

AN EXPLORATORY SURVEY ABOUT THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING
IN VHEMBE DISTRICT SCHOOLS

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Abstract: The study was conducted at Malamulele Central and Malamulele-West educational districts of Vhembe District in Limpopo Province. Data was gathered from 4 schools. Three of the 4 schools were public schools, whereas 1 of the schools was a private school. All 4 schools fall under the same circuit. The study was conducted in order to assess and evaluate the quality of leadership provided by the School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in the 4 schools. The 4 schools were Jim Yingwane High School (Public school), Mahlefunye Primary School (Public school), EPP Mhinga High School (Public school), and Holy Rosary Catholic School (Private or independent school). The total number of students in the 4 schools was 2, 500. Data was collected on a total of 49 variables of the study by using a questionnaire. All 4 schools were under the Malamulele Central and Malamulele-West educational districts of Vhembe District in Limpopo Province. From among the 4 schools, 3 are public schools, whereas 1 is a private schools. All 4 schools fall under the same circuit. Data was collected from 27 members of SGBs and 58 teachers and 20 circuit officials (105 participants of study). Data was collected from 105 eligible participants by using a self-administered questionnaire of study. The quantitative aspect of study entailed collecting data from n=105 respondents. Frequency tables, percentages, pie charts and bar charts were used for summarising results. The results showed that 69 of the 105 respondents (66%) of the 105 respondents were happy with the quality of academic leadership in SGBs. The remaining 36 of the 105 respondents (34%) were not happy with the quality of academic leadership in SGBs.

Keywords: Vhembe District, Quality of teaching and learning, School Governing Bodies

Introduction and background to study

The study was conducted at Malamulele Central and Malamulele-West educational districts of Vhembe District in Limpopo Province. Data was gathered from 4 schools. Three of the 4 schools were public schools, whereas 1 of the schools was a private school. All 4 schools fall under the same circuit. The study was conducted in order to assess and evaluate the quality of leadership provided by the School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in the 4 schools. The 4 schools were Jim Yingwane High School (Public school), Mahlefunye Primary School (Public school), EPP Mhinga High School (Public school), and Holy Rosary Catholic School (Private or independent school). The total number of students in the 4 schools was 2, 500. Data was collected on a total of 49 variables of the study by using a questionnaire. All 4 schools were under the Malamulele Central and Malamulele-West educational districts of Vhembe District in Limpopo Province.

Data was collected from 27 members of SGBs and 58 teachers and 20 circuit officials. Runhare, Ouda, Vele and Mudzielwana (2021) have shown that the quality of leadership in SGBs in Limpopo Province needs to be improved in order to ensure academic quality and professional integrity in public schools. Muthala, Govender and Ajani (2022) have shown that SGBs must involve parents and legal guardians so that the quality of education can be improved in all public schools. Ramaano (2021) has shown that accountability to learners and good governance are needed for ensuring academic quality and professional integrity in all public schools. Worku (2019:109-120) has argued that a key mandate of SGBs in public schools should be to ensure the recruitment of teachers who are suitably qualified to teach and are committed to improve the pass rates of their learners. The research work by

Walker (2022:543-559) shows that commitment from teachers requires loyalty to learners and due respect for the teacher's profession.

Objective of study

The overall objective of study was to assess and evaluate the level of academic leadership provided in the 4 schools by members of SGBs. The study has the following specific objectives:

- To assess and evaluate the quality of partnership amongst all affected parties;
- To determine whether the applicable system has appropriate institutional policies for ensuring sound governance and administration in education;
- To identify the challenges that could hamper the envisaged partnership compared to how things were done in the past under apartheid regime;
- To assess and evaluate the degree of performance by learners and teachers during the course of the year within the current system in place if the intended results are achieved to the satisfactory of school community at large and;
- To establish whether effectiveness of the school governing bodies have a direct impact on the quality of the results of the schools.

Literature review

Mestry (2018) and Spaul (2013) have identified systemic problems related to school level governance in School Governing Boards (SGBs) in Limpopo Province. Both studies have identified major obstacles to quality teaching and learning in South African public schools. Examples of such obstacles are absenteeism, lack of punctuality, indiscipline, unethical conduct, and inability to take disciplinary action against teachers and learners who violate school level discipline. Additional causes identified by the authors are poor laboratory conditions, failure to distribute books in time to learners, failure to check lesson plans prepared by teachers on a regular basis, inability to recruit good teachers, lack of funds, lack of books and teaching aids that are required for proper teaching and learning in classrooms.

