



Journal of Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities
<http://www.jssshonline.com/>
Volume 12, No. 1, 2026, 113-127
ISSN: 2413-9270

Contesting for school governing body elections in South African public schools: The stakeholders' battleground

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Abstract

Parents are the paramount stakeholders in the democratic foundation of the educational system. Currently elections for school governing bodies have transformed into a contentious arena, with various stakeholders aggressively competing for positions in public primary and secondary school governance. This study examined the factors contributing to the heightened interest in candidacy for school governing body elections among stakeholders at public schools in South Africa. This study research employed a qualitative methodology. Three primary and three secondary school principals were intentionally chosen to participate in the interviews to divulge their contextual experience about stakeholders' contestation for SGB elections in their schools. The data from a multiple case study was analyzed using data analysis spiral. The findings revealed three distinct viewpoints regarding stakeholders' ambition to contest in the SGB elections. Although numerous stakeholders are attracted by personal financial gain, a minority pursue elections exclusively for the institution's educational success. Party's political objective to garner support among educational stakeholders was also exposed by the findings as drive to leverage membership in the SGB as well as job opportunities within a school. This report recommends the implementation of a screening process and conducting interviews with prospective members before the final elections are held.

Key words: Contestation; Elections; Public school; School governing body; Stakeholders

Introduction

The achievement of educational objectives in a school are hinged on the support provided by school governors (Usman et al., 2021). The creation of policies, support for teaching and learning and managing of students' body is all part of the entire rationale for implementing governance structures in a global setting (Khanyile & Mpuangnan, 2024). School governors upholds individual rights, ensures accountability, impartiality, and knowledge access, and involves stakeholders in decision-making (Davids, 2022; Sari, 2023). Around the world, school governors have distinct brands. In the USA, they are school boards, and are in charge of making policies and the necessary regulations to guarantee that the fundamentals values of a school are upheld (Kober, 2020). In England, school governors are referred to as boards of trustees or school governing boards (West, Wolfe & Yaghi, 2023). The board of trustees collaborates with senior executives and head teachers to hold them responsible for their professional decisions about the school's internal structure and administration as well as its academic achievement (West et al., 2023). In Uganda, they are Board of Governors (BOGs), and their duties include maintaining school property, managing school finances, ensuring the safety and wellness of learners and teachers, proposing payments to be contributed by parents after consulting with the Minister (Wandera, Eryenyu & Atibuni, 2024; Wataba & Abiodun, 2018). Like in Uganda, these governors are called Board of Governors (BOGs) in Kenya (Kindiki,

2022) and are responsible for overseeing schools and have been given the power to control and influence the budget, discipline, hiring and promoting teachers and administrative personnel, and curriculum implementation (Act CAP 2011-2012). In terms of South African schools Act (SASA) school governors are described as school governing bodies. (RSA, 1996b). In public schools, the SGBs stand in for the parents' organizational power. Stakeholders volunteer their service or are nominated to provide services to the school through this governance structure (Samuel-Okoyel, 2021). The stakeholders are those individual parents who genuinely care about making sure that governance is effective and that schooling is successful. Parents, educators, learners, community residents, and interested business people are all allowed to participate voluntarily through the election process.

The elections of stakeholders to the SGB in South Africa was essentially disregarded by the youthful parents and left to the elderly or grandparents (Grobler, 2024; Sibanda, 2021). The view of school governing body membership has changed in recent years. Sebidi (2019) avers that many stakeholders, both literate and illiterate, are vigorously contesting for the positions in schools' governance. Nevertheless, inadequate literature deliberates on SGB elections. Given this context, it is necessary to carry out this study to investigate the principals' experiences about the stakeholders' plans to run for SGB elections in public schools. These experiences could add to the pool of knowledge already in existence regarding governance in schools both domestically and abroad.

RQ1: "Why are stakeholders in South African public schools so eager to contest for school governing body elections in recent years?" was the research question posed by this study.

