School Management & Leadership

2008
Volume 2 Number 10

POLICY • LEADERSHIP • MANAGEMENT • GOVERNANCE
for South African Schools

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SM&L

is published 10 times per year by Ednews. It is editorially and financially independent and it not affiliated to any organisation. It seeks to provide the leaders of South African schools with current and relevant information on issues of policy, leadership, management and governance.

2008 brought you more than we promised

2008 has been a good year for *School Management & Leadership*. Thanks to the continuing support of our readers, our subscriber base has continued to grow steadily in all of the provinces and increasing numbers mean we are beginning to gain some support from advertisers. Our commitment has always been to provide our subscribers with 10 issues per year with a minimum of at least 12 pages of useful information and practical advice in every issue. In 2008 we did far more than we promised, providing you with the equivalent of an additional 16-page bonus issue for the year. We have provided some statistics about our subscriber profile on page 11.

We have exciting plans for 2009 and hope, with your support, not only to grow our subscriber base but to bring you more of the information and tools that you need to lead and manage your schools successfully in the new year. One of the great joys of living in South Africa and of working in the school sector is that it offers so many opportunities to make a difference in the lives of children. It is why we do the work that we do and why we so enjoy searching for ways in which we can support those who are doing the real work in our schools, often in challenging circumstances. We would like to issue an open invitation to all of our readers to contact us about any education-related topics which are of interest to them or which they would like us to feature in future editions. We are also always keen to use *SM&L* as a platform for sharing examples of good practice and of things that have worked so we encourage you to write and tell us what you have done or are doing to make a difference in your school or district. We include an example of this kind of article on page 7. Written by Patrick Kabuya, an accountant and chairman of the SGB of Montrose Primary School in Gauteng, it provides useful practical advice on financial management.

We have extended our deadline for discounted subscription renewals to 31 January 2009 because of the late distribution of the last two issues of *SM&L* for 2008. The annual subscription fee for 2009 is R330, an increase of 10%. This is our first increase since our launch in January 2007 and is necessitated by increased production costs.

Renew your subscription by 31 January 2009 and save

Subscriptions for 2009 may be renewed at the 2008 rate of R300.00 if paid before 31 January 2009, a saving of R30.00on the 2009 rate of R330.00. This discount will also apply for those who order multiple copies of each edition. (2 copies R500, 3 copies R600).

Leadership

Authentic Leadership

Are you the same person to your colleagues at work as you are to the pupils you teach and to your friends, your spouse and your own children - or do you wear a different mask for each of them? Being authentic is about ensuring that everyone you meet is exposed to the same you.

We all wear masks at some stage in our lives. As adults and teachers, we frequently wear a mask of moral rectitude when dealing with children and the pupils we teach, emphasising to them the importance of good values and correct behaviour, values and behaviours that we may fail to live up to in our private lives. Younger children in the pre-school and primary schools years generally regard adults and teachers as being paragons of virtue unless they have been the victim of some form of abuse by an adult or teacher. Adolescents are not only less naïve about these kinds of things but are also nosier. As many a young teacher has discovered to his or her dismay, even relatively minor indiscretions or the sharing of information about his or her private life instantly strips away the teacher mask and some of the authority goes with it. A similar fate awaits leaders who are not authentic and whose style of leadership is not firmly grounded in the real person that they are.

Bill George and Peter Sims, authors of "True North: Discover Your Authentic Leadership"[1] writing in the *Harvard Business Review*[2] includes the following quotation from Ann Fudge, chairman and CEO of Young & Rubicam to emphasise the importance of self-knowledge if leaders are to be "authentic".

"All of us have the spark of leadership in us, whether it is in business, in government, or as a non-profit volunteer. The challenge is to understand ourselves well enough to use our leadership gifts to serve others."

The authors define authentic leaders as leaders who "demonstrate a passion for their purpose, practise their values consistently, and lead with their hearts as well as their heads. They establish long-term meaningful relationships and have the self-discipline to get results. They know who they are."

> Authentic leaders do not see themselves as passive observers of their lives. They view their lives rather as a journey of learning, developing self-awareness from their experiences.