Motsodisa (2019:65-87) has identified barriers to quality teaching and learning in Tshwane North District public schools, and has identified strike actions, absenteeism by teachers, and inability to follow participatory and transformational leadership styles in schools as main causes of poor academic performance among learners. Runhare, Ouda, Vele and Mudzielwana (2021) have identified factors that undermine the quality of academic leadership in Limpopo Province public schools. These factors undermine the quality of learning and teaching and professional integrity in public schools. Muthala, Govender and Ajani (2022) have identified factors that deny parents and legal guardians the right to participate in SGBs in all public schools of Limpopo Province. The authors have argued that parents, legal guardians and members of the community must be supported, encouraged and motivated to participate in school level affairs that affect the quality of teaching and learning. According to the authors, strict monitoring and control are required to ensure accountability to learners and their parents. That is, it is essential to apply strict processes of monitoring and accountability in all schools to ensure the completion of teaching curricula and syllabi within allocated timetables.

A key aspect of ensuring academic quality in public schools is performance monitoring and the management of trade unions on academic affairs. Motsodisa (2019:65-87) has argued that ensuring school level discipline requires the ability to ensure the continuity and predictability of all scheduled teaching and learning activities in schools. This means principals must protect academic calendars from abuse arising from strike actions by teachers. To achieve this goal, effective leadership is needed at all levels including SGBs, principals, teachers, learners, parents and guardians. Baloyi and Worku (2021:99-104) have shown that learners must be carefully monitored and supervised so that they can use their learning times in schools effectively and without being distracted. Punctuality is a key aspect of learning and teaching in classrooms. Completing the planned syllabi and curricula is equally important. The authors have pointed out that rewards and incentives should be provided to outstanding teachers, principals and learners in public schools.

The survey by Ramaano (2021) has identified various administrative, logistical and leadership factors that undermine accountability to learners and parents in all public schools. According to the author, members of School Governing

Boards (SGBs) must be encouraged to participate in all affairs that involve teaching and learning and the recruitment of administrative and academic employees in schools. In this regard, Munyai, Litshani and Mulovhedzi (2021) have identified factors that undermine the ability of learners in public schools to write and read well, and to understanding mathematics and science subjects well enough. Hlongwane, Slotow and Munyai (2021) have shown that rural schools are particularly disadvantaged due to inadequate resources needed for proper teaching and learning.

Mmbengwa, Qin and Nkobi (2021) have shown that public school graduates in Vhembe District lack adequate skills due to poor levels of teaching and learning in all public schools of Limpopo Province. The survey by Cloete, Mouton and Sheppard (2015) have pointed out that the participation of stakeholders such as parents and legal guardians in school affairs is vital for ensuring accountability to learners and local communities. The authors have argued that lack of accountability to learners and their parents is attributed to dysfunctional SGBs in schools. In comparison with public schools, private schools perform relatively better. Khosa and Mulovhedzi (2020) have shown that in most rural public schools in Limpopo Province, lack of accountability to learners and parents often results in poor learning and teaching.

Munyai, Litshani and Mulovhedzi (2021) have made a call for further research to identify the root causes of failure among learners in public schools to write and read well, and to understanding mathematics and science subjects well enough. Hlongwane, Slotow and Munyai (2021) have pointed out that most of the data about rural schools in Vhembe District is not reliable, current and complete. Distraction resulting from use of social media during lectures is an obstacle in Tshwane North District public schools (Worku, 2022:983-993), and often undermines the ability of learners to write properly in English.

Mestry (2018) and Spaul (2013) have shown that there is a dire need for enhancing the level of academic leadership in SGBs in Limpopo Province. Runhare, Ouda, Vele and Mudzielwana (2021) have shown that the quality of leadership in SGBs in Limpopo Province needs to be improved in order to ensure academic quality and professional integrity in public schools. Muthala, Govender and Ajani (2022) have shown that SGBs must involve parents and legal guardians so that the quality of education can be improved in all public schools. Ramaano (2021) has shown that accountability to learners and good governance are needed for ensuring academic quality and professional integrity in all public schools.

