

THE ROLES AND CHALLENGES CONFRONTING THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY IN REPRESENTING SCHOOLS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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ABSTRACT

This research centres on the roles and challenges facing the “School Governing Body” (SGB) in this digital age where students and educators are more becoming tech-active and addicted. A case study was deployed in a school located in Mafikeng, the capital of the North West Province, South Africa. The 21st century learners and educators are making technology there daily necessity both within and outside the school premises. The Department of Education is investing in schools technologically. Then, the aim of this research was to find out the problems SGB’s face in dealing with these technologies and representing the schools in order to carry out their roles. The qualitative research technique was used applying exploratory and descriptive research pattern. Data was gathered through an individual interview with SGB members in the school and also, a semi-structured focused group interview was conducted with non SGB members too. The collected data was analysed in themes and categories in order to get in-deep perspectives of the participants in regards to the topic. The findings have various roles and challenges confronting the SGB in the new information age. These roles include to maintain and monitor school policy in line with information age, control school finance to accommodate growing innovations in technologies, design school technology-oriented curriculum and calendar, draft school rules and determine the vision and mission statement of the school to include digitalisations, maintain and monitor school properties, create a good link between the SGB members and the school and lastly to be a mediator between the learners and the SGB in resolving technology related issues. Findings also found that the SGB are faced with various challenges in respect of the representivity aspect of the school in this digital age.

Keywords: SGB, Digital Age, Learners, Representation, School, Education, South Africa, Educators.

INTRODUCTION

In the developing world, a technology application is changing educational processes and learner’s experience. This study emphasises on understanding the roles and challenges of “School Governing Bodies” (hereafter referred to as SGBs) in managing and maintaining their members interests in the school governance in this digitalized world. According to Xaba (2011) ‘school governance in South Africa’ is a fundamental important element in the education system, but it encounters challenges, considering the fact that it is over a decade the enactment of the “South African Schools Act” (SASA), which stipulates a set of consistent norms and standards for the learners education at schools and the governance, organization and school funding mechanisms

throughout the “Republic of South Africa”. However, “It seems that efforts to have an effective school fall far short on the governance of a school” (Xaba, 2011:1). The ‘South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996)’ mandates the establishment of school governance structure which should constitute elected members; the school principal and co-opted members. The elected members comprise; the school educators, the learners parents, non-educators staff members and learners in grade eight and above in secondary school. Regardless of the school size, parents in the SGB always hold a majority having 50% plus one member representative (Duma, Kapueja & Khanyile, 2011).

The “South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996)” describes the two parts of governance and management of school as two separate activities. The professional management is responsible for the daily teaching and learning activities whilst the school governing body is responsible for the school governance (Heystek, 2006). According to Mabasa & Themane (2002) report, “SGBs are not trained before they start their work and this manifests in problems such as unfamiliarity with meeting procedures”, lack of appropriate legislation, lack of specialist language used in meetings, difficulties in managing large volumes of document and feeling intimidated in presence of other members who seems to be more knowledgeable, perceived in skills as having more skills and digital trends. In addition to this, Mncube (2009) indicated that practically, parents elected are not participating fully in the SGB, since many of them lack the necessary skills to perform the assigned duties and functions to them. Stiglitz, Orszag & Orszag (2000) indicated that governing bodies of any organization in a nation must inculcate in them the technological aid that would help to foster effective governance. According to them, productivity growth is the key to effective ruling. The most important contribution that information technology can make to economic performance is thus to improve productivity. The representative aspect of the SGB implies that the SGB represents four groups of the school community, which are the parents, educators, the non-academic staff and the learners. The elected representatives need to know what their roles and duties are with regard to representing these groups. This study therefore focuses on how the SGBs understand their roles and the challenges they encounter as far as representing and carrying their roles on this digital age.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Department of Education (2007:1) declares that schools are “committed to providing an environment for the delivery of quality teaching and learning”. This was evident in the mission statement which states that “our vision is of a South Africa in which all people have equal access to lifelong education and training opportunities which will contribute to the improvement of quality of life as well as building a peaceful and democratic society” (DOE 1996:1). For this mission statement to be achieved there is therefore need to integrate and skilled role players in the governance and management of schools in this digital age. Before the 1994 elections, parents were involved in schools governance. ‘Many parents were willing to participate and indicated a need to contribute constructively to school activities’. In those “years parental participation in educational matters was largely sporadic and localized” (Mestry, 2006:27). Mabasa & Themane (2002:112) indicated that school “governance used to be characterized by authoritarian” and exclusive practices until the establishment of the “South African schools Act of 1996” which indicates that all public schools are required to have SGBs. Mncube & Mafora (2013:14) see representation as a way in “which individuals are represented

on issues affecting their lives or the lives of their children”. The SGBs are mandated to set the policies and rules which govern the school and to make sure that the school is run according to those policies in a manner that represents the learners, educators, parents and the non-academic staff involved in the school. Therefore, the voices of those most influenced by the site of teaching and learning have a direct role in making school-based decisions. These roles performed by the SGBs sometimes become difficult to play and the SGBs are unable to participate in the affairs of the schools as well as executing their responsibilities (Clive & Richard 2009). The difficulties got more intensified with the adoption of technological devices and gadgets by learners in this digital age as learning tools.

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND MOTIVATION

Mestry (2006) highlights some important challenges facing SGBs as lack of necessary skills and knowledge for financial management as well as interaction and collaboration between principals and parents. Clase, Kok & Van Der Merwe (2007) also affirm that numerous documented incidents in the media have confirmed that there is tension between School Governing Bodies of public schools in South Africa and the Department of Education, which is of great concern to all partners in the system. In addition to this, Dieltiens (2011) also affirms that school governors cannot do their job because there is something particular to schools and education that requires knowledge and information that parents do not usually have. Articles by Xaba (2011:3) highlights the findings such as difficulties in realizing the main role of the SGBs, for example “promoting the best interests of the school” in the digital age. Xaba (2011) research also identifies some recommendations to reduce these problems which include reassessing terms of objectives of office of school governors as well as training for capacity building of the SGBs. Based on these views, the study motivated and it can be said that due to the lack of 21st century knowledge and skills by the SGBs, they are unable to perform their task effectively including being able to represent those they are meant to represent in the school. Although there has been a lot of research done with regard to the roles and problems encountered by school governing bodies and how this challenge can be curbed, to the best of the researcher’s knowledge, no focused area regarding the digital era representivity aspect of the SGBs in schools has been done. And so, this study is meant to bridge that gap in the area of Mahikeng.

