

## Management & Leadership

POLICY • LEADERSHIP • MANAGEMENT • GOVERNANCE

for South African Schools

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### Our plans for 2008

Dear Readers

Thanks to your support, *SM&L* has survived its first year and we are going into 2008 with plenty of confidence and a commitment to providing you, our readers, with a better and more informative product. You will be pleased to know that there will be no increase in subscription rates in 2008 and that we are offering a discount to subscribers who would like to order multiple copies of each edition. This is in response to request from principals who are keen to provide copies for members of their SMT and members of their governing bodies. Details of these discounts are given on p. 12. A complete set of the 10 editions published in 2007 is available for R100.00, including postage.

In 2008 we plan to continue to provide our readers with the best and latest information, as well as advice on issues of management, leadership, governance and policy, always trying to present this material in a way that is relevant and meaningful in the South African context.

In addition to our normal features, we plan to include articles written specifically to assist aspirant principals and newly-appointed principals. The decision to include material of this kind is in response to readers who, through inexperience and/or lack of mentoring, are unsure about how to tackle many of the daunting challenges that face principals in their first appointment. The aim of these articles will be to provide simple, practical guidance of the "how to" type.

2008 is a milestone-year for the National Curriculum as the present Grade 12 pupils will be the first to write the new National Senior Certificate examinations. Everyone knows that these examinations will be different from those that have been set in the past. The most obvious difference of this curriculum is the dispensing of differentiation of subject matter and assessment into Higher Grade and Standard Grade. Introducing something as important as a new national curriculum and a national exit examination which has a new format and structure was bound to cause anxiety and some stress to the system. Principals and teachers of high schools are understandably concerned about whether they are (and have been) doing the right thing and whether, when the pupils finally sit the examination, they will have been adequately prepared for whatever it throws up. In an effort to help the leaders of our high schools, *SM&L* will be running a series of articles, starting with this first issue, on the systems, strategies and approaches that some of the country's best high schools are using in their efforts to make sure that the pupils they teach are as well prepared as they can be for this important examination.

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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.*

#### Reminder to renew your subscription

Subscribers who received all 10 editions of *SM&L* are reminded that their subscription fee for 2008 is now due. Details of a special subscription discount offer are provided on page 12

## Leadership

# Lessons from Eskom

There are hard lessons for those who fail to plan for the long-term

The current (no pun intended) Eskom debacle provides an excellent example of how a focus on meeting pressing short-term needs can distract leaders from tackling less urgent, but equally important, long-term strategies. In almost every organisation there is competition between short-term and long-term needs and it is very easy to slip into the trap of diverting resources which may have been initially set aside to meet long-term needs to address clamouring short-term needs. It is also the popular thing to do which is why politicians tend to go for short-term rather than long-term solutions to problems. In Eskom's case this has created the situation we have today, where widespread and repeated outages (power shut-downs) occur at regular intervals across the country - also affecting our neighbouring states.

If reports in the press are to be believed, there is clear evidence that there were those at Eskom and in government who, as long as 10 years ago, identified the need for greater power-generating capacity in the future as well as the need for upgrading and servicing of the existing infrastructure. As we have now discovered to our cost that their voices were drowned out by others who would see only the need to solve what they perceived to be more pressing and urgent problems: housing, education, health, defence and poverty alleviation.

Now, suddenly, the pressing need has become power but unfortunately creating the capacity to generate sufficient power is not only expensive it also takes time. As a result it will take up to 10 years for South Africa to develop adequate capacity to meet growing demand and to make blackouts and power failures a thing of the past.

A focus on meeting short-term needs (and wants) in terms of self-gratification is a strong human trait. Witness how many of us looked at our bank and credit card accounts at the end of January, only to rue our extravagant spending over the festive season. There is also, however, some substantial research which shows that those who, in their childhood, are able to curtail their short-term desires (in the belief that there will be a greater reward in the long-term if they do), grow up to be more successful than those who simply succumb and satisfy their desires.

The original classic study was done in the late 1960s by Walter Mischel, a psychological researcher at Stanford University. Mischel's research demonstrated clearly how important self-discipline is for lifelong success. (More information about the study is given in the box on page 4)

Those responsible for taking decisions about the country's long-term power needs behaved exactly like the 4-year-olds in Mischel's study - they chose instant gratification rather than long-term rewards in the form of a sufficient supply of power for the future. Those responsible failed to take a long-term view and a willingness to commit today to the needs of the future. The problem is that the development and maintenance of infrastructure is neither glamorous nor obvious. It is also costly to provide for, although in the long-term less expensive than the eventual impact of failing to allocate the funds and resources needed. But good strategic

leadership is about the ability to make just such decisions, about convincing those around you that these decisions are ultimately in everyone's best interests.

In Eskom's case they were decisions about investing timeously in infrastructure and future capacity.

What are the leadership lessons that school principals and governing bodies can learn from Eskom's failings?

