# Improving Participation in Quality Education in South Africa: Who Are the Stakeholders?

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**ABSTRACT** Education is of importance in improving the living conditions of citizens all over the world. It is the only tool for individuals and states' sustainable development. Educated nations contribute towards development of their states. Therefore, it is necessary for the states to offer quality education to its citizenry. The question which arises mostly is who should get involved in education. Community leaders and members, educators, parents and other stakeholders blame governments when education is of poor quality. It is, therefore, government which is ridiculed when education systems collapse. Quality education is the key towards individuals and state development, therefore everyone should be part of or involved in the provision of quality education. This conceptual paper, through involvement of different stakeholders in Singapore and the United States (US), would like to add a voice for South Africa and point out who are these stakeholders, and their roles and functions in the provision of quality education. The present paper also outlines the way in which all stakeholders are involved in the provision of quality education in Singapore and US and lessons for South Africa learn from these two countries.

## INTRODUCTION

The Department of Basic Education encourages different stakeholders to participate in education. The South African Schools Act of 1996 stipulates the roles and functions of parents, through School Governing Bodies, in the education of their children, as one of the most important stakeholders. It is not only parents who should get involved in education. All people who are interested in education should be involved.

In the present conceptual paper, researchers are going to discuss how Singapore and the United States of America (US) involve different stakeholders in education. These countries involve different stakeholders and stipulate their roles and functions, in a manner that supersedes South Africa. Having critically reviewed the literature to find out how these two countries involve stakeholders in education, the researchers are convinced that provision of quality education depends on the participation of different stakeholders besides adequate financial resources. The purpose of this paper is to emphasize different stakeholders' roles and functions in the provision of quality education in South Africa.

## Who Are Stakeholders?

According to Saxena (2014), a stakeholder of any school is anyone who is involved in the welfare and success of a school and its stu-dents, including administrators, teachers, staff, students, parents, community members, school board members, city councilors and state representatives.

The Glossary of Education Reform (2013) describe the term 'stakeholder' as one who refers to anyone who is invested in the welfare and success of a school and its students. Such people include administrators, teachers, staff members, students, parents, families, community members, local business leaders, and elected officials such as school governing body members, city councilors, and state representatives. Stakeholders may also be collective entities such as local businesses, organizations, initiatives, committees, media outlets, and cultural institutions. In other words, stakeholders have a "stake" in the school and its students, meaning that they have personal, professional, civic, or financial interest or concern. The term "stakeholders" may also be used interchangeably with the concept of a school community, which necessarily comprises a wide variety of stakeholders. The idea of a "stakeholder" intersects with many school-reform concepts and strategies, particularly leadership teams, shared leadership and voice, which generally seek to expand the number of people involved in making important decisions related to a school's organization, operation, and academics. Besides, shared leadership entails the creation of leadership roles and decision-making opportunities for teachers,

staff members, students, parents, and community members, while "voice" refers the values, opinions, beliefs, perspectives, and cultural backgrounds of the people in a school or surrounding community. Stakeholders may participate in a leadership team, take on leadership responsibilities in a school, or give "voice" to their ideas, perspectives, and opinions during community forums or school-board meetings (Glossary of Education Reform 2013).

Glossary of Education Reform (2013) further states that stakeholders also play a role in community-based learning. The term 'community-based learning' refers to the practice of connecting what is being taught in a school to its surrounding community, which may include local history, literature, and cultural heritages, in addition to local experts, institutions, and natural environments. Community-based learning is also motivated by the belief that all communities have intrinsic educational assets that educators can use to enhance learning experiences for students. Therefore, stakeholders are necessarily involved in the process.

Generally speaking, the growing use and involvement of stakeholders in public education is based on the recognition that schools, as well as public institutions, are supported by state and local tax revenues. In addition, schools are not only part of and responsible to the communities they serve, but they are also obligated to involve the broader community in important decisions related to the governance, operation, or improvement of the school. Increasingly, schools are being more intentional and proactive about involving a greater diversity of stakeholders, particularly stakeholders from disadvantaged communities and backgrounds, or from groups that have, historically, been under-served by schools or that have underperformed academically (Glossary of Education Reform 2013).

