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Dolna 17, Warsaw,
Poland 00-773
+48 226 0 227 03
editorial_office@rsglobal.pl

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DEBUNKING THE MYTH OF COUNTERREVOLUTIONARIES: ANALYSING THE IMPACT OF THE BELA ACT ON SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICA

Ngogi Emmanuel Mahaye

University of Pretoria, Faculty of Education, Teacher Education and Professional Development, Humanities Education

ORCID ID: 0009-0009-5668-111X

ABSTRACT

This study critically examines the impact of the Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA) Act on school governance and leadership in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The BELA Act, which centralizes authority by shifting certain power from School Governing Bodies (SGBs) to provincial education departments, has generated considerable debate regarding its effects on local school autonomy and leadership. While proponents argue that the Act promotes equity and simplifies governance, opponents fear it may diminish the responsiveness of school leadership to unique local needs. Using the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) and Transformational Leadership Theory, this research explores how school leaders and SGBs perceive and implement the BELA Act, considering socio-economic challenges and community involvement. The findings suggest that while the Act may foster some degree of standardization, its centralizing effects pose challenges for schools in resource-poor areas, potentially undermining the adaptive leadership needed to address local disparities. The study contributes to the discourse on policy implementation and educational governance, offering insights into the implications for school leadership and community engagement in KwaZulu-Natal. The BELA Act marks a pivotal step in the transformation of South Africa's education system. Its full implementation reflects the country's commitment to providing equal educational opportunities for all children, in line with constitutional principles. The extensive consultations and subsequent consensus reached have paved the way for a more inclusive and equitable education system.

KEYWORDS

BELA Act, School Governance, Transformational Leadership, Concerns-Based Adoption Model, KwaZulu-Natal

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Introduction.

Stability in education systems and good governance have strategic contributions into improvement of learner's achievements and society (Raju, 2024). Recently in South Africa legislation changes such as the Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA) Act have raised much debate on their effects on school leadership and governance (Soudien, 2023). As reported by Kruger et al (2024), the BELA Act presents several measures, initiation of several of which would result in shifting power from SGBs to the provincial departments of education. While it is claimed by the supporters that such changes started to promote equity and enabling reforms at the same time to simplify the governance, its opponents encourage that they will reduce the autonomy of the local schools as well as impact the school leadership to address the needs of a particular context. This research aims to evaluate the effects of the BELA Act on schools' governing and leadership in KwaZulu-Natal because of the problems of differentiation connected with socio-economic factors and management of learning institutions.

The BELA Act comes at a time when there is real concern about management of schools and governance of interactions within school communities. This is in support of Clercq (2020) who stresses that school

governance in South Africa is characterised by socio-economic factors that affect provision of resources as well as leadership. These disparities are maybe well illustrated in areas such as KwaZulu-Natal in which many schools require resource to address social and economic challenges of their operation. The BELA Act centralizes governance and causes one to wonder what will happen to the autonomy that school leaders can no longer exercise in arriving at decisions relevant to their communities. That is why this study's objective is to address this gap and to examine how school governance, leadership adaptation and community involvement might change under new legislative conditions.

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) is used to guide the study on how school leaders and SGBs regard these legislative changes and how they implement them (Moila, 2022). CBAM asserts that through five cycles of awareness, personal and management concern is enacted by the stakeholders when encountering new policies. This model will assist in understanding the preparedness and stance of school leaders in KwaZulu-Natal in as much as the BELA Act demands. In addition, Litz & Blaik-Hourani (2020) goes further and suggest that Transformational Leadership Theory can be used to extend our understanding of how school leaders can lead their teams through this period of change while preserving stability in education when governance systems are in transition.

Hence socio-economic contextual factors and education disparities add on more problems to the school leaders to sustain the governance in schools. According to Mahaye & Ajani (2023), poverty, unemployment and social inequality have strong influences on school management affairs a situation that always exert pressure on the leadership options available. It is that BELA Act has shifted the pattern more partial centralism and could impact upon how the heads of schools respond to such socio-economic issues. According to Davids (2023) schools that have been down listed are known to depended mostly on SGBs to champion the community interments and call for resources. The possibility of a reduction of decentralisation at the local level could transform the balance of how schools change in relation to these socio-economic circumstances.