Literature Review

Significance SGB Elections

Aiming to democratize and delegate governance responsibilities and authority to schools, the government of South Africa introduced SGBs in schools as an attempt to integrate democratic values into school governance (Davids, 2022). School governance is the autonomy provided to the SGBs to manage resources in their schools (Supriadi et al., 2021). In accordance with Mifsud and Wilkins (2025, p. 2), school governance refers to "the way school leaders and governors pursue certain institutional and ideological means to maintain accountability of their organizations as custodians of education services"

SGBs are statutory bodies that function that must support the school and the principal when performing his duties (RSA, 1996b). Public schools must therefore constitute SGBs so that parents, educators, learners, employees, business people, and other community members can actively take part in deciding how their children education should be shaped (RSA, 1996b). Formation of SGBs is believed that will serve as a means of providing them with the capability to make decisions that may increase educational effectiveness by representing the views and expectations of their communities (Teise & Barnett, 2021). This suggests that there should be intensive collaboration between the school and the parents' community to achieve the needs of the school.

The school and the community relationships are impacted by educational collaborations (Sathorar & Geduld, 2021). As a result, SGB elections are a prime example of collaborative governance since they bring together principals, parents, teachers, learners, and the community in an effort to create a thriving educational community (Mohapi & Chombo, 2021; Moorosi et al., 2020). Consequently, Ssenkasi (2021) asserts that in order to enhance instruction in schools, it is preferable for all parties involved to participate in school-related activities as a collective. Nevertheless, if stakeholders volunteer or are elected to serve as SGB members, this collaboration can be realized. When the stakeholders have been elected in the SGB, it is the responsibility of school principal as the representative of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to encourage collaboration for parent and teacher governors to perform their functions (Mohapi et al., 2021).

By holding SGB elections, stakeholders are guaranteed to "balance national legislation requirements with the unique needs of their school communities and ensure that every child's right to education is upheld"

(Grobler, 2024). The “Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance” (MGSLG) (2024) highlights that SGB elections are essential to effective school development and governance and should be given top priority in order to plan, advocate for, manage, and distribute human and physical resources. Additionally, since SGB is the third level of administration in education, following national and provincial departments, they are considered a major and most significant activity following national and local government elections (MGSLG, 2024). DBE also affirms that by participating in SGB elections and governance procedures, stakeholders are provided with a forum to exercise their democratic rights and to support their obligation to work together in the pursuit of educational excellence (DBE, 2024).

Conducting SGB Elections in South Africa

Ever since the adoption of SASA in 1997, ten cycles elections for SGBs have been held to date in all public schools nationwide (Act 84 of 1996). Parent members contest for SGB elections cycle has elapsed which is in accordance with section 31(I) (RSA, 1996b). This suggests that every three years, SGB elections have to take place at every public school. This exercise is regarded to be one of the DBE’s most significant activity because “school governing bodies are the nerve centers of public schools in South Africa” (Pakade & Chilenga-Butao, 2021, p. 4).

The purpose of SGB elections is to create a school governance oversight body for ensuring effective implementation of school governance policies, provide regulatory oversight with democratic involvement of stakeholders, decision-making and accountability in schools (Kapelela, Mislav & Manyengo, 2025). However, the SGB elections are not held at random. In order to set the legislative tone for the elections, the first phase begins with the Minister of Basic Education including the Members of Executive Councils (MECs) for various provinces and other education-related stakeholders in the advocacy campaign (DBE, 2024). Stakeholders are encouraged to participate in the SGB elections through in-person meetings, newspapers, radios, televisions, internet blocks, and posters (DBE, 2024). Nonetheless, the MECs for education in provinces and the legislatures determines detailed election procedures for SGBs and the provincial legislatures approve unique regulations for SGB elections (DBE, 2024).

Department of Basic Education (2024, p. 8) further states that in order to start the SGB elections, each MEC must designate a Provincial Election Coordinator (PEC) in writing. The coordinator is responsible for organizing the necessary election materials and provincial regulations, among other things. A District Electoral Officer (DEO) is then appointed in writing by the district director to oversee the election procedures and ensure that election laws are observed. The National Guidelines for SGB Elections serve as a framework for the consistent interpretation of SASA, ensuring that elections take place on the same day, represent full democratic practice, and permit parental participation (DBE, 2024). To ensure free and fair elections, among other things, the procedure must be directed by Act 27 of 1996 (NEPA, 1996c), and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996a).

