

The expectations of school governing bodies with respect to educator workloads: An education labour law analysis

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ABSTRACT

Decentralisation remains a preferred instrument of education reform policies throughout the world. In theory, decentralisation shifts power and authority from the state at national level to the school community at local level. In South Africa, a decentralising initiative in education was the promulgation of the South African Schools Act, No 84 of 1996, which provided parents with an opportunity to share in the governance of a public school by being elected to serve on its school governing body.

In this context, it appears that members of school governing bodies hold unique sets of expectations when serving on a school governing body. Expectations may influence the nature and type of education to which a particular school community aspires and may consequently influence the workloads of the educators at that school. A primary search of national and international literature on governing bodies provides numerous descriptions of governmental intentions with respect to governing bodies but the expectations that governing body members have of educators, appears to be a neglected field of empirical enquiry. This study therefore examines public primary school governing body functions in the light of prevailing education labour law and other relevant law.

The findings emerging from open-ended questionnaires completed by members of school governing bodies, time-use diaries recorded by educators and interviews with principals together with an analysis of prevailing education labour law and other relevant law consistently show that the workloads of educators who teach at public primary schools situated in middle-class contexts have intensified. There appears to be a variety of factors, which singularly and collectively contribute to the intensification of educators' workloads. Among these are the increasing expectations of parents, differences in the conceptual understanding of professionalism, marketisation and managerialism arising from decentralisation and the principal's leadership style. The findings point to sport and professional development as the core duties, which demand a great deal of educators' time and appear to militate most on educators' private lives. Moreover, this research has provided conclusive evidence that despite the fact that school governing bodies' expectations of educators are aligned with prevailing education labour law and other relevant law, the open-ended nature of such law, together with omissions and silences, allows legal space for individual and contextual interpretation and implementation. It is therefore, the most prominent factor contributing to the intensification of educators' workloads.

LIST OF KEY WORDS

1. Decentralisation
2. School Governing Body
3. Expectations
4. Educator Workload
5. Core Duties
6. Education Labour Law
7. Alignment
8. Intensification
9. School Governance
10. Professional Management

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LIST OF ADDENDA

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