An important part of this study is to find out the extent to which BELA Act enhances or hinders transformational leadership in schools. Transforming leaders give others the ability to create and maintain interest and a focus to bring everyone together to embrace and foster change. In the conceptual framework provided by Mahaye and Ajani (2023), those school principals who possess transformational leadership characteristics are found to meet the challenges of creating positive school contexts and bringing staff together even when there are huge changes in policies as well. This research will assess whether the act allows or prohibits such leadership practices and the consequence for governance efficiency of schools in the KwaZulu-Natal region.

The interest of the study is founded on the probability that the findings can contribute to alter current local and national education policy. The exploratory nature of this work means that it is vital to determine how school leaders and SGBs grapple with the BELA Act to learn more about the Act in the context of school governance and leadership. According to the authors, Cohen et al. (2023), educational policy requires both a national steerage that supports the creation of coherent educational policy and local adaptation necessary for policy implementation. The objective of this research is to extend that discourse by identifying how the BELA Act may occasion changes in school leadership and governance and relations between key constituencies in KwaZulu-Natal

This research shall apply the Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory to explain the relationships between people, policies, and the context. Woodman (2022) observes that this theory emphasizes systems at the microlevel (school administrators and educators) and macrolevel (policies and laws). In that respect, applying this theory, the study will allow finding out how the BELA Act influences not only the school governance but also the socio-economic and cultural factors triggering educational stability.

Literature Review

Leadership and school management have remained key issues in school effectiveness literature, more especially when addressing issues of legislative changes like the BELA Act. The BELA Act make some drastic changes that would imply transfer of some powers from SGBs to the provincial education departments. This legislative change has brought issues to do with leadership, decision, and the place of communities in the overall management of schools into contention. Nirmala (2024) have postulated that school governance in South Africa is highly determine by socio-economic factors relating to resource management and leadership effectiveness. Some of these issues of inequities BELA Act intends to fix with its move to centralize the authority, but the effects this move will have on decentralization of governance is something to ponder about.

According to Kruger (2021) school governance entails policies which should be set at a central parameter of an education system, so that particular schools have an opportunity to respond to the problems they encounter on a daily basis. Proposed changes by the BELA Act could distort this equilibrium and reduce the organisations' capacities to serve the interest of special school communities that SGBs represent. This is especially important in areas where there are little resources available, and in which SGBs have previously been actively campaigning for local interests. Mahaye and Ajani (2023) posit that this conceptual shift in governance could result in standardization of the way in which these policies are rolled out, with little consideration paid to how the contexts might vary within South African schools.

Another factor of uncertainty to do with the BELA Act is the impact that it will have on parents, and communities in general, of schools. It is worth to note that SGBs historically enabled huge parental involvement in school decision making to promote accountability. This significantly active engagement may lessen with the proposed transfer of authority to provincial departments and compromise the community relationships with school leadership (Webber et al., 2024).

Another important aspect for consideration is that which pertains to the extent to which the BELA Act is compatible with the four overall objectives of sector-wide educational stability and enhancement of quality. Gordon & Landa (2021) opine those central policies cause homogeneity and therefore do not address problems that are prevailing in local areas often enough. For example, schools in agricultural or resource poor settings are bound to come across impedance that cannot be solved through standard measures. The change of governance introduced by the BELA Act might pose limitation in the undertaking of targeted interventions undermining the effect of leadership and school management. In this respect, transformational leadership rises to the occasion because leaders must deal with these centralization requirements but also look after the unique needs of their schools.

Combined with the support given to policy implementation as well as the type of training provided; the effectiveness of implementing policies is also determined by. According to Mahaye and Ajani (2023), any shift in governance demands sufficient backing in order that college leaders can discharge their responsibilities properly. Such contending changes call for leadership flexibility in the context of governance changes. School leaders able to communicate with both provincial management and local people would be more prepared to sustain school performance and community confidence. Nzama and Ajani (2021) posit that by working together school leaders can fill the middle management void between the policy makers at the central level and the contextual needs of the classroom hence making it possible for implementation of the BELA Act not to have negative impact on school performance.

Finally, given the possible alteration of the school governance arrangements promised by the BELA Act, the final important question is how school leaders are to meet both the provincial directive and the school community needs. According to Sugrue & Solbrette (2023) to work effectively in such situation's leadership entails engaging in role renegotiation, assertion of responsibilities and greater and clearer communication as well as stakeholder cooperation. Studies in the framework of the CBAM model provide a developmental route map of how school leaders can engage with such concerns at different levels from the development of awareness of ACT to participation in policy change processes.