The *HBR* article is based on research conducted by the authors in an effort to answer the question: "How can people become and remain authentic leaders?" Their research team interviewed 125 leaders to learn how they developed their leadership abilities and the authors claim that these interviews constitute the largest in-depth study of leadership development ever undertaken. The people interviewed ranged in age from 23 to 93 and were chosen on the basis of their

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How authentic arer you in your dealings with people?

with apologies to Ronald Searle

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reputation for authenticity and effectiveness as leaders. The group included men and women from a diverse array of racial, religious and socio-economic backgrounds and nationalities. Half were CEOs and the other half were leaders from a range of profit and non-profit organisations.

The findings suggest a reason why more than 1 000 other studies have not yet identified the common characteristics of successful leaders: analysis of the extensive research showed that there is no common personal profile or set of universal characteristics, traits, skills and styles which are shared by successful leaders. It would seem that authentic leaders are people who take responsibility for developing themselves and realising their own potential rather than waiting for others to do it for them. Critical to authentic leadership is an understanding of "life stories" – which are different from life histories. Your life history is simply a list of the events which constitute your life. Your "life story" is the way in which you interpret your personal history and the lessons that you learnt from it.

"All of us have the spark of leadership in us, whether it is in business, in government, or as a non-profit volunteer. The challenge is to understand ourselves well enough to use our leadership gifts to serve others."

Authentic leaders do not see themselves as passive observers of their lives. They view their lives rather as a journey of learning, developing self-awareness from their experiences. They also act on the basis of their learning and the values and principles that they have built from it. It is their self-awareness and entrenched values and principles that guide their decisions. Because of this, authentic leaders are more likely to be driven by intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards. Extrinsic rewards include material things such as more money, fancier motor cars and designer clothes, as well as things such as recognition and status. Intrinsic rewards include such things as personal growth, helping others and the satisfaction that one derives from a job well done.

"The world can shape you if you let it. To have a sense of yourself as you live you must make conscious choices. Sometimes the choices are really hard, and you make a lot of mistakes."

Because of their self-awareness and entrenched value systems, authentic leaders are able to build excellent leadership teams who support them in challenging times: people on whom they can rely, who are loyal and who will provide honest counsel when it is needed most. This is because their teams are built on openness, mutual respect and trust. They also have support structures outside of their professional lives which include at least one person who accepts them "warts and all", in whom they have complete trust, and who will tell them the honest truth when truth needs to be told. This is usually a spouse or partner but can be close friend.

They also tend to live healthy, balanced lives, devoting time to friends and family and to outside interests, involving themselves in community affairs, engaging in spiritual practices and getting sufficient exercise. This is not to suggest that their lives are perfect or stress-free; it is simply that they are willing to work hard to ensure that they live their lives in a way that is in keeping with the values and principles that they espouse and that their self-awareness makes it possible for them to reject patterns of behaviour that are at odds with the life-choices that they have made. John Donahoe, president of eBay Marketplaces, notes that being authentic is about maintaining a sense of self no matter where you are and is quoted to have warned: "The world can shape you if you let it. To have a sense of yourself as you live you must make conscious choices. Sometimes the choices are really hard, and you make a lot of mistakes."

The authors use the following interesting analogy to help us understand what authenticity is all about. They suggest that you think of your life as house, with your bedroom representing you personal life, your study your professional life, the family room for family life and a living room to share with friends. The question they ask is: if you knocked all the walls down, could you be the same person with every group?

Authenticity is something all school leaders in particular need to work at if they are to be successful, as schools are too people-intensive for it to be otherwise. Like an indiscreet young teacher, school leaders are soon exposed if they do not act with integrity and if their actions are not based on sound moral values and firm educational principles. Despite our best efforts, we will still make mistakes - which is where self-awareness comes in; as it is through self-awareness that we can learn and which enables us to grow as individuals and leaders. ■

References

[1] Bill George and Peter Sims, True North: Discover Your Authentic Leadership (Jossey-Bass, 2007)

[2] Bill George et al. Discover Your Authentic Leadership. HBR, February 2007.

Research

Which pupils will drop out of high school?

Findings from a recent study in the United States may help schools to identify those Grade 9 pupils who may be at risk of dropping out of high school before they reach Grade 12

A recent study[1] in the United States looked to identify factors which were predictors of the likelihood that Grade 9 pupils would drop out of high school. The study, released earlier this year, investigated factors influencing drop-out rates in Chicago Public Schools in an effort to identify pupils 'at risk'. The purpose of the study was to provide education authorities with information that they could use to identify these 'at-risk' pupils early so that interventions could be put in place to support them. The study was a follow-up to earlier research (published in 2005) by the same authors which looked at the validity of using failure in core courses and the number of credits completed in their first year at high school to predict the likelihood of a student matriculating[2] (passing in their final year at high school). This study classified Grade 9 pupils as being 'on-track' - meaning that they were likely to complete their high school course without dropping out - if they received at least 5 out of 7 credits and failed no more than one core course. Pupils who obtained fewer credits or failed more than 1 core course were considered to be 'at-risk' and in need of support.