Methods and materials of study

The study was conducted in Vhembe District of Limpopo Province by gathering data from 4 schools. From among the 4 schools, 3 are public schools, whereas 1 is a private schools. All 4 schools fall under the same circuit. Quantitative data was collected from 27 members of SGBs and 58 teachers and 20 circuit officials (105 participants of study). Data was collected from 105 eligible participants by using a self-administered questionnaire of study. The quantitative aspect of study entailed collecting data from n=105 respondents. Frequency tables, percentages, pie charts and bar charts were used for summarising results. Qualitative analysis was performed by using thematic and document analysis (Li & Zhang, 2022:149-165). The qualitative aspect of study entailed conducting individual 1-hour-long interviews with 12 officials. Interviews were transcribed, coded and categorised. Two themes were created out of codes. Theme 1 was factors that undermine academic leadership. Theme 2 was remedial or feasible actions that should be taken in order to ensure satisfactory academic leadership in public schools. Thematic analysis was used for performing qualitative data analysis. Triangulation was used for assessing trustworthiness of results obtained from qualitative analysis. Triangulation is a method of confirming facts obtained from qualitative studies. Saturation was reached after interviewing 12 officials. From then on, interview results were a repeat of what had already been found from the first 12 participants.

Results of study

Table 1 shows frequency counts and percentages for the characteristics of the 105 participants of study. The table shows that 69 of the 105 respondents (66%) of the 105 respondents were happy with the performance of School Governing Boards (SGBs). The remaining 36 of the 105 respondents (34%) were not happy with the performance of SGBs. The percentage of participants from public schools was 75.24%. The percentage of participants from private schools was 24.76%. About 55% of participants were teachers. About 26% of participants were SGB members. About 19% of participants were circuit officials. Male participants accounted for about 61% of the 105

participants. Female participants accounted for about 39% of participants. About 50% of participants had ages of 40 years or less. About 50% of participants had ages of 41 years or more. Less than 3% of participants had Grade 12 or matric level academic qualifications. About 23% of participants had certificates of teaching. About 29% of them had teaching diplomas. About 30% of them had Bachelor’s degrees. About 9% of them had Honour’s degrees. About 6% of them had Master’s degrees.

Table 1: General profile of participants of survey (n=105)

General profile of participants of survey	Number (Percentage)
Perceived level of satisfaction with the performance of SGBs	Adequate: 69 (65.71%) Inadequate: 36 (34.29%)
Type of school	Public: 79 (75.24%) Private: 26 (24.76%)
Designation of participant	Teacher: 58 (55.24%) SGB member: 27 (25.71%) Circuit official: 20 (19.05%)
Gender of participant	Male: 64 (60.95%) Female: 41 (39.05%)
Age category of participant	40 years or less: 53 (50.48%) 41 years or more: 52 (49.52%)
Highest level of education of participant	Grade 12 or less: 3 (2.86%) Certificate: 24 (22.86%) Diploma: 30 (28.57%) Bachelor’s degree: 32 (30.48%) Honour’s degree: 9 (8.57%) Master’s degree: 6 (5.71%) Doctoral degree: 1 (0.95%)

Table 2 shows frequency counts and percentages for the length of experience held by the 105 participants of study in teaching, membership of SGBs and membership of circuit committees. The table shows that about 50% of participants had an experience of teaching for 20 years or less at the time of the survey. About 77% of participants had served as SGB members for 20 years or less at the time of the survey. About 85% of participants had served as circuit officials for over 20 years or less at the time of the survey.

Table 2: Assessment of experience of participants (n=105)

Type of experience	Number (Percentage)
Length of experience as a teacher	20 years or less: 53 (50.48%) 21 years or more: 52 (49.52%)
Length of experience as an SGB member	20 years or less: 81 (77.14%) 21 years or more: 24 (22.86%)
Length of experience as a circuit official	20 years or less: 89 (84.76%) 21 years or more: 16 (15.24%)

Table 3 shows an assessment of views held by participants on indicators of accountability to learners, parents and their legal guardians. About 71% of participants indicated that elections of SGB members were duly announced at schools. About 83% of participants indicated that the professional integrity of SGB members should be assessed. About 63% of participants indicated that the suitability of SGB members should be assessed based on past track records. About 59% of participants indicated that the Department of Education provides enough support to SGBs

so that they can implement decisions taken. About 59% of participants indicated that their schools appreciated constructive comments and suggestions made by parents of pupils. About 89% of participants indicated that their schools appreciated constructive comments and suggestions made by legal guardians of pupils. About 18% of participants indicated that all allegations of misconduct were duly investigated. About 84% of participants indicated that whistleblowers must be protected as a means of ensuring accountability.