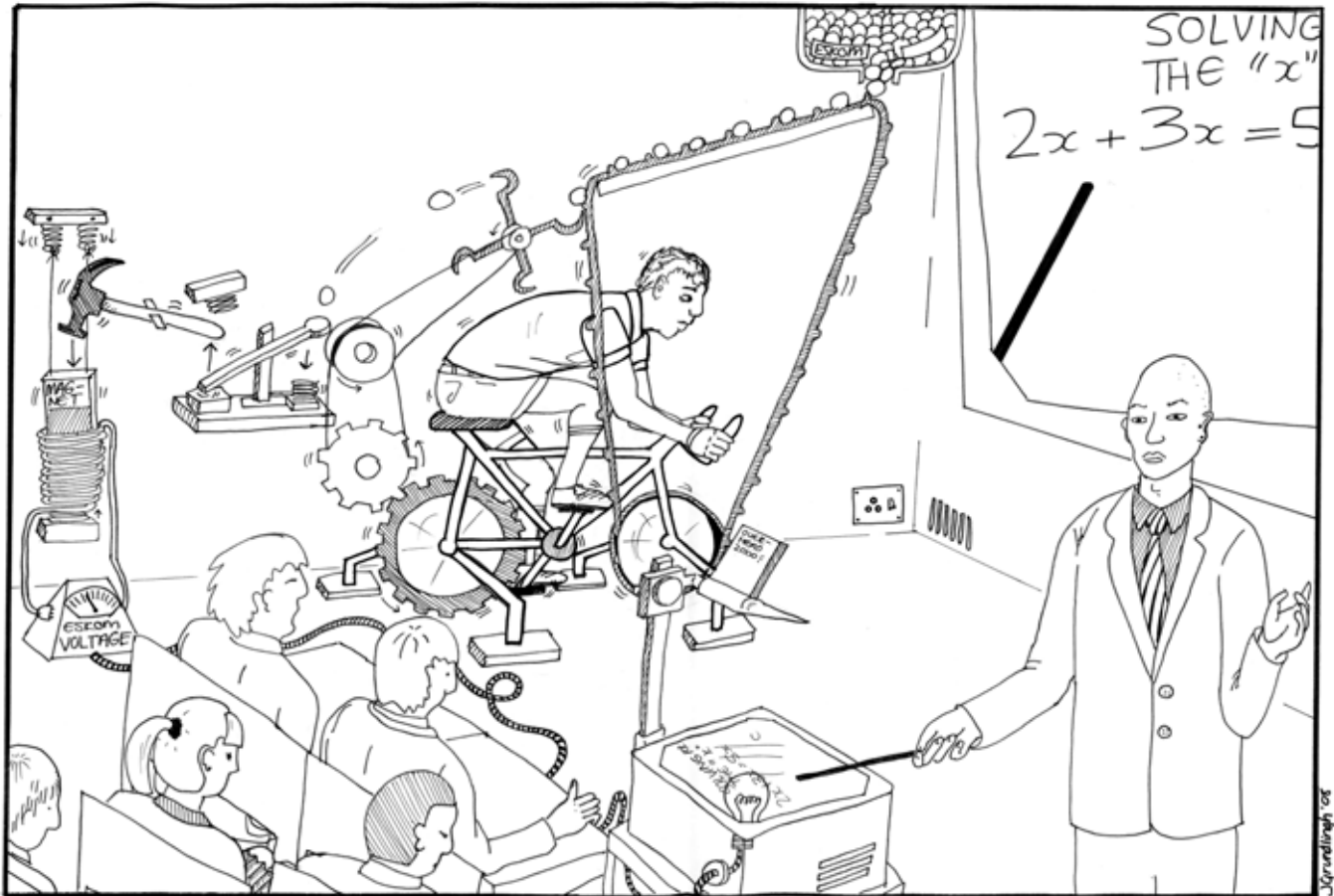
The most important lesson is the need for the school leadership to develop a long-term view for the school. This should include such things as its existing physical infrastructure - its buildings and grounds, the school's immediate environment - the rural, urban or inner city, the community it serves - their socio-economic status and educational profile, and the way the school is funded. Taking a 5 to 10-year view of these and similar issues often helps bring a sense of perspective when dealing with immediate challenges. It also helps to identify not only future problems but also potential opportunities and makes it possible to put in place plans to deal with these. Identifying the coming retirement of a head or a long-serving member of staff - who may teach a critical subject or have responsibility for the management of a key portfolio - makes succession

### *Izinsuk' amathanda kwenelwa* "Days like to be provided for"

This isiZulu expression which in English means "Days like to be provided for" aptly applies to the leadership failures of those responsible for planning for our long-term power needs. Avoid making the same mistake by ensuring that the governors and management team of your school set aside time to undertake the long-term planning that is essential for the future long-term success of your school.

#### Reference:

Stewart, D. *Wisdom of Africa*. Struik Publishers, Cape Town (2005)



*Emergency power-generating device for use in classrooms during power outages?*

planning for the training or mentoring of a successor possible.