AIM OF THE RESEARCH

This study aimed to investigate and report on the findings to showcase the roles and challenges confronting the school governing body (SGB) in representing schools in the digital age.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question for this study is:

1. What are the roles and challenges faced by the school governing bodies in representing schools in this digital age?

The sub- questions derived from the main question to this study are:

2. How do the members of the SGB understand their roles in meeting 21st century technological changes?

3. How does the SGB understand their roles in representing the digital age schools?
4. How representative are the school governing body member's in the digital age schools?
5. What are the challenges faced by the SGB in representing the digital age schools?
6. What strategies (if any) are put in place by the school to deal with SGB representation in meeting the digital age school demands?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The roles performed by school governing bodies and the challenges they encounter in representing their members in the governance of schools is not a new concept in South African education literature. The literature review helps to determine whether the topic is worth studying and it provides insight into ways in which the researcher can limit the scope to a needed area of enquiry (Creswell, 2013). This is done in order to revise other scholar's view and see what to make out of it in this study.

The Representivity Principle in School Governance

According to Malan (2010:427) "representivity is the principal instrument for achieving transformation". Through representivity, "genuine South African institutions" and organized spheres are created, each one reflecting the national population, digital evolutions and each being a replica of all the others. The researcher also stated that representivity is the norm in terms of which institutions and organized spheres of people are required to be composed in such a manner that they reflect the national population profile, particularly the racial profile of the national population. This can be supported by the statement of Mncube & Mafora (2013) who see representation as a way in which individuals are represented on issues affecting their lives or the lives of their children.

Representation also refers to a mode of representation which gives some people more voting power in decision making and greater numbers on decision-making structures (Carrim, 2011). Various researches has been conducted on the roles of SGBs in schools as well as the dilemmas or problems they experience in executing their roles but as stated previously, not much research work has been done on the representivity aspect and digital age challenges of the SGBs. Thus, this is a gap that needs to be filled with the aid of this study.

Selection and the Representative Process of the School Governing Bodies

There are three groups represented on the SGB. According to the SASA (RSA, 1996), the membership of SGBs should comprise elected members, the school principal and optional co-opted members who do not have the right to vote (for example, members of the community or the owner of the school property). Elected members of the governing body shall comprise: parents of learners at the school, educators at the school, members of staff who are not educators, learners in the eighth grade or higher at the school. Figure 1 below presents the structure of the school governing bodies.

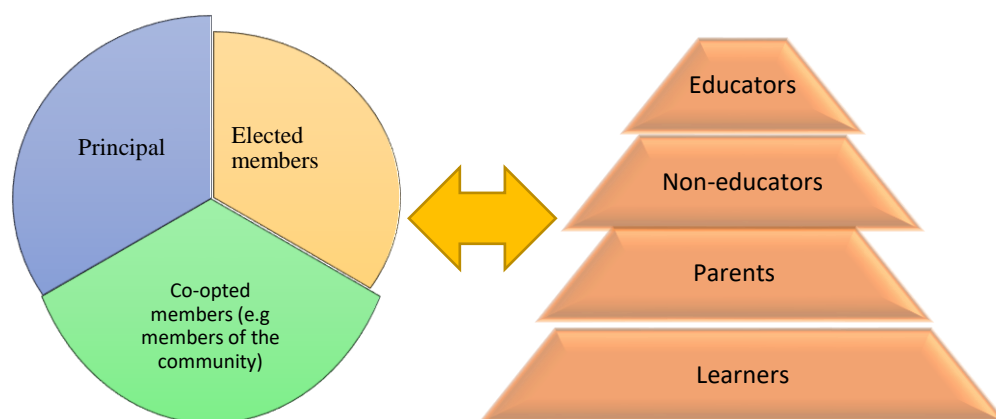


Figure 1
THE STRUCTURE OF THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

The Figure 1 composition is also indicated in section 23 (1 & 2) of SASA regulations. Therefore it can be said that Parents elect parent representatives, educators elect educator representatives and learners elect learner representatives in school governing bodies. These representatives in the SGBs therefore need to know what their roles and duties are with regard to the representative aspect of the school as well as the challenges they face in representing the schools in this digital aid. This can be done based on the findings of the researcher in this study.

Parent Representatives in SGBs

Deiltens (2011) states that many parents on the governing bodies view their role as co-opted and glorified fund-raisers rather than as co-decision makers in educational matters". The majority of voting members of the SGB must be parents. Governing bodies have the option of co-opting a member or members, of the community to the governing body. According to Chaka (2008:17) "when a parent's child completes or leaves a school, that parent is no longer eligible to stand for election to the SGB". SASA also makes it clear that a parent who is employed at the school may not be elected to the SGB as a parent member, but can serve as a representative of staff (educator or non-educator). The principal also has to provide parents with information about SGB elections (DoE, 2003).

In the case of special schools, section 24 of SASA stipulates that SGB members might include representatives of parents of learners with special needs, disabled persons and representatives of organizations of disabled persons, experts in appropriate fields of special needs education and representatives of sponsoring organizations.

Learner Representatives in SGBs

With regard to the learner's representatives, SASA makes it clear that only learners from grade 8 to 12 can be elected onto the SGBs. This means that only SGBs in secondary schools and combined schools have learner representatives (Chaka, 2008). Also section 11 (1) of SASA as well as section 23(4) require that a representative council of learners in a school are required to elect a learner representative in the SGB. Education worldwide is becoming increasingly

accountable to the public and therefore it can be argued that learners should play a role in policy making and implementation, as they constitute a major stakeholder group (Mncube, 2007). Mncube (2007) also stated that as members of the school governing bodies, learner representatives are also required to take part actively in the execution of these functions, which in most cases has produced ‘more heat than light’. Some commentators suggest that, arguably, learners lack experience in educational matters and integrating them towards technology. For example, adult members of SGBs may feel that learners are immature and thus unable to make sound decisions (Mncube, 2007). While some adult members of SGB don’t see the place of digital technology in schools. However, it is well known that learners took an active part in the struggle for liberation in South Africa and as such they are supposed to take part in matters affecting their education in order for their voice to be heard. The silencing of the voice of learners, implicitly or explicitly, means that issues of democracy and social justice are ignored (Mncube & Naicke, 2011).

