools.

According to SASA's preamble, it is the responsibility of the state in partnership with other stakeholders to build and develop capacity for SGBs in schools; and effective training and capacity building play a crucial role in equipping the newly elected SGB members with knowledge and skills. Therefore, Training of SGBs and the support from the department were identified as the strategies used in most secondary schools in the Namakgale circuit, and their achievements did not meet the set goals. The support which the department provided to schools was not enough to assist the SGB members. The study suggests that more trainings and workshops are needed in schools, so that members are well equipped with relevant knowledge and skills pertaining school governance.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that there is no effective functioning of SGBs in many secondary schools in Namakgale circuit. The identified facts about the study were as follows: aspects which are influential in the effectiveness of SGBs, the relationship between SGBs and schools, and the suitable strategies to enhance good governance. The study's findings revealed that the school governing bodies are still faced with challenges that need the intervention of both the Department of Basic Education and parents.

6. Recommendations.

The study found that training provided to SGBs by the Department of Basic Education was inadequate, and SGBs are complaining about little time allocated during trainings. Continuous trainings and workshops for SGB members was recommended, that the Department of Basic Education should conduct one training or workshop in every quarter of the year. They study found that there was lack of interest from both teachers and parents serving in the SGB structures, therefore, it was recommended that train to members of SGBs be made compulsory and also be a prerequisite to any member who is elected to the SGB.

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