To run the elections, the district appoints a School Electoral Officer (SEO) in writing who is the principal of another school to prepare notices regarding the elections process. that include determination of election modes; identifying venues for the elections; making sure that the School Election Teams (SET) are aware of the electoral process and adhere to applicable laws; mediate and settle any disputes on election days (DBE, 2024, p. 9). According to SASA section 23(2), all stakeholder groups must be listed on the voter list prior to the start of the election as evidence that they are eligible to vote (RSA, 1996b). Fourteen days prior to the nomination, the electoral officer must announce election nominations either online or through exhibited posters (DBE, 2018).

Stakeholders’ Contestation for SGB Membership

Prior to the initiation of nominations for the school governing body, the SEO must verify that the requisite 15% quorum of eligible voting parents has been attained (DBE, 2024). According to Nxumalo, Gamede & Uleanya (2021) the individuals eligible for nomination in terms of section 23 of SASA include: “parents of learners at a school, teachers employed at the school, support staff members, and a learner in the eighth grade or above” (RSA, 1996b). Adelabu and Mncube (2023) assert that parents are an essential component

of educational advancement and their children's learning. Section 9 of SASA mandates that the majority of nominees for the SGB must be parents during elections (Kekana & Makura, 2020). This need denotes a transparent and accountable mechanism whereby nominated individuals can express and exchange views to impact decision-making (Barker, 2018). To avoid a conflict of interest, parents working at the school are prohibited from representing other parents in the governing council (RSA, 1996b). Among others the responsibilities of members to be elected in the SGB include: formulation of policies, tailoring code of conduct for learners, formulating language and admission policy, ensuring maintenance of school infrastructure, recommending appointments, dealing with learner behaviour and managing school finances (Manilal & Jairam, 2023; Pakade et al., 2021). Teachers' role is to represent their peers in the SGB decision-making processes and inform the SGB about the teaching and learning requirements within their schools (Slabbert, 2021).

During the learners' elections, sections 32 (2 & 3) pertaining to the status of minors within the governing body must be elucidated (RSA, 1996b). Non-teaching staff encompasses individuals employed at a school who are not engaged in instructional duties (Garaba, 2022). The attendance and participation of non-teaching staff personnel and learners in meetings facilitate the presentation of ideas that can enhance the efficacy of school governance and high quality of education (Eden, Chisom & Adeniyi 2024; Yu & Shay, 2022). This invention is important because valuing the perspectives of non-teaching staff and learners enhances collaboration, fosters a harmonious educational atmosphere conducive to the cultivation of democratic principles (Loots, 2020). The school principals are not elected during the SGB elections but immediately becomes members of the SGBs since they represent the DBE in their schools (Kruger, Beckmann & du Plessis, 2022).

Modes of Conducting SGB elections

There are three modes of conducting the SGB elections. The modes are: "nomination and election mode; full-day elections mode; and E-elections mode" (DBE, 2024, p. 11). Before conducting SGB elections, the SEO should notify the Head of Department (HOD) within 30 days about the election mode to be utilized, and the HOD must respond within 14 days after notification was made (DBE, 2024). The acceptance of the proposed electoral method by a school is contingent upon the assurance that the method is non-discriminatory, promotes extensive stakeholder participation, and ensures the availability of resources (DBE, 2024). A significant number of parents in South Africa continue to have difficulties with technology (Ngozwana, 2023). Consequently, the electoral method favoured by the majority of public schools is nomination and selection form.

After the nomination process, the SEO must follow election procedural requirements by: "retaining all documents utilized during the elections in sealed wrappers, archiving the election papers for three months from the date of the elections (DBE, 2024). Furthermore, the SEO must notify all elected members about their election and also alert the principal of the election results in writing, and request the principal to communicate the election outcomes to the parents within 14 days post-election meeting (DBE, 2024). Subsequently, SEO must submit a written notice to the district director containing the personal details of the elected members, providing declarations for both undisputed and disputed elections if applicable, and finally submitting the completed governing body data forms from all newly elected members to the district (DBE, 2024).

