

## Management & Leadership

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.

### Some new perspectives

In this issue, we report for the first time on the outcome of two court cases which have important implications for principals and governors. One case deals with the successful challenge by a school governing body to the decision of the Provincial Head of Education not to appoint their two preferred candidates to the post of Principal and Deputy Principal. The other deals with an attempt by a parent to have his son re-instated as a prefect after the Principal had dismissed him as a prefect for cheating in a school exam. There are lessons to be learned from both cases for principals, governors and departmental officials.

We also include some interesting and useful material which has been provided by our readers and subscribers. Farouk Bayat, Principal of North West Secondary School in KZN gives some good advice on the meaning of success and how to achieve it. For his contribution, we will be sending him one of three copies of *Education Management and Leadership. A South African Perspective*, which were donated to **SM&L** by the publishers, Oxford University Press. You can read Clive Roos's review of the book on page 15.

There is also advice from four primary heads on the kinds of duties that should be allocated to members of a school's Senior Management Team. They were responding to a question I raised on behalf of "Sipho" Sibisi, Principal of Glen Park Primary School, who had consulted me about this matter.

This kind of sharing of ideas and of best practice is something that we would like to encourage and are offering the remaining two copies of *Education Management and Leadership* donated by OUP for any material that we publish. It does not have to be long (300 to 500 words) and it does not have to be serious. What it must provide is entertaining and / or useful practical advice about things that have worked for you in your role as manager and leader. (It also does not have to be in a specific format: our editors will proofread and prepare the copy for publication.)

From time to time we receive exasperated complaints from principals about the way in which subject advisors go about their business. Their frustrations relate mostly to three areas of concern: the autocratic and confrontational manner in which teachers are treated by subject advisors; the fact that subject advisors schedule cluster and other meetings at times that fall within the formal school day and then are unhappy when principals do not permit their teachers to attend these meetings; and the fact that the advice (usually presented as an instruction) is bureaucratic, makes unreasonable demands of teachers and is often at odds with the school's own policies. Please let us know by e-mail, letter, fax or SMS if this has been your experience. We plan to address the problem in future issues of **SM&L**.

Alan Clarke  
(Editor)

# Making a point at Punt

A recent ruling by the Supreme Court of Appeal makes it clear that a provincial Head of Department cannot completely disregard the decisions of a School Governing Body when making an appointment.

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A recent ruling by the Supreme Court of Appeal makes it clear that a provincial Head of Department (HOD) cannot completely disregard the decisions of a School Governing Body (SGB) when making an appointment. At the very least, the HOD has to exercise discretion in a responsible and accountable way.

In a judgement handed down by the Supreme Court of Appeal on 31 March, the court made it abundantly clear that although the Provincial HOD has discretionary powers when making an appointment, this discretion must be exercised with due regard to the law and the policy framework governing such appointments.

The case originally arose when the SGB of Punt High School in Mossel Bay approached the High Court to set aside the decision of the Western Cape HOD not to appoint their preferred candidates for the posts of Principal and Deputy Principal. The two posts had fallen vacant and had been advertised at the same time. The SGB followed the correct procedure and nominated their preferred three applicants - in both cases based on a scoring system that they had agreed upon. In both instances (Principal and Deputy Principal) the scores of the candidates nominated as number 1 (both from outside the Western Cape) were significantly higher than the scores of the acting candidates. What is relevant - because it has a bearing on the outcome of the case - is that all three nominations in both cases were white males and that the first-choice nominations in both instances were employees of other provincial education departments.

The HOD made the decision to appoint the acting person in both cases i.e. nomination 3 in the case of the Principal's post and nomination 2 in the case of the Deputy Principal's post. The SGB was aggrieved at this, given the fact that they had scored these candidates so much lower than their first choice; and they asked the HOD to provide reasons for the decisions. This they are entitled to do; and in terms of the *Promotion of Administrative Justice Act*, the HOD is required to provide reasons for his decision. In his response, the HOD indicated that he had based his decisions on the relevant provisions of the *Employment of Educators Act* and the demands of Employment Equity as contained in the WCED's own EE plan and its strategies to achieve its employment equity targets.

The SGB was not happy with these reasons and asked that these decisions be set aside by the High Court.

In his submissions to the High Court, the HOD argued in essence that by appointing applicants from within the province, further vacancies would arise within the province and that these could then ultimately and theoretically be exploited for the purpose of furthering the Department's EE targets. Appointing applicants from outside the province, however, would have the opposite effect and would in fact diminish the chances of the WCED achieving its targets.

In its judgement, the High Court found in favour of the SGB, deciding that the HOD's interpretation of the implementation of Employment Equity was incorrect in this instance, as was his view (as presented to the court) of the scope of his discretion in determining which candidate to appoint. Unusually, the High Court also ordered that the HOD appoint the number 1 nomination of the SGB in the case of each post.

The HOD of the WCED appealed the judgement and the matter was heard on 27 February, with the judgement delivered on 31 March. In its judgement, the Supreme Court of Appeal made a number of important points which need to be noted by school governing bodies. These include the following:

- Recent amendments to the *Employment Equity Act* broaden the scope of the HOD's discretion when making appointments; but this wider scope does not excuse him from having to furnish acceptable reasons for his decisions.
- The provisions of the *Employment of Educators Act* do not give him the licence simply to disregard the recommendations of the SGB and he is obliged to give serious consideration to their recommendations, particularly in instances where there were significant differences in the scores assigned to each candidate.
- The HOD is not in a position to criticise the basis of the SGB decision in order to use it as a reason for choosing candidates other than the SGB's nomination 1. If the HOD believes that the SGB has faulted in its process, he is

obliged to refuse to make an appointment and to follow the consequential provisions of the Act. In the Punt case, the SGB had adhered to the Departmental Guidelines in reaching their decision and had acted under the supervision of a Circuit Manager.