> Attendance rates were also highly predictive of course failure, with 9th grade attendance rates being "eight times more predictive of course failure than 8th Grade test scores".

The so-called 'on-track' indicator was seen to be a strong predictor of eventual matriculation: thus it was useful as a means by which pupils 'at-risk' could be identified and supported. This 'on-track' indicator was found to be a better predictor of graduation than either test scores or demographic characteristics (race, socio-economic class, etc.). The study also showed that there were many pupils with high test scores who fell 'off-track' and who were therefore less likely to graduate than pupils with low test scores who remained 'on-track' by passing their courses.

> Pupils attend class more often and are more successful when they have strong relationships with teachers

In the more recent study - the one on which this article is based - three other factors were considered to determine the extent to which future matriculation success could be predicted:

- course failure in Grade 9
- Grade Point Average (GPA) and
- school attendance.

The researchers looked at data from 20 803 pupils who entered Chicago Public Schools in 2000 and who had graduated or dropped out by spring of 2005. They also analysed quantitative data from ninth graders in the 2004 – 2005 school year and survey responses from students and teachers in spring 2005 to determine if there were school characteristics associated with better-than-expected attendance rates, failure rates and grades.

The researchers analysed this data in an effort to answer the following questions:

- "How did course failure, overall GPA, and number of absences predict students who would fall off-track?"
- "Could the additional indicators be used for earlier intervention and more targeted intervention than on-track indicators?"
- "What student and school factors contributed to course failure?"
- "What school climate factors affected student attendance?"

The research team found that course failure, GPA and school attendance were all indicators of the likelihood that a pupil will drop out. They also found that there is a strong correlation between course failure and GPA and that, generally, pupils who failed a course tended to be weak in their other courses. GPA was found to be the best predictor of successful matriculation. What is particularly interesting and informative is the extent to which Grade 9 attendance/ absentee rates affect the likelihood that a pupil will succeed in Grade 12.

One of their findings was that the difference in matriculation rates between those who missed fewer than 5 days of school compared to those who missed 5 to 9 days of school during their Grade 9 year. The matriculation rate of those who missed fewer than 5 days of school in Grade 9 was 87%, compared with the 63% who missed 5 to 9 days of school.

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This study emphasises once again the important part that schools and teachers can play in identifying and supporting 'at-risk' pupils which in this country are almost certainly the majority of school-going children. While most communities in South Africa do not have access to the kinds of intergovernmental support structures that are found in a large first-world city like Chicago, our schools can still make a difference by tackling those issues over which they do have some influence. The research findings provide some direction in this regard. We provide the following checklist of strategies, which we hope will help schools to identify 'at-risk' pupils and to provide a reasonable measure of monitoring and support for those who are identified as being 'at-risk'.

1 Monitoring of pupil attendance

School attendance should be included as one of the factors that is used to identify pupils who are 'at-risk'. Five or more days of absence in a term should trigger some follow-up action from the pupil's class teacher, phase or grade head, or teacher counsellor. There should also be immediate follow-up (phone call or note to parent) for any pupil who is absent for 3 consecutive days or who misses school on 3 or more Mondays or Fridays in a term.

2 Early identification of 'at-risk' pupils

'At-risk' pupils should be identified as early as possible in their school career – at least by the end of their first year at primary or high school. Academic performance, school attendance, regular late-coming and repeated failure to hand in work-related assignments should be used as 'at-risk' indicators.

3 Responsibilities of class teachers and grade and phase heads

Class teachers, grade or phase heads should be required to make a list of 'at-risk' pupils each quarter when school reports are being prepared, checked and signed prior to their distribution to parents. The list should include all pupils who have been absent for 5 or more days in the term or for more than 10 days in the year; pupils who have failed the Language of Learning and Teaching of the school and Mathematics or Mathematical literacy and/or two or more subjects; and/or pupils whose results have dropped by more than 10%. These lists should be form the basis of whole-staff discussion which should focus on identifying those who are most at risk and on developing specific support strategies for each of the individuals identified. Responsibility for the on-going monitoring and support of individual pupils should be assigned to specific teachers. This could but need not necessarily be the pupil's class teacher, or his or her grade or phase head.

