

Partnerships between SGBs and Principals in Public Schools: Reasons for the Failure of the Partnerships.

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this article is to report on the reasons for the failure of the partnerships between SGBs and principals in public schools. A qualitative study using the convenience sampling strategy was used by engaging practising final year principals from the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) presented at a South African university. The principals were requested to write narratives on whether the partnership between the SGBs and the principals in public schools is successful or not. In analysing the narratives, the researcher applied the open coding method. From the investigation, the following points were extracted as reasons for the failure the SGBs: a lack of understanding of their roles and functions; trust relations; control of schools by SGBs; dominance of principals over SGBs; literacy levels of SGBs and poor financial knowledge by the SGB. To address these crucial issues, it is recommended that the SASA be translated into all eleven languages to make its contents more understandable for all stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION

Prior to 1994 statutory school governance structures did not exist. Structures that existed in some schools were known as school committees, school boards, management councils and parent-teacher-student associations (PTSAs) (Karlsson 2002:328). After the 1994 elections in South Africa, democratic change was implemented in the education system. The South African Schools Act (SASA), 84 of 1996 (RSA 1996) ushered in democratic governance in all public schools. The SASA supports the notion that parents as stakeholders know the needs and values of their respective communities, thereby placing the governance of every public school in the hands of the school governing body (SGB). Joubert and Bray (2007:30) explain that the SGB is responsible for the governance of the school. They assert that the SGB and the principal as ex-officio members of the governing body are both responsible for the governance of the school. According to them, this briefly means that the governing body contributes to, or decides on all the functions as described in the South African School's Act; for example: the ethos and character of the school; the development of the school's language; admission requirements; religious observance; financial policies and development plans, as well as the code of conduct for learners amongst other things. The school management team (SMT) on the other hand, is responsible for the day-to-day professional management of the school. The

SMT consists of the principal, deputy principal and heads of department of the school (Joubert and Bray 2007: 30). It is important to note that the principal plays a dual role as an employee of the Department of Education (DoE) and as an ex-officio member of the SGB. According to Van Wyk (2004:50), the SASA indicates the state's intention to secure a framework of governance which is characterised by the sharing of power and co-operation as partners between the SGB and the SMT. Through this arrangement, the SASA ensured a neat separation of the roles and functions for the two centres of power in schools.

Section 16 (2) of the SASA stipulates that an SGB stands in a position of trust towards the school (RSA 1996: s. 16 (2)) which should form the foundation of the partnership between the SGB and the principal of the school. A solid partnership between the SGB and the principal creates the opportunity for the two centres of power to develop a sense of ownership of the school with its challenges, compelling both partners to take responsibility jointly for the betterment and advancement of the school.

The question that often arises is whether this partnership between SGBs and principals in public schools is successful or not, since there are numerous reports (Karlsson 2000; Moon et al. 2000; Heystek 2004; Mestry 2006) that refer to power struggles between SGBs and principals in public schools. This power struggle can be attributed to the principal's privileged position of having knowledge of policies and regu-

lations, as well as knowing the school intimately compared to the SGB's insufficient knowledge about the school and their roles and functions as SGBs (Botha 2010: 582). This implies that for SGB parent members to have knowledge of their roles and functions, they have to be literate and skilful. In this regard, numerous researchers pointed out that the ability of an SGB, especially the parent members of the SGB, to govern a school, depends largely on their literacy levels, knowledge, skills, and experience of governance (Tsetetsi et al. 2008; Mncube 2009; Xaba 2011). This means that the SGB members should be people with a high level of literacy. The SASA however, does not require any literacy levels from the parent members to serve on the SGB. The only requirement is that the parent members must have children at the school. This places a huge challenge on these parents to positively contribute to the governance processes.

The researcher, a lecturer to principals who are attending the Advance Certificate in Education (ACE) School Leadership programme at the University of the Free State (UFS), realised that there are still many principals who undermine the status, power, roles and functions of the SGBs as espoused by the South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996, hereafter referred to as the SASA. The researcher also found that this state of affairs in schools has the potential to undermine the intentions of the SASA of promoting a partnership between the SGBs and principals. This situation in some schools prompted the researcher to embark on this study.

