Use of scorecards in measuring the governance of public special schools

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ABSTRACT

Conflicts and dis-functionality in public schools is frequently the root of poor school performance and learner outcomes. This often is a direct result of poor schools governance. Studies have previously identified a number of factors affecting the standard of school governance. One of these is absence of “effective monitoring and evaluation” system for school governance. The current approach of Whole School Evaluation which incorporates the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) unfortunately does not possess adequately measurement for school governance to identify specific areas of failure. The authors have designed a measurement instrument to address this particular gap in management of public schools. This is in the form of a balanced scorecard based on Kaplan and Norton (1996) but only developed specifically for measuring the public, educational and non-profit sector. A number of school governance performance areas based on the regulatory frameworks like the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) have been linked to specific indicators and measures and streamlined towards meeting key targets for achieving satisfactory school outcomes.
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

From governance to good governance

Over the last two decades governance has become a household concept internationally, yet there has hardly been a consensus on how it could be effectively applied to achieve more accountability. Fukuda-Parr and Ponzio (2002) in ‘Governance: Past, Present, Future; Setting the governance agenda for the Millennium Declaration’ agrees that the term governance has not been consistently articulated by the international community, yet it can be generalized as:

“the process by which power and authority are exercised in a society in which different actors—government, the private sector and the civil society—try to communicate their interests; reconcile their differences and exercised their legal rights and obligations” (Fukuda-Parr and Ponzio 2002:2).

Governance refers not just to the decision-making processes in the management organisations, but on the processes and systems by which these organisations operate. It describes the mechanisms these organisation apply to ensure that their constituencies follow the established processes and policies of the organisation. Governance therefore is an instrument for maintaining oversight and accountability in a democratic way within an organisational structure to achieve its goals.

Good governance is generally understood to have at least three dimensions: first, the need for a rule-based, open, transparent, efficient, and accountable government; second, the need for government to undertake its task in a manner that is participatory, consultative and that generally lives up to the precepts of formal democracy; and third, the need for government and the state to ensure that the substantive goals of democracy, which would be compatible with the need to attain sustainable human development in the long run, are achieved (Mhone and Edighedji 2003). The Institute on Governance (IOG 2004) has subsequently published the following characteristics of good governance and which are also similar to EU Commission’s key principles of good governance:

• **Participation**: providing all men and women with a voice in decision-making.
• **Transparency**: openness, access and free flow of information.
• **Responsiveness**: of institutions and processes to stakeholders.
• **Consensus orientation**: differing interests are mediated to reach a broad consensus on what is in the general interests.
• **Equity**: all men and women have opportunities to become involved.
• **Effectiveness and efficiency**: processes and institutions produce results that meet the needs while making the best use of resources
• Accountability: of decision-makers to stakeholders.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF PUBLIC SECTOR

According to the Public Service Commission (PSC 2008), one of the key proponents of monitoring and evaluation in South Africa, the concept can be defined separately as:

Monitoring is.....

“a continuing function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of organisation an on-going developmental intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievements of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds”.

Evaluation is.....

“a systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme, or policy, design, implementation, and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficient, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of both recipient and donors”.

The Department for International Development (DFID 2005) defines M&E as a continuous internal and external process conducted by managers or the agencies assigned that responsibility to check the progress of development intervention against pre-defined objectives and plans, or simply put, ‘keeping ship on course’. DFID also views evaluation as basically asking ‘what happened and why’, and answers specific questions related to relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of the programmes output.

Monitoring entails the routine tracking of the key elements of a programme performance through record keeping, regular reporting, surveillance systems and periodic surveys. Monitoring assists programme managers to determine which areas require greater effort and to identify areas that contribute to improved programme performance. In a good monitoring and evaluation system, monitoring is essential to prepare for evaluation. Indicators selected for monitoring will be different depending on the reporting level within the management system. Evaluation is the periodic assessment of the change in targeted results that can be attributed to a programme. It attempts to link a
particular outcome or impact directly to a particular intervention after a period of time. It helps determine the value or worth of a particular programme. Evaluations can be used to link any two parts of the monitoring and evaluation framework (inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes, or impact). For example, one could evaluate whether financial inputs are effectively generating the desired training or service deliveries. At present the Balanced Scorecard is one of the most popular M & E strategies.