Developing a model for the routine maintenance and upgrading of the school's infrastructure is another essential part of long-term planning. Things such as the routine servicing and regular upgrading of toilet blocks, kitchens and laboratories will extend the working lives of specialist venues of this kind almost indefinitely. It will also ensure that they function efficiently and remain pleasant areas to use. Routine maintenance of classrooms, such as repairs to doors and windows and regular painting will also reduce the need for costly refurbishments. The same applies to things such as roofs and fascia boards, sportsfields, halls and the machinery and equipment used on the school site. The cost of this kind of routine maintenance needs to be built into the school's budget. To do this, work out the cost of doing a complete basic refurbishment of the whole school over a 5 to 10-year period. Include in this the costs of things that may need to be replaced. Once you have this cost, calculate what needs to be set aside each year to complete the project over that period. This, as a percentage of the school's annual budget will provide you with a-rule-of-thumb amount which needs to be set aside to maintain the school's infrastructure in good standing.

The costs involved in maintaining and/or developing the school's ICT provision can be calculated using a similar

model. The purchase of computers and the ICT infrastructure to link and maintain them is not a once-off cost as many schools have found out to their cost, ICT requires not only ongoing maintenance and usually also the presence of a specialist ICT expert, but also regular upgrading. Schools investing in ICT for the first time or which plan to upgrade their systems significantly need to bear this in mind and to determine how often they plan to replace their computers, file-servers and printers. If the plan is to do it every 3 years (which is about the norm), then the cost of the total system needs to be divided by 3 and this amount needs to be included in the budget each year. The upgrading and replacement then becomes either an annual process with some of the system upgraded each year or a triennial process with the funds set aside and accumulating so that sufficient funds are available every third year to replace the entire system. Clearly, part of this process must be to make allowance for inflation.

If this kind of long-term planning is done and the funding needs of maintenance and capital development projects are properly calculated, then the school's annual budget will provide a true measure of the cost of meeting the ongoing needs of the school in a way that is sustainable and developmental.

*Continued on page 4*

## Take a child and two marshmallows

The so-called “Marshmallow Study”, a longitudinal study conducted by Michael Mischel in the late 1960s, looked at the impulsive behaviour of 4-year-olds and whether their ability to control their impulsiveness would influence their success in later life. The impulsive behaviour of the children or the ability to defer gratification for greater reward in the future was tested using marshmallows, which is the reason it is now commonly referred to as the “marshmallow study”.

The children were placed in a room and the movements and behaviour secretly videoed. They were offered a



marshmallow but were told that if they left the marshmallow untouched until Mischel returned, they would be rewarded with two marshmallows. Mischel then left the room for 15 to 20 minutes. Some children were able to wait (i.e. to defer their gratification) while others either took the marshmallow immediately he left the room or at some time during the course of his absence. Interestingly, the children who were able to defer gratification seemed to have the ability to think about other things while those that succumbed to its temptation focused on it as they struggled with their desires.



The children were then tracked into adult life (the study is still apparently ongoing) to determine the extent to which they were either “delayers” (delayed gratification) or “impulsives” (immediate gratification). By the time these children had completed their schooling at age 18, the differences between the two groups were significant and startling. Those who waited were more positive and self-motivated, they were more persistent in dealing with difficulties and were willing to delay gratification in the pursuit of their goals. They had, in fact, developed all of the habits of successful adults. On the other hand, those that were not able to control their urge to take the marshmallow were more troubled, stubborn, indecisive and mistrustful than their deferring peers and also less self-confident. They also performed far less well in the SAT tests than did those who were able to control their desires – the difference between the average of the two groups was 210 points. (The SAT tests are used in the United States to determine access to tertiary institutions.)

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Problems arise when the fees and other income are insufficient to cover these budgeted costs. It is normally at this time that schools often fall into the same trap that Eskom did - they off put off until tomorrow what needs to be done today. Regrettably if you follow this route the results will be the same – your school will gradually begin to unwind until the buildings crumble and the lights go out. Rather cut other things or a little off everything. If you do not, you need to remind yourself and those around you every day that you are sitting on a school that is running down and that in time it will cease to function as an effective and viable institution. Sadly, many schools already find themselves in this position and the challenges of climbing out of the pit of decay are far more testing than if one had taken the trouble and costs to wall up the pit in the first place.

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Probably the biggest challenge to the long-term prosperity of this country is the need provide a basic level of literacy and numeracy to enable our children to succeed academically. The value of literacy and numeracy is so fundamental and such a critical element of education that we feel obliged to continue to do what we can to help school leaders to develop the capacity of their teachers to meet their obligations in this regard. We aim to search out examples of best practice and of the strategies that schools have used that have been successful in cracking this difficult nut, and to bring these to you in a way that we hope will help schools improve their success rates.

Finally, we would like you, our readers, to help us to bring you the content that meets your need and serves your purpose. That is our purpose and the reason for our existence. We invite you to share your successes and failures – there is plenty to be learned from failure – with us and through us, with the rest of our readership. Please feel free to contact us by e-mail, fax or phone with your ideas, suggestion and requests. We are always delighted to hear from you.

Alan Clarke  
Managing Editor

### Quality Education News

*Quality Education News* is a quarterly publication issued by the South African Quality Institute (SAQI) in the interests of promoting educational excellence. The newsletter is prepared by SAQI and distributed by Woolworths to schools nominated to benefit from their *My School Project*. Its editor is retired primary school head, Dr Richard Hayward, who is a subscriber to *SM&L*. For more information about SAQI, visit their website [www.saqi.co.za](http://www.saqi.co.za) or contact Dr Hayward at [rdphayward@yahoo.com](mailto:rdphayward@yahoo.com) or telephone 011 888 3262.