- The HOD failed to consider his department's own guidelines when weighing up the employment equity considerations in relation to the SGB's recommendations regarding the competence and suitability of the applicants. These guidelines, which were quoted in the judgement, include the following

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The judges make it clear in their judgement that the HOD was misguided in the manner in which he interpreted the word "insignificant" and clarified the position in the following extract from their judgement: "Employment equity provisions should only prevail in circumstances where there is approximate equality between the ability and potential ability of the two candidates."

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"The recruitment, selection and appointment procedure will be utilised to achieve the goals of representivity. The following will be used to create vacancies in the department in line with the objectives of the Employment Equity Plan:

- natural staff turnover (resignations, retirements, dismissals, etc.)
- transfers and promotions;
- expansions of the department;
- restructuring of the public service.

All appointments will, however, be based on the inherent requirements of the position. Only where an insignificant gap between possible candidates exists in terms of merit/performance, preference will be given to an employee from a designated group, should the appointment contribute to the improvement of the representation of specific designated groups." The judges make it clear in their judgement that the HOD was misguided in the manner in which he interpreted the word "insignificant" and clarified the position in the following extract from their judgement: "Employment equity provisions should only prevail in circumstances where there is approximate equality between the ability and potential ability of the two candidates."

In upholding the decision to set aside the actions of the HOD in appointing the two candidates who were respectively ranked third and second by the SGB, the judges based their conclusions on the grounds that the HOD's actions were unreasonable in terms of the *Promotion of Administrative Justice Act*. The judgement wrote, "In my view the HOD proceeded

without a proper understanding of the scope of the discretion which he was called upon to exercise. He disregarded the necessity of actually weighing the equity considerations to which he sought to give effect, against the interests of the Governing Body and the School (including its pupils) to have the benefit of improved ability in the teaching staff. In doing so he omitted to reach a reasonable equilibrium between these interests, rendering his decision reviewable....."

The court went on to instruct the HOD to appoint the SGB-preferred candidates to the respective posts of Principal and Deputy Principal. In the case of the Principal's post, the SGB's second-choice candidate was appointed in terms of the court order because the first-choice candidate had accepted another post. This a consequence of the 14-month delay in confirming the appointment brought about by the legal challenges to the decision. The SGB's first-choice candidate was confirmed as Deputy Principal.

### SM&L Comment

This case has a number of important lessons for SGBs, for Principals and for PED officials. The most important of these are:

- ensuring that the policies and procedures required by law are in place and that these are correctly formulated in terms of the law;
- ensuring that the policies and procedures are strictly adhered to and acted upon;
- ensuring that all the relevant processes are carefully minuted and that proper records are kept which could be used in any challenge to the recommendations of the SGB;
- ensuring that the relevant PED's handling of these decisions is consistent and not vulnerable to the sort of criticism levelled by the Supreme Court of Appeal in this matter;
- ensuring that due regard is given to the facts of the matter and that all facts are considered when decisions are made which may have far-reaching implications for members of staff and pupils.

## Education Law

# The Discretionary Powers of Principals

### The High Court supports discretionary powers of Principals in dealing with disciplinary issues

In a judgement handed down in the High Court, earlier this year Acting-Justice PC van der Byl confirmed that principals have discretionary powers when dealing with the misconduct of pupils. These discretionary powers give them the right to decide whether or not a pupil should be brought before a disciplinary hearing of the SGB to face a charge of “serious misconduct”.

The case involved the kind of incident that most principals of high schools will have dealt with on a number of occasions. The incident in question involved two senior pupils who were caught cheating in an examination at the end of their Grade 11 year. The two were questioned about the incident and although initially denying that they had been dishonest, finally admitted that they had cheated and/or planned to cheat in the examination. The matter was partly complicated by the fact that the two pupils had recently been appointed as prefects and one as a hostel prefect for their Grade 12 year. The principal decided that part of the sanction for their dishonesty would involve the loss of their prefectships. His decision was based on the fact that cheating in an examination was seen as being “contrary to the high moral standards expected from a prefect”. This decision, with reasons, was communicated in writing by the principal to both sets of parents.

During the pupils' Grade 12 year, the parents of one of the two boys challenged in the high court the principal's decision to demote their son. This challenge was based on two grounds:

- That the boy had been prejudiced and would continue to suffer prejudice from having not having been made a prefect
- That the transgression was an example of “serious misconduct” as defined by the SASA and as such should have been investigated as such and referred to the SGB for a formal disciplinary hearing. It was further argued that by not dealing with the matter in this way, the principal had denied his son the right to “fair administrative justice”

The relief they sought was that their son be reinstated as a school prefect.

Of additional interest to school principals is the fact that during the course of the court case the pupil in question turned 18 and he himself became the plaintiff in terms of

the new age of majority that applied in South Africa from 1 July 2007.