However, it is currently not clear which factors might pose a threat to the partnership between SGBs and principals.

The aim of this article is to report on the reasons for the failure of the partnership between the SGBs and principals. Commencing with a brief overview of a partnership, especially in an educational context, the researcher will then deal with the reasons for the failure of the partnership and make recommendations to improve the quality thereof.

Theoretical Framework

In the business world a partnership means that a number of people, who have a common goal, co-operate with one another by contributing something of value to the relationship, with

the aim of making a profit (Potgieter et al. 1997: 8). Du Toit et al. (2007: 67) contend that the success of a partnership depends on mutual trust and respect among the partners. According to them, partners have joint control and authority over the business and are also jointly liable for the partnership debts.

In South Africa, public schools as organisations are managed along business principles, except that the aim is not profit, but rather quality learning outcomes exhibited by the learners. As in a business, the SASA envisages a partnership based on trust between the SGB and the principal to serve the best interests of the school. Lazarus (2001:8) describes a partnership as the vehicle for engagement and notes that through a partnership, one is confronted with the different realities and forms of knowledge each partner brings to the relationship, and that new realities and new forms of knowledge may consequently emerge. Joubert and Bray (2007:18) consider this mutual trust and respect between the partners as crucial for the success of a school governing partnership. This implies that a partnership should be based on mutual trust and respect between the two parties, where each partner is equal, with no dominance from one partner over the other. Such a partnership also implies the existence of openness, cooperation, participation and accountability between the partners, to work together in all spheres of management and governance, so as to promote the best interest of their school. For this partnership to succeed, specific knowledge and skills are required from SGB members which will enable them to perform their roles and functions effectively. Tsetetsi et al. (2008:387) argue that the ability of the SGB to govern a school depends on their literacy levels, knowledge, skills and experience of governance. Their views support the findings of the report of The Review of School Governance (DoE 2004:91), which states that 44% of participants felt that the skills deficit of SGBs weakened their effective functioning. Mestry (2006:28) highlights the fact that although the SASA (RSA 1996 (b)) provides guidelines for SGBs and principals on their roles and responsibilities in managing the school's finances, some SGBs and principals still struggle to manage their school's finances, because they either have too little knowledge of the Act, or interpret the Act incorrectly. He further states that some SGBs and principals are

simply not able to work out practical solutions to their financial problems because of their lack of financial knowledge, skills and expertise. Section 20 of the SASA (1996) stipulates the functions of the SGBs which include supporting the principal and educators in the execution of their functions. It also entails, amongst other things, roles and functions such as administering and controlling the school property, buildings, school grounds and assets, as well as making recommendations for the appointment of personnel. Additional functions may be allocated to the SGB in terms of section 21 of the SASA, provided that the Head of Department is satisfied that the SGB can perform these functions (DoE 1997:32). These would include functions such as determining the school's extramural curriculum, the choice of subject options, the development of policies, purchasing learning and teaching materials and paying for services such as water and electricity. To perform these specialised functions SGBs have to be trained not only to improve their capacity, but also to ensure that they understand their roles and responsibilities clearly (Tsoetsi et al. 2008:397).

Prior to 1994, principals were vested with all the power to manage their schools on their own. By democratising education in South Africa, freedom was given to parents to become involved in the governance of the schools which their children attend and to make decisions about the standard and quality of education. Heystek (2004:311) supports the government's approach of involving the local community in the governance of the school and states that this change is in line with the principles of decentralised management within self-managing schools. However, principals do not always welcome this sharing of power. Shearn et al. (1995: 179) assert that in some instances, principals have been found to dominate decision making in SGBs. Karlsson (2002:332) adds that in almost every SGB she studied, principals played a dominant role in meetings and decision making. She attributes this dominant role to the principal's position of power in the school and the level of his/her education, in contrast to the other members. He/she has first access to information from education authorities, as well as the fact that he/she executes the decisions taken by the SGB. These findings demonstrate that because principals are in the privileged posi-