## Research

# How our brain decides

Recent research into a much studied economic dilemma sheds light on how our brain makes decisions

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The so-called “Marshmallow Study” (see the box on page 4 for more details of the study), conducted by Michael Mischel in the late 1960s, and later studies which looked at how the ability of young children to control their impulse for immediate gratification, provide valuable and thought-provoking insights for those involved in the education and counselling. The longitudinal study looked at how the ability of 4-year-olds to defer immediate gratification on the basis of a promise of greater reward later, would influence the success in later life. The theory was that individuals willing to forego short-term pleasure for the sake long-term goals and rewards go on to become more productive and successful adults. The research confirmed this view and showed that by the age of 18, those children who were able to defer gratification had developed all of the habits of successful adults.

The reason why those with better self-control and the ability to defer gratification are more successful is fairly obvious. Those with self-control are able to focus on longer-term and more rewarding goals. So doing homework, or studying or paying attention during a boring lesson for them becomes worth doing because the reward will be better results, greater prestige, gaining access to better schools or universities or getting better jobs. Those with less self-control are less able to focus on these long-term goals and become easily distracted by more enticing short-term options – playing with a friend, or watching TV or visiting a mall. They are also more likely to get into trouble for petty and more serious impetuous behaviour, tardiness and truancy, failure to do homework, shop-lifting and experimentation with drugs and sex.

It is also sadly true that children from poorer homes and lower socio-economic status are more inclined to be immediate gratifiers. This can at least partly be explained by the fact that their desire may be greater not only because they are more needy but because they and their families may be forced to live a hand-to-mouth existence through circumstances. They cannot think long-term because their current needs are so pressing.

School have a part to play here as there is good evidence to suggest that these youngsters can be taught the importance of having a longer-term view and the rewards that can be derived from deferring gratification.

More recent research used advanced techniques which examine which parts of the brain are involved in the decision-making process have provided some

insights which may help us better understand the processes that lead to addiction.

The researchers used an apparently much-studied economic dilemma which has shown that individuals will behave impatiently (seeking immediate gratification) today but plan to act more patiently in the future. An example of this dilemma is the response of individuals to two offers. The first is the offer of \$10 today or \$11 tomorrow and the other is \$10 in a year or \$11 in a year and a day. Most people chose the \$10 in the first instance and the \$11 in the second. This is clearly illogical, although understandable to most people.

What these researchers tried to determine was how the brain made this kind of decision.

They offered 14 students at the University of Princeton a series of similar types of problems; that is, problems which dealt with issues relating to instant gratification but which produced different answers depending on whether the response dealt with the problem in the short-term or long-term. The students were asked to consider these delayed reward problems while undergoing magnetic resonance imaging. This is a process which measures the parts of the brain which are active during the thinking process.

What they discovered was that the part of the brain associated with emotions drives our craving for immediate gratification – taking the marshmallow, spending using our credit card when we know we are in debt, giving in to our craving for a cigarette when we are trying to give up smoking and other similar emotional needs. Our logical brain on the other hand is the part that looks to make us make rational decisions - decisions that logically would be in our long-term best interests – waiting rather to earn the reward of two marshmallows, being prudent with our money and saving for the future or controlling our desire for that one last cigarette because that would assure us of a healthier future.

What the researchers discovered was that when the students made a decision which gave them immediate or short-term gratification, the emotional and logical parts of the brain were equally active; while when they made a decision to defer gratification, the logical part of the brain was significantly more active than the emotional part.

This evidence suggests that decisions about immediate gratification are driven by emotional rather

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## Preparing for the NCS

What we have learned from some of the country's most academically successful schools

SM&L would like to extend special thanks to those schools that took the trouble to complete the questionnaire and return it to us. We appreciate their efforts during one of the busiest periods of the school year. There were also a number of other schools and individuals who gave input - mostly verbally - in discussion with our editor. We would also like to thank them for making the time to speak to him.

One of the issues that emerges most clearly from the material that we have gathered is the anxiety of teachers as a result of their uncertainty about three things:

- the level of detail and the depth of content that must be covered
- where emphasis must be placed
- in some subjects, the content that will be assessed in the examinations, the format and the mark allocation.