In deciding against the plaintiff, Acting-Justice van der Byl made some important points which are relevant to principals and to SGBs. The most significant of these are listed below:

#### The procedural fairness of the action of the principal

The court ruled, quoting existing case law, that “where a matter is left to the discretion or determination of a public officer, and where his discretion has been bona fide exercised or his judgement bona fide expressed, the Court will not interfere with the result. ...and if he has duly and honestly applied himself to the question which has been left to his discretion, it is impossible for a Court of Law either to make him change his mind or to substitute its conclusion for his own... There are circumstances in

which interference would be possible and right. If, for instance, such an officer had acted *mala fide* or from ulterior and improper motives, if he had not applied his mind to the matter or exercised his discretion at all, or if he had disregarded the express provisions of a statute – in such cases the court might grant relief. But it would be unable to interfere with the due and honest exercise of discretion, even if it considered the decision inequitable or wrong”

In simple terms, when a principal exercises his or her discretionary powers, provided these are exercised without malice (*mala fide*) or from ulterior and improper motives, that decision cannot legally be overturned even if the decision can be shown to be inequitable or wrong.

This is an important legal principle which has significant implications for principals who in terms of SASA and the DoE policy guidelines for dealing with disciplinary matters, are given powers of discretion, particularly in regard to whether or not to initiate a formal disciplinary hearing.

#### Prejudice suffered by the pupil

In his judgement the judge pointed out that the fact that one of the two pupils had been appointed first team rugby captain and the other vice-captain of the first hockey team was clear evidence that the boy's loss of prefectship had not “severely tainted his good name and reputation in the eyes of the teaching staff, his peers and their parents” as was alleged. He also made the point that since they were no longer pupils at the school it was in any event not possible for them to be reinstated as prefects.

“where a matter is left to the discretion or determination of a public officer, and where his discretion has been bona fide exercised or his judgement bona fide expressed, the Court will not interfere with the result.”

## Leadership

# The Meaning of Success - where it can all go right

Farouk Bayat, principal of North West Secondary School, provides some sage advice.

Analysis of failure is a national pastime. There can't be a school in the country that has not, at some time or the other, chewed over grisly details of their school's failure to deliver – falling standards, rising truancy, a drop in levels of behaviour. Most teachers have been there at some point in their lives. But why don't we apply the same searching analysis to success? In Clive Woodward's excellent book *'Winning'* he gives a precious piece of advice: when you achieve success you should head straight to the boardroom instead of making for the nearest pub.

When Senior Certificate Examination results are released, we should do just that. When end-of-year examinations are written, marked and results computed, we should do just that.

Many of our pupils start their secondary school career with very low levels of literacy and numeracy. In addition to this they often suffer from low self-esteem and poor motivation. What I describe below is a measured approach to these and other challenges and a description of some of the 'ingredients' which can make up a school's success.

**Don't accept excuses.** There may be reasons for underperformance which relate to home circumstances or past failure, but don't allow yourselves to say 'what more do you expect?'

**Pupils will rise to the level expected of them.** Schools should have very high expectations of attainment and behaviour. Never give up on pupils – consequently you will often be surprised by them.

**Staff - pupil relationships are fundamental** to the smooth running of a school. Mutual respect is the key, and to a large extent it is earned by staff taking a genuine, all-round interest in the pupils they teach.

**Pupils operate best when there are clear boundaries and guidelines.** Sanctions must be seen to be fair and consistent, and there must be zero tolerance of pupils who stop others from learning.

**Clarity and simplicity** should be basic requirements of our school systems and policies: Major policies (e.g. Learning Strategies and Motivation Strategies) should be tacked on to every teacher's desk in the form of, say, a Blue Memo and a Yellow Memo.

**The SMT must be highly visible** around the school; they must earn their spurs by being 'hands on'; and they shouldn't ask a member of staff to do a job they wouldn't do themselves.

**The curriculum must continue to develop and evolve;** regularly review current provision and look for more relevant and interesting material for all age groups.

**The school environment is crucial** – it must be clean, bright, interesting and celebrate pupil success everywhere: someone once said, 'A school should be the best front room you ever walked into.' Work hard to make it so.

And finally – the most important ingredient of all is the **teaching staff**. If you get the teachers right everything else falls into place. A happy and highly motivated staff has an enormous knock-on effect on the lives of children. Staff welfare and training should be the number one priority. Teachers must be trusted to run with initiatives and operate in a no-blame culture.

None of the above is rocket science. You can reach the top through sheer hard work and some false starts. Although success is undoubtedly sweet, we know that schools serve the needs of a rapidly changing society. No amount of recognitions or accolades should make us complacent. We cannot afford to let it. To sustain success, we need to plan for the future in a spirit of optimism, always remaining confident that we can continue to make things better. Perhaps that's where the pub comes in.

### An invitation to contribute

What are some of the 'ingredients' which make your school a success? Get into the boardroom, analyse your success and submit a brief account to Farouk Bayat at: [admin@nwss.kzn.school.za](mailto:admin@nwss.kzn.school.za) or fax to 031 578 6695. He plans to compile the material into a booklet to circulate among schools.

**SM&L** will publish the best of these.

Farouk wins a copy of *Education Management and Leadership. A South African perspective*<sup>1</sup> for this contribution. The book is reviewed on page 15.

<sup>1</sup>Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge and Ngcobo. *Education Management and Leadership. A South African perspective*. (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 2008)

# Research

## Learner Absenteeism

How problematic are the levels of pupil absenteeism in South African public schools and what factors contribute to increased levels of absenteeism? A report based on research conducted at a limited number of schools in 2007 provides some useful perspectives.