According to Carrim (2011:32) data gathered from the workings of SGBs in South African schools show that all categories of “stakeholders”, including “learners”, consistently and repeatedly complain about their representatives not representing them adequately or accurately in this modern age, representatives are seen to “speak in their own voices” and not as the spokespersons of the represented. Based on these reviews, it can be said that learner representatives in SGBs basically encounter various challenges on how they are to represent those they are expected to represent in the digital age schools.

Educators and Non-Educator Representatives in SGBs

As noted earlier, an elected member of the governing body shall comprise both educators of the school as well as members of the staff at the school who are not educators (SASA section 23(2) b & c). Carrim (2011) identifies that the non-academic staff of the SGBs as gardeners, cleaning staff, security staff and administrative staff. It should be understood that the educator representatives in the SGB can either be one or two representatives who have been elected by the other educators in the school as well as the parents in the governing body. A research conducted by Beckmann and Prinsloo (2009) highlighted the key issues regarding the legislation of school governance, which include the power to appoint educators. The study indicated that the parents on the governing body have an obligation toward the school community to recommend the appointment of the best qualified, motivated, committed and competent educators to vacant posts, in order to ensure effective and quality teaching and learning for their children. But one can say that majority of these non-educators representatives are not up-to-date with the 21st century tech-dependent events and trends.

Roles and Functions of the School Governing Bodies

Since the introduction of the Schools Act (SASA 1996), SGBs have become responsible for a range of functions that were previously the responsibility of the Department of Education. Van Wyk (2004) stresses the fact that SGBs in South Africa have at their disposal considerable powers and functions bestowed upon them by the South African schools act (Act 84 of 1996). According to Kruger & Van Schalkwyk (1997) each organization should have a policy which can serve as a guide line for the behaviour of the employees.

There are various functions of all SGBs in a school which have been stated in section 20 of SASA. These functions were also supported by Wolhuter, Lemmer, De Wet & Van Wyk (2007) who also stated that the governing body of public schools in South Africa must, among other things; develop a mission statement of the school; adopt a code of conduct for the learners at the school after consultation with the learners, educators and parents of the school; determine the admission and language policy of the school within the framework laid down in the constitution (RSA 1996c). They mandate should be flexible towards learners in this tech-dependent world. Based on this, it is to be noted that the school is an “organization” and those that form part of it are expected to know the various functions outlined in the Act.

Individual Functions of the SGBs

SGBs are expected to elect office bearers from among themselves, including a chairperson, a treasurer and a secretary (section 20 (1) of SASA). The chairperson should be a parent member (Chaka, 2008). In general, the individual roles in the SGBs include chairperson, treasurer, secretary, SGB committees and the executive committee.

Allocated Functions of the SGBs

Subject to SASA 21, a governing body may apply to the Head of Department in writing to be allocated any of the following functions; To maintain and improve the school's property and buildings and grounds occupied by the school, including the school hostels, if applicable; to determine the extra-mural curriculum of the school and the choice of subject options in terms of the provincial curriculum policy; to purchase textbooks, educational materials and equipment for the school, to pay for services to the school; to provide an adult basic education and training class or centre subject to any applicable law. Various reviews of the literature have also identified these functions as allocated functions of the SGBs. The SGB according to the DoE (2010) needs to have a structure that will enable it to administer and carry out its functions. It also has to elect people to perform certain administrative functions. These functions failed to recognize learner's current tech-dependence as a learning tool.

Problems Encountered by SGBs in Executing their Roles As Well As Representing Schools

In a study conducted in Zimbabwe, it was found that despite the presence of a legal decentralized school governance structure in which parents form the majority, they did not have the capacity to function effectively therein and were still marginalized in school governance decision-making (Chikoko, 2008). Various factors that hinder SGBs to perform their roles effectively and efficiently as well as representing the schools are evident from different literature and will be examined below.

Lack of Skills in SGBs Influence their Representation

Mncube (2009) indicates that practically, parent governors are not all participating fully in SGB since many of them lack the necessary skills to perform the duties assigned to them. In line with this, Keating (2008) indicates that SGBs do not have the skills to appoint teachers, manage huge school budgets, nor even implement policies outlined in the South African Council

of Education (SACE). In a research by Van Wyk (2007) it was noted that 47% of teachers and principals interviewed felt that the skills deficit among SGB members weakens the effective functioning of SGBs. In addition to this, a research conducted by Lekalekale (2006) also highlighted that SGBs lack various skills in executing their task; these skills include marketing skills, financial management skills, fund-raising skills, communication skills as well as conflict resolution skills. Mestry & Khumalo (2012) confirm on their basis of the concluding paragraph that lack of adequate knowledge of legislation and training militates against the ability of the SGBs to perform their functions. It should be noted that not only do educators lack skills of working with parents but parents also lack technological skills and working with educators, thus it is well known that there is a general lack of skills amongst SGB members of working together as well as representing the school in this digital age tech-dependent world.

Limited Training of the SGBs Member

The limited training of the main role players in the management and governance of schools, coupled with uncertainty regarding their functions and duties, make it sometimes difficult for principals and parental SGB members to work together harmoniously (Heystek, 2004). The training of SGB members is crucial in ensuring that they have the necessary capacity, full knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities and that they will be able to set their own goals, targets, time frames and allocate functions to each other (Maluleka, 2008). According to Van Wyk (2007) teachers often mentioned the necessity of providing appropriate training for school governors, particularly the parent representatives. They also suggested that the SGB members should receive copies of the SASA in their own language and undergo training on the content thereof by people that are fluent in the local vernacular. Therefore, for members of the governing bodies to fulfil the task assigned to them, they need to be well equipped and trained on how to execute these functions and accommodate learners in this digital age.