These are understandable concerns but are to be expected, with the introduction of a new curriculum with different and re-organised content, with new modes of assessment and with changed perspectives about what is or is not important. It is rather like moving into a new house or changing schools. All the familiar features - the things that made one feel comfortable and at home or in the case of schools, the friends and the familiar systems and procedures - are gone, with the result that one feels a little lost. Adding to the anxiety are the fears about letting down the children that we teach. They have expectations of us and their school. They are - or at least should be - confident that if they follow our instructions and are diligent in their preparation, they will do well. There is trust that they have placed in us, a trust that we are concerned may be displaced. What

if the final examination is different from what we thought it would be and there are questions for which we have not adequately prepared them or - even worse - things which we have not covered? It has been a long time since the last major overhaul of the curriculum in South Africa. The last change of the magnitude of the present one happened way back in the early 70s so only a few of the most senior staff will remember it. It included the introduction of Higher Grade and Standard Grade; but with that introduction, there were no exemplar papers or

national exams in Grade 11, so in many ways, in introducing the current system the education system has provided greater support for teachers. Saying that, however, does not take away the anxiety that principals and teachers are experiencing. One of the best pieces of advice we came across in the documents that schools provided, was from Dirkey Lamprecht, a Physical Science teacher at Hottentots Holland High School. Her advice was "not to transfer our own doubts and uncertainties to our learners". As principals and teachers, we need to have confidence where we have had a record of success in the past; we must have confidence in our ability to use all the documents and resources that have been provided, to interpret the curriculum and the assessment standards sufficiently well to make sure that those we teach are thoroughly prepared for the examinations. Good teaching, after all, remains good teaching; and as almost all research shows, it is the quality of teaching in the classroom - what is transacted between teacher and pupil - that determines the quality of learning and, ultimately, pupil success. Well-taught pupils have the skills they need to deal with unexpected and challenging question. Those that are taught by rote, who are not made to think as part of the

### What was said

Below is a selection of some of the positive and constructive ideas from the teachers of the schools that responded.

- *Cluster meetings are a source of shared commiseration often, but also an opportunity to get together with colleagues and to share ideas and strategies.*
- *Think tanks about ideas - I really enjoy this - for making assessment and the introduction of sections interesting*
- *Close contact with like-minded schools.*
- *Extra classes during holidays*
- *Subject teams communicate and discuss continually*
- *Use a variety of textbooks and references*
- *Regional workshops on "creating rubrics"*
- *We phone the Department regularly*
- *Speedy feedback on classwork and assessment*
- *Forming collectives - sharing skills and content*
- *Work to develop pupils critical thinking skills and broad content knowledge so they have the ability to cope with any challenge the examination may bring*

teaching process, will not have these skills and are more likely to struggle when faced with the unusual or unexpected.

## **What should schools do?**

### **Focus on the importance of quality classroom instruction**

All the evidence shows that the quality of the teacher and the quality of instruction are the most significant factors in determining pupil performance. Teachers must devote their time to the teaching and learning process, not to endless and often meaningless administrative and other chores.

### **Maximise the use of teaching time**

This should be something that should be a core priority of all schools but for this year's Grade 12 group, the protection of teaching time should be non-negotiable. Almost all of the responses from subject heads of all the schools contacted raised concerns about the length of the curriculum relative to the time available. A number of the schools are planning to make use of after-school sessions, Saturday classes and lessons during school holidays to make sure that they have completed the work in good time. The focus first, however, should be on ensuring that teachers make optimal use of the teaching time that is formally scheduled in the school. This means making sure that lessons start on time and that the whole lesson is used productively. Pupils also need to be reminded of their responsibilities in this regard, particularly in relation to their behaviour, their willingness to be constructive participants in the lesson, and the need to be well prepared.

### **Vigorously interrogate the curriculum and any support material provided by the DoE and your PED**

Subject heads and teachers need to make sure that they have a thorough understanding of what is required and of the extent and detail of the curriculum and how it will be assessed. Teachers need to attend whatever training sessions, cluster meetings or discussion groups that are on offer and to ask the hard questions about things that they find unclear or where they feel that they need guidance. From the responses we received, it would appear that levels and quality of support provided by subject advisors and regional offices vary widely not only from province to province but from regional office to regional office. Some schools felt that the support had been positive and helpful while others complained of little or no support and of incompetent, dogmatic and/or unhelpful officials.

### **Encourage and support the formation of subject-based cooperative collectives**

One of the best ways to ensure that everyone gains a better understanding of what is required and how best to

approach teaching and assessing the curriculum is by sharing. Principals and academic heads of schools need to make sure that time is set aside for members of subject teams to meet and plan together. They also need to make sure that the time set aside for this purpose is used accordingly and not for organisational and administrative matters. There is also value in setting aside time for meetings of subject heads to share ideas on how to mentor and monitor the members of their subject teams. A special effort should also be made to hold joint meetings with subject teams from other schools, so that subject expertise and approaches to teaching and assessing the curriculum can be shared more widely. This is particularly important for small subject teams, subjects which are taught by only one teacher, and subject teams which may be led by less experienced teachers. Principals can play an important part in this regard by contacting principals of other schools and facilitating the arrangements for these meetings with them. The great advantage of this cooperative-collective type of approach is that it is meeting of equals which is not always the case with meetings called by PEDs and subject advisors for this purpose.

### **Share, share, share, - particularly examination papers, their memoranda and other assessment tasks**

This is not the time for schools and subject department to be possessive about tests and examination papers and other assessment tasks that they have set. Unlike the old system which had been running for many years, only the exemplars set by the DoE examiners provide samples of what the examination papers are likely to be. This is certainly not enough to prepare pupils adequately for the final NSC examination. Swap papers and memoranda with neighbouring or similar schools. If 10 schools were to do this, each subject team would have 10 sets of "past" examination papers to use for revision. An added bonus would be the fact that each would have a slightly different emphasis because teachers remain unsure of exactly what is required. Teachers need to be told to avoid the temptation of trying to amend swapped papers to make them more suitable for their classes and the way they have been taught. This defeats part of the purpose of the exercise, which is to teach pupils how to cope with and interpret the unexpected. Make arrangements to write some of these papers under full examination conditions to make the exercise even more real for them. This needs to be followed up with discussion with the pupil about techniques that they can use to interpret and make sense of questions that they are unsure of.