Scorecard for measuring the public and non-profit sector

Paul Arveson (1998) sees the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) as a strategic planning and management system to align activities to the vision and strategy of the organisation, improve internal and external communications, and monitor organisation performance against strategic goals. The BSC was originated by Kaplan and Norton in 1992 as a performance measurement framework that added strategic non-financial performance measures to traditional financial metrics in giving managers and executives a more ‘balanced’ view of organisational performance (Arveson 1998). Through a particular focus on the private sector and business monitoring and evaluation, Kaplan and Norton (1996) proposed the following four perspectives for evaluating the performance of an organisation:

- **Financial perspective:** To succeed financially, how should we appear financially?
- **Customer perspective:** To achieve our vision, how should we appear to our customers?
- **Learning and growth perspective:** To achieve our vision, how will we sustain our ability to change and improve, and adapt to changes in the environment and new changes?
- **Internal process perspective:** To satisfy our shareholders and customers, what business process must we excel at? What are the unique competencies the organisations should have?

Essentially, the BSC offers these four perspectives from which to view the organisation’s effectiveness. For each the organisation must first identify goals, and then determine measures and benchmarks that will capture the outcomes of these goals. Although empirical research and many success stories show that strategic measurement can work wonders, there are also many cases where scorecards simply did not work. The most common view argues that the BSC tool works well, when it is well implemented. In reviewing how a scorecard can be applied in measuring governance of public special schools, it is important to revisit the governance of public schools in South Africa.
GOVERNANCE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The White Paper 1 on Education and Training (RSA, 1995) paved the way for genuine democratic approach to education. It installed parents through their SGBs as the custodians of education in public schools in South Africa. However, based on the provisions of the Constitution (RSA 1996), the National Education Policy Act (1996a) serves as a basis for all education and school policies. Section 4 of the Act states that the national minister shall determine the national policy for planning, provision, financing, staffing, co-ordination, management, governance, programmes, monitoring, evaluation and well-being of the education system. The Act also provides for the MEC to be responsible for professional administration of education and schools to determine national policies for various issues of school management (Barry 2006). This Act is therefore designed to give foundation and guidance to the creation of regulations at national, provincial and institutional level of all these policies for the purposes of similarity and co-ordination.

Foster and Smith (2002) state that school governance and management are two interwoven elements in the process aimed at enabling schools to provide effective and efficient education and learning. However such provision requires clear policies and the generation, distribution and utilisation of resources in an accountable, equitable and effective manner. Meanwhile, according to Potgieter, Visser, Van der Bank, Mothata and Squelch. (1997) school governance means determining the policies and rules by which the school is to be organised and controlled. Professional management of schools, on the other hand, refers to the day-to-day administration and organising of teaching and learning at the school and to the performance of the departmental responsibilities that are prescribed by law. Davis (1999) however perceives minimum distinction is between “governance” and “professional management” of schools, these two issues are, in practice, even more intertwined than is recognised.

In 1996 the South African government passed the South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996b), also referred to in this report, as SASA (RSA, 1996b), to deal explicitly with undoing the country’s discriminatory past and to smoothen the path to an open, just and equitable system. The essential idea behind the Act was to put ownership and control of schools in the hands of parents. It mandated the establishment of a School Governing Body (SGB) at every public school in the country. The responsibilities given to SGBs include, among others:

- recommending teacher appointments;
- developing mission statements, code of conduct and other school policies;
- in special cases such as special schools, being Section 21 schools, administering school finances and property. This is one of the major responsibilities (Soudien 2003).
The SASA (RSA 1996b) was intended to build the democratic capacity of the South African people. Each province has been given a two month period in 2003 to manage SGB elections which have become the fourth largest public elections in the country. But how well is the system working? Is it building democracy? And most importantly is it delivering quality education?

SASA makes provision for both governance and professional management of public schools. In terms of SASA (1996b), the governing body, which is a statutory body of elected people, is responsible for governance and stewardship of the school whilst the principal, as part of the School Management Team (SMT), under the authority of HOD, is responsible for professional management. Public schools therefore have to appoint SGBs consisting of parents, teachers, principal, non-teaching staff, and pupils (in special cases where allowed by law). The majority of voting members must be parents. The functions of the SGB are listed, including the following:

- to develop the school’s mission and constitution;
- to determine the school’s admission policy, subject to the law;
- to determine the school’s language policy ... provided it did not discriminate on racial grounds;
- to adopt a code of conduct for learners;
- to determine the times of the school day;
- to make recommendations regarding the appointment of teaching and non-teaching staff;
- to manage school buildings and grounds;
- to draft an annual budget;
- to formulate rules for voluntary religious observance at school (RSA 1996b).