Lack of Dedicated Time

Most parents usually fail to attend SGB meetings because of other commitments in their communities or business. According to the Mercury (S.A) of July 10 2008, parents were cited to have less interest in schools. Westville Senior Primary School South Africa was cited for SGB repeatedly staying away from governing body elections and thus there were no SGBs for a long period. In relation to lack of dedicated time for SGBs to represent the school effectively, Van Wyk (2004) in his six features for lack of effective school governance pointed out that effective time management and delegation hinders the SGB to govern the school effectively. This was evident in the research of Segwapa (2008) who indicated that parents in SGBs find themselves in situation whereby they have to choose between work that would yield a salary to meet the needs of their families and attend school activities in order to represent the school. The issue of time is not only the case of parents; teachers and other stakeholders alike in the SGB always regard SGB meetings as a sacrificial lamb for other commitments of theirs.

Complexity of Functions

Chaka (2008) and Chisholm & Sujee (2006) identifies another challenge facing SGBs which is the complexity of functions SGBs are required to undertake. SGBs have to perform a range of basic functions, which include developing policies, recommending the appointment of teachers and drawing up school budgets. They need to have a good knowledge of the South African Schools Act and technology trends. According to Chaka (2008) SGBs also require an understanding of other education and non-education policies. For example, the appointment of educators and other staff requires an understanding of laws about employment including the Employment of Educators Act, the Public Service Act and the Labour Relations Act. Karlsson (2002) also states that the tasks stated in section 20 and 21 of SASA are extensive and complicated and it has been observed with concern that some functions of the SGBs are contingent on the social conditions of schools as well as the capacity differences of the SGBs. Tsotetsi, Van Wyk & Lemmer (2008). Agree that in view of the complex functions prescribed for SGBs in South African schools, sound training should be provided for proper discharge of the multiple duties bestowed upon them. This is because these functions look complex for them and some tends to forget what their roles are with regard to representing schools.

Field of Tension and Confusion amongst Stakeholders in the Governance of Schools

Another problem encountered by the SGBs in representing schools is as a result of the field of tension and confusion amongst stakeholders in the governance of schools. Clase & Van Der Merwe (2007) indicated that confusion at grass-roots level about the governance of public schools is a further matter that can lead to the development of extensive situations of tension. This implies that when the SGBs are confused in respect of their function it can result to tension and hereby not executing their duties effectively.

Digital Age in Schools

Education learning environment is comprises of students or learners from different racial, economic, digital group and others also with learning expectations, capacity and information needs (Naidoo & Raju, 2012). These differences brings digital and social divide across the learners as one can see or experience in South Africa secondary school system today. The use of technology tools, devices and applications is growing rapidly across education institutions (primary, middle/high and higher education) by learners. Government at the same time is busy transforming Apartheid-era education footprint that segregates through massive technological investment into schools. These efforts and investment are in line with digital age trends and SGBs must be informed. Digital Age can be known as Computer Age, Information age or New Media Age. In this study, digital age is regarded as the traditional and historic shift to revolutionary computerization of processes, knowledge, innovation, ideas, access to information and many more. According to Kincsei (2007), information or digital age brings radicalized technological processes, procedures and systems “with a greater acceleration”. This radicalism can be realized on smartphone penetration among learners and others. According to Kreutzer (2009), 60% of South Africans over the age of 16 years own phone, possibly smartphone. Information or digital age accelerates Information Literacy (IL), IL is the power to discover information need(s), understand the important of information, develop information search

mechanism, information source, gather information, analysis and interpret information and assemble effective information (Kincsei, 2007). Currently our learners are depending on their smartphone or Internet enabled phone to belong in this digital age.

Oftentimes, this smartphones get in between learners and their studies, in form of distraction. However, Costley (2014) believed that technology improves learners learning abilities and unlocking their potentials even for those with special needs. While Sutton (2013) also believed that technology negatively affect our education system and society. And Hennessy, Onguko, Harrison, Ang'ondi, Namalefe, Naseem & Wamakote (2010). They revealed that schools governing bodies, leaders and so on have a negative mind-set about Internet, computer and others. The power of digital age has revolutionized the way learners think process and produce ideas and shared them. However, the role of digital age in schools in the 21st century is highly debated on the aspect of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (Mathevula, 2015) through the power of computer associated devices. The digital age surround us, many are adopting the trends. The trend shows no sign of stopping (Bates, 2016). According to Bates (2016), educators are challenged adapting to digital age in communicating with colleagues, learners and governing council. Learners themselves are challenged on how to adjust or apply the changes brought by digital age effectively in their learning process. Literatures revealed that learners are addicted to their smartphone and many learners even use their smartphones while in class, meeting, consultation with the educators and many more. The fact that digital age evolution, smartphone and other computer devices cause many implications to learners. Then managing these implications through policies and other regulations by SGB are very challenging.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section describes and explains the research design and methodology that was considered appropriate in collecting data for the study. The selection of the research design was influenced by the main research questions stated earlier which states. What are the roles and challenges faced by the SGBs in representing schools in this digital age? In pursuit of the aim of this study, a basic or generic qualitative research design was regarded as the most appropriate Mestry & Khumalo (2012). Says that qualitative research seeks to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process or the perspectives and worldviews of people involved. The selected research design for this study is qualitative research design.

Qualitative Research Design

This study uses a qualitative research design, which is connected with most of the four world views such as constructivism, pragmatism and advocacy world views. The approach to this research design is a case study. Qualitative research is an enquiry in which researchers collect data in face-to-face, telephonically, teleconferencing situations by interacting with selected persons in their settings, describing and analysing people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions (Schumacher & McMillan, 2006). According to Creswell (2009) qualitative research begins with assumptions, worldview, the possible theoretical lens and the study of research problems which involves inquiry into the meaning individuals and groups ascribe to social and human problems.

Qualitative research was viewed as the best approach for this research as it provided the researchers with an opportunity to understand the social phenomenon of SGB's perspective to their roles as well as the challenges they encountered in representing the school in the 21st technological century. In line with this, it also includes an in-depth verbal description of observed phenomenon (Schumacher & McMillan, 2006). Thus, to have this first-hand information; the researchers collected data in a natural setting. By natural setting, according to Mtsweni (2008), the researcher should commence with examining the relevant literature, having knowledge of the subject and learning what others say about it, when the researcher intends compiling a research design. Thus, a constructivist researcher often addresses the "process" of interaction among individuals, it focuses on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participant. This implies that the researchers have to focus on the school in which the participants has been selected for the study.