### **Insist that teachers teach examination technique**

Good examination techniques, including the ability of pupils to interpret questions, to allocate time based on marks assigned to questions and to be self-disciplined in sticking to the time they have allocated to each question,

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## Governance

# Good Governance checklist

Use this checklist to assess the extent to which individual governors manage their role as governors

I am committed to ensuring that the school provides the best education that it can for all of its pupils

As governor I will not put the particular needs and special interests of my child ahead of those of other pupils

I do not interfere in areas that are the responsibility of the principal

I do not interfere in the day-to-day operations of the school unless they are a clear governance responsibility e.g. finance

I publicly support all decisions of the SGB even those which I may have opposed at board meetings

I try to attend all meetings of the SGB and the sub-committees on which I serve and aim to make a constructive contribution to debate and decision-making

I make every effort to attend all school functions and to contribute when required and/or requested to do so.

I support school policies and procedures including those about which I have reservations. I raise these reservations within the appropriate structures.

I attempt to attend as many of the school's sporting, cultural and social events as possible and engage in informal conversations with other parents and with staff, using these to understand their legitimate concerns and expectations. I understand the difference between this and listening to unsupported school gossip.

While acknowledging problems and shortcomings that may exist I always try to represent the school and its staff in a positive light

I maintain confidentiality and do not discuss sensitive or confidential issues relating to the school with my children or friends

I try to stay abreast of educational issues within the country and particularly those that may affect my community

I always ensure that my child's school fees are paid on time or that I have made the necessary application for exemption should this be relevant.

I carefully scrutinise all minutes, agendas and associate documents circulated prior to board meetings to ensure that I am well prepared for board meetings

I do not give up my normal rights and responsibilities as a parent merely because I am elected to the SGB

I make every effort to ensure that my child is an acceptable pupil in the way he/she conducts him/herself and in his/her appearance

I do not interfere when my child faces minor disciplinary infractions and make every attempt to support the school in the dealings with him/her

I do not interfere in the decision of the school when my child faces disappointment as a result of failure to achieve hoped-for goals such as appointment to leadership positions or selection for sports teams

I do not expect my child to be treated differently as a result of my being a member of the SGB

When I do have concerns about issues relating to my child I raise them with the principal or relevant teacher as would any other parent and never use my position as governor to exact concessions

I recuse myself from any discussion which relates to my child and his/her behaviour and/or performance or selection.

I declare my business interests when elected as a member of the SGB and do not contract business with the school or provide professional service to the school for a fee or financial gain

I insist that the school manages its finances properly and that all financial transactions involving school funds are legitimate, that all monies are properly accounted for.

Score using the following ratings

2 = very like me

1 = mostly like me

0 = unlike me

and then rate yourself using the information in the box at the top of the following page.



## Your Good Governance Rating

Total your results and use the score card below to see how you rate

30 – 46: Excellent. You have the qualities and commitment needed and the school is fortunate to have a governor of your quality

20 – 29: Good. You have what it takes to be a good governor although there are areas which you could do better.

0 – 19: Weak. You need to re-think your role as governor and decide whether you can legitimately continue to serve on the SGB. Either improve your contribution or resign so that someone with greater commitment and understanding of the role can serve in your place.

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are more important when pupils are faced with new and/or unexpected questions. Teaching good examination technique should not be left to chance; neither should it be dealt with as an afterthought in a post-examination review of internal examinations. It should be taught and practised whenever pupils are required to answer examination-type questions and before and after each examination paper that they write.

### **Plan to complete the curriculum in good time**

With the NSC examinations now scheduled to start in the first week of November, schools have at least 3 full weeks of available teaching time in the fourth term. If properly used, these three weeks could be a lifeline for weak and struggling pupils. Subject teams should plan to complete their teaching of the curriculum before the start of the third quarter examinations which can now start later than they may have done in the past, making more time available for teaching before the start of these examinations. The period after these examinations, including the three weeks available at the start of the fourth term, can then be used for intensive revision and for the teaching of examination technique.

### **Make optimal use of the three weeks of teaching time available in the fourth term**

With a well-planned revision programme, this can be an extremely productive period for the Grade 12 pupils. Those schools that have followed our advice and made arrangements to swap and share test and examination papers will reap the benefits of their efforts at this time as they will have an adequate collection of revision material to work through with their pupils. Those that haven't may struggle.