The SGBs could opt for greater decentralisation by applying for additional powers such as the maintenance and improvement of school buildings and grounds, determining subject choice and extra-curricular activities, and buying textbooks, materials and equipment. Section 21 of the SASA (RSA 1996b) states that in addition to the above functions, a school governing body can request to carry out allocated (or additional) functions. The SASA, Section 19, states that the provincial education department is responsible for providing training to the SGBs. It must be noted that SGBs currently face many difficulties which threaten their effectiveness and their ability to carry out all stated responsibilities effectively. Other complications that SGBs face have to do with the following issues:

- SGBs have been forced to focus most on budgets and school fees rather than on issues related to teaching, learning, and school mores due to the decline of state funding.
• SGBs have been handed the responsibility of fundraising, and therefore, unequal funding for schools persists, as wealthier school districts rely on their communities to strengthen the quality of education;
• SGB training has been inadequate and has not prepared members to deal with their complex responsibilities and roles (Chaka and Dieltiens 2004: 163).

However, the governing bodies must take the initiative in identifying areas in which it needs training. The HOD has the responsibility to make sure that the principal and other officers of the Department of Education assist the school governing body in this identification process. The challenge for the future is to find ways of moving democratic and effective, quality governance of schools from an idea to practice amid such economic diversity. The purpose of the SASA and other legislation is precisely to increase effective management and administration of schools.

SCORECARD FOR EDUCATION AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

“What we measure counts: measuring outcomes is important both in its own right, to demonstrate the effectiveness of what we are doing, and in creating the right incentives to improve performance.” (Dunnell 2007)

Realising how measuring performance and service quality have become increasingly concern issues over the last few decades, monitoring and evaluation of public governance has also become a concept that runs very much through the pinnacle of policy and regulatory developments in South Africa. The BSC as a tool of performance measurement and management initially used extensively for the private sector is frequently adapted and applied to the public sector. Yet as confirmed by Kaplan and Norton (1992) the BSC indeed has some additional shortcomings particular for the public and voluntary sector.

The Western Cape Education Department (WCED 2007a) suggested that Public Service Commission (PSC) is tasked and empowered to investigate, monitor, and evaluate the organisation and administration of the public service. Furthermore, it is regarded in the public sector environment as the custodian and a key driver of performance monitoring and evaluation and it also encourages the use of an adapted Kaplan and Norton’s scorecard for evaluating the performance of public sector. According to PSC (2008) some of the most important values and principles that a measuring instrument for the governance of public sector must undertake are:
• *High standard of professional ethics*
• Efficiency, effectiveness and economy
• Developmental orientation
• Equality and equitability
• Responsiveness
• Participatory
• Transparency
• Representatively (PSC 2008)

The WCED Quality Assurance’s Monitoring and Evaluation guide (2007a) sees indicators as something that, whether assessed quantitatively or qualitatively, indicates progress through measuring impact, success, or limitations of a project. In the case of school governance scorecard the intention is to measure mostly qualitative indicators. Furthermore as dictated by this WCED Quality Assurance’s Monitoring and Evaluation guide the development of these indicators will be such that they encapsulate the following elements:
  • Aptness and relevance – the indicator should be directly related to the specific objective or goal of the project
  • Specific standardised and quantifiable – these must be embroiled within the indicator
  • Acceptable and credible – to the constituencies and role-players for whom they are intended
  • Aggregation – indicators must be part of a whole and not stand-alone. The relationship between indicators for a particular goal or objective must be explicit
  • Complementary – allows for cross-checking of signals between indicators
  • Impact orientated – the indicator must measure what you are trying to achieve
  • Specific – well-defined and be understandable by all involved, not ambiguous
  • Practical – must be attainable

The overriding element of this scorecard is the fact that it must meet all the policy requirements as determined by the SASA (RSA 1996b). It is important that it operates within an enabling, legislative and regulatory environment for school monitoring and evaluation of the WCED. As a new instrument, it is imperative that the school governance BSC must be designed on the most simplified scale and must use a manageable number of the most influential and effective indicators according to the school governance goals linked to the determined performance areas. Enough room has to be created for the future expansion and development of the instrument which will be impacted on by future developments and new policies.
### Fig. 1: A Synopsis of Scorecard for Measuring School Governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Score (0-5)</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) SGB Election</td>
<td>Every three years the different school constituents elect delegates to participate on the SGB to represent their interests on school matters.</td>
<td>Correct principles and procedures are followed for electing the relevant role-players in fair and democratic manner.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Constitutionality and Legal status</td>
<td>SGB must be fully established and operating in terms of relevant laws and Constitution.</td>
<td>The SGB is in a complete juristic and constitutional state with legal capacity to perform its functions in terms of the SASA (1996). It must also be fully recognised by the laws.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) SGB Structure</td>
<td>The set-up of positions, format and numbers of representatives and organisation of the SGB.</td>
<td>Should be constituted correctly in terms of SASA Section 24 with an executive made of Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) SGB Sub-committees</td>
<td>SGB should establish various committees to handle specific school matters and to help it govern well.</td>
<td>SGB has created financial, staff appointments, sports, environment and health committee, etc. and each committee is chaired by a governing body member.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outstanding: No further improvement possible = 5. Good quality: Above average (high standard and high quality) = 4. Acceptable: Broadly typical / Average (It meets expectations) = 3. Needs improvement: Below average = 2. Needs urgent support: Well below average (unacceptably very low standard and quality) = 1. No information available = 0