Theoretical Framework

This research uses the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) as its dominant theoretical foundation that guides the identification of more focused strategies for analysing school governance and leadership in South Africa, and more specifically, in KwaZulu-Natal, to the legislative changes initiated by the BELA Act. Originated from the works of Hall and Hord (1987), CBAM is aimed at the process of change in educational organisations, and highlights concern and change process of such participants as leaders of the educational establishment, teachers and SGBs (Rotich et al., 2024). Here, CBAM is particularly helpful for determining in what ways the proposed centralization of governance under the BELA Act affects readiness and perceptions of school administrators and SGBs

CBAM also assumes that change is developmental, what is, people progress through different stages of concern while facing and implementing new strategies or policies. With regard to the BELA Act, school leaders and SGBs may first encounter apprehensions concerning decisions and positions of exclusive authority and the decrease thereof, and how this change might influence school performance (Pakade & Chilenga-Butao., 2021). In this process, their concerns read from policy awareness/concern as well as policy understanding to more complicated concerns towards policy enactment as well as the impact and implication policy has for school governance as well as the community involvement in the same (Hill & Hupe., 2021).

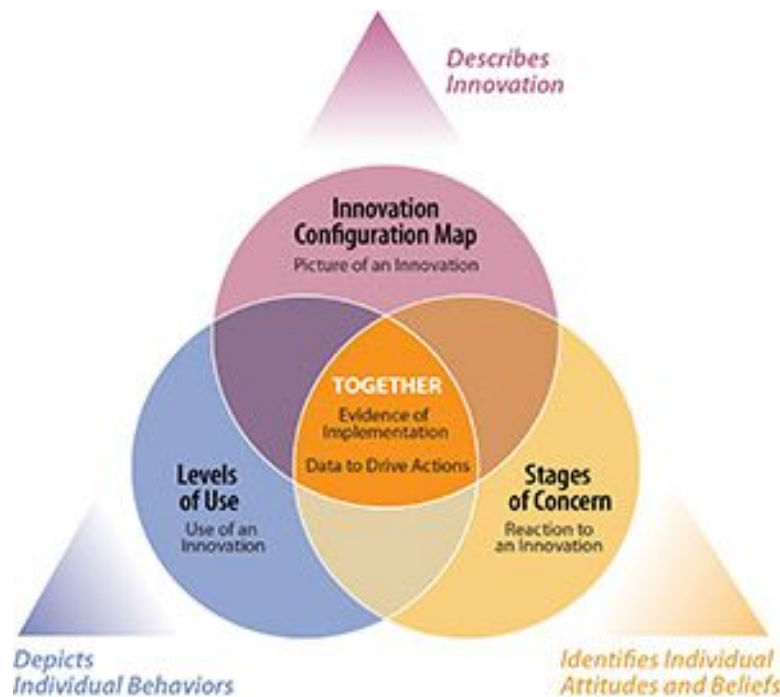


Fig. 1. Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM)

This is one of the key principles of CBAM, which means that concerns of stakeholders are not fixed. At first, school leaders could be interested in the BELA Act in terms of restrictions of their power and changes in responsibilities of SGBs (Veriava, 2024). Such questions may shift to what are operational in nature how to begin implementing new governance mandates and at the same time continue to have their idiosyncratic approaches that are appropriate to each school. The model is beneficial for identifying such changing concerns that would require appropriate focus and policy adjustment to better meet the stakeholders' expectations (Mahaye & Ajani.,2023).

Another component of the CBAM framework is the so-called Levels of Use (LoU), which looks at how new policies are used. For this study, the LoU framework assists in evaluating the extent to which school leaders, teachers and SGBs are implementing the tenets of the BELA Act into their daily governance and leadership practices. Where there is poor practice, it would be informative to know where improvement can occur or when barriers may exist in terms of practical application that requires training as well as shaping the new governance structures (Ajani & Khumalo, 2023). This is likely to create disparities observed in the socio-economic status of schools and the practical applicability of the act (Mthethwa 2022).

Although synergistic with CBAM, Transformational Leadership Theory brings a second perspective regarding how school leaders can navigate their organizations through the legislative processes. Transformational leadership focuses on how leaders facilitate an organisation's change process in a positive manner (Gacicio,2022). As applied to the BELA Act, the concept of transformational leadership helps encourage teachers, learners, and their community to trust each other and work in great harmony. These leaders can only help to narrow the gap between the expectations laid down in the Act and the requirements peculiar to educational institutions, providing open communication and sharing of decisions with all the members of the school community (Mahaye & Ajani, 2023).