### **Don't schedule farewell and other social functions during the first three weeks of Term 4**

For schools with a good work ethic, this may not be a problem but for schools where the Grade 12 class has routinely abandoned classes after the third term examinations, there is a need to put in place systems to ensure that the Grade 12 pupils (and their teachers!) attend school for the full school day for every day of the fourth term, and that productive use is made of this time. Schools should, at all costs, avoid scheduling matric dances and other farewell functions during this period. Nothing should be allowed to interfere with the teaching process. The school's code of conduct also needs to be rigorously enforced to ensure that the Grade 12s do not become unruly and disruptive at this time – something that some unfortunately tend to do. SM&L trusts that schools will receive the support of the DoE and PEDs at this time in dealing with disciplinary issues involving Grade 12s and that some sort of penalty, such as the withholding of results, be imposed on Grade 12 pupils who misbehave. SM&L plans to take up this issue with the DoE in the hope that they will make a strong public statement in this regard and that this is communicated to all Grade 12 pupils.

### **Be confident of what you are doing**

Principals and teachers must make every effort to avoid transferring to the pupils their own concerns and anxiety about the curriculum implementation and the extent to which they feel they have prepared their classes for the examinations. Pupils need to go into the examinations confident in the knowledge that their teachers have prepared them to handle the questions and tasks that may be set. Anxious pupils are more likely to make unnecessary mistakes and to panic when faced with questions which may be worded differently from those that they are used to. If the school and teachers have followed the suggestions we have made, then they should be little need for anxiety and pupils can be expected to perform to their potential.

### **NSC Guidelines**

#### **We thank the following schools for their contributions**

Alexander Road High School  
Bergvliet High School  
Herschel Girls' School  
Hottentots-Holland High School  
King David High School, Linksfield  
Parktown Boys' High School  
Russell High School  
Westerford High School  
Zakariyya Muslim School

# Management

## Management by Walking About (MBWA)

Get off your chair and out of your office to find out what is really happening in your school. It is good for you and it is good for your school

For those not initiated in the ways of “management speak”, management by walking about (or MBWA as it is more commonly called) may seem to be a rather bizarre management concept and certainly not one that many regard as one of the key elements in good management. Yet for most good managers and good principals, it is an important part of their daily routine.

At its simplest level, MBWA is about the manager getting out of his office and walking about the organisation as a means of getting to know first-hand what it actually going on. It usually goes together with an open door policy because both MBWA and an open-door policy are approaches to management which are aimed at bringing a manager closer to the employees who fall under his area of supervision. For the head of an organisation, it is about bringing him closer to all employees, not just those who are members of his senior management team. When a head has an open-door policy, it implies that any member of staff is welcome any time her door is open to come in for informal discussion of any issue related to her work.

The main purpose of MBWA and of an open-door policy is to bring the manager or head closer to the people who are doing the work. It is a management model which seeks to avoid the problems that are normally associated with strongly hierarchical management structures. The concept seems to have originated as part of the management strategies developed by Edward Deming, an American management expert who worked closely with Japanese business and manufacturing organisations, particularly Toyota, and who is considered to be the founder of the Total Quality Movement (TQM) and of Lean Manufacturing. It has now become an element in the management strategies of top business leaders across the world and has been found to be particularly helpful when organisations are faced with change and uncertainty. This is because the MBWA makes the organisation’s managers and leaders more visible and available to the staff and customers of the organisation. Because of their greater availability, the leaders can dispel rumours and provide greater clarity of the organisation’s new vision and strategies.

As a principal of a school, MBWA means getting out of your office on a regular basis (at least once a day) and walking through the school to see how things are going. It is about having informal discussion with teachers, cleaners, pupils and parents as you wend your way through the school and, most of all, it is

about learning first-hand what really goes on in your school. Initially, if you or your predecessor did not practice MBWA, there may be a degree of suspicion about your purpose. People will think that you are checking up on them or even spying on them. Of course in some ways you are. People should come to school with a purpose: to teach and to learn or to create and maintain the kind of environment which promotes teaching and learning. If this is not what

### Open-door policy

The idea of an open-door policy is that all employees have access to all levels of management in the organisation. In schools it would mean that all staff (and all pupils) have access to all members of the management team. The member of staff or pupil would simply need to come to the principal’s (or other member of the management team’s) door and ask to speak to her. In most circumstances the individual concerned would immediately be invited in to discuss whatever issue it is that they wish to discuss. They are carefully listened to and advice is given which either helps them to solve the problem themselves or which sends them to the person or source that can assist them in finding a solution to the problem. An open-door policy is not about the principal or senior manager undermining the authority of his subordinates although it is about a willingness to listen to complaints about supervisors and work-related problems. Listening, however, is not the same as agreeing and an open-door policy requires principals to manage their interaction with complainants very carefully. They need to be able to empathise with the anger and frustration of an individual who is angry and frustrated without necessarily supporting the individual’s actions or condemning or criticising the decisions or actions that created the problem. Wherever possible, complainants should be given advice and guidance that will help them solve the problem themselves. Equally importantly, the principal should make sure that he hears the other side of the story and that he provides and guidance on how best to resolve the problem. An open-door policy, if properly practised, will improve communication relationships within the school or workplace. It has an important added advantage of being a practice which helps junior and inexperienced leaders and managers to develop and grow.

they are doing, then it is important that you know and understand why this is so. The purpose of MBWA is, however, not to catch them doing what they should not be doing but rather to discover what they are doing that is good and to learn from them about the obstacles that prevent them from performing to the best of their ability those tasks that have been entrusted to them. Therefore it is important to be open and empathetic when engaging those you meet and engage in discussion. Remember the idea is to gather information, to understand how systems work in practice and who is doing the work that matters. Your purpose is not inspection and it is not to criticise and correct. It is also important to cover all areas of the school and all times of the working day: the last thing you want to happen is that your staff perceive you to have favourites or that you attend and support certain functions and or activities more than others.