tion of having knowledge of policies and regulations, they will take advantage of the SGB's lack thereof and dominate the decision-making process. Mncube (2009:99) also found that SGBs are not always given sufficient opportunity by principals to participate in the decision-making process. He attributes SGBs' lack of participation in decision making to a lack of confidence. He is also of the opinion that SGBs need to have a certain level of competency, literacy knowledge and skills to be able to make positive contributions. This lack of confidence may be attributed to the perception which the principals hold that they are more educated and knowledgeable about educational aspects than the SGBs. Consequently, SGBs may be led to believe that they should leave all the decisions in the hands of the principal and simply carry out orders. This type of situation in a school is in direct conflict with the spirit in which the SASA was adopted. However, it is understandable, that despite the intention of the SASA, principals will continue to strive to protect their own integrity and the image and reputation of the school before taking decisions that will not be in the best interests of the school and the learners.

With the introduction of the SASA, two centres of power were established in public schools. McLellan (1996:44) states that no longer can a principal regard him- or herself as the sole governor of the school, because SGBs have been elected to govern schools. Mestry (2006:28) supports McLellan's statement asserting that many principals feel threatened, because SGBs have been given the responsibility of managing the school's finances. They no longer possess the sole power of managing the school and taking all the decisions on their own. Khuzwayo and Chikoko (2009:147) believe that an effective partnership of trust between the principal and the SGB is essential if the staff and governors are to contribute positively to the effectiveness of the school. Heystek (2006:474) points out that although emphasis is placed on the SGB by legislation to be in a relationship of trust with the school, in practice, trust is also expected from other parties, namely the principal, the SMT and the educators. This notion is supported by Clase et al. (2007:243) with their contention that the proper functioning of any country's education system is dependent to a great extent, on the mutual trust and collaboration that exists among all partners.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The aim of this study is to establish the reasons why the partnership between SGBs and principals is unsuccessful in their schools. The qualitative research method was employed to elicit the principal's views on why the partnership between themselves and the SGB is failing. Qualitative researchers are motivated by an in-depth inquiry into a phenomenon in its natural setting, to make sense of, as well as to interpret the phenomenon in terms of meanings and understandings constructed by people (Denzin 2005:3). The researcher requested the participants to write narratives on the question: 'Why is the partnership between principals and SGBs failing?' The qualitative research method allowed the researcher to elicit the information needed from the narratives of the participants and to analyse it. Through this method, the researcher could interpret and understand the complex views of the participants and the subjective meanings they assign to their experiences.

DATA COLLECTION

The researcher used the convenience sampling method by engaging practising principals from the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE), which is presented at the Faculty of Education by the University of the Free State. Principals were requested to write narratives about four questions that dealt with the roles played by the SGB in their schools to ensure that quality education takes place; the extent to which the partnership between SGBs and principals is successful or unsuccessful in their schools; the extent to which SGBs are involved in participative decision making; and to what extent SGB members are trained to perform their roles and functions effectively. These principals were selected by the Free State Department of Education from across the Free State province for the ACE programme in an effort to improve the quality of education in their respective schools. The principals constitute mostly those from the townships and rural areas, who on average, have more than five years' experience as principals or more than ten years' experience as teachers or as senior managers. The class consisted of fifty practising school principals, both male and female, in their final year of study.

Twenty-five of them voluntarily participated in the inquiry.

DATA ANALYSIS

In analysing the narratives, two coding procedures, namely open coding and axial coding were used (Merriam 2009). Four questions served as the main themes. After carefully reading through the responses by the participants, open coding was used to identify the sub-themes. The researcher then categorised the sub-themes according to their properties, dimensions and incidents. In applying the axial coding method, the researcher identified relationships or connections between the main themes and the sub-themes to assist in giving meaning to the themes (Nieuwenhuis 2008:107).