With the realisation of the common microaggressions believed by teachers, the use of Transformational Leadership Theory is more appropriate for understanding how the leaders of the school can avoid the possibilities of the BELA Act's resistance by the teachers. As noted above, having a common vision, and directing efforts towards achieving both policy directions and local needs/requirements will help transformational leaders lessen negative attitudes and create a favourable context for change. Accepting the blended theoretical lens of CBAM and Transformational Leadership Theory means understanding both, the procedural and psychological approaches to policy implementation.

Lastly, employing of CBAM and Transformational Leadership Theory within this research recognises that favourable change in the context of governance adaptation involves more than compliance with policy. It

encompasses appreciation of stakeholders' concerns and fears, development of trust and facilitation of the integration of the new policy into existing school structures (Maringe et al 2021). This approach provides a deeper understanding of the effects of the BELA Act in school governance and leadership and why transformational-school leadership, that is one that is sensitive to change influences while preserving stability within schools and among the stakeholders, is helpful.

Methodology

This paper chose systematic literature review (SLR) as the main researcher approach that entailed a search of factors that led to instability in the KwaZulu-Natal schools and the effects brought by education governance changes like BELA Act. In this study, the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) checklist was used for the identification, selection, and synthesis of relevant studies. Therefore, the method of identifying and analysing source materials sought to examine the literature from the past five years (2020–2024) and present an overview of current research findings and gaps as captured both in academic journals and in grey literature.

The first part of the PRISMA process, which is the inclusion of studies, involved creation of an effective search strategy. This research was done using various search engines of scholarly articles such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and JSTOR and analysing articles using keywords such as “educational governance”, “BELA Act”, “Policy implementation in schools”, “KZN, “educational stability”. Other sources of information like the grey literature involving the reports on the South African government agencies, education non-profit organizations and the international agencies etc was also incorporated into the study sample to capture richness of diverse ideas. Such articles and papers released from 2020 to the present time were chosen to reflect recent trends and data more especially due to changes in legislative enactments and emergence of socio-economic impacts on education.

The inclusion criteria in this review were to select only articles from peer reviewed journals and research reports that specifically dealt about the studies of the educational governance, policy effects or socio-economic issues of schools in the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal. To revisit the theoretical framework comparing the Canadian culture with that of Jamaica, policy implementation, and challenges concerning educational stability, theoretical works were considered. The following criteria were used for exclusion; if the article under consideration did not focus on South African schools, did not present empirical findings, or was published before 2020. Due to application of the PRISMA criteria into the research, it was possible to eliminate research studies of poor quality, and only research studies that met all the above criteria were used in the synthesis of the research studies (Page et al., 2021)

Finally, data collection entailed identifying each of the studies under consideration and extracting relevant information as regards the research objectives, methods used, findings and conclusion as well as the overall relationship on educational governance and stability. The data extracted was then analysed thematically that helped in pneumatic out the prominent themes as well as patterns from each of the studies reviewed (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Choice of thematic analysis was especially appropriate in this research as it synthesised the qualitative data and offered a complex, detailed view of the factors implicating in the school stability and governance in KwaZulu-Natal. Several themes that were identified include the role played by policy changes in school management, status of socio-economic factors in effecting performance of schools, and participation by the community and leaders in effecting change.

By using a systematic literature review conducted in parallel with the thematic analysis, this study was able to provide the comprehensive and critical overview of the factors contributing to educational instability as well as the potential effects of the governance reforms such as BELA Act. This kind of methodological approach made the research very oriented towards the prior findings effectively at the same time pointing out the issues, which need further research. According to Mahaye and Ajani (2023), the integration of SLR in educational research compiled multiple viewpoints thereby offering richer contextualized understanding of significant issues in educational policy and practice.

Findings

1.1 The Impact of the BELA Act on Educational Stability and Governance

Consequently, the results from this study also underpin the possible impact of BELA Act on school governance and leadership especially in KwaZulu Natal (KZN). In the case of the Act in question, the changes proposed seek to devolve some decision-making powers from SGBs to the provincial education departments and this centralisation growing key issues of democratic participation: the balance of autonomic or

decentralised and centralised power. This shift may well impact how schooling contexts manage the governance issues and sustain scholarly stability when socio economic disparities are already being felt.

1.2 Concerns Regarding Autonomy and Decision-Making

One of the main findings is that whilst the idea of centralised governance pursued by the BELA Act may be seen as a trend towards weakening the role of SGBs; at the same time, they remained an essential tool for acting on behalf of local communities and responding to individual school needs. According to Byrd (2023), the shift might limit the discretion of principals to deepen context sensitive decisions that reflect the community's values and aspirations. This issue is especially important for analysing schools in KZN as the highlighted socio-economic context implies that governance issues are rather different for schools within this province. The limited autonomy may slow down the ability on the part of the school leaders to facilitate issues like availability of resource, community participation, and support programs that meet the needs of their learners.