Source: Authors 2011.
PRESENTING THE SCORECARD: A NORMATIVE MODEL

Fig.1 is part of the school governance scorecard model developed by the authors, it is based on a study, “A scorecard for monitoring and evaluation of governance of special schools in the Western Cape”. This model was designed mainly in terms of the principles of Kaplan and Norton’s Scorecard for Non-profit Sector (1996).

**Performance Area 1: Overall school governing body state:** The overall status of the school governing body is important for it to function effectively. As the SASA (RSA, 1996b) indicates the SGB must be established properly in terms of the law. It must also have correct structures and do all its functions as required.

Targets: To have a correct foundation framework and perform all functions excellently as required by law. To target a score of over 90% in this PA as a basis of overall success.

This scorecard model (Fig.1) is a simple instrument to facilitate reporting on governance and effective development of public special schools in the WCED. It has been built around the key principles of good governance as translated in the public sector, the WCED guidelines for effective school governance as well as the IQMS monitoring and evaluation code for schools. These WCED frameworks chiefly provide some important guidance in the development of monitoring and evaluation systems and encourage standards for school governance assessment and reporting. The following scorecard presentation as captured in Fig 1 defines how and why this model is structured in such a manner.

Essentially this BSC contains indicators, goals, measures as well as targets of good school governance practices to assist SGBs in fulfilling their school missions and developing professionally. Good practices are provided for various performance areas, i.e., state of existence and functioning of SGB; meetings; principles of good governance; vision and mission; school financial management and fundraising; communication, employing educators and staff, developing school policies, and school overall development. It focuses mainly on the context of school governance and requires little or no additional data collection from outside. It also takes view of the processes of school governance including policies, status, and responsibilities. The scorecard relies mostly on informed opinions from the school governors, principals, educators, and parents. More advantage is that it takes a short period of time and costs little resources. More issues are broadly covered, but the depth of analysis is generally low.

This scorecard approach is more useful as the focus is on improving the governance process than just measuring performance. However the confirmation of final school governance results requires an independent evaluation through other more in-depth evaluation instruments. It is based on the key performance
areas that policies of good school governance entails and each is viewed in terms of the indicators, goals, objectives and measures. The scores are allocated per indicator and constructed to the following score index as adapted from the WCED Integrated Quality Management System (2001) (See table 1).

Although Section 21 schools are not independent schools, they are more responsible for their own affairs and the school governing body carries considerably more responsibility for the success of the school. It is imperative therefore that school governance in the special schools be adequately empowered and evaluated as required in terms of the experience, expectations and responsibilities. Whereas all the special schools in the Western Cape have Section 21 status, the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) from time to time still embarks on “special projects” whereby that education department assumes the responsibility for purchasing and supplying textbooks to meet pre-identified strategic educational needs, using special funding.

In referring learners to special schools the school management and the parent or guardian need to certify certain requirements in terms of the WCED. Schools therefore need to ensure that only learners who really require extreme special care and who cannot be accommodated in mainstream schools are referred to and admitted in the special school. Moreover to manage the double complications and challenges posed by the new changes in these Section 21 schools, the WCED also concedes to a need for a high level of effectiveness and an accountability mechanism.

The major purpose is to measure the governance of public special schools and to help the school governing bodies, school principals, WCED, and stakeholders to determine their school’s progress along the school governance and management continuum. This scorecard therefore is a short, straightforward measurement tool to help public special schools identify where they are succeeding and where they need to address governance failures.

**Table 1: Score Index**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>No further improvement possible</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Above average (high standard and high quality)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>Broodly typical / Average (It meets expectations)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs Improvement</td>
<td>Below average</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs Urgent Support</td>
<td>Well below average (unacceptably very low standard and quality)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Available</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because this scorecard can be completed by both the internal and external measures, it can also be a useful team building exercise. The purpose therefore is to create performance a pattern that must guide the manner in which a school is appropriately governed as required by the SASA (RSA 1996b) stipulations on school governance. It is hence useful to assist schools gradually improve their standard of governance by periodically doing self-assessments.