4 Responsibilities of subject teachers and subject teams

Subject teams should be required to have processes in place to ensure that subject teachers identify pupils who are falling behind in their subject. The subject team should also develop procedures which makes it possible for team members to provide collaborative on-going support for these under-performing pupils.

5 Keeping parents informed

5.1 There needs to be a system in place which makes it possible for the school to keep parents informed of their children's school attendance on a regular basis. Quarterly reports to parents should include a record of the number of days that the pupil has been absent that term. Parents should also be regularly informed of the relationship between school attendance and academic success.

5.2 The policy and procedure which is to be followed when informing the parents of pupils who are 'at-risk' must be clearly stipulated. This is to ensure that parents are correctly and appropriately informed about the nature of their child's academic risk and the remedies that the school is proposing to put in place to address these. The policy should include clear guidelines on who is responsible for contacting the parents, who should be present at any meeting with parents and the records that need to be kept of the matters that are transacted at these meetings. Any decision about follow-up and future reporting on progress should form part of these records.

5.3 Careful consideration should also be given to the kind of advice that should be given to parents on the things that they can do to support and monitor their child's progress. This needs to take into consideration the socio-economic context of the family and the educational level of the parents.

6 Record keeping

The school should have a clear policy and procedure for the systematic recording and filing of all information associated with each 'at-risk' pupil. This should include the pupil's academic results and absentee record and a history of all interventions including staff support and records of interviews with the pupil and with his or her parents. ■

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Attendance rates were also highly predictive of course failure, with 9th grade attendance rates being "eight times more predictive of course failure than 8th Grade test scores". This relationship was supported by other evidence which showed that pupils who performed well in Grade 8 (those with test scores in the top quartile) but who had high absentee rates in Grade 9 were more likely to fail than pupils who performed less well in Grade 8 (with test scores in the bottom quartile) but who missed just one week of school.

Absenteeism in the Chicago Public school system was found to be so prevalent that "half of the highest-achieving students ... missed more than one week of class per semester". Interestingly, the report goes on to state that the effects of "economic status, mobility rate, and age on course failure rates largely disappeared when 8th grade test scores and absenteeism were considered".

Given the strong link between poor attendance, course failure and future matriculation success, the need to identify the school factors which contributed to poor attendance and course failure becomes obvious. The research team used school climate surveys to identify and measure the impact of these factors. These surveys were administered to teachers and pupils during the 2004 - 2005 school year. The findings from these surveys included the following:

- Attendance is the largest predictor of course failure
- Boys fail more often than girls
- Academic preparation (as measured by 8th grade tests) affects success
- Pupils attend class more often and are more successful when they:
  - have strong relationships with teachers
  - perceive school and their coursework as important to their future
  - have support for academic achievement from their peers
- Students are more successful in schools where teachers collaborate.

Based on these findings, the researchers made a number of recommendations about approaches and strategies that could be used to help keep pupils in school and to increase the likelihood of those identified as being 'at-risk' to graduate. These included the following:

- Pupils with low grades or who fail courses should be identified early and provided with support in the form of mentoring and other interventions
- Schools, subject heads and subject teams should make every effort to ensure that there is a common approach to the curriculum and the way it is taught. The authors note that evidence shows that "grades and attendance are better than expected in schools where the instructional programme is more coherent".
- The interventions should be closely aligned to the instructional programmes of the school. This is worth noting. Many commercial extra-lesson programmes in subjects such as Mathematics tend to focus on their own programmes rather than on the work in which the pupils are involved in their schools. As a result, there is often conflict between the teacher and the pupil about what is important and about which approach is best. This lack of coherence can only be to the detriment of "at-risk" pupils, particularly in the light of the evidence supporting the previous point.
- Pupil attendance rates need to be closely monitored and interventions put in place to support pupils immediately they begin to miss class regularly.
- Pupils and parents need to be made aware of the link between attendance and good grades, and absence and course failure.
- Teachers need to be made aware of the link between teacher-pupil relationships as well as pupil attendance and good grades; and schools should put in place strategies to improve teacher-pupil relationships.
- Teachers need to help pupils to understand the connection between their course work and future goals.