Initially, you may find that staff members are a little anxious when you approach them in your rounds but that will soon disappear if you approach them in the way that we have suggested. The benefits will come when they discover that not only are you listening to them but that you are willing to intervene on their behalf and to support their constructive suggestions about things that can be done to improve their effectiveness. Your senior management team is the one group of individuals that may find your decision to manage by walking about a little disconcerting. Their concerns will relate to their fear that you may be muscling in on their turf and in doing so, perhaps undermining their authority. To an extent these fears are justified but that must not prevent you from the responsibility that you have to learn first-hand how your school is functioning. What you must avoid, however, is bypassing them in making decisions about things that formally fall under their areas of responsibility. The best way to avoid this problem is to make sure that you engage them in the same sort of information discussions in your walking about as you would with any other member of staff. Encourage them to be open about any management and leadership problems that they may be experiencing, share what you have learned in your wanderings with them and remember that you have a responsibility to grow them as managers and leaders. Encourage them to do as you do and to spend some of their management time walking about.

There is one other person that may find your decision to include MBWA as part of your management strategy and that is your secretary. Most good secretaries and PAs believe that bosses should stay in their offices so that they can mother and control them. They want you to be there to deal with phone calls and mail and all the other menial chores that

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## MBWA Guidelines

- Appear relaxed as you make your rounds. Staff and pupils will respond positively and are likely to reflect your feelings and actions.
- Walk alone – staff and pupils are unlikely to be relaxed and good-humoured if confronted by the principal with a posse of deputies.
- Remain open and responsive to questions and concerns.
- Observe and listen so that staff, pupils and parents understand that you are interested in their views.
- Be good humoured – laughter breaks down barriers and eases stress.
- Have fun and enjoy the process.
- Use what you have learned to engage staff and pupils in discussion about their particular interests and achievements, including those which are not related to the school
- Invite suggestions about things that can be done to improve the operations and activities of the school
- Don't bypass Subject Heads, HoDs and Deputies when responding to staff members' queries that relate to these people areas of responsibility. Rather encourage the staff member to take his or her concerns to the person concerned.
- Plan to spend similar amounts of time in all areas of the school and with all organisational groupings within the school.
- Try to catch people doing things that are right and then make a special effort to laud their good work or constructive proposal publicly.
- Behave like a coach training a team rather than like an inspector seeking compliance with policy.
- Encourage staff and pupils to show you their best efforts.
- Spread good news stories and special achievements.
- Share your dreams. Everyone likes to dream and the staff are more likely to support you and work to help you achieve your dreams for the school if they know what they are.

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are the nightmare of many heads. And if you are good and do as you are told they will bring you coffee and even an occasional slice of cake when it is a staff member's birthday. If this is the situation, and all else fails, complain of a sore back from all the sitting and explain that you have been told that a brisk walk is the best thing for it!

MBWA is not a fad or an excuse not to do the paperwork that is the inevitable lot of any principal or manager. It is a management strategy that has been around for a long time and one which continues to be part of the daily routine of good managers everywhere. Do it properly and with purpose and you will not only learn more about your school than you could have learned in any other way, you will also improve communication within the school, increase the morale and motivation of your staff, earn their greater loyalty and respect and even improve your physical and mental health. Try it, it works!

## Good news for subscribers in 2008

Notwithstanding rising costs, we have decided not to increase our subscription fee in 2008: this despite our commitment to increasing the extent of *SM&L* to 16 pages in editions that contain advertisements. In response to requests from our readers, we are also offering a discount to schools and other institutions that wish to order multiple copies of each edition – for deputy-principals, SMT members and governors.

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than logical or rational factors. Physical events and environmental factors which trigger emotional responses therefore appear to play a big part in our compulsive behaviour. Advertisers and marketers have understood this for years, although they would not have known the reasons why individuals respond in this way. The research team believes that these mechanisms also play a part in those who show addictive behaviour, including those who abuse drugs. Future research will look at how these two components of the brain interact and whether mechanisms can be found to block the emotional component or strengthen the rational logical component in a way that can help individuals with addictive behaviour to manage their compulsion.

Almost every teacher and school principal will have had to deal with pupils who struggle to control their impulsive behaviour, particularly in adolescence. More experienced teachers and those who work with problem children on a regular basis will also be aware of the fact that compulsive and often seemingly irrational behaviour of pupils is often triggered by specific events or activities. These will vary from individual to individual but understanding how this happens and what precipitates this kind of behaviour makes it possible to help children to manage their behaviour more effectively. Teachers can also help all children to grow into more productive and emotionally stable adults by helping them to learn the value of deferring gratification for the greater long term reward that it brings.

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