Theoretical Framework

This study is reinforced by Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), expressed by Icek Ajzen in 1991. The theory seeks to forecast human behavior in relation to specific human activities. This theory was to understand principals 'experiences regarding stakeholders' intentions to engage in the SGB elections. It was essential for the researcher to comprehend stakeholders' beliefs, attitudes, and intentions regarding participation in the SGB elections (Ajzen & Cote, 2008).

This theory posits that stakeholders' activities and behaviors are influenced by aspirations, curiosity, and motives to engage in specific activities (Maskari, 2015). This designates that stakeholders' willingness to engage in the SGB elections is contingent upon the motivation to fulfill the governance objective. According to Ajzen (1991, p. 181), "attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control affect behavioural intention." Consequently, the disposition towards participating in SGB elections reflects the drive stakeholders possess for their involvement in particular activities (Ajzen, 1988). The subjective norm is considered a social influence that determines whether to engage in a behaviour or refrain from it (Ajzen, 1985). This occurs when stakeholders recognize how their engagement in SGB elections might add value to the education of their children.

Comfort or difficulty in executing a particular behaviour is influenced by prior experiences related to that behavior (Rogers, 1959). Once the rationale for contesting or refraining from contesting in SGB elections is established, several tactics can be formulated to mitigate or enhance behavioural actions (Ajzen, 1991). Persuasive acts and messages are necessary to effectuate changes in attitude (Ajzen, 1987; McGuire, 1985; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Persuasive communications seek to influence individuals' ideas and behaviors to alter their attitudes in order to encourage a specific action (Crano & Prislin, 2008). Articulating the advantages of SGB elections to parents may affect their level of involvement (Gardikiotis & Crano, 2015). When the significance of engaging in SGB elections is elucidated stakeholders may be swayed and acquiesce to the appeal (O'Keefe, 2002). Positive attitude and subjective norm for an activity, along with increased perceived behavioral control enhance the desire to engage in particular conduct (Ajzen 1991; Ajzen, 188). Nevertheless, the desire to perform some of the activities may depend on factors such as accessibility of essential prospects and resources, funds, and collaboration with others (Ajzen, 1985). This theory is an innovative framework of logical action, with the primary element being to engage in specific behaviors such as contestation or engagement in the SGB elections (Ajzen, 1985).

Methodology

The qualitative study methodology was used to comprehend principals' experiences about stakeholders' motivations to participate in the SGB elections at public schools (Bonache & Festing, 2020). This methodology was selected to obtain a comprehensive account of participants' behaviors, intentions, and attitudes regarding their involvement in SGB elections within their schools (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Utilizing a qualitative strategy, enabled posing of inquiries that resisted quantification in order to comprehend participants' experiences (Lim, 2025).

Research Design

Research design is defined by Khanday and Khanam (2019, p. 367) as a "framework of methods and techniques chosen by a researcher to combine various components of research in a reasonably logical manner so that the research problem is efficiently handled". Case study research design was used to obtain insights from the participants regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Coombs, 2022). SGB election was a specific case to be addressed in this study. Case study was adopted to scrutinize emotions, perspectives, and experiences of the participants relating to SGB elections in their own context (Yin, 2018).

Research Setting

'Physical, social, and cultural context in which the investigators conduct the research' (Menon et al., 2023, p. 388) is regarded as a setting. They further accentuate that a precise and a comprehensive explanation of the study setting is essential for making judgement regarding the relevance and generalizability of the findings. This study involved principals at rural public primary and secondary schools in Mpumalanga province where high percentage of parents are illiterate (Mavuso, 2022). According to the press release made by Democratic Alliance (DA) political party, the rate of illiteracy in Mpumalanga province is claimed to be at 14.7% (DA, 2023). Nevertheless, due to the introduction of education for adults "Adult Basic

Education and Training” (ABET) in communities, some of the parents are able to read and right (Addae, 2021). This milestone has ignited stakeholders’ interest to engage in school governance activities.

Sampling

Sampling is a selection of a subset of the population that represents the entire population (Giri, 2024; Turner, 2020). The accuracy of a conducting this research was profoundly influenced by the sampling process (Makwana et al., 2023). Therefore, three public primary and three public secondary schools’ principals were purposively selected to participate in the data collection for this study. Recruitment of participants was directed by extensive knowledge they possess regarding SGB elections and a maximum of 10 years’ experience in public primary and secondary schools’ management and leadership (Kazembe, Woldeamanuel & Abay, 2024). A minimum of engagement in public schools’ electoral activities for six cycles in the SGB elections was also a preferred yardstick. These experiences assisted in providing comprehensive understanding of the process of conducting SGB elections.