Trustworthiness

The following two strategies were used to strengthen the study:

- A peer check was done. The researcher and an experienced qualitative researcher independently read and coded the transcripts and took part in consensus discussions (McMillan and Schumacher 2001: 274).
- Member checking was used. If something was not understood during the interviews, the researcher went back to the participants to confirm/explain the meaning that was asked for (McMillan and Schumacher 2001:275).

Ethical Considerations

In this enquiry, the voluntary participation of the participants was acknowledged at all times. All the participants were informed of the aim of the inquiry, the research methods, the nature of their participation, confidentiality and the possible publication of the results (Burgess 1989:6). They were also constantly assured of their anonymity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the principals' narratives about the partnership between the two centres of power, most of them mentioned that this partnership is fraught with problems and is unsuccessful. They highlighted, amongst other things, the SGBs'

lack of understanding of their roles and functions; trust relations; control of schools by SGBs; dominance of principals over SGBs; the literacy levels of SGBs; and their poor financial knowledge, as the key reasons for the unsuccessful partnership. The importance of this partnership is that both centres of power must work together in the best interest of the learners. These reasons cited by the principals, in effect means that the partnership as envisaged by the SASA has failed. The first reason for the failure of the partnership is discussed below.

SGBs do not Understand Their Roles and Functions

Despite the fact that the SASA (RSA 1996: s.16) is clear about the roles and functions of the SGBs and the principals, SGBs more often than not, do not understand their roles and functions. This is illustrated by the following three extracts from the narratives:

Sometimes the SGBs overstep the mark and move on to management issues (Principal D).

Some members overstep their territory; for example, trying to execute the functions of school management (Principal U).

SGBs do not stick to governance and want to do administration, which causes friction (Principal Q).

This 'overstepping' seems to be a common problem in South African schools. Khuzwayo and Chikoko (2009:148) note, for example, that principals find it difficult to perform their duties as required by the SASA, because of what they view as 'interference' by SGB chairpersons. Bush and Heystek (2003:129) confirm these findings and mention that parent members of the SGB at an Afrikaans-medium school asked whether they could sit in during the interview between themselves, as researchers and the principal. Heystek (2006:480) found that in one school, the chair of the SGB locks and unlocks the gates, tells the educators where to park their cars and walks to the classes to 'lend' support. This overstepping of boundaries may, amongst other things, be the result of ignorance, poor literacy levels of members of SGBs and their inability to correctly interpret the SASA (Heystek 2006:482; Tsotetsi et al. 2008:387). Xaba (2011:210) argues that while SGBs do not really succeed in dealing with the challenges of their roles and responsibilities, these challenges

are not only located in their functional abilities, but are inherent in the specialised and skills-based nature of the prescribed functions themselves. This lack of understanding may create serious tensions between the two centres of power and may ultimately influence the trust relationship negatively.

Trust Relations

SGB members sometimes disrespect the principals. According to the participants, the SGBs abuse their position of trust:

The partnership has been unsuccessful for the past six years, because the chairperson of the SGB does not act in the best interests of the school. He always looks for what he can get from the school. When contractors tender for work at the school, he manipulates the tenders in such a way that his friends get the tenders (Principal C).

Principals and SGB bodies have often been subjected to forensic audits by the DoE due to the mismanagement of funds through misappropriation, fraud, pilfering of cash, theft and improper control of financial records. According to Mestry (2006:29), the issue of mismanagement and misappropriation of school funds has subjected the principal and/or SGB members, in some instances, to be named in legal action. Heystek (2006:474) attests that being a member of the SGB means that an individual accepts the trust vested in him or her, which means that the member should act in good faith and with due diligence towards the school. He also warns that members of the SGB should avoid the kind of behaviour which might lead to fraudulent conduct, recklessness or dishonesty. The findings of this study are thus confirmed by the literature; namely, that some SGBs tend to misuse their power to promote their own interests and in the process, break their positions of trust with the school. The trust relationship between the partners in a school is of utmost importance for the effective functioning of that school, and should be regularly reviewed (Joubert and Bray 2007:18).

