

When Devolved Power is Re-centralised: The Adulteration of Deliberative Democracy in School Governing Bodies

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ABSTRACT This article reports findings of a study on shared decision-making in School Governing Bodies (SGBs) of township secondary schools. The focus was on the manifestation of power in the shared decision-making process and how it is experienced and perceived by SGB members. The study adopted a qualitative multi-site case study design. Data were collected through semi-structured one session heterogeneous focus group interviews and supplemented with one to one interviews. Data analysis was based on Teschs steps for open coding and it generated a number of themes which form the bases for discussing findings. Findings suggest that the decision-making power that is devolved to SGBs is not enjoyed equally by all members. Rather, it is centred on the principal and some elite group who do not follow the prescripts of deliberative democracy when exercising it. It is argued that since SGB members are not inherently undemocratic, their decision-making practices can be aligned to deliberative democracy tenets through more accountability measures and capacity building.