This is the second part of a two-part article prepared in response to two national documents reporting on the relationship between pupils and the South African school system. One focuses on the extent to which the system retains pupils from Grade 1 through to Grade 12 while the other focuses on the incidence and reasons for pupil absenteeism. The first part of the article dealt with learner retention while this second part deals with the issue of pupil absenteeism

The report on Learner Absenteeism was commissioned by the Department of Education late in 2006 and the investigation was conducted during January to July 2007. It was based on a limited study of 30 schools drawn from all 9 provinces and made use of structured interviews with Principals, SGB members, District Officials and Head Office staff of the Provincial Education Departments. An extensive literature study of international and local reports on school absenteeism was also conducted.

### Aims of the study

The aims of the study were:

- To provide information on the incidence of learner absenteeism in the country
- To investigate the reasons why learners absent themselves from schools
- To provide an analysis of the systems that exist to monitor and reduce learner absenteeism

*[The report concedes that the sample used was small and could possibly not be representative of all schools.]*

Given the compulsory nature of education for the major part of schooling in South Africa and the fact that it is an offence to prevent a learner from attending school when subject to such compulsion, the committee worked on a simple definition of absenteeism as a situation where a learner is not at school for an entire day [presumably when enrolled at a particular school]. No distinction was drawn between authorised and unauthorised absenteeism. It is understandable, therefore, that the investigation focused considerable attention on school-level record-keeping of learner attendance and absence.

### Main Findings

Among the main findings of the committee were:

- 1 Learner absenteeism [i.e. for a full day] is not

experienced as a problem for the majority of respondents

- 2 The same respondents indicated that partial absenteeism, including late-coming, was a problem that needed to be addressed.
- 3 The approximate absenteeism rate in the schools visited was 5%.
- 4 There is a lack of a common understanding of or a policy approach to the recording, monitoring and addressing of dropouts and that there is probably a continuum of behaviour from partial absences, through full-day absences, grade repetition and dropping-out.
- 5 Reasons for absenteeism, not surprisingly, are given, in order of frequency, as:
  - Poverty
  - Inadequate transport
  - Illness
  - Lack of parental involvement
  - Food insecurity
  - Disintegration of family units
  - Drug abuse
  - Teenage pregnancy
  - Classroom overcrowding
  - Violence and bullying at school
  - Lack of basic services at school
  - Grant distribution days
  - Inefficient management
  - Negative attitudes among learners
  - Poor academic performance
  - Undefined psychological problems
  - Lack of skill and commitment among educators
  - Negative relationships between learners and educators

#### SM&L NOTE:

*The above forms a useful checklist for schools. Principals may want to consider to what extent their schools are able to identify and deal with the above contributory factors. The same can be said of the measures listed in 6 below.*

- 6 Measures taken by schools to reduce absenteeism include the following:
- The introduction of sporting and other extra-mural activities
  - Improved communication with parents
  - Honouring learners for good attendance
  - Nutrition/ feeding schemes at school
  - Active and involved SGBs
  - Counselling [only 2 of the 30 schools studied employed guidance counsellors]
  - Punitive measures
  - Sound school management systems

7 PED officials identified the lack of policies and procedures, the lack of school resources and ineffective disciplinary measures as contributing to absenteeism.

8 Most of the schools studied maintained adequate records and submitted them to the relevant officials.

9 There is no policy or procedure at District Offices designed specifically to investigate or address learner absenteeism, schools do not generally receive feedback from District Offices when they report cases and schools do not receive support or resources relating to learner absenteeism.

10 There is a lack of inter-departmental cooperation in monitoring and dealing with learner absenteeism.

### Recommendations

The recommendations of the committee include the following:

- There is a need for a holistic approach to the management of absenteeism to take into account the broader factors which contribute to the problem.
- Schools should develop attendance policies [SM&L comment: presumably as part of the admission policy or learner code of conduct]

- Consideration should be given to making schools accountable to their District Offices for absenteeism rates as happens in some other countries [SM&L Comment: the new requirements for professional management reporting to SGBs could include this and it could result in more active support for the schools from their District Offices]

- Improved security at schools.

- Efforts to increase parental and SGB involvement.

- Extension of nutrition schemes.

- Proper implementation of learner transport systems.

The full report will be available on the [SM&L website](http://www.ednews.co.za)



*Pupils walking home from school near Dutywa in the Eastern Cape.*

*Poverty and inadequate public transport are two of the most frequently cited reasons for absenteeism*

# Leadership

## Less fox and more hedgehog is what we need

Foxes pursue many small and divergent ideas while hedgehogs think in terms of a single vision

I was recently re-reading parts of Jim Collins's *Good to Great* as I gathered ideas for a presentation. In it he mentions the writings of Isaiah Berlin, a British philosopher and political theorist, and a book he wrote on Tolstoy<sup>1</sup>. Berlin classifies people into two types: Hedgehogs and Foxes. Hedgehogs are people whose lives are the embodiment of one central vision. They seek to see the whole as a single integrated system. Foxes, on the other hand, are people who live their lives pursuing many divergent ends and show little desire to bring these together to form a coherent whole.

Collins suggests that the CEOs of the “Good to Great” companies - and the companies themselves - are hedgehog types. They identify one single simple idea and focus all their energies on making it work. The CEOs of the less successful companies tend to be constantly chasing after the latest trends or re-inventing themselves in new guises.