Data Collection

Data was collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews. This is data collection techniques was used to extract data from the participants through verbal interaction (Horsfall et al., 2021). Interviews allowed conversation between the participants and the researcher (Ruslin et al., 2022). Interviews also allowed articulation of experiences and elicited more prompts to generate valuable data (Kahlke et al., 2024). Participants were invited through invitation letters and the consent forms which they signed to volunteer their participation. During the interviews similar interview questions were asked participants for 35 to 40 minutes in their offices. Based on participants consent, an audio-recorder was used during the interview proceedings (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018).

Data Analysis

Analysing data is “the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, observation notes, or other non-textual materials that the researcher accumulates to increase the understanding of the phenomenon” (Wong, 2008:14). Data analysis followed consecutive stages of data analysis spiral of organizing, perusing, coding, classifying and synthesizing the data (Leedy & Omhrod, 2015, p. 316). During data organization, huge elements of data were fragmented into smaller and perused to make sense of what was contained in the data to inscribe preliminary interpretations. These interpretations were then clustered to find meaning in the data that provided a theory for this study. This procedure unearthed new understandings that were used as recommendations for future studies.

Ethical Considerations

We were authorized by Nkangala District and the designated public primary and secondary schools to conduct this study. Consent to participate in this study was obtained from participants without any coercion. Codes were assigned to schools and participants to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the information gathered. Primary school principals were labelled PPS1-PPS3 whereas secondary school principals were coded PSS1-PSS3.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is evidence of an extremely moral research which is a predictor of trust (Zhang et al., 2024). To ensure that this study was trustworthy, we adopted principles such as credibility, transferability and confirmability (Maree et al., 2019). Credibility was ensured by engaging in a rigorous data collection analysis that reflected the original views experiences of the participants. We also engaged participants in member-checking to verify the correctness of the data collected.

Transferability is a process of applying a specific data drawn from participants, settings, and epochs to others that were not directly investigated. It focuses on a thorough explanation of the research context, participants and methods that allow readers to evaluate the resemblances amid their context and the study,

allowing them to judge the pertinence and significance of findings to their own. The component of transferability formed the basis for new knowledge in this area of discipline.

Confirmability is about the neutrality and fairness of the findings, assuring that they are not affected by prejudices of the researcher. Confirmability of the findings of this study was ensured by engaging experts in this field of discipline to inspect whether the ideas presented by this study, solely represented participants views not those of the researchers

Results

The themes drawn from the data analysis process from the interviews included: persuasion to contest in the SGB elections; perceptions on the SGB elections; stakeholders benefit on the SGB elections.

Persuasion to Contest in the SGB Elections

Manilal and Jairam (2023) declare that previously in education, stakeholders' participation was limited in schools. However, the democratic order adopted in South Africa changed the landscape. Parents were afforded opportunity by legislation and policies to participate in school decision-making process (Sebidi, 2023; Selamolela, 2019). Section 23(2)(a) of SASA emphasizes participation of parents in SGBs. (RSA,1996b). It was discovered that stakeholders are persuaded in different ways to engage in the SGB elections, and this is what PPS1 said:

“The department of education launch face to face campaigns through its different education tiers, advertise through different radio stations, newspapers and the television to alert parents about SGB elections.”

Nevertheless, PPS2 declared that, *“After the confirmation of SGB elections date, schools enter into SGB elections campaigns by alerting the parents about SGB elections by holding meetings, displaying SGB lections posters at the strategic places in the community.”*

Furthermore, PSS2 mentioned that, *“During the SGB elections cycle, the district electoral coordinator trains all the principals to be abreast with the provincial electoral guidelines in order to share them with parents during parents' meetings. Political parties also assist in disseminating information to their constituencies.”*