This is an interesting study and although it was undertaken in public schools in Chicago, this is not sufficient reason to dismiss it as being irrelevant to the South African situation. In fact, there are a number of studies that have been undertaken in this country which, although not dealing with the same specifics as this study, certainly cover some of the same ground. The HSRC study on learner retention levels in schools which we covered in an article published in Vol. 2, No. 2 is one example of such a study. Given the high drop-out rate in our public high schools, it is essential that we consider any evidence which may suggest useful approaches and practical suggestions about the kinds of things that schools and districts can do to tackle the problem. This report provides some ideas about the kinds of things that could be done.

Reference and notes

[1] Allensworth, EM & Easton, J.Q. What matters for staying on-track and graduating in Chicago Public High Schools: A close look at course grades, failures, and attendance in the freshman year. (University of Chicago, Chicago, 2007)

[2] We have used matriculate in place of graduate which is the word commonly used in the USA to describe a student who passes his or her final year at high school, because we believe it is a more easily understood South African equivalent.

Governance

Should schools be run on business principles?

Patrick Kabuya, an accountant by profession and the Chairperson of Montrose Primary Schools, presents a case for running schools on business principles and suggest how this can best be achieved.

Like it or not, nowadays running a school is like running a business.

Adopting business principles could contribute to enhancing the education system that South Africa desperately needs in order to develop more human capital.

Public schools, with limited financial ability, can apply elementary business principles to run a viable proposition for learners and community. Without these principles, the quality of education and hence future of the learners, is decidedly negative. So, what can the school do?

Patrick Kabuya is Project Director: Public Sector and Africa at the South African Association of Chartered Accountants (SAICA). He is also Chairman of Montrose Primary School Governing Body and Executive Committee member of Governing Body Foundation (Gauteng Chapter)

Schools should pursue a standard model of adopting business principles that can be adapted to unique circumstances.

A good starting point would be for parents to elect a school governing body comprising parents with credentials that include business and professional experience, leadership ability and moral integrity.

Such parents should offer strong leadership and operate under strong governance principles. They should apply their expertise in running the school.

They should essentially start by developing a school strategy probably to cover their term of office: normally three years. In developing the strategy, the governing body should consider what they perceive to be the main micro and macro risks and the main changes within the economy, including technology developments, which might impact upon the school's wellbeing.

The primary micro risk lies in retaining quality teachers. The government requires a teacher employed by the state to have 40 learners in a class. The governing body should consider whether to lower this ratio with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of teaching and concentration of teachers on learners. If so, it would require the school to employ its own teachers to be paid by school fees raised from parents. In doing so, the governors would need to assess whether or not the parents are able to pay for the privilege and, if so, how much extra.

Most schools' governing bodies are aware of South Africa's teaching scarcity; one that is threatening to deteriorate, given that 20 000 are leaving the profession every year, with only 6 000 qualifying annually. Mathematics teachers are in especially short supply. Therefore, it is critical for the governors to put in place initiatives that increase the level of teacher retention.

Safety and security is a major objective. The strategy should include measures on how the school should maintain a safe and secure environment, such as CCTV cameras and private guards. The extent of such equipments and services would depend on the ability of the school to afford these.

The infrastructure requirements in terms of learner material, sports field and equipment, computers, maintaining school buildings and grounds maintenance should also be addressed. The state provides buildings but offers minimal funding to maintain the land and buildings.

It is clear that the schools have to ensure that they have appropriate tools to manage their funding in order to meet the objectives.

Principles of budgeting should be applied. The guidelines and stipulations issued by the Department of Education should serve as the minimum criteria. The governing body should prepare a budget annually with input from the school management team. The main drivers of the budget should be the agreed strategic objectives.