1.3 Proclamation of the Act by President to Be Implemented in Full

As anticipated, the President authorized the full implementation of the BELA Act, including Clauses 4 and 5, which pertained to admission and language policies in public schools, respectively. These provisions, which had initially been excluded to allow for further negotiations and presentations, were now part of the immediate implementation, likely following a consensus or compromises reached.

There had been earlier speculations that the Democratic Alliance (DA) might exit the Government of National Unity (GNU) due to these developments. However, such a move was considered unwarranted, as it was not in the best interest of any party. Despite past remarks by Helen Zille, withdrawal from the GNU was a complex decision that would have had significant consequences.

It was important to note that Minister of Basic Education, Siviwe Gwarube, had consistently stated that, regardless of personal or party stance on the BELA Act, her duty as Minister required her to implement the law until it was overturned by a court of competent jurisdiction. Accordingly, DA Ministers in government were committed to upholding the Constitution and implementing duly passed legislation, irrespective of their party's position on specific policies.

However, the full implementation of the BELA Act required the development of norms, standards, and regulations by the Minister of Basic Education. This process was essential to ensure the consistent and uniform application of the law, thereby minimizing ambiguity and the risk of misinterpretation. The creation of these supporting regulations was expected to take up to a year.

On the other hand, organizations such as Solidarity, which had expressed strong opposition to the policy, viewed it as an attack on Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in public schools. While their opposition was anticipated, the broader goal of the policy was the recognition and promotion of all official languages, not just Afrikaans, as mediums of instruction in public schools—a measure that had been long overdue. The gradual development of indigenous languages to serve alongside English and Afrikaans should have been initiated earlier. However, many indigenous languages remained underdeveloped for use in academic contexts, particularly in specialized subjects such as science, technology, and mathematics. The lack of qualified teachers proficient in these languages further complicated this transition.

2.1 Leadership Challenges and Adaptation

The introduction of the BELA Act also releases certain risks to the school leaders that they must uphold proper governance and organizational stability of the schools in addition to the provisions made by the Act. Mahaye (2022) suggests that in relation to changes both the school principals and SGBs might experience role ambiguity uncertainty. This process means likely dealing with tensions between the previous organizational learning practice and new requirements that may create tensions within school communities. This tension raises the challenge of strong leadership, which calls for the adoption of new governance systems to firm up existing systems in a way that offers support to educational stability (Rambuda & Arko-Achemfuor.,2024).

The results of this study suggest that KZN school leaders may need further support in the professional training to deal with BELA Act requirements. Notably, motivation and participation of stakeholders based on the vision under the transformational leadership perspective more matter in this respect. Administrators who well motivate people to embrace common goals are better placed to address issues arising from policies (Mahaye, 2022).

2.2 Impact on Community Engagement and SGB Effectiveness

Hence, the results raise issues regarding the diminished community participation because of the lowered levels of SGBs' decision-making power. It must also be acknowledged that in many schools in KZN SGBs have traditionally acted as links between communities, schools and identity and resource providers to address unique context challenges. The fact that the BELA Act centralizes these dynamics may alter these directionalities, thus dampening the proactive forces that community members can take over school governance structures (Kruger, 2021). This change may also affect the tendencies of school- parents and other community member interaction these are important factors for a healthy educational setting.

Another important result presented is the potential gap between policy and practice. Studies made by Mutambara & Cele (2023) further provided empirical evidence that although policy centralisation ensure the provision of standard policies in governance, the policies' implementation pays little attention to the varied needs of schools within different socio- economical context. Schools in poor zones of KZN for instance, might challenge themselves to meet new central imperatives based on current restricted resource endowment and conditions.

3.1 Proposed Strategies for Governance and Stability

Several strategies are proposed to mitigate the potential impact of the BELA Act and promote effective governance and educational stability.

3.2 Strengthening Leadership Capacities: In relation to leadership, schools should develop relevant training about how principals and members of SGB could be trained to offer required policy changes while at the same time keep in mind the context of the community in which the school is situated. Educational transformational leadership training can make school leaders ready to develop hope, trust, and constructive cooperation with other stakeholders (Ajani, 2024).