The tension between the two centres of power is not only obvious from the participants' discussion of SGBs' fraudulent actions, but also in the explanation by some of the participants that there are SGB members who wish to be in control.

Control of School by SGB

Principals were concerned that some SGB members wished to control their schools:

Some SGB members are bent on disciplining the principal and want to control me (Principal Q).

Some SGB members, especially the older ones, are under the impression that they should be policing the principal and the educators. This situation creates tension between the two groups (Principal O).

The literature indicates that with the decentralisation of governance, power and authority have been bestowed upon the SGBs through the SASA. Heystek (2006:475) warns that this power and authority of the SGBs may lead parents to believe that they can 'rule' or control the school through the SGB. Verhoeven (1996:144) raises concern about the considerable amount of power and authority vested in the SGBs and contends that it presents a threat to principals who, in the past, possessed all the power to manage the school. Khuzwayo and Chikoko (2009:147-149) are of the view that the two centres of power, which were created by the SASA, have the potential to create conflict between the SGB and the principal if this power is not managed properly. The danger of this arrangement is that too much power is vested in the SGB, while the principal and the educators are actually running the school. This perception undermines the principle of a partnership between the SGB and the principal. A partnership is based on mutual trust and respect between the two parties, where each partner is equal, with no dominance by one partner over the other. The establishment of the two centres of power by the SASA has created a position of dominance in some schools by one centre of power over the other. Conversely, some of the participants' narratives refer to the dominance of principals in schools.

Dominance of Principals over SGBs

According to Van Wyk (in Mncube 2009:95), SGBs are expected to be abreast of the latest developments in education and to be agents of change in their schools, because of the powers vested in them through the SASA. However, despite SGBs having extensive power and authority, some principals continue to dominate

meetings and school activities, as revealed by the following participants in their narratives:

In township schools principals still dominate discussions (Principal K).

Because I, as principal, have knowledge of the policies and regulations of the Department, I always give them direction (Principal N).

The above statements align with the literature. Shearn et al. (1995:179) attest that in some instances, principals have been accused of, and found to dominate decision making in SGBs. Although Heystek (2006:480) found that in some black schools the parents dominate the relationship, Karlsson (2002:332) states that in almost every SGB she studied, principals played a dominant role in meetings and decision making. She attributes this dominant attitude of principals to their position of power in the school, the level of their education in contrast to the SGB members, through having first access to information from education authorities, as well as the fact that he/she executes the decisions taken by the SGBs. It therefore stands to reason that some principals would resist sharing power and working together with SGBs in a partnership, because they have become used to possessing all the power to manage the school, including its finances. This power struggle between the two centres of power will continue, unless the partnership concept is adopted by both players, in order to ensure that their schools are successful. This dominant attitude which is displayed by the principals can be viewed as a means to cling to the power they had before the introduction of the SASA. According to Karlsson (2002:332) this dominance is exercised to such an extent, that SGBs succumb to it and become reluctant to voice their ideas and opinions. The following excerpts from the principals' narratives illustrate this fact.

They (SGB) are very reluctant to voice their ideas (Principal L).

They (SGB) always take what I say. They do not question. I long to see them questioning and giving their own opinions and not just agree with what the SMT and I say (Principal P).

Mncube (2009:99) confirms that SGBs are not always given sufficient opportunity to participate in the meetings because of the dominant attitude of the principal. He attributes this reluctance and lack of participation by the SGBs to a lack of confidence. Moreover, they need to have a certain level of competency, literacy and

skill to be able to make positive contributions in the best interests of the school. He further attributes this lack of confidence by the SGBs to the perception that principals and SMTs are more educated and knowledgeable about educational aspects than they are. In this case, they may be led to believe that they should leave all the decisions in the hands of the principal and the SMT and simply carry out orders, as confirmed by principal G, who wrote:

They (SGB) just carry out orders.

This type of situation in a school is in direct conflict with the spirit in which the SASA was adopted. However, it is understandable, that despite the intention of the SASA, principals will strive to protect their own integrity, as well as the image and reputation of the school before taking decisions that will not be in the best interests of the school and the learners.