Maric (2013) defines stakeholders as any group or an individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization objectives; and stakeholders as constituencies in the organization's external environment that are affected by the organization's decisions and actions. The main groups of stakeholders are mostly customers, employees, local communities, suppliers and distributors, shareholders. Stakeholder analysis can be used to generate knowledge about relevant actors so as to understand their behavior, intentions, interrelations, agendas, interests and the influence or resources they have.

Paine and McCann (2009) accept that a stakeholder is an individual or group with an interest in the success of an organization in fulfilling its mission of delivering intended results and maintaining the viability of its products, services, and outcomes over time. What is interesting is that Paine and McCann (2009) go on to distinguish between different types of stakeholders in a school context; they state that there are internal stakeholders work within the school system on a daily basis and who largely control what goes on there. These include school staff, district staff, and, to some extent, school boards. External stakeholders stay outside the day-to-day work of the schools having a strong interest in school outcomes but do not directly determine what goes into producing those outcomes.

## Involvement of Stakeholders in Education

Stakeholder-engagement strategies are widely considered central to successful school improvement by many individuals and organizations that work with public schools. Because some communities may be relatively uninformed about or disconnected from their local schools, a growing number of educational reformers and reform movements in recent decades have advocated for more inclusive, community-wide involvement in an improvement process. The general theory connotes to including more members of a school community in the process, school leaders can foster a stronger sense of "ownership" among the participants and within the broader community. Besides, when the members of an organization or community feel that their ideas and opinions are being heard, and when they are given the opportunity to participate authentically in a planning or improvement process, they will feel more invested in the work and in the achievement of its goals, which will therefore increase the likelihood of the school's success (Glossary of Education Reform 2013).

In some cases, when schools make major organizational, programmatic, or instructional changes, particularly when parents and community members are not informed in advance or involved in the process, it can give rise to criticism, resistance, and even organized opposition.

As a reform strategy, involving a variety of stakeholders from the broader community can improve communication and public understanding, while also incorporating the perspectives, experiences, and expertise of participating community members in order to improve reform proposals, strategies, or processes. In these cases, educators may use phrases such as "securing community support," "building stakeholder buy-in," or "fostering collective ownership" to describe efforts being made to involve community stakeholders in a planning and improvement process. In fact, stakeholders are individuals who have power or influence in a community, and schools may be obligated, by law or social expectation, to keep certain parties informed (Glossary of Education Reform 2013).

With the involvement of stakeholders in education, Sexana (2014) categorizes stakeholders as collective entities such as organizations, initiatives, committees, media outlets, and cultural institutions. Within the context of schools, stakeholders have a stake in the school and its students, which means they have personal, professional, civic, financial interest or concern in the school.

Stakeholder engagement is considered vital to the success and improvement of a school. The involvement of the broader community of the school can improve communication and public understanding; it also allows for the incorporation of the perspectives, experiences and expertise of participating community members to improve reform proposals, strategies, or processes (Sexana 2014).

Parent, family and community involvement can have a different meaning for different people. A research-based framework developed by Joyce Epstein of John Hopkins University in (Sexana 2014), describes six types of stakeholder involvement:

*Parenting:* It helps families by providing them with parenting skills and family support, make them understand the phases of child development, its complexities and ways to cope with it. Parent stakeholders serve the purpose of assisting schools to understand backgrounds and cultures of families and their goals for children.

*Communicating:* It creates reliable communication channels between the school and homes to communicate with families about school programs and student progress.

*Volunteering:* It enables educators to work with volunteers who support students and the school. This involves families as volunteers and as audiences at the school.

*Learning at Home:* It encourages the involvement of families in their children's academic activities at home through curriculum-related exercises such as homework and goal setting.

*Decision Making:* It creates space for families to participate in school decisions, governance, and advocacy activities.

*Collaborating with the Community:* It serves the purpose of coordinating resources and services for families, students, and the school with community groups such as businesses, cultural and civic organizations, colleges or universities.