This set me thinking about our own education system and how fox-like it has become over the past 15 years. Think of it - there have been rationalisation, restructuring (ad nauseum), OBE, NCS, CASS, CATs, CTAs, RNCS, pupils to learners, teachers to educators, work schedules, work schemes, learning outcomes, learning areas, learning fields, learning programmes, learning phases, GET and FET bands, NQF, SC, FETC, NSC, Assessment Standards, subject statements, inclusive education, barriers to learning, NSB, credits, fundamental learning component, core

learning component, elective learning component, rating codes, notional time, IQMS, OSD.... it's a never-ending list. In order to help teachers understand these, there have been endless workshops, often conducted by people with little experience of running schools or the practicalities of managing classrooms frequently filled to overflowing with children who have a self-centred view of their human rights. Therefore it is not surprising that, despite the noble intentions of the policy-makers and curriculum “specialists”, systems failure has become the norm in many educational districts and schools.

What our education system desperately needs at the moment is a lot more hedgehog and a lot less fox. I am not suggesting that the present curriculum be abandoned or changed again - that would be a fox-like response and one that has become the typical response of politically-driven policy reform across the world.

Ample evidence of the repeated failure of policy and funding reform to improve pupil outcomes is provided in the McKinsey and

Company report, *How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top*<sup>2</sup> which we have reported on in this publication in the past. If the quality of our schooling system is to improve, the kind of hedgehog concept that we need is something simple that focuses on the two things that make a difference: well-managed schools and well-taught classes. As Jim Collins and the authors of the

### Three things matter most

- getting the right people to become teachers
- developing them into effective instructors
- ensuring that the system is able to deliver the best possible instruction to every child.





McKinsey report point out, however, this means getting the right people to do the job. Collins talks about getting the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus and the right people in the right seats. The McKinsey report notes that three things matter most in the top school systems:

- getting the right people to become teachers
- developing them into effective instructors
- ensuring that the system is able to deliver the best possible instruction to every child. Elsewhere they comment that developing effective instructional leaders in schools means doing three things:
  - getting the right teachers to become principals
  - developing their instructional leadership skills
  - focusing each principal's time on instructional leadership

Teaching quality refers to the teacher's ability to teach – what the teacher does to promote pupil learning inside the classroom.

Research evidence of what constitutes good teaching in terms of pupil outcomes yields a similar simple message. It is about engagement between the teacher and the pupils of the class. Successful teachers have the ability to get all members of the class to engage with the matter under discussion. It is their ability to stimulate the interest of the pupils and their skill at posing questions that elicit reflection and encourage thoughtful responses that are the basis of real learning.

In a study in which Kaplan and Owings reviewed the research findings linking teacher quality to pupil achievement, they distinguished between teacher quality and teaching quality. Teacher quality concerns the inputs that the teacher brings to the school. These include their “demographic” profile, aptitude, professional preparation, qualifications and prior professional work experience. Teaching quality, on the

other hand, refers to the teacher's ability to teach – what the teacher does to promote pupil learning inside the classroom. Kaplan and Owings list the following factors which relate teaching quality to increased pupil achievement:

- Verbal ability (of the teacher)
- Content knowledge
- Education coursework on teaching methods in their discipline – that is the extent of their training in their subject specialities
- Their performance in state licensing examinations that measure both basic skills and teaching knowledge. In the USA, where this study was based, teachers are required to “pass” a licensing examination before they may teach in the state's public schools (this would be equivalent to the SACE-approved teaching qualification and SACE registration that is a requirement for teachers who wish to teach in South African schools)
  - Ongoing professional learning
  - Flexibility, creativity, and adaptability
  - The amount of teaching experience (once a teacher has taught for three or more years the difference associated with experience is marginal)
  - Demonstrated skill in asking pupils higher-order questions and probing their responses
  - Class size, planning time, opportunities to work with colleagues and curricular resources.

There is nothing here about the kind of bureaucratic, prescriptive and assessment-focused



approach that is so often demanded by subject advisors - an approach driven by the mistaken assumption that changing the way pupils are assessed will improve "teaching quality".

The HSRC report<sup>3</sup> on the supply and demand of teachers identifies this as a problem and notes: "With regard to the new curriculum it is important that the DoE improve training and practicals on OBE to relieve the stress associated with the curriculum and reduce the paperwork burden as well as administrative tasks and other activities that increase educator workload".<sup>4</sup>

The paperwork and administrative demands of the new curriculum are a typically foxy response to the challenges that our education system faces.

Elsewhere in the HSRC report the authors note that some teachers spend as little as 10% of their allocated teaching time engaged in instructional practice - i.e. actually teaching. It goes on to say: "Finally, it was clear from discussion with teachers, and from observation that the amount of paperwork and administration is onerous. Much of the paperwork that teachers are required to do is designed to ensure that teaching and assessment occurs regularly, including requiring that teachers indicate the completion of certain assessment standards, the specification of which outcomes have been addressed, and the detailed recording of marks. Ironically, it is precisely this policy which attempts to guarantee that instruction and assessment takes place that serves to undermine instructional time. This happens particularly when teachers use class time to complete administrative tasks."<sup>5</sup>

It is clear from this that in many schools, teachers spend their time processing the administrative paperwork demanded by departmental officials, instead of using their time preparing lessons, teaching and assessing the work of the pupils they teach in the most appropriate and efficient way. As the authors of the HSRC report point out, the recording and reporting processes required of teachers are hindering rather than promoting good teaching. The foxiness of this reporting model is matched only by the single-minded hedgehog-like zeal of subject advisors, who seem determined to ensure that every teacher in every school meets every assessment prescription to the letter. These additional demands on teachers' time are demotivating for the best and most committed teachers, while incompetent and uncommitted teachers use these demands as excuses for not fulfilling their classroom obligations.