3.3 Balancing Centralization with Local Input: The results have implications for the implementation of top-down approaches to urban design which suggest the benefits of mechanisms that provide a balance of policy control with possibilities for local engagement. This saves the White Paper from aligning schools needs based on a general approach without regard to the specific needs' schools within the regions and particularly those schools that are challenged by socio-economic challenges (Mthethwa, 2022).

3.4 Promoting Community-School Partnerships: Nevertheless, the cutting down the powers of SGBs, the task of improving and developing the cooperation between schools and reason of their creation remains crucial. The communication channels between schools, parents and local organizations should be kept open to continue to foster ways of addressing the challenges and enhancing learners' achievements (Mahaye & Ajani, 2023). Such partnerships can one day assist in closing the gap between policy as a governmental directive and policy as an executable plan.

3.5 Resource Allocation and Support: Some of the following schools may need some level of support to manage their new governance status under the BELA Act: Schools in the areas of low investments. This entails increased and specific school funding and support to enable them to meet new regulatory requirements as well as meeting other local needs effectively (Machiwenyika,2023). Schools must have proper support to assure proper educational quality and governance in disadvantaged areas would not decrease anymore.

3.6 The Role of Transformational Leadership

In this respect, the focus of the findings suggests that school leaders who exercise transformational leadership have better ability in addressing the changes introduced by the BELA Act. These leaders are more likely to foster organizational climate where people are afforded the opportunity to participate in decision making, be open and find solutions collectively (Mahaye.,2022). It noted that due to the influence and roles of the transformational leaders, there is every possibility of preventing the occurrence of resentment on the part of the stakeholders, particularly through the processes of engaging the stakeholders in policy change discussions and ensuring that the new practices reflect the school's vision/ mission and core values.

Discussion

These research findings enhance the understanding of key issues that characterise educational governance and stability in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), with reference to the BELA Act. One of the identified

problem areas in the existing BELA Act that became apparent as a consideration or issue affecting School Governance is that centralization of specific decision-making powers from SGBs to provincial departments has created new factor of consideration in School Governance and which may affect stability. This sits well with other studies on educational governance reforms in South Africa which note that reforms need to be well coordinated so that power is centralised as well as decentralised in order to facilitate efficient school management (Lalujan & Pranjol, 2024).

4.1 Theoretical Implications of CBAM on Governance Reforms

Fostering practice implementation through the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) used in this study demonstrates the relevance of identifying the concerns teachers, school leaders, SGB members, and the community may have about the proposed changes to the BELA Act. CBAM affirms that the state of preparedness for embracing policy change among implementers determines the success of reforms once key policy changes are implemented Hassan (, 2020). This theory is quite appropriate for schools in KZN whereby change oriented to new governance structures must struggle due to resource limitation as well as socio-economic factors in the province.

Teachers and school administrators for instance, may at first, wonder how the BELA Act will affect them in the daily practice with the change of power of decision-making. Issues may encompass legal challenges touching on conflict with provincial legislation or affairs as well as down to the ways by which new governance policies can be inserted into school structures (Ajani, 2024). CBAM offers a methodical process through which these stages of concern are recognized and met with systematic strategies to accentuate the reforms as relevant not only in educational practices but also in the everyday life of institutions.

4.2 Transformational Leadership and Policy Adaptation

Scholars suggest that transformational leadership becomes important when it comes to organisational leadership associated with change, such as the policy change concerning BELA Act. To this end, KZN school leaders, especially those who espouse the qualities of transformational leadership are in a good position to address such resistance and engage the necessary stakeholders collectively to ensure seamless policy change. They are required to foster a level of commitment to ensure that the stakeholders feel the power to enhance the implementation of new policies successfully (Mahaye, 2022). Consequently, the tasks of school principals are not only in compliance with policy requirements; principals are also expected to understand and manage trust between school staff and the community.

4.3 Community Engagement Shifts

The study also highlights that although centralization seeks to establish standardized practices, it weakens the engagement of decentralised communities in the management of schools implying a disconnection and low problem-solving decentralisation approach (Maphosa & Moyo.,2024). SGBs when implemented in KZN have been used to ensure that school and communities interrelate so that governance reflects the needs of the society. The change of governance authority under the BELA Act can distort the stability of education since this relationship exists (Gogo, 2022).

This show that it is necessary to keep the methods for the population's engagement even if there is centralisation in governance. Strategies like the community consultation forums and collaboration with local bodies as partners can be utilized to cinch the deficit in the implementation of the policy to make sure that schools continue to benefit from the coming of local perspectives and strategies (Mahaye & Ajani, 2023).