The participants also pointed to the high rate of illiteracy or semi-literacy of parent governors on the SGBs, as some of the reasons for the failure of the partnership between SGBs and principals.

Literacy Levels of SGB Members

Some of the participants made it very clear that the partnership was unsuccessful where SGB members were illiterate.

The partnership was successful when SGB members were people who could read and write; people who had university degrees and who knew the importance of education (Principal Q).

The partnership is successful where the SGB members are more literate (Principal K).

The literacy levels of SGB members also determine the extent to which they are capable of performing their duties as prescribed by the SASA. The formulation of policies, which requires a reasonable literacy level, is the responsibility of the SGB. In this regard, two principals reported:

The partnership is not successful because the SGB members do not have a high level of education and grapple with policies (Principal U).

Most members of SGBs are not literate and have a problem in interpreting the constitution and policies (Principal L).

These principals attest that the partnership between SGBs and themselves can be successful only if SGB members are literate. Heystek (2006:280) argues that because of their illiteracy,

parent governors cannot interpret legislation and policies and may even make their own interpretations, or ultimately depend on the principal for the interpretation of the constitution and school policies. He adds that the high rate of illiteracy among parental governors makes it very difficult for them to formulate new policies for the school, which are a requirement of the DoE. The illiteracy and skills deficiency of SGBs are a major challenge to many principals who have to draw up the policies of the school on behalf of the SGB, as well as implement them. This further places SGB members in a poor position to govern the school. Tsotetsi et al. (2008:387) claim that the ability of SGBs to govern schools depends on their members' literacy levels, skills, knowledge and experience of governance. Moreover, the report of The Review of School Governance (DoE 2004:91), indicates that 44% of participants felt that the skills deficit of SGBs weakened the effective functioning of SGBs.

The above principals and authors are in agreement that the partnership between SGBs and principals is not successful because some members of SGBs are illiterate. Their statements further suggest that the SGBs' inability to read and write poses a challenge for the SGBs to develop policies or to interpret the constitution and other education related policies. This inability of the SGBs to read and understand the SASA or other acts and policies, creates a situation where the SGB relies on the principal for the interpretation of all documents. Consequently, this results in principals taking all decisions on the SGB's behalf.

Reliance of SGBs on the Principal

The SGBs' reliance on their principals, even regarding matters that involve them directly, is illustrated by the following:

The previous SGB left 95% of the decisions in the hands of the principal and the SMT (Principal B).

The SGB relies mostly on what is said by the principal (Principal L).

The SGB looks up to the principal and SMT for leadership, even in matters that involve them directly (Principal P).

They rely on the principal and the SMT to lead the activities; they just follow suit (Principal M).

Van Wyk (in Mncube 2009:95) posits that illiterate parents are unable to keep abreast of the new challenges in education with some SGBs tending to abdicate their responsibilities to the school principal, thus becoming passive participants. This notion is confirmed by Khuzwayo and Chikoko's (2009:161) findings which reveal that SGB chairpersons are largely dependent on the principal for guidance on school governance and policy matters.

The literature and the statements by the principals confirm that there are some SGBs who are solely reliant on their principals. Their statements suggest that some SGBs lack the knowledge and skills to perform the roles and functions assigned to them by the SASA. The implication of this lack of knowledge and uncertainty, inevitably and subsequently cause some SGBs to be subservient to principals. Thus, they become mere observers and rubber stamps, instead of being in a partnership that serves the best interests of the learners.

Another reason why the partnership is not successful between the SGB and the principal is the lack of financial knowledge by SGB members.

Poor Financial Knowledge of SGB Members

As stipulated in section 20 of the SASA (RSA 1996 (b):s.20), the SGB must perform all functions which give them full responsibility for managing the finances of the school. However, SGBs often lack financial knowledge and skills.

The SGB lacks knowledge and skills in finances (Principal X).

The SGB just does not have enough knowledge in money matters (Principal R).

The SGB does not understand how school finances should be used (Principal G).