Remarking on this assertion, PPS3 indicated that, *“Immediately after the date of the SGB elections is announced, principals issue letters to the parents to alert them about date and the venue where the elections will be held when the elections, this is also repeated a week before the elections date is due.”* PSS3 confirmed this postulation by alluding that *“Schools hire a loud hailer to communicate the SGB elections message to the parents and this is done on the last weekend of the month when elections are to be held. Churches also assist to communicate message of elections to their congregations.”*

The findings exposed that, parents are influenced to engage in the SGB elections through the use of media, face-to-face campaigns, loud hailing, posters and discourses by non-governmental organizations. Okeke (2014) opines that communication in this case becomes important to develop parent leaders and representatives at schools. The findings also revealed that the persuasion mechanism used to encourage parents to engage in the SGB elections arouse their interest. Concurring with the theoretical framework, persuasive communication is important to ignite interest and produce changes in parents' attitudes to contest in SGB elections. (McGuire, 1985; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Perception on the SGB Elections

It was found that youthful parents were reluctant to engage in SGB elections. This was because of the inherited thinking that SGB errands would interfere with their work. This attitude aligns with Rogers (1959) assertion that comfort or struggle of performing a certain act is determined by the experience regarding the same behaviour (Rogers, 1959).

This is what PSS2 mentioned,

“Parents claim to have huge responsibilities at their work places and they think that when they are elected in the SGB, their work schedules will be disturbed by the SGB meetings and workshops they have to attend.” Coinciding with this postulation, PPS1 declared that *“When parents are confronted to participate in SGB elections, they usually indicate that this kind of elections are not meant for youthful parents who are still working because they cannot serve dual interest.”*

The findings also exposed that some of the parents who are still at their youthful age are skeptical to contest for SGB elections because of their huge social responsibilities. This finding coincides with Maluleka (2008) view that engagement of young parents in SGB is largely undermined in communities and reduced to the responsibility of grandparents. Some of the parents claimed that their employers in the industries don't allow them to take a day off to participate in an SGB elections event, as such their engagement in the elections becomes impossible. PSS1 declared that,

“Due to lack of knowledge of some the parents regarding the leave measures, they think that it is impossible to apply for a leave to go and participate in SGB elections where their children are attending school. They also think that their employers are not aware of this arrangement.” Based on this disclosure, work opportunities were articulated by some of the parents for their lack of interest to contest in SGB elections where their children are attending school. They blame their locations of employment as reason for not engaging in the SGB elections activities as well as rigidity of their employers of not giving them leave days to be involved in SGB matters.

PPS2 lamented the situation when declaring that *“It is no longer simple to get a job where one is staying, so parents blame the distance of their employment for their disengagement in SGB elections. Remember, these are not old parents, but parents who can be engaged in virtual meeting whenever they have been elected in the SGB.”*

The findings exposed that; parents have different perceptions of their disengagement in SGB elections activity. They thought that when they are working far away from their homes, they won't be able to participate fruitfully in SGB activities if they can be elected. This concurs with the DBE (2018) assertion that “many parents are reluctant to participate in SGB election because of their full-time professions. The solution to this problem is articulated by Ajzen (1991) who confirms that when the basis of performing or not performing the behaviour is known, different strategies can be used to minimise or increase the behavioural actions. However, Sox et al. (2016) suggest that a hybrid meeting can be held to accommodate those attending SGB meeting physically and virtually. Findings also exposed that; parents lack knowledge regarding their rights of being allowed to be involved in SGB elections.

Stakeholders Intentions to Contest in the SGB Elections

Basically, holding SGB elections is to ensure effective school governance that can assist schools to realise their educational objectives (DBE, 2024). Therefore, voting should aim at nominating the best candidates who can assist the principal to engage in an effective decision-making for the school to realise its vision. However, findings suggest that the three variables in the TPB have a substantial effect on persuading parents' contestation in SGB elections, and this is what PP1 had to say:

“Some of the literate parents' intention participate in SGB elections is to support and assist the school to perform its educational obligations efficiently.”

However, in addition, PSS3 mentioned that,

“Some of the parents contest to be elected in the SGB because they want to use their delegated power to enrich themselves financially. They also think that when they have been elected in the SGB, they will have job opportunities”. Lamenting the situation, PPS2 suggested that, “Parents having children in particular

schools, and who are the affiliates of different political parties, contest in the SGB elections for political gain. They fight for membership and persuade other parents to vote for them. They promise parents employment”.