Sadly, the problem is generally worst in schools attended by pupils most in need of committed and skilled teachers. The McKinsey and Company report makes it clear that one of the reasons that the best-performing education systems are successful is that they put in place strategies to support the underperforming pupils early in their school careers. If the HSRC report correctly reflects what is happening in South Africa, the reverse is probably true here.

What is most needed by our education system at the moment is a hedgehog-like, single-minded drive to improve teaching quality - that thing that happens in the classroom between the teacher and the pupils in the class. Teaching quality does not just happen; it is learned through classroom observation - both observing and being observed, through practice in a range of classroom situations, through experience and through formal and informal collaboration with colleagues. There is very little focus on these kinds of activities by departmental officials or by the principals and management teams of many schools, yet it is these kinds of activities that are shown to be most effective at improving teaching quality. Perhaps it is time

for those in leadership positions in schools to take a stand on this and to become very hedgehog-like in their insistence that teaching quality and not paperwork is the primary focus of their schools. Elsewhere on this page we offer some suggestions on strategies that can be employed to promote teacher quality and on how principals can use their hedgehog prickles to protect their staff from the unreasonable administrative demands of fox-like officials.

“...the recording and reporting on the teaching and assessment that teachers are required to do is hindering rather than making good teaching happen.”

## References

<sup>1</sup> *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson; New York: Simon and Schuster. Expanded version of 'Lev Tolstoy's Historical Scepticism', *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, 2, 1951: 17-54. Reprinted in Berlin 1978a.

<sup>2</sup> *How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top*. McKinsey & Company (2007)

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid

# Leadership

## Hedgehog Strategies for Principals



### Protect instructional time

Make it school policy not to allow any activity to interfere with instructional time during the formal school day

Protest – preferably in writing - when departmental officials schedule workshops during the formal school day and refuse to

allow your teachers to attend

Insist that teachers arrive at school at least 10 minutes before the start of the school day and remain at school until at least 15 minutes after the end of the formal school day

Insist that teachers are in class for the full duration of every lesson

Schedule staff and other meetings outside of the formal school day. Remember that teachers must account for at least 1 800 hours of work each year. In a 200 day school year, if they are at school for the required minimum 7 hours every school day, they will have accounted for just 1 400 of those hours.

### Encourage discussion about teaching quality

Take a lead in this regard by talking about issues of teaching quality in staff meetings and one-on-one discussions with teachers

Make teaching quality a regular item on the agenda of staff meetings, meetings of subject/ phase/ learning area heads and meetings of the SMT

Establish an area of the staffroom notice board which is devoted to material related to teaching quality such as extracts from *The Teacher*, *SM&L* and other similar educational publications

### Make time for staff professional development

Time for staff professional development should be built into your school year plan. Establish a staff professional development team under your leadership or that of a senior member of staff and make him/her responsible for planning and organising the programme

### Make teaching quality the focus of all professional development activities

If you do not take personal responsibility for the programme, insist that the majority of professional development activities are directly related to quality of teaching

### Promote classroom observation

Classroom observation allows teachers to learn from one another and is one of the most successful ways of sharing good practice. This kind of classroom observation should not be part of any evaluative process. Principals can encourage the process by inviting teachers to observe their classes. SMT members and subject heads can do the same. Encourage members of staff to discuss what they have learned at staff meetings and professional development workshops.

### Provide teachers with professional resources

Set aside funds in the school budget for the purchase of professional resources (such as journals) for teachers. There is a wide range of teaching-related resource materials which can be accessed and downloaded free of charge from the internet. The *Ednews* website has links to some of the best of these.

### Be visible in your school (MBWA)

Management by Walking About, which we featured in Volume 2 No 1 of 2008, is a good way to find out which teachers are teaching well and which need help and support. As the principal, it is essential that you have a good idea of what is happening in the classrooms of your school. You are ultimately responsible for the quality of teaching in your school. It is not possible to monitor it from the confines of your office.

### Celebrate teaching of high quality

Regular observation and discussion on teaching will quickly reveal who are the school's most talented, innovative and effective teachers. Publicly acknowledge their special skill and improve their status by inviting them to take responsibility for supporting and mentoring new and beginner teachers.

### Share ideas and learn from others

Encourage and make time for your teachers to meet teachers from other schools and - where possible - to observe them teach. This is especially important for those teachers on your staff who are the sole teachers of specific subjects. As the principal, you should also make every effort to share ideas with the principals of other schools about the things that can be done to improve the quality of teaching.



*It's about well managed schools and well taught classrooms!*

# Management

## Which duties should you assign to your SMT?

Four experienced heads provide guidance on the allocation of duties to members of the SMT

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### Sipho Sibisi's request

Khulekani (Sipho) Sibisi, Principal of Glen Park Primary Farm School near Mtubatuba in KZN, contacts me regularly about leadership and management issues. One of the matters he raised was how best to allocate duties to his Deputy and two HODs who, together with him, constitute the Senior Management Team. As most of my experience has been with secondary schools, I approached four experienced primary school principals and asked them for their advice on the matter. Their responses are provided on this page.

### Greg Brown's advice

Greg is principal of Bishops Preparatory School and a former head of The Grove Primary School.