A critical funding risk the governing body should consider is the impact of the government's school fee exemption policy, which should be factored in the budget preparation. Mechanisms to encourage exempted

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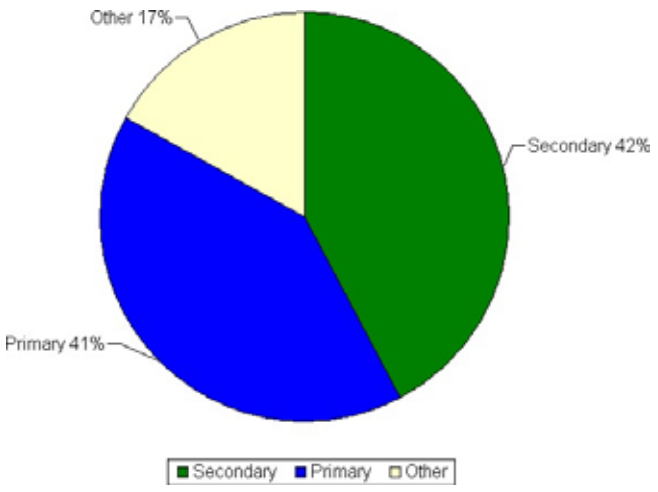

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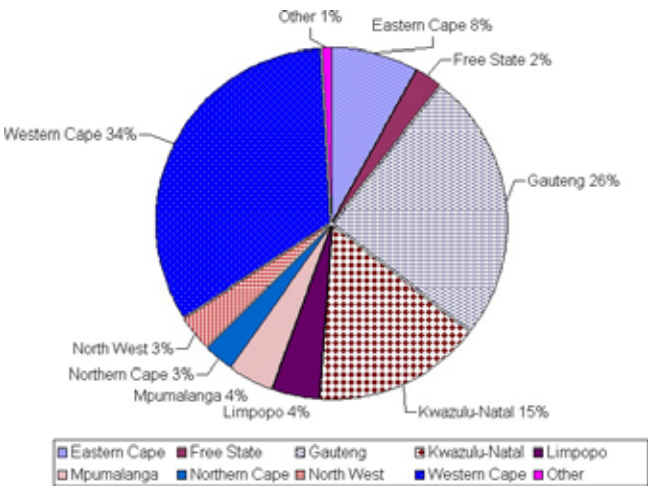

"If you are involved in the management of education in any way … then this book is a vital tool that you will refer to again and again. Clarke gets an A+ for his book." Brian Joss

The *essential reference* for anyone involved in managing a school …

The Handbook of School Management Clear, exceptionally practical, and comprehensive, The Handbook of School Management is the essential reference book for anyone involved in managing a school: principals, deputies, senior management teams, school governing bodies, education department officials, and senior teachers working towards promotion.

It contains
- 57 sample policies and useful checklists that schools can adapt for their own use
- examples from international best practice on areas such as financial controls, budgeting, ethics, turning around under-performing schools, dealing with disruptive students
- the results of international research into school management, staff professional development, financial management, discipline, criteria for professionalism, and change management, among others
- relevant South African case studies and examples on how to make a difference to poorly performing schools, textbook retention, and how to deal with issues of safety and security
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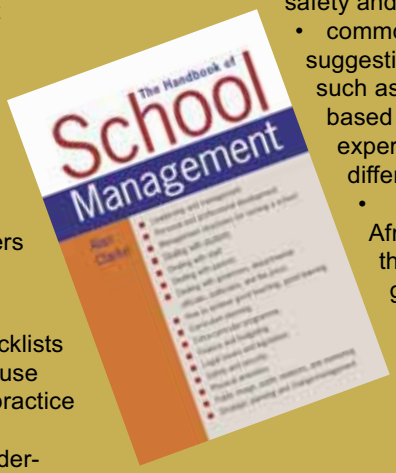
A CD of the policies and other documents is also available.



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parents to contribute to the school should be put in place. The impact of school fees bad debt should also be factored in preparing the budget. The governing body should put in place measures to reduce bad debts which are currently increasing.

It is clear that schools require adequate funding to meet their objectives. In most instances, there are limitations to raise adequate funds from school fees. Schools can raise additional funding through fund-raising activities especially from the businesses in the community.

Administering the funds is also important. A school should put in place processes similar to those in business of designing and implementing appropriate internal control systems e.g. process to authorise transactions, tendering process, record systems of transactions etc. If feasible, a school should use an accounting package to record all transactions. Monthly management accounts should be prepared and reviewed by the Finance committee before being presented to the Governing Body. External audits should be conducted immediately after the year end.

The Governing Body should also undertake appropriate succession planning to ensure that the next team of governors is well versed in the school policies and requirements: hence it is important to ensure at least 1/3 of parent members remain in office for the next term.

It is clear that business principles are good drivers of achieving quality education. Yes, it is more difficult to achieve and apply them in the poorer rural schools. But with reasonable adaptation, it is possible to run a more effective school if the principles are adopted. ■

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