This assertion was confirmed by PSS2 who declared that,

“Parents who belong to certain political parties organize meetings in the community and nominate their candidate who should be nominated by the members of that political party who are parents in particular schools during the SGB elections. They do aspire to control schools and use them indirectly as their political campaigning hubs.”

Submissions made by participants suggested a threefold intention to contest in SGB elections. Some parents compete solely for academic advancement. This finding aligns with the argument of DBE (2024) that through SGB elections, stakeholders are given an opportunity to exercise their democratic rights and affirm their participation in the education of their children. Certain stakeholders are drawn in the SGB elections for personal financial gain (Rangongo, Mohlakwana & Beckmann, 2016). Nevertheless, Ajzen (1988) asserts that parental attitudes towards competing in SGB elections reflect the extent of their favourable or unfavourable evaluation of the specific activity in question. This deduction is corroborated by Sebidi (2019), who indicates that parents seek to be elected as members expecting to receive a salary for their membership. Section 27 (2) of SASA explicitly denounce that no member of SGB must be remunerated the execution of their duties. Nevertheless, some parents vie for SGB election for political advantage. Parents affiliated with certain schools and political parties vigorously compete in SGB elections, urging fellow parents to elect them to strengthen their political affiliations, seize control of educational institutions, and utilize schools as arenas for political conflict. This exercise contravenes Section 33A (1)(2) of SASA which prohibits political party officials to engage in party-political events during school hours. This encompasses political campaigning in all forms, including the exhibition of party logos, apparel, and campaign materials (RSA, 1996b).

Discussion

The findings revealed that historically parents were not properly motivated and notified about the SGB elections. Currently, the media, posters and meetings are used to alert parents about SGB elections when they are due to be held. These findings coincide with Selamolela (2019) who assert that in the democratic South Africa, parents are stimulated to be involved and participate in school governance in different ways. This is confirmed by O’Keefe (2002) who mentions that when the worth of participating in SGB elections is explained, stakeholders’ interest is captivated and they turn to comply with the request. Furthermore, Ajzen (1991) accentuates that the influential acts and messages are essential to effect changes in attitude of the stakeholders.

Apart from motivation to participate in SGB elections, the findings discovered lack of knowledge from parent members. Some of the parents neglect their responsibility to participate in the SGB elections because of misconstructions they embrace. Among others parents think that if they can participate in the SGB elections and it happens that they get elected, their participation will be impeded due to their work commitment. Some of the youthful parents claim that they were working far away from their homes, so their election in the SGB was not worthwhile. However, it is possible to be elected as a school governing body even if one is working very far because currently online platforms are normally used to accommodate members who cannot attend meetings physically.

The findings exposed a connection between the stakeholders’ attitude and their intentions of engaging in a particular behaviour. Stakeholders’ behaviour is influenced by their ambitions, inquisitiveness, and tenacities to engage in specific activities such as SGB elections. It was discovered that parents’ determination to participate in the SGB elections is driven by different factors. Some of the parents solely participate to assist the school achieve its educational objectives, whereas others participate to engage in malevolent acts of misusing school funds, to gain political power to control the school stakeholders and

to have access to job opportunities. This assertion is corroborated by Garcer and Mestry (2025) and Mlakalaka and Rulashe (2024) that there has been an overabundance reports related to deception and missing and mismanagement of funds in public schools (Mlakalaka & Rulashe, 2024).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Stakeholders contestation for SGB elections should be conducted in good faith and with an understanding that when elected as members in school governance, they are obliged to enhance the functionality of a school towards realising its educational vision. The findings revealed that majority of stakeholders contest for SGB elections persuaded by ulterior and malevolent motives. These motives include: yearning to defraud school funds, party political objectives to garner support and job opportunities within a school. This study recommends to the DBE to complement SGB elections with vetting system and interviews of the interested members before the final elections. This screening process would assist the parents to elect the best possible members in the SGB based on the preliminary shortlisting made by the district officials. This system would also assist to minimise unnecessary contestation based on the ulterior and malevolent mission of parents to enrich themselves.

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