Table 3: Assessment of views on indicators of accountability (n=105)

Views on indicators of accountability	Number (Percentage)
Elections of SGB members are announced to the general public	Yes: 75 (71.43%) No: 30 (28.57%)
The professional integrity of SGB members should be assessed	Yes: 87 (82.86%) No: 18 (17.14%)
The suitability of SGB members should be assessed based on past track record	Yes: 66 (62.86%) No: 39 (37.14%)
The Department of Education provides enough support to SGBs so that they can implement decisions taken	Yes: 62 (59.05%) No: 43 (40.95%)
The school appreciates constructive comments and suggestions made by parents of pupils	Yes: 62 (59.05%) No: 43 (40.95%)
The school appreciates constructive comments and suggestions made by legal guardians of pupils	Yes: 93 (88.57%) No: 12 (11.43%)
All allegations of misconduct are duly investigated	Yes: 19 (18.10%) No: 86 (81.90%)
Whistleblowers must be protected as a means of ensuring accountability	Yes: 88 (83.81%) No: 17 (16.19%)

Table 4 shows frequency counts and percentages for 32 indicators of the quality of leadership provided by SGBs in the 4 schools that were chosen for the study. Assessment was made by using a 5-point ordinal scale in which the level of agreement with each statement is assessed based on 5 possible values. These values are strong disagreement, disagreement, not being sure, agreement, and strong agreement with the statement provided. The results show that the perceived quality of leadership provided at the level of schools by members of SGBs was not satisfactory for most of the indicators used for assessment. The majority of participants believe that a lot more is expected from School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in terms of attracting parents and legal guardians.

Table 4: Assessment of the quality of leadership provided by SGBs (n=105)

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Members of School Governing Bodies should be assessed for competence in management and leadership qualities (Competence)	8(7.62%)	7(6.67%)	7(6.67%)	56 (53.33%)	27 (25.71%)
2. Parents must be allowed to sit on School Governing Bodies (SGBs) of public and independent schools in Vhembe District (Parents)	4(3.81%)	6(5.71%)	5(4.76%)	52 (49.52%)	38 (36.19%)
3. Legal guardians must	3(2.86%)	8(7.62%)	10(9.52%)	59 (56.19%)	25 (23.81%)

be allowed to sit on School Governing Bodies (SGBs) of public schools in Vhembe District (Sit)					
4. Educators must make the time to meet with parents at least once in a school term (time_parents)	17(16.19%)	24(22.86%)	13(12.38%)	19 (18.10%)	32 (30.48%)
5. Educators must make the time to meet with legal guardians of pupils at least once in a school term (time_guardians)	5(4.76%)	22(20.95%)	9(8.57%)	42 (53.33%)	27 (25.71%)
6. The number of educators working in Vhembe District public schools and independent schools is adequate (adequate_guardians)	5(4.76%)	22(20.95%)	9(8.57%)	42 (40.00%)	27 (25.71%)
7. There are enough number of suitably qualified educators working in Vhembe District public and independent schools (adequate_teachers)	23(21.90%)	25(23.81%)	38(36.19%)	12 (11.43%)	7 (6.67%)
8. There are enough textbooks for all pupils in Vhembe District public schools and independent schools (qualified_teachers)	21(20.00%)	51(48.57%)	15(14.29%)	12 (11.43%)	6 (5.71%)
9. Textbooks are provided to pupils at the right time in Vhembe District public schools (books_available)	16(15.24%)	25(23.81%)	40(38.10%)	8 (7.62%)	16 (15.24%)
10. Educators are punctual at the workplace in Vhembe District public schools and independent schools (punctual)	17(16.19%)	19(18.10%)	44(41.90%)	19 (18.10%)	6 (5.71%)
11. Educators use up-to-date lesson plans for teaching in Vhembe District and lesson plans used by educators are checked regularly on a weekly basis in Vhembe District (uptodate)	7(6.67%)	41(39.05%)	27(25.71%)	26 (24.76%)	4 (3.81%)
12. Lesson plans used by educators are checked regularly on a weekly basis in Vhembe District public schools	7(6.67%)	8(7.62%)	10(9.52%)	60 (57.14%)	20 (19.05%)