**Involvement of Stakeholders in the Education Systems of Singapore and the US**

Further, researchers discuss identified stakeholders and their roles in education systems of Singapore and the United States of America (US). There are different stakeholders in these countries that South Africa may not have or may not recognize them as important, however, identifying all of them might be a lesson to the South African education system on how to engage some of the stakeholders which are not regarded as necessary.

*Singapore*

In Ministry of Education (MoE) (2013), the Department of Education and Lee (2013) identify the following stakeholders and their roles:

*Students*

The students value education and want to learn, thereby desiring to get the most out of the experience schools offer. They also stand firmly by what is right, having understood what is right and wrong from parents and teachers, respect authority and have a sound sense of civic responsibility. These students work well and independently with others, with purpose, passion and pride in their work, and demonstrate a spirit of caring and sharing towards others, together with a sense of identity and pride as Singaporeans. According to Tan (2005), there is a need for Singapore students to possess 'national values and social instincts'.

*Parents/Grandparents*

Parents and grandparent play a role of supporting schools in their efforts to educate the child and take ultimate responsibility for the upbringing of their children/grandchildren by setting good examples for them to follow. They also instill a sense of responsibility in their children/grandchildren through helping them to become good citizens, and show care and concern for their children/grandchildren by being interested in what they do. Guanyinmiao (2012) states that it is crucial for teachers and parents to maintain a constructive and complementary relationship, as it forms the necessary foundation for teaching-learning pedagogies to evolve at school and at home.

*Teachers*

Teachers inspire love for Singapore in students and care deeply for the character and moral development of students by word and example; they also promote teamwork, enterprise, innovation and creativity in students. In addition, they motivate, challenge and help students find the potential within themselves, seek to learn continuously, and believe in their calling to influence the young.

*Principals*

School principals are effective translators of educational policies into practice and interpret and apply these appropriately to suit school conditions. They also lead by example, thereby conveying a deep sense of mission. In addition, they build a supportive community by forging links with parents, alumni and the community by creating an environment to nurture growth and learning for staff and students; and facilitate sharing of vision with parents and students.

*Ministry of Education Head Quarters*

The Ministry sets the strategic directions for schools by collaborating with schools to formulate effective policies and practices. It also supports principals and teachers to do an excellent job and works in tandem with schools to inform and clarify policy positions to the public. In addition, it supports teachers in helping their students achieve the Desired Outcomes of Education (DOEs), and collaborates with other government agencies and non-governmental organizations to formulate effective programs and practices.

*Community*

The community welcomes and encourages young people to be involved in the life of the community and upholds and transmits the right values and attitudes to the young. It also recognizes the variety of abilities and talents displayed by the young and see the worth in each child. In addition, communities, offer scholarships and bursaries to students and teachers and provide support to families and students who are in need of assistance.

*Business/Industry*

The business stakeholders provide opportunities for the young to experience the world of work by collaborating with schools to formulate effective programs for the young such as offering work-related projects. They also support placement opportunities for the professional development of teachers; and offers scholarships and bursaries to students and teachers.

*Alumni Associations*

Alumni associations demonstrate loyalty and responsibility for future generations by supporting the school. These provide the school with a sense of history, and act as mentors and role models to students in the school. They also offer scholarships and bursaries to students and teachers.

*School Advisory/Management Committee*

The school committee serves in an advisory and voluntary capacity to support school programs, functions and activities. Such committees offer sponsorship and help the school to raise funds for developmental, infrastructural, and enrichment activities to benefit students and staff. They also provide links and encourage networking between the school, on the one hand, and the community, industry, and parents on the other, for mutual benefit and quality education, and acts as role models of active citizenship for students.

### United States of America

Waters (2011) identifies some stakeholders and their roles in education in the United States education system. Further, he attempts to explain the roles of six distinctive educational stakeholders which are school board members, superintendents, site administrators, teachers, parents, and students-who are closely involved in the overall operations of schools.Waters (2011) further describes influential factors for each of the stakeholders' roles, which may better define the significance of each educational stakeholder.