Qualitative Case Study Approach

This study was conducted on the basis of a qualitative case study approach. According to Maree (2010), case study research is a systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon under study. It can also be seen as an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources. The case study approach is relevant if the research question seeks to explain some present circumstance (for example "how" or "why" some social phenomenon works). This is because the study will require an "in-depth" description of some social phenomenon (Yin, 2013). Therefore, the researchers used a variety of data collection methods such as in-depth individual interviews as well as focus group interviews in order to ensure that relevant information was obtained from the participants during the course of the study.

Details of the School Selected

The school from which participants are drawn is Midtown School, which is located in a large township area in Mafikeng in the North West Province. The name Midtown school is a pseudonym; this was done for the purpose of confidentiality. The school is a public school and also a combined school that is, it has learners from grade 7 to grade 12. The school has good teaching and learning infrastructures and also has a mixture of both black and white educators as well as learners. The school has a total number of 725 learners as well as 28 educators as well as 12 SGB members of which the number of parent's representatives in SGB was not given. The following data on Tables 1-3 was obtained from the school in respect of gender, numbers of learners and teachers as well as the racial and gender breakdown of the school.

Table 1 NUMBER OF LEARNERS ACCORDING TO RACE, GENDER AND GRADE												
Grade	African black		Coloured		Indian		White		Other		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M		M	F	M	F	M	F
Grade 7	20	16									20	16
Grade 8	65	89	1	1							66	90
Grade 9	60	74	2			2					62	76
Grade 10	59	87		1							59	88
Grade 11	60	88			1						61	88
Grade 12	46	57	1								47	57
Total 725	310	411	4	2	1	2					315	415

Table 2 NUMBER OF EDUCATORS ACCORDING TO RACE AND GENDER						
Teachers	Black		White		Indian	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	10	13	1	3	0	1
Total 28	10	13	1	3	0	1

Table 3 NUMBER OF SGB MEMBERS ACCORDING TO RACE AND GENDER (EXCLUDING PARENTS REPRESENTATIVES)								
SGB Members Total 12	Black educators including principal		White educators		Indian		Learner Rep	
	Male	Female	M	F	M	F	M	F
	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	2
Total 12	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	2

The data above presented in Tables 1-3 was obtained by the researchers in order to present details about the school. This enables the researchers to know the total number of learners, SGB and educators in respect of gender and race before the interviews will be carried out.

A purposeful sampling technique was used in this study. According to Maree (2007) in purposeful sampling, participants are selected because of some defining characteristics (such as their post level, phase of teaching and position held in schools) that makes them the holder of data needed for the study. This study therefore selected participants based on their positions as SGB members and phase of teaching. The purposeful sampling of this study was based on the selection of participants of the SGB in Midtown school who are known as representatives of the school and have the relevant information needed for this study as well as the non-SGB members in the school which include learners and the educators.

The researcher focused on individual interviews and semi-structured focused group interviews. The individual interviews were conducted with the SGB learners, the principal as well as the educators in SGBs. The semi-structured focused group was conducted with the learners in school who are not members of the SGBs as well as non SGBs educators. This was done in order for the researchers to know how the participants feel about the representivity of the school as well as the challenges the SGBs encountered in representing Midtown School in the

digital age. After data has been collected, the researchers identify and transcribe the data obtained from the participants, thereafter categorizing the responses obtained and presenting them in themes and categories. This is done with the aim to gain a new and better understanding of the situation and process being investigated (Creswell, 2013).

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The section presents the findings and it was followed by a deliberate attempt to link these findings to the existing literature on the themes and categories. The findings of this empirical investigation are based on the main categories that emerged from data collected during the interviews and observation. These data were analysed and organized into themes and categories that are presented in Table 4 below. The themes and categories are used later as headings and sub-headings to present detailed findings.

Table 4 PRESENTATION OF DATA IN THEMES AND CATEGORIES	
Themes	Categories
1. The general duties and roles of the SGB	1. Maintain and monitor school policy Control school finance 2. Design school curriculum, calendar and school rules as well as determining the mission and vision of the school 3. Maintain and monitor school properties 4. Create a good link between the members of the school and the SGB. 5. Be a mediator between the learner and the SGB.
2. Understanding the concept of SGB representation	1. Going out to deliver the task you are expected to perform and translating the roles into action. 2. Carrying the plight of the school 3. Understanding the stability, governance and guideline of the roles and ensuring that it is seen in the SGB 4. Being an ambassador for the school
3. SGB roles in representing the digital age schools	1. Ensure the safety of learners as well as the educators in the use of digital age 2. Resolve any conflict between the educators, learners, parents of the school and the SGB. 3. Restrict the use of digital media by learners in school 4. Ensure that the activities of the school are well documented in the school digital age

4. challenges faced by the SGB in representing the digital age schools	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Challenges regarding learners' behavior and discipline on digital aid 2. Dealing with learners immoral behaviors on media 3. Lack of communication during representivity 4. Lack of motivational skills 5. Lack of parents' and learners' involvements in SGB meetings.
5. strategies (if any) are put in place by the school to deal with SGB representation in meeting the digital age school demands	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There should be good coloration between the SGBs and the school. 2. Provide training to help the SGB members to understand their role and how they are expected to represent the school in the digital aid 3. Parental involvement in school and SGBs affairs.

For the purpose of convenience and coherence the views and perceptions of the different groups of participants were jointly analysed and presented which enabled the researchers to compare different data sets under one theme presented as sub-titles.

DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

This section presents the discussion of the findings from the themes and categories as presented in Table 4 above. The discussions were based on the research questions as presented earlier which include the followings:

1. How do the members of the SGB understand their roles in meeting 21st century technological changes?
2. How does the SGB understand their roles in representing the digital age schools?
3. How representative are the school governing body member's in the digital age schools?
4. What are the challenges faced by the SGB in representing the digital age schools?
5. What strategies (if any) are put in place by the school to deal with SGB representation in meeting the digital age school demands?
6. The findings of the study are discussed under themes that emerged from the collected data concerning each of the research questions.