(check_lessonplan)					
13. Classes begin punctually in Vhembe District public schools and independent schools (classes_begin)	4(3.81%)	8(7.62%)	14(13.33%)	60 (57.14%)	19 (18.10%)
14. Classes end punctually in Vhembe District public schools and independent schools (classes_end)	16(15.24%)	12(11.43%)	33(31.43%)	40 (38.10%)	4 (3.81%)
15. Home works, assignments and tests are marked regularly in Vhembe District public schools (homework)	23(21.90%)	27(25.71%)	36(34.29%)	15 (14.29%)	4 (3.81%)
16. Feedback is provided to home works, assignments and tests promptly (feedback)	19(18.10%)	48(45.71%)	15(14.29%)	16 (15.24%)	7 (6.67%)
17. There is due respect for accountability, transparency, rules and regulations in all decisions taken in public schools and independent schools (accountability)	21(20.00%)	22(20.95%)	42(40.00%)	14 (13.33%)	6 (5.71%)
18. There is due respect for objectivity in all decisions taken in public schools and independent schools (objectivity)	14(13.33%)	30(28.57%)	42(40.00%)	13 (12.38%)	6 (5.71%)
19. There is due respect for due process and fairness in all decisions taken in public schools and independent schools (dueprocess)	21(20.00%)	19(18.10%)	43(40.95%)	20 (19.05%)	2 (1.90%)
20. Pupils are encouraged to complain to Principals about wrong treatment (complain)	7(6.67%)	7(6.67%)	61(58.10%)	26 (24.76%)	4 (3.81%)
21. School Governing Body (SGB) members must be trained on the basic principles of good governance on a regular basis (training)	8(7.62%)	7(6.67%)	6(5.71%)	56 (53.33%)	28 (26.67%)
22. The working relationship between public schools, independent schools and local communities is good enough (relationship)	12(11.43%)	13(12.38%)	33(31.43%)	44 (41.90%)	3 (2.86%)
23. The finances of public schools are managed efficiently compared to	18(17.14%)	12(11.43%)	33(31.43%)	38 (36.19%)	4 (3.81%)

independent schools (finances)					
24. The finances of public schools are audited regularly (audit)	5(4.76%)	8(7.62%)	12(11.43%)	59 (56.19%)	21 (20.00%)
25. The quality of teaching mathematics subjects and science subjects to pupils in public schools is good enough compared to independent schools (mathsandscience)	5(4.76%)	39(37.14%)	9(8.57%)	34 (32.38%)	18 (17.14%)
26. Department Heads assist educators who need training in order to improve their level of teaching skills (heads_assist)	8(7.62%)	7(6.67%)	8(7.62%)	56 (53.33%)	26 (24.76%)
27. Department Heads assist educators who need professional counselling services (counselling)	25(23.81%)	29(27.62%)	35(33.33%)	11 (10.48%)	5 (4.76%)
28. Department Heads uplift the morale of educators so that they are productive and happy at the workplace (morale)	18(17.14%)	29(27.62%)	36(34.29%)	14 (13.33%)	8 (7.62%)
29. Members of the local community are actively encouraged to take part in school activities (community)	20(19.05%)	21(20.00%)	45(42.86%)	16 (15.24%)	3 (2.86%)
30. Enough respect and appreciation is provided to educators who work hard (respect)	6(5.71%)	7(6.67%)	6(5.71%)	56 (53.33%)	30 (28.57%)
31. Awards are given to educators who improve pass rates (awards)	20(19.05%)	19(18.10%)	46(43.81%)	20 (19.05%)	0 (0.00%)
32. Members of School governing Bodies and School Management Teams work in harmony and respect with each other (harmony)	8(7.62%)	7(6.67%)	7(6.67%)	56 (53.33%)	27 (25.71%)

Discussion of results

The study has shown that 69 of the 105 respondents (66%) of the 105 respondents were happy with the quality of academic leadership in SGBs. The remaining 36 of the 105 respondents (34%) were not happy with the quality of academic leadership in SGBs. Results obtained from qualitative analysis have shown that the overall quality of academic leadership was inadequate, especially in the 3 public schools that were chosen for the survey.

Recommendations

In light of results obtained from the survey, SGBs must actively encourage and motivate parents and legal guardians to sit on SGBs and participate in school level affairs. This means that SGBs must allow membership to parents and legal guardians so that they are relevant to the needs of learners and parents. There is a dire need for monitoring and evaluation of academic services in all public schools. SGB members must be trained properly so that they have the necessary skills and competence to take appropriate decisions on behalf of learners. The study has also shown the need for more library and laboratory resources in the 3 public schools. The level of academic leadership was inadequate. SGBs must also actively work with business enterprises and industry with a view to secure the basic needs of public schools. Partnerships with industry and business are highly recommended in all four schools in Vhembe District. There is a dire need for monitoring and evaluation of academic services in all public schools. SGB members must be trained properly. More resources are needed in all three public schools. These needs can be met by way of closely working with members of industry and business.

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