4.4 Challenges of Implementation in Diverse Socio-Economic Contexts

There are special problems which may make a coordinated response difficult in schools in the economically disadvantaged provinces of KZN. The findings imply that while the centralised governance of the overall education system may facilitate efficient decision making, it is inherently insensitive to the heterogeneity of resources, infrastructures, and social contexts among the schools (Omodan & Dube, 2020). This is where the consideration of CBAM's focus of identifying and responding to stakeholders' concerns is especially fitting; reforms should be able to consider the needs of each school setting.

Those leaders who have ability to mobilize partner and go out for funding and develop staff and learners' capacity to be resilient may enhance successful delivery of new governance structures (Ajani, 2023). Still, that may vary greatly with the level of support provided by the provincial departments because many schools will find it difficult to match new mandates to their current abilities (Mthethwa, 2022).

4.5 Long-Term Stability and Policy Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, a proper mechanism of the relationship between centralization and decentralization measures should be used for maintaining educational stability in tBELAong term. Short-term changes to the BELA Act may simply be shaped around the non-compliance agenda, however, for sustainable development there is a need to engage the communities, for leadership to be more responsive and for resource support. These policy adjustments should entail mechanisms for regular communication with local school-based governance bodies and professional development sessions [that would] empower school leaders with knowledge on how to deal with change changes, properly (Rasool, 2022).

In addition, the schools in KZN plays strategic and major role of promoting shared leadership that allows room for governance input from everybody even the teachers and parents. This approach is in line with transformational leadership and may enhance the development of climate that is capable of face and adjust to the change of policies (Mahaye, 2022).

5. Mandate on the full implementation of BELA Act

On 13th September 2024, President Cyril Ramaphosa enacted the Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA) Act, marking a significant milestone in the ongoing reform of South Africa's education system. This Act is a critical component of the broader efforts to align the education system with the constitutional values of equality and access to quality education for all children, regardless of their background or circumstances. The BELA Act is part of a long-standing effort, spanning over three decades, to ensure equitable access to quality education for all South African children, irrespective of factors such as their socio-economic status, geographic location, or the language they speak.

5.1 Key Constitutional Principles:

The Bill of Rights guarantees the right to equality for all individuals. It enshrines the right to basic education for every child. Importantly, it asserts the right to education in the official language(s) of one's choice, where feasible. This right applies universally, covering speakers of all official languages, including English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, as well as South African Sign Language. **Delayed Implementation and Consultation Process:** Following the signing of the BELA Act, President Ramaphosa acknowledged that certain sections, particularly those related to admission and language policies, required further consultation. To facilitate this, the full implementation of the Act was delayed by three months to allow for further deliberations among relevant stakeholders.

5.2 Key Actions Taken:

The three-month delay allowed for discussions between political parties and other stakeholders to resolve contentious issues. These discussions included both government bodies and external groups, with some parties supporting the language provisions and others expressing opposition. **Outcomes of the Consultation Process:** By December 2024, the GNU clearing house mechanism, a platform for resolving issues among parties in the Government of National Unity (GNU), submitted a report on the deliberations. The key outcomes included: **Agreement on Full Implementation:** Despite some disagreements, there was a consensus that the BELA Act should proceed without changes to the contested provisions on admission and language. **Endorsement by Political Leaders:** The decision to implement the Act in full was endorsed by the leaders of the parties in the GNU after a meeting with President Ramaphosa. **Presidential Directives and Implementation:** Following the consultations, President Ramaphosa announced that the BELA Act would officially take effect from 20th December 2024. **Key directives and conclusions included:** **Presidential Proclamation:** A formal Presidential Proclamation was issued to implement the BELA Act. **Ministerial Mandates:** The Minister of Basic Education was instructed to ensure the Act's full implementation, focusing on universal Grade R access and the creation of necessary regulations. **Adherence to Constitutional Principles:** All officials involved in the implementation of the Act are required to ensure that their actions are in line with the Constitution, relevant laws, and applicable regulations. **Commitment to Educational Equity:** The Act underscores the commitment to ensuring that no child is left behind, guaranteeing equal access to quality education for every child. **Research Insights and Policy Implications:** Research and analysis of education policy suggest that the implementation of the BELA Act, particularly its emphasis on language policies and access to education, will have significant positive consequences for the education system: **Promotion of Multilingual Education:** The Act's focus on promoting mother-tongue education and multilingualism has the potential to enhance academic performance, as research indicates that children who are taught in their first language tend to achieve better educational

outcomes. Implementation Challenges: Despite the Act's positive intentions, challenges remain, particularly the lack of development of indigenous languages for academic purposes and the shortage of qualified teachers. Addressing these issues will require sustained efforts and time.