### School Board Members

A school board is comprised of members that are usually elected by the residents of the school district, but in some districts are elected by the mayor or other executives of jurisdictions that may include towns, cities, or counties. The size of a school board varies between districts and from city to city; similarly, the power of the boards will vary between districts and from city to city. School boards have the power to hire and fire teachers and administrators. They are the guardians of the policy that help implement changes that will benefit the district or support the superintendent of the district who has the responsibility of implementing and maintaining the policies set by the board.

### Superintendent

In most cases, the school board selects the school district superintendents. The school board's responsibilities are similar to that of a chief executive officer of a large corporation. Through the help of the school board, the school district superintendent has the responsibility of making sure that personnel selections meet state standards and that they benefit the district with their educational experience. The district superintendent, as a stakeholder, also makes important decisions in matters such as new school construction, the districts finance, and a major part of the curriculum and teaching that goes on in the schools of the district. The district superintendent has other responsibilities that include creating long-term plans for technology, educational delivery, and district growth.

A school district superintendent needs to have a commitment to playing a leading role in the building board governing capacity and conducting school business. The selection committee should look at the candidate's educational philosophy and the initiatives that he or she will undertake in the future in terms of budgeting, strategic planning, and monitoring the performance of both the district and its employees.

In cases that include dismissal, the superintendent's perspective of the dismissal is required to follow two directions. First, the superintendent is required to listen to the school board and honor their wishes regarding what should be done. Although he/she may have input regarding the dismissal, the ultimate decision rests on the school board. The superintendent is also required filter all of the media coverage and act as a spokesperson for the district.

The other direction that the superintendent is required to take in cases of dismissal is to address the situation with the site administrator. An investigation to exactly what was said and done by both parties is mostly to be conducted after which the superintendent is required to give the site administrator suggestions and directives of how to manage their staff, media, and students regarding the situation. Since there is a district policy, the superintendent might deem it necessary to hold a meeting with all stakeholders to set up a consequence and have it aligned with the dismissal so that there would be no retaliation from the dismissed teacher.

### Site Administrator

The site administrator represents the single most influential stakeholder in the school setting and is expected to set the academic tone for students, parents, staff, and community members through effective participatory leadership. Effective site administration and leadership develops a collaborative team approach to decision making and problem solving, while simultaneously and consistently developing and maintaining district-wide policies and guidelines. Additionally, the successful site administrator employs a distributive approach to routine school operations to ensure maximum involvement of other internal and external stakeholders. Besides, the site administrator may choose to set up task-force committees, including parents, teachers, community leaders, and students in

order to research a particular issue and report their findings to the School Improvement Team. Finally, the site administrator may be subjected to significant influences by the cultures; these are explicit and implicit interactions among school staff which may determine the effectiveness of his or her leadership. For example, in addition, many explicit interactions, ceremonies and rituals, are routine and are expected; such interactions should be encouraged and honored, whereas implicit behaviors stemming from unwritten expectations are potentially problematic. Besides, teachers with seniority expect certain privileges from the site administration such as selecting their teaching assignments, or receiving preferential opportunities to attend state conferences. Thus, the site administrator will need to be aware of the inter works of these cultures to maintain effective leadership.

### Teachers

The teacher, along with the student, plays an interactive role in the education process because one cannot function without the other. MoE (2013) explains "the empowerment of teachers will facilitate the empowerment of students." Teacher empowerment provides teachers with a significant role in decision-making, control over their work environment and conditions, and opportunities to serve in a range of professional roles. The teacher, as a stakeholder, is expected to possess the professional knowledge to lead the students in instruction. In addition to serving in an instructional role, the teacher can be a mentor, supervisor, counselor, and community leader. The teacher can be a mentor to students or other teachers. The role of supervisor is present in every aspect of a teacher's daily responsibilities. In addition, the teacher's role as counselor can be used to offer advice to students or school advisory committees.

The motivational factors for teachers is related to the impact they play in producing individual learners who become an assets to the community they live in. The teacher is motivated to fulfill his/her role with an understanding of how important teachers are to society; without teachers, societies would not be able to function as global competitors.