Understanding the SGB Roles In General Meeting the 21st Technological Changes

Various literatures as well as the SASA (1996) have highlighted the roles of SGBs. Subject to SASA 21, a governing body may apply to the Head of Department in writing to be allocated any of the following functions; To maintain and improve the school's property and buildings and grounds occupied by the school, including the school hostels, if applicable, to determine the extra-mural curriculum of the school and the choice of subject options in terms of the provincial curriculum policy. Findings in this study confirms (or do not confirm) these roles and are discussed below using themes and categories that emerged from the data (Table 4 above).

Maintain and Monitor School Policy Control and Control School Finance

DoE (2010:15) stipulates that parents need to supplement the resources provided by the state through contributing towards the school fund. The SGBs need to manage school finances in relation to an annual budget, correct auditing procedures, bookkeeping and fundraising in the 21st century education system. In respect of the findings from the participants, a majority of the SGB representatives highlighted that their roles are to monitor school properties, manage the finances and also find strategies to raise funds for the school. It is clear that the SGB were able to state these points as one of their major roles and how they are supposed to go about raising the funds for the school. SGBs indicated a mastery of their role in participating in school finances and raising school funds and they are practically applying it, though in different ways. Van Wyk (2004) stresses the fact that SGBs in South Africa have at their disposal considerable powers and functions bestowed upon them by SASA (Act 84 of 1996). These functions include an ability to make school policies, maintain and monitor the policy they have set. This study reviewed that although the SGB knows that to maintain and monitor the school policy as one of their major roles, not much contribution was made by the participants in respect to this function. This is because most of the existing SGB constitutions and those of the school are just being carried over from one SGB to the other every year, leaving the SGB to remain with static policies that have been drafted by previous SGBs. The rigidity of the policies shows lack of compliance with digital age education system needs and expectations.

Design School Curriculum, Calendar and School Rules as Well as Determining the Mission and Vision of the School

Findings of this study suggest that both the learners, educators and the school in general have a say in the development of the school curriculum, calendar and school rules. This was certain in one of the learner representatives as well as the non-SGB learners interviewed who stated that “they also have an influence in determining the school timetable; school calendar as well as ensuring fair disciplinary processes are taken in respect of any misconduct by the learners”. This finding is in line with the DoE (2002) which advised that governing bodies should be involved in curriculum development in schools. The SGB should have a general view of the curriculum as actually given from the day-to-day activities within the school. In addition to this, DoE (2010) indicates that the vision and mission statements of schools should be based on shared values of those directly concerned with the school.

These functions were also supported by Wolhuter et al. (2007) & Van Wyk (2007) who also stated that the governing body of public schools in South Africa must among other things; develop a mission statement of the school; adopt a code of conduct for the learners at the school after consultation with the learners, educators and parents of the school; determine the admission and language policy of the school within the framework laid down in the constitution (RSA 1996c). However, it is not only sufficient to compile the mission and vision statements of a school, but also how to realize that the designed mission and vision is essential for SGBs. This means that the mission and vision statement of the school should be realistic and well-practiced and also to be in the best interest of the school as well as the learners in meeting the 21st century education advancement and innovations.

Maintain and Monitor School Properties

The school properties are seen as an essential element which the school has to take care of. This is because the school needs to be answerable to the Department for any misuse of such properties. The principal of the school made mention in his interview that “one of his main roles is to maintain and monitor the school properties because he is held accountable for any misuse and the non-SGB learners also stated that the SGB maintain the school properties”. Therefore, the findings of this research suggest that the SGB see this role as a compulsory role, they have to ensure that the school properties are used effectively and efficiently and they are not damaged.

Create a Good Link between the Members of the School and the SGB

This study reviewed that one of the roles of the SGB is also to create a good link between the members of the school and the SGBs. The “link” mentioned above include good collaboration between the learners, the educators in the school, the principal, SGB as well as all other stakeholders involved in the affairs of the school. To support the issue of effective collaboration in schools, Govindasamy (2009) states that collaboration is about different people working together in an attempt to find solutions that satisfy the concerns of those working together. According to him, “success is more likely when individuals in school are collegial and working collaboratively on improvement activities. It should therefore be noted that without good collaboration among the members of the schools and the SGBs the functioning of the school will not be well organized and there cannot be any agreement between these people.

Being a Mediator between the Learner and the SGB

This is also another finding which was identified by a learner representative in respect of the roles of the SGB. Participant 1 of the learner representative stated that “their role basically is to see themselves as a mediator between the learners and the SGB, finding out their problems and discussing it with the SGB”. This means that the learner representatives of the SGB are not only among the SGB in order to fulfil the required composition stated in SASA but they also see themselves as mediators who should be standing for the learners at any time, they find out the current needs of the learners and as such bring it to the attention of the SGB.

How the SGB Understands their Roles in Representing the Digital Age Schools

This section of the research question was obtained in the findings under the following themes:

Understanding the Concept of SGB Representation

In order for the SGB to fully participate in this study, they need to have knowledge of the SGB representation. During this process of finding out the concept of SGB representation, it was realized that various participants have their own views. In terms of understanding the concept of SGB representation, the SGB emphasized that SGB representation simply means going out to deliver the task you are expected to do as an SGB, carrying the plight of the school,

understanding the governance and stability of the school as well as being an ambassador for the school.

Based on what these participants have said, there seems to be a different understanding of representation. Malan (2010:427) sees representivity as the principal instrument for achieving transformation. Through representivity “genuine South African institutions” and organized spheres are created, each one reflecting the national population and each being a replica of all the others. Mncube and Mafora (2013) also attest that representation is a way in which individuals are represented on issues affecting their lives or the lives of their children. Contrary to this literature, data obtained shows that the SGB had mixed views of what representation is all about. In order to clarify these mixed views, it can therefore be said that the term representivity in the SGB concept can be seen as a way in which each SGB representative has to represent their fellow representatives in any issues relating to the school. This includes an SGB educator representing the educators in the school in respect of any matter that is of a concern to the school, learner representative representing the learners in the school, the parent representatives also representing the parents of the school in general. Through this, the affairs of the school will be well handled and the voice of everyone involved in the school will be heard and meeting digital age economy and learner needs and demands.