Conclusions

Finally, this study raises awareness of the contextualised and dynamic process of educational instability within KZN, and the role played by the BELA Act in changes to educational governance. Therefore, it is the concern of this study that these changes affect internal governance of schools and are equally affected by outside socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, and crime rate in the society. The Thailand educational governance reforms drive the piece of study using Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) so that it identifies that pursuing educational governance reforms must take a follower concerns approach that tries to address the most pressing readiness issues of school administrators, teachers, learners, and the community in large. Moreover, the integration of Transformational Leadership Theory increases our understanding of the centrality of the school leaders in enhancing the collaborative, adaptive and stakeholder school environments.

Bold, clear communication, policy training and encouraging the community involvement can be vital for the solution of the immediate governance issues but the ultimate solution of the issues involving social inequality, scarcity of resources and external crime is important for a stable education in the longer run. This is the category of the study that holds that schools cannot rejuvenate themselves without the support of their surrounding society and the body that oversees them.

Research had shown that children who studied in their mother tongue performed better academically. As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o had argued, language was deeply tied to culture, and linguistic decolonization was essential for achieving educational equity. There remained a prevalent mindset in some communities that fluency in English signified wisdom and success, with some even speaking English or other foreign languages at home as a symbol of social status. This perception, however, was misguided, as research suggested that fostering proficiency in indigenous languages could have positive cognitive and academic outcomes for students.

The BELA Act marks a pivotal step in the transformation of South Africa's education system. Its full implementation reflects the country's commitment to providing equal educational opportunities for all children, in line with constitutional principles. The extensive consultations and subsequent consensus reached have paved the way for a more inclusive and equitable education system. However, challenges remain, particularly regarding language development and teacher training, which will require ongoing attention to ensure the success of the Act in achieving its goals.

Recommendations

Strengthening Stakeholder Engagement in Policy Implementation: In order for governance changes found in the BELA Act to be implemented as proposed schools should ensure stakeholder involvement from the onset throughout the change process includes teachers, learners and SGBs. The following maintenance activities can help to develop a coherent view on the policy's objectives, and ensure people's engagement: weekly workshops, periodic feedback sessions, and joint planning meetings.

Building Leadership Capacity: To solve the latter problem, generally good leadership training programs for the heads of schools, and principals must be provided with appropriate tools to work with the changes in the policy and that investment should be made. These programs should bear on the transformational leadership ideas that foster staff admiration, the techniques for change and the desirable school culture that is compatible with new governance.

Promoting Transparent Communication Channels: Both school and provincial education departments should therefore ensure that they open subordinate instrumentality and develop good communication to effectively support implementation of these new policies. This entails ensuring that their clients are constantly informed, receive unambiguous policies and guidelines from the company in cases where they have cause for complaints, the company provides for ways that the clients can be attended to immediately. A process which is characterized by clear language creates a feeling of ownership among the stakeholders.

Enhancing Collaborative Community Initiatives: There is the need for schools to pair with local governments and other community stakeholders and non-governmental organizations to tackle the socio-economic factors about education. In therefore proposes that programs that might enhance school-community link such as mentorship initiatives, community development projects and resource sharing cooperation enhance educational stability.

Policy Adaptation Support Programs: Some of the recommendations made include provincial education departments should ensure that they avail increase support to schools in responding to the new governance models. This entails financing for fundamental upgrades in systems than require policy management through better technologies up to safety measures to shield institutions from external threats.

Research and Evaluation of Governance Impacts: Another, continuous research required to track and assess the impacts of governance change, for example, BELA Act, on education stability. Research should compare effects of policy changes on the performance of schools, the community, and the learners. From such research, one can infer the subsequent changes of policy that are likely to be implemented, and the current practices regarded as ideal.

Training in Conflict Resolution and Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL): Introducing socio-emotional learning programs also assist teacher and learners in handling new formulation of governance changes and key roles. SEL, which works on the promotion of the set student's coping with potential difficulties, enhancing the means of their communication, helps in the conflict solving which might appear due to policy changes. If these recommendations are affected then schools in KZN province they will be able to enhance their governance structures, adhere to provisions of BELA Act as well as benefit from communal partnership of the society that will yield stability in the education system. This approach is not only relevant to the resolutions of the current leadership crises but also creates a long-term framework for any form of education improvement and learner outcomes.

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