### Parents

Parents play key roles as educational stakeholders. Parents' primary objective is the assurance that their children will receive a quality education, which will enable the children to lead productive rewarding lives as adults in a global society. Parents bring valuable quality to the educational experience of their children because they are better able to understand their own children and can influence, significantly, student behaviors such as time management and study habits, eating practices, and their personal safety and general welfare. Parents, as educational stakeholders, provide additional resources for the school to assist with student achievement and to enhance a sense of community pride and commitment, which may be influential in the overall success of the school. Besides, parent's involvement with their children's educational process through attending school functions, participating in the decision making process, encouraging students to manage their social and academic time wisely, and modelling desirable behavior for their children represents a valuable resource for schools across the nation. In addition, parents have the right and the responsibility to be involved in their children's educational process. Parents are very important stakeholders to the educational decision-making process. Many parents' decisions regarding educational issues are significantly influenced by their values and beliefs, rather than the school's legislation. In addition, each geographical area is subject to present different beliefs and values. Thus, the parent's positions on the nativity scene may be dependent on their value systems or the area that they live in.

### Students

The student plays a lead role in the educational process, and as stakeholders, are expected to participate in the process. "Successful schools encourage significant participation by parents, students and teachers" (MoE 2013). Although the student's primary role is that of a recipient, students should be encouraged to exercise their decision-making role in the education process. By giving aid to the decision-making process, students become an integral part of a successful institution. To empower students with shared decision-making increases their choices and responsibilities for their own learning.

Student participation in education is not the only role of students, but the student is used as a determining factor for some aspects of educa-

tion. The student determines the educational services, to be offered in the school, such as special education for those who are gifted and learning-challenged. The number and needs of students can be a determining factor for allocating resources in schools. As a result, of their participation students gain the skills and knowledge needed to be productive and viable part of society. Students, as stakeholders, possess both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. The intrinsic motivation comes with understanding the value of an education. Extrinsic motivations are the accolades students receive for successful completing their education.

## DISCUSSION

Stakeholders, in the South African education context, are teachers, learners, and parents. These stakeholders participate in schools through School Governing Body, Department of Basic Education, business and civil societies. The following paragraph discusses stakeholders in the South African education system.

### The South African Education System

Department of Education (DoE) (2000:19) defines 'stakeholders' as all the role players in an organization such as a school. Stakeholders include both teaching and non-teaching staff such as educators, learners, administrative clerks, general workers and the parents. Stakeholders of the school also include DoE, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and all the community members who have interest in the education of their children.

Schools consist of educators, learners, principals, School Management Teams (SMT), School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and parents who work together in different ways (learning, teaching, managing and supporting to meet shared goals).

In terms of governance, former Deputy President, Kgalema Motlanthe, joined Minister of Basic Education, Mrs. Angie Motshekga and representatives from civil society and business for the launch of the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) at the Presidential Guesthouse in Pretoria on Tuesday, 16 July 2013. The NECT is to guide in the National Education Collaboration Framework (NECF) that was developed by a range of stakeholders in response to the National Development Plan, which takes forward Government's commitment to prioritizing education.

The NECF defines themes for collaboration between government through the Department of Basic Education and civil society, with the aim of improving human capacity, school management, district support, infrastructure and results-orientated mutual accountability between schools and communities.

The NECT, to be guided by the National Education Collaboration Framework, does not intend to usurp the primary role of government in education, which is to manage and administer the entire basic education system. Government remains responsible for the basic provisioning of the system. The NECT rather creates an interface to between government and civil society and aims to both influence and support the agenda for reform in education.

Former Deputy President Motlanthe hailed the initiative as an historic collaboration which would take the vast resources invested in education by the private sector each year. "Interventions by the private sector have demonstrated that even those learners who attend poorly resourced schools can achieve excellent results if provided with the requisite support, we appreciate the great financial and human resources contribution business makes to education and are encouraged that these programs are being taken further through the launch of this framework to improve co-ordination. Labor, business, government, civil society and other stakeholders have to work together to realize the improvements in learning outcomes required by the NDP." said the former Deputy President (2013).

