

School Governing Bodies in Strengthening Democracy and Social Justice: Parents as Partners?

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ABSTRACT This paper reports findings of a qualitative multi-site case study of schools in two provinces in South Africa. Framed within theories of democratic governance and social justice, the aim of the study was to explore the role of school governing bodies, through parental participation in strengthening democracy and social justice. Data were collected through semi-structured focus group interviews and phenomenological steps for data analysis were followed. Findings suggest that the effective functioning of SGBs is influenced by the context within which schools operate. While parents are represented in SGBs, however; SGBs are fraught with difficult power relations, exclusionary practices and a disregard for social justice principles. The paper argues that all stakeholders have a role to play in entrenching democratic governance in schools. To this end, stakeholders should be assisted to develop the requisite democratic values, behaviour, skill and attitudes.