Mestry (2006:28) points out that although the SASA (RSA 1996 (b)) provides guidelines for the SGB and the principal on their roles and responsibilities in managing the school's finances, some SGBs and principals still struggle to manage their school's finances, because they either have too little knowledge of the Act, or interpret the act incorrectly. He also states that some SGBs and principals are simply not able to work out practical solutions to their financial problems, because of their lack of financial knowledge, skills and expertise.

The successful running of a school revolves around finances. The above-mentioned principals point out that some SGBs lack financial knowledge and skills, despite the fact that SGBs have been given full responsibility by legislation to manage the finances of their schools. This implies that SGBs should have the requisite financial knowledge and skills in order to run the school effectively. These statements also suggest that the lack of financial knowledge and skills may result in the SGB being unable to establish a finance committee or develop a financial policy for the school, which in turn, could lead to financial mismanagement. In a business, partners have joint control and authority over the finances and are jointly liable for the partnership (Du Toit et al. 2007:67). The same is expected from the partnership in a school; thus, the establishment of the finance committee which consists of members of the SGB and the SMT who are responsible for the finances of the school.

CONCLUSION

The SASA envisages a partnership between SGBs and principals of public schools. However, the majority of the participants in this study pointed out that the partnership between SGBs and principals is unsuccessful. They identified, amongst other things, that SGBs do not understand their roles and functions; a lack of trust relations; control of schools by SGBs; the dominance of principals over SGBs; poor literacy levels of SGBs; the reliance of SGBs on the principal; and the SGBs' poor financial knowledge, as some of the reasons for the failure of the partnership. When considering why the aforementioned reasons are not working in some schools, it is important to understand the position of the principal. Furthermore, it is also important to remember that the participants in this study are principals who are supposed to ensure that their schools are democratic and efficient. It is evident from the above reasons that the principals do not understand the intention of the SASA with regard to the forging of a partnership between themselves and the SGBs. Furthermore, it is evident that they do not understand the precepts of the SASA. The SASA states that the principal must assist the SGB in the execution of their duties. From some of the reasons above, this is clearly not happening. It has also emerged

that some SGBs do not understand their roles and functions. The aforementioned suggests that both centres of power do not understand the prescripts of the SASA, which is the main reason for the failure of the partnership. Therefore, knowledge of and the interpretation of the SASA by both centres of power is essential for the success of the partnership. Additionally, the above reasons for the failure of the partnership, pose a threat that conflict between the two centres of power may become unavoidable. Conflict between the two centres of power will result in their ultimately failing to work together in the best interests of the learners and the school, thus causing the school to become dysfunctional. By exposing the failure of the partnership between the two centres of power, the opportunity is presented to the DoE to act decisively and to implement measures that will enhance the principle of partnership between the SGB and the principal, in the best interests of the learners and the school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study was limited by the target population being principals from the Free State only. A more extensive study which could include principals from throughout South Africa, may add more insight into this phenomenon. Numerous calls have been made by the academe for capacity building that would improve the knowledge of the two centres of power because the current type of capacity building for the SGBs seems irrelevant and inadequate and does not address their core function, which is school governance. Therefore, unless effective capacity-building programmes are devised and implemented by the different PDoEs to improve the knowledge base of SGB members with regard to their specific tasks, the partnership between the two centres will remain problematic.

To address this crucial issue of building capacity, it is recommended that the SASA be translated into all eleven languages to make its contents more understandable for all stakeholders. In addition, the SASA should be amended to include specifically, the number of capacity-building workshops for both centres of power per annum. These workshops should be aimed at building a working relationship between SGBs and principals, which will ultimately lead to a partnership between the two centres of

power. This partnership will help them to better understand their main function, which is to promote the best interests of the learners and the school. Furthermore, each PDoE should partner with a tertiary institution which could assist in developing both centres of power in terms of governance and management. Lastly, the PDoE should establish a structure which would ensure that these partnerships are functional and successful in all public schools in the interests of education in South Africa. This challenge lies undeniably on the shoulders of the DoE, which is the custodian of education in this country.

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