The first response I would make to this query would be to say that every school does have different needs and priorities so a school must decide what it thinks are its major leadership priorities. However, having said that, there are certain portfolios or areas of responsibility that are generic to all schools. I would suggest that they are, inter alia:

- Academic leadership and support;
- Discipline;
- Communication and parental issues;
- Extra-mural programme and events;
- Administration (returns, etc.);
- Admissions and staffing; and

#### IQMS

As we are talking about a primary school it would be a good idea for each HOD to head up a phase: One the Foundation Phase and the other the Intermediate and Senior Phases combined. Phase leadership would include monitoring learning programmes, assessment, checking of books, special needs support and the achievement of learning outcomes. All teachers in a Phase would report to their HOD in all matters academic. In addition, other administration portfolios could be given to these HODs; but the bulk of their

responsibility must be leadership of the Phase. Making one teacher in each grade a Grade Head is also a great help for the HOD.

The Deputy Principal should ideally manage discipline, the extra-mural programme (organisation, allocation of duties, equipment, fixtures, etc.) and co-ordination of IQMS, whole school and staff appraisal.

The Principal is left then with overall leadership of the school that needs to include lots of inspiration, motivation and looking ahead – “putting the school where it isn't”. I think that admissions, staffing, communication and parental issues are part of the Principal's domain.

This is not a large SMT, especially if the school is a large one, so senior staff will need to keep focused on the core issues in their area of responsibility. This is easier said than done but ensures that the leadership of the school is strong and the direction clear. Ultimately, focused leadership that sets definite goals for its school influences all teachers to concentrate on core curriculum issues for which the school will become known.

### Tony Ryan's Advice

Tony is principal of Rondebosch Boys' Preparatory School

The Principal should focus on the future of the school while the Deputy Principal takes responsibility for all administration that deals with existing and current activities, as well as all planning schedules. The Deputy Principal is therefore responsible for daily management of the school.

One HOD could be assigned responsibility for managing all academic issues, including becoming an expert in all curricular matter. This HOD needs to drive the delivery of the curriculum from timetables (with the Deputy Principal) to reporting and creating support structures for all weak learners.

The second - and perhaps less senior - HOD should manage all non-academic matters. This will include: the full extra-curricular sports programme, the cultural activities e.g. choir, dramatic production, confirming fixtures and transport arrangements for all teams. This

HOD would also be responsible for the production of the school magazine.

For this structure to be successful there should be a weekly meeting of this Senior Management Team. At every meeting there would be a review of the previous week, each member of the team would report on his/her portfolios and the following week's activities would be planned. The Deputy would also be expected to remind members a month in advance of planned events at the meeting. This is to ensure that bookings can be made and staff informed well in advance of the event.

### **Richard Hayward's advice**

Richard is a retired principal and is editor of *Quality Education News*, a newsletter published by the South African Quality Assurance Institute

In a primary school with a Deputy Principal and two HODs, I'm presuming that there are at least 750 learners. A most important function of the principal with these three staff members is to groom them for principalship. They need to be given the opportunities to 'steer the ship' with the principal's hand 'gently holding the tiller'.

There are so many responsibilities for staff members and especially at senior management level. Therefore, this is not a complete list. Duties indicated below are simply guidelines. Allocate duties according to a person's strengths and areas identified for professional growth.

There would be the expectation that the Deputy Principal attends at least these meetings: Finance Committee, Parent-Teacher Association, School Governing Body as well as any meeting where Awards (for example, Scholastic or Cultural) are being decided on.

**Deputy Principal** (Assuming that Deputy teaches in the higher classes)

- Academic programme: Director
- Children's Council/Prefects
- Discipline issues: Grades Four to Seven
- Examination timetable
- Learning area (subject) control: To be shared amongst senior teachers
- Mentor to new staff members
- Prize-Giving/ Valediction functions
- Safety and security issues
- Substitution timetable
- Teaching timetable: Grades Four to Seven

**Head of Department** (Assuming that HOD teaches in Foundation Phase)

- Assembly control (Junior Assembly)
- Consumable stock control: Foundation Phase
- Discipline issues: Foundation Phase
- Junior Prize-Giving
- Interhouse Sports Days: Responsible for Foundation Phase
- Mentor to new Foundation Phase teachers
- Textbook control: Grades One to Three
- Written reports on learners' work

**Head of Department** (Assuming that HOD teaches in the higher classes)

- Assembly control (Senior Assembly)
- Consumable stock: Grade Four upwards
- Extramural programme: Director
- Extramural timetable
- Interhouse Sports Days: Grade Four upwards
- Learning area (subject) control: To be shared amongst senior teachers
- Scholar patrol
- Textbook control: Grade Four upwards

### **Altavan Heerden's advice**

Alta van Heerden is Principal of Sunlands Primary School and is also Provincial President of SAPA: Western Cape.

Rather than make suggestions on the allocation of duties, she explains how duties and responsibilities have been assigned at Sunlands.

- Each member of the Leadership Team has at least one portfolio to manage. The portfolios are:
- Curriculum (Principal)
- Discipline (Deputy)
- EST Coordinator (HOD)
- Sports Coordinator (HOD)
- Foundation Phase Coordinator (HOD)

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- Learners with Special Education Needs (Post level one volunteer)
- Estate – buildings and grounds (Post level one volunteer),

The post level one teachers who serve on the SMT do so because of the portfolios that they manage. Each volunteered to take on the specific portfolio as a way of growing their own management skills and because of their special interest in the respective portfolios.

All teachers are assigned to at least one Portfolio Team as this gives them an opportunity to share in the management of the school. Examples are Fundraising; Staff Welfare and Development, Safety and Security and Arts and Culture. There is also an Assessment Team, which deals with promotion, progression, intervention and other assessment-related issues. Some SMT members serve on this team.