How the SGB are Expected to Represent the School?

According to Lewis and Naidoo (2004:108) a majority of stakeholders, especially principals, felt that the SGB represents “their constituency” because they had an “elected SGB that is there to support the school”. For many, to have held elections and formed an SGB with representatives of each type of stakeholder meant representation had been achieved.

Findings suggest that the proportion of the SGB do not really know how they are expected to represent the school at all times especially in this 21st century. Although their response include to be an exemplary to the school, ensuring clear lines between separate administration and governance, resolving any conflict between the educators, learners, parents of the school and the SGB as well as ensuring the safety of the learners. This response was obtained mainly from the principal, SGB chairperson as well as few SGB representatives. However, the rest of the SGB members were unable to throw light on how they are expected to represent the school. In one of the comment of the principal he “also stated that the SGB do not know how they are expected to represent the school and as such they need training on the concept of representation”.

SGB Roles in Representing the Digital Age Schools

Findings suggest that the participants are unable to throw more light on the representivity aspect of the SGBs in the digital age, but rather talked about the composition of the school.

Ensure the Safety of Learners as Well as the Educators in the Use of Digital Age

The world of digital age exposes learners and educators to new challenges and opportunities. Many learners are confronted with online or cyber bullying, insults, discriminations, humiliations, rejections and many more. According to Sutton (2013), digital age technology impacts on the general wellbeing of our education system and society at large. Based

on these challenges, SGB members are not equipped or trained to understand different digital age safety majors for the learners and the nature of policies and regulations to enforce to ensure online or new media safety. But SGBs should be equipped with digital age technological knowledge to formulate policies and regulations that will retrieve the online contents learners can visit and the amount of time to spend.

Resolve Any Conflict between the Educators, Learners and Parents of the School and the SGB

SGBs are involved in conflict resolution between educators, learners, parents and SGBs. The conflict could be between educator(s) and learner(s), a learner and parent, parents and SGBs, SGBs and parents(s) and others. Conflict can also arise online with a learner and a friend or lover on social media which directly impact on the individual academic performance and grades. Learners can also be addicted online which impact negatively on him/her socially and academically. The 21st century demands that SGBs be trained properly in order to handle different forms of conflict which may surface or occur between the parties in the school structure.

Restrict the Use of Digital Media by Learners in School

Social media is becoming a life-line of many including learners in secondary schools in a developing countries. The usage impacts on the learner(s) in many forms ranging from addiction to lack of concentration in school, home even at the religious worship places. The height of learner's addiction and involvement on digital media should be included on the roles of SGB in the schools. Then, SGBs should formulate policies and penalties to enforce restriction on learner's usage and involvement of social or digital media while in the premises. For them to carry this mandates, enough workshops, trainings, orientations and many innovative ideas and knowledge should be taught to SGB as well as learners themselves.

Ensure that the Activities of the School are Well Documented in the School Digital Age

Digital age brings transformation from traditional file or data storage to electronic filing. SGB members works with a lot files and filings and documents. The researchers observed that SGB documents are kept manually in the school office. These documents are exposed to various forms of risk which could affect the contents. To overcome these risks, then electronic file (e-file) should be provided to them for the security and confidentiality of the contents.

Challenges Faced by the SGB in Representing the Digital Age Schools

Findings suggest that there are different types of challenges that the SGB faces in representing the digital age schools. These challenges include:

Racial Challenge

Racial challenge was identified by one of the educator representatives as one of the challenges she faced in representing the school. This was also confirmed by one of the white

educator representatives in the SGB. There has not been much literature in respect to this aspect of racial challenges among SGBs. However, Chisholm & Sujee (2006) suggest that different degrees of racial diversity in schools can create lot of complexity and challenges. This complexity and challenges include not being able to represent those the SGBs are expected to represent in the school effectively due to language, culture, gender and race. The comment of the participant A of the educator representative affirms this challenge when she stated thus, “I am white and I am expected to represent the black educators and the school in general, I sometimes find it difficult to represent them due to my racial background”. Other SGB representatives also highlighted that racial challenge is also one of the challenges they face among themselves in the SGB. This is because they have to adjust in languages in order to fit into their fellow SGB who are not speaking the same language. According to them, sometimes they feel like expressing themselves in their own language of instruction but find it difficult to do so because their fellow SGB member will not understand them. According to this discussion, it can be said that “racial” is coupled with language challenges which can therefore be regarded as one of the challenges the SGB faces in the course of representing the school in the post-apartheid era.

Learner’s Behaviour and Discipline on the Digital Age

The attitude of the learners matters a lot in the representative aspect of the SGB in schools in the 21st century or the digital age. Dealing with learners behaviours in the current dispensation can be tagged “immoral” because their actions and attitudes on media is predominate and determined by the events they read, watch, share or chat on and others in this age. Naidoo and Raju (2012) states that education system is diversified across different learners characteristics. This diversity brought about various kinds of information age attitudes, behaviours and many more that parents, society and even education system fails to manage or handle. This was evident in the comment made by participant 1 and 2 of the learner’s representative; “one of our major challenges in trying to represent the learners is the behaviour they have toward us, in that they don’t respect us because we are of the same class and age. When we try to talk to them they are always not interested. So to me I think it is a challenge”. The chairperson of the SGB also affirms this challenge by stating that the learner’s behaviour and discipline sometimes makes it difficult for them to represent the school effectively. Therefore, if the learners are not respecting their learner’s representative, it will be a challenge for the school in that the learner representatives as well as the SGB in general will find it difficult to handle the learners in the current generation.

