



The Governing Body Foundation calls for Responsible Use of Cellphones and Electronics in Schools

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In response to a recent UN report recommending the banning of smartphones from schools, The Governing Body Foundation (GBF) emphasises the need to strike a balance between leveraging digital technology for enhanced learning experiences while preserving the essential aspects of face-to-face interaction between teachers and students. The GBF, a leading voice in education policy and thought leadership, is urging educators, policymakers, and parents to recognise that the issue with technology in schools lies not in the technology itself but in its inappropriate or misinformed use.

The UN report by Unesco, released on Wednesday 26 Jul 2023, highlights concerns over excessive mobile phone use in schools, linking it to reduced educational performance and negative effects on children's emotional stability. GBF acknowledges the importance of addressing these challenges while maintaining a human-centered vision of education.

"It is crucial to understand that technology, when used responsibly, has immeasurable potential to improve learning outcomes and the overall wellbeing of students and teachers," stated Anthea Cereseto, CEO of the Governing Body Foundation. "Our focus should be on empowering learners and supporting teachers in navigating the digital landscape to create positive educational experiences."



Image 1: The GBF supports the responsible use of technology in schools to enhance student learning and wellbeing.

The GBF urges policymakers and schools to adopt clear objectives and principles to ensure that digital technology benefits education while avoiding potential harms. The organization recognises the value of a well-balanced educational approach that integrates both online and face-to-face teaching. "The social dimension of education should never be neglected. Face-to-face interactions between students and educators foster vital aspects of learning that cannot be fully replicated in digital environments," emphasised Cereseto.

The GBF also recognises the disparity in access to digital educational infrastructure, which disproportionately affects marginalised communities. Addressing this issue is crucial in ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to benefit from digital learning resources. the GBF encourages policymakers to take a holistic approach to digital technology implementation, considering its environmental and economic implications as well.

While Unesco's report highlighted cases of countries successfully limiting digital device use in classrooms, the GBF emphasises that blanket bans on technology may not be the most effective solution. Instead, the GBF encourages schools to implement well-thought-out policies that balance the benefits and challenges of technology use. Such policies should empower teachers to manage technology effectively within the learning environment while fostering responsible digital citizenship among students.



Image 2: The GBF does not believe that a blanket ban on cellphones in schools is the most appropriate solution.

As a thought leader in education, the GBF calls for more research and collaboration between educational institutions and technology providers. By evaluating the effectiveness of digital learning tools and platforms, educators can make informed decisions to create meaningful educational experiences for their students.

"While we recognise the legitimate concerns raised by Unesco and other educational bodies, we firmly believe that technology can be harnessed as a powerful tool for learning and growth," said Cereseto.

"The key is to prioritise the needs of learners and support teachers in integrating technology responsibly into their teaching methods."

The GBF remains committed to promoting responsible technology use in schools and providing valuable guidance to educational institutions as they navigate the evolving landscape of digital learning. By fostering open dialogue and collaboration, the GBF aims to shape a future where technology and education work in harmony to empower the next generation of learners.

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Notes to Editor:

The Governing Body Foundation (GBF) is an organization dedicated to supporting and empowering governing bodies in South African schools. As an influential advocate for effective school governance, the GBF provides guidance, resources, and training to help governing bodies fulfill their responsibilities and enhance educational outcomes. The organization assists in developing policies, codes of conduct, and strategies that promote school safety, inclusive practices, and educational excellence. Through its initiatives, the GBF aims to foster collaboration between schools, parents, and education authorities, ensuring a conducive learning environment for all learners. The GBF's work is rooted in the principles of good governance, transparency, and accountability, with a focus on promoting the interests and well-being of students, educators, and school communities. To learn more about the Governing Body Foundation and its initiatives, please visit www.gbf.org.za.