Even though the Deputy President and Minister of Basic Education have launched the National Education Collaboration Trust, Schreiner (2014) states that challenges to SA's education system require consultation with all interested stakeholders. The current challenges in South Africa's education system can only be overcome if there is direct consultation with principals, teachers, parents, and other interested stakeholders in the industry. The problem is that South Africans are unable to identify exact stakeholders. It is necessary to identify different stakeholders in education and stipulate their exact roles in education.

The Department is to be commended for the establishment of the (NECT) which aims at iden-

tifying and working together with different stakeholders. The Trust has set itself an ambitious program to improve schooling in 10 districts until 2018.

## Strengths and Weaknesses of Stakeholder Participation in South African Education System

The launch of National Collaboration Trust is a step in right direction. The most important thing is to identify stakeholders, their functions and roles and responsibilities in working with different schools in the whole country. The Department of Basic Education should discuss the roles and functions of all interested stakeholders.

In Singapore, the Ministry of Education has school advisory management committees, community and alumni associations which play critical roles in advancing education. On the other hand, the NECT is the only business and communities which are mentioned. The advisory/management committees should be instituted in the South African education system. There are alumni which are less regarded in basic education in South Africa.  In addition, schools have their own alumni which are working in the corporate world, and these alumni are forgotten and recognized elsewhere, mostly by institutions of higher learning, where they are contributing positively. It is time for South African schools to realize the importance of alumni in contributing towards donating resources for their former schools.

In most cases, communities in South Africa are reluctant to be involved in education, and it is only a few parents who are members of School Governing Body who are involved in the education of their children. There should be mechanism of involving the communities to be part of the schools because the communities are the ones which have an understanding of abilities of its own people.

In the US educational system, there is a site administrator who represents the single most influential stakeholder in the school setting and is expected to set the academic tone for students, parents, staff, and community members through effective participatory leadership. In South African context, a site administrator is needed to ensure that all stakeholders participate without fear or prejudice that some might feel regarding not being taken seriously because

of the level of their education. It remains to be seen or realized whether NECT will bear fruits in engaging all stakeholders regarding their roles and functions in education as per its long-term strategic objectives for 2018.

## CONCLUSION

Singapore and the US have identified and categories their stakeholders with their roles and functions. They both categorize their stakeholders as students, parents/grandparents, and teachers. Singapore's other stakeholders are: principals, ministry of education, communities, businesses and industry, alumni associations, school advisory and management committees, whereas the US stakeholders are school board members, superintendents and site administrator.

It might be not possible for the Department of  Basic Education to write down roles and functions like that of school governing bodies, students (learners), and teachers for the identified stakeholders to adhere to its policies, in comparison with Singapore and the US roles and functions of all stakeholders need to be stipulated. Nevertheless, the Department of Basic Education should identify and specify the roles and functions of each stakeholder in a persuasive manner in order to get their input and financial resources in order to offer quality education.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Singapore and the US have a number of stakeholders and have specified their roles and functions in their education system. It is necessary for the South African education system to identify its stakeholders in the provision and support of education. Such stakeholders may be: the Department of Basic Education, parents, students, community (civic leaders), and business/industry, alumni associates, school management committee, teacher unions, education support professionals, district and school leaders, school advisory/management committees.

In rural communities where parents are mostly illiterate, it is imperative for the Department of Basic Education to reintroduce Adult Basic Education and Training for parents and grandparents for them to be able to read and write and to be involved in education of their children and grandchildren with ease.

In South Africa, when these stakeholders have been identified and engaged, they should be given roles to play in the provision of quality education. Their roles can be associated with those of Singapore and the US. In most cases, students are not recruited or encouraged to be stakeholders who can play a role in education; it should be acknowledged that a student is a very important stakeholder who plays a very important role in the success of the school. There cannot be a school and education without this important stakeholder. Summatively, all these stakeholders can be engaged in different ways where all of them can contribute towards development and offering of quality education to all South Africans.

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