Lack of Communication

Communication is a very important aspect in many organizations such as a school. This is because it is seen as a way in which various functions of the school link up with one another much more in the digital age. For there to be a good representivity aspect communication must exist among all members of the SGB. The principal in his interview made mention of lack of communication among the SGB by the chairperson to be a challenge. According to the principal, “my SGB lacks communication, the chairperson does not always communicate to us here in the school with regard to what is happening. Sometimes when you try to reach him he is not reachable and after like two days he surface in the school to make decisions which to him he thinks can suit us”. This was affirmed in the focus group interview with non SGB learners who

made mention of the chairperson being too autocratic and not communicating effectively with the school as well as the SGB. According to Govindasamy (2009) communication is an essential function in schools and the collaborative relationships that exist between the principal and the SGB is as a result of effective communication. In line with this, Mestry & Grobler (2007) stated that appropriate decision can be taken only if everyone has sufficient information at their disposal.

Based on this reviews, the findings from this study suggest that the SGB members do not receive good communication in respect of the schools activities, which is a challenge to the SGB when it comes to representing the school. Also, the study found out that digital age communication gadgets and devices are not considered importantly by the SGBs. This is because if communication does not exist, then effective representation cannot occur.

Lack of Motivational Skills from the Chairperson

According to participant A of the educator representatives interviewed, “the lack of motivational skills from the chairperson in respect of their representivity is also a challenge. The chairperson does not encourage them when the going gets tough, he also does not encourage them in their activities as SGB members”. Based on this finding, it can be said that motivation from the chairperson to the SGB members is essential to create encouragement among the SGB members. This would lead to successful work.

Lack of Parents and Learners Involvement in SGB Meetings

Participants interviewed mentioned that many parents in SGB are not willing to participate in the governance of the school due to their work and families; they are forced to play their roles and also not active in their roles. Learners are also not involved due to their studies. In addition to this, the comment made by the chairperson in respect of the non-activeness of the learners and also participant 1 of the learner representative made mention in the interview that “their studies are their major setbacks in representing the school”. This was also evident in the principals response when he stated that “the learners are prioritizing their studies as a means of not been able to represent their fellow learners”. The researcher sees this point to be similar to what was presented in the literature review by Van Wyk (2004) who sees effective time management and delegation hinders the SGBs to govern the school effectively. This was evident in the research of Segwapa (2008) who indicated that parents in SGBs find themselves in situation whereby they have to choose between work that would yield a salary to meet the needs of their families and attend school activities in order to represent the school. Findings have therefore proven that lack of parents’ and learners’ involvement in SGB meetings is a challenge to the SGB in general. This lack of involvement makes it difficult for SGBs to understand the needs and expectations of learners in this digital age.

The Strategies (If Any) Put in Place by the School to Deal with SGB Representation in Meeting the Digital Age School Demands

The strategies obtained from the participants as presented in the findings, give a thorough reflection of what should be done in order to deal with SGB representation and digital age school demands. These strategies include:

Good Collaboration between the SGB Members and the School

The principal suggests that good collaboration between the SGB members will create effective representation. This is because if the SGB are not communicated with in respect of information needed to carry out their representivity aspect effectively they won't be able to represent the school in the manner in which they are supposed to. Such collaboration includes the SGB members providing the necessary information for their fellow educators, parents and learners of the school in order to create effective functioning of the school. The collaboration can be achieved through social networking sites, applications and others.

Proper Training of the SGB

The training of SGB members is crucial in ensuring that they have the necessary capacity, full knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities and that they will be able to set their own goals, targets, time frames and allocate functions to each other (Maluleka, 2008). To support this, Van Wyk (2007) stated that teachers often mentioned the necessity of providing appropriate training for school governors, particularly the parent representatives. They also suggested that the SGB members should receive copies of the SASA in their own language and undergo training on the content thereof by people that are fluent in the local vernacular. In view of this, the chairperson of the SGB also stated thus; "proper training of the SGB members to understand their role and how they are expected to represent the school is required. This is because most of the SGB members do not know how to represent and whom they are expected to represent". Findings also suggest that the SGB should be given proper modern training on how to manage the affairs of the school as well as the finance aspect of the school. Therefore it can be said that proper training of the SGB will lead to effective representation and carrying along all the stakeholders in the digital age where innovations abound.

Parental Involvement in the School and SGB Affairs

As stated earlier that parents do not involve themselves much in SGB affairs and in the school due to many reasons, it is important that tasks should be assigned to them in order to make them involved in SGB affairs as stated by one of the educator representatives in the findings instead of the chairperson and the principal being more involved. Tasks such as being involved more in the aspect of raising funds for the school, digital age monitoring and management of finance of the school as well as setting school rules. This simply means that when they are tasked to carry out certain responsibilities, they would be more involved and as such be able to represent the parents of the school which they are expected to represent. Then, parents should be able to monitor their children activities on the social media world and able to report to SGB in a situation where they are been distracted online or addicted for proper actions to be taken.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

As far as the researchers are concerned, more research on the representivity aspect of the SGB in this digital age is required. The following topics can be considered in future and the purpose of considering these topics in future is because the concept of representivity by the SGB

is quite a new concept, not much has been done on it and therefore more research work needs to be done.

1. Representation and participation of the governing bodies in the digital school age.
2. The needs of the SGBs which have to be catered for by training in order for the SGB to fully represent the school.
3. What are the reasons for lack of effective representation of the SGB in digital school age?
4. The effectiveness of deploying technology in bridging gap among external stakeholder, SGBs and the learners.

CONCLUSION

The roles of the SGBs in our schools cannot be underrated and challenges they faced in carrying out their constituted mandates. Through this empirical data analysis and interpretations, the research mandate was reached. The research aims and objectives was achieved through the main research questions which based on the following subtitle; the duties and roles of the SGB, understanding the concept of SGB, how the SGB are expected to represent the school, the activeness of SGB, the challenges the SGB face in the course of executing their roles and representing the school as well as strategies that can be put in place to resolve the challenges and the representative aspect of the SGB in this 21st century school age.

Based on the findings, the researchers recommends that proper 21st century skills training should be given to the SGB in respect of the concept representation in the schools, the SGB should also be more involved in the setting of school policy, mission and vision statement of the school year after year, rather than living on existing policies set by the previous SGB members. There should also be good support and motivational skills by the chairperson of the SGB and the issue of language and racial difficulties should also be addressed in schools. The researchers also recommended that SGBs should be educated, trained on soft skills and digital age learner's needs and expectations. Through these recommendations, the secondary school systems and contents can be digitally revolutionized in producing 21st century graduates.

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