The aim of this scorecard is not to enforce monitoring and evaluation to all special schools, but to be applied voluntarily to those that are willing to participate, and as such those schools will be part and members of the “School Governance Peer Evaluation Group (SGOPEG)”. The group teams with specialist bodies will, once in 2–3 years, embark on programmes of school governance peer evaluation among member schools. However in-between these periods, member schools will be allowed to use this scorecard to perform self-assessment exercises. These self-assessments would be done yearly at simultaneous periods where the scorecard website would be opened for access by school governing body internal assessors.

The ultimate intention in using an online system is to enable assessment to be done uniformly, effectively and to generate quick results. It will have a self-management system such that can, upon editing of key data, calculate the percentage results and scores by click of a button. It will be up to the particular member school to decide if they want to publicise their outcomes to other member schools or to conceal off their results. Only schools whose results are available for other members would access results of others. Nevertheless, a recommendation by Papalexandris, Ioannou, Prastacos, and Soderquist (2005), suggests that small scale re-evaluation and fine tuning of the scorecard can be performed quarterly or semi-annually with a large scale re-evaluation taking place yearly or whenever there is a significant shift in the education and school’s policy strategy is admirable.

CONCLUSION

A rigorous and somber evaluation of insufficiency in school governance performance should focus on interdependent cross-sectional indicators instead of making general assumptions based on assessment of a few performance areas. SGB’s and Principals may be unable to understand and correct governance problems without monitoring and evaluating the broader range of micro-indicators and measures of school governance. To address the governance problems and insufficiencies schools need to turn to a management tool called the balanced scorecard so as to translate schools vision and missions into measurable objectives. As management of information becomes increasingly
vital for public organisations including educational institutions and schools, the balanced scorecard was introduced in 1992 by Drs. Robert Kaplan and David Norton, as acknowledgment of the new meaning of monitoring and evaluation.

The BSC is a tool that focuses on strategy and objectives to address four perspectives, and translate the strategies into applicable action plans. As indicated earlier, the traditional analysis of a schools performance generally focused on pass rate analysis, and often ended there. But, what about the significant elements of the school that must be successful to generate good pass rates? How can they be monitored and evaluated in defined and measurable terms?

BSC does just what the name implies; it balances the performance perspectives of all the considerable elements within the governance of the school. The four perspectives used in the balanced scorecard are:

- Stakeholders: (Satisfaction)
- Managers: (Internal Processes)
- Employees: (Innovation and Learning)
- Funders: (Financial Results)

All strategies and objectives for the scorecard are aligned with the school vision and mission strategy, in order to support overall school governance success. The SGB, management and all key stakeholders should identify and prioritise areas of achievement for each perspective. By aligning with the school strategies and objectives, scorecard can extend these measurable goals into applicable action plans, which gives stakeholders both involvement in, and accountability for, school governance performance. Developing strategies and objectives for the school requires the SGB and management to consider critical factors for success in each of the scorecard perspectives. By defining the measurable elements necessary to earn stakeholder satisfaction, the SGB and school management team must develop specific action plan to achieve the goal, and still earn the returns as defined in the scorecard’s financial perspective. Providing financial incentives to SGB for achieving the measurable goals articulated in the scorecard will help to build more proactive teamwork within the school. It will also give all stakeholders a sense of ownership in the process that can lead to even more ambitious goals for the planning year.

Comprehensive measurements of school governance performance will be enhanced by using the school governance scorecard and the School Governance Index (SGI) could be developed. It is able to offer a report card on the accomplishments of each school based on the indications as well as micro-indicators for the years being investigated with reasonably complete available data for all school governance. The key issue nonetheless is to firstly understand how the scorecard is designed and how it operates. That will give information about the performance areas and indicators that are measured.
Finally, the BSC as a management tool provides feedback around both internal program processes and external outcomes in order to continuously improve school governance performance and results. SGBs use a balanced scorecard to monitor school governance performance in all areas. This balanced scorecard includes several key performance objectives that include school fundraising and finance management, educator and staff employment, and school policy formulation. Progress on each of the indicators is easily reported to the WCED, staff, and all other stakeholders regularly. Each year the SGB of special schools involved will establish specific objectives and measures of the balanced scorecard for that year based on feedback from staff and other stakeholders within the school.

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