SMT members also all take responsibility for overseeing of one or two grades. These responsibilities include the following:

- Monitoring Planners and Assessment Records on a monthly basis.

- Guidance wherever needed on grade-related issues. Each grade also has a Grade Head but the Grade Heads are not HODs.
- Service on IQMS-teams, including associated class visits when possible.
- The checking of report comments and assessments before these are forwarded to the Principal's office for signing.
- Serving as Learning Area Heads. These duties involve:
  - Perusal of pupils' books on a quarterly basis
  - The moderation of Assessment Tasks
  - Providing guidance with regard to Learning Areas
  - Maintaining the master copy of the Learning Area file for the school

When the Principal is away at meetings, each HOD takes responsibility for all eventualities in one section of the school (a passage/corridor). This includes dealing with disciplinary matters and any problems that may arise. This leaves the Deputy Principal to deal with parents and any bigger issues that may occur.

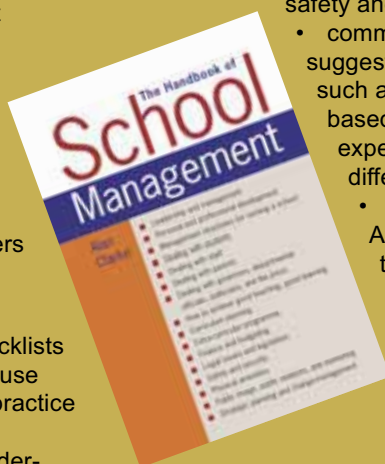
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# Book Review

## **EDUCATION MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP: A South African Perspective**

Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge and Ngcobo.

2008 Oxford University Press 204 pages

ISBN 978 0 19 576529 8

R229.95

### **Reviewed by Clive Roos**

Informed observers of developments in education in South Africa over the last 10 years have repeatedly identified uneven levels of education management as an on-going challenge in the provision of education, particularly at school level. One of the responses of the government has been the encouragement of a range of postgraduate courses in school management offered by or under the aegis of various Higher Education institutions. These include the ACE in Education Management and Leadership Development as well as the relevant BEd and BEd [Hons] degrees. Many of these courses are undertaken by serving educators on a part-time and after hours basis and the availability of good support material is therefore crucial.

This recent publication by OUP is of such a nature. All the authors are active in the field of training educators in Education Management and collectively represent a

wealth of experience, while ensuring the material is properly located in a philosophical context.

Education Management and Leadership: A South African Perspective is comprehensive without being unnecessarily detailed. With the exception of the contextual chapter which opens the book each of the 11 chapters focuses on a specific management and leadership challenge within this South African context. Topics covered include:

- Quality and accountability
- School development
- Staff development
- Promoting effective teaching and learning
- School governance
- Financial and physical resources

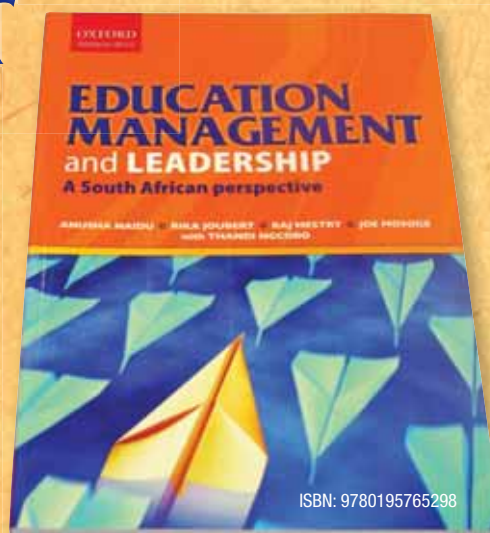
For each such topic there is a clear overview and a useful setting out of the outcomes and the key concepts.

The authors have provided, where necessary, relevant examples and case studies as well as flow charts to illustrate key processes in areas such as quality assurance, characteristics of effective schools and

*Continued on page 16*

# EDUCATION MANAGEMENT and LEADERSHIP A South African perspective

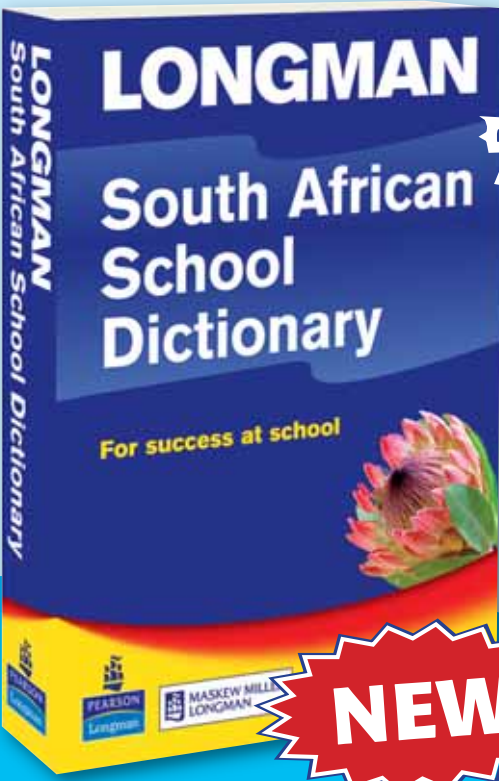
- Prepares teachers, principals, heads of department, academics and other educators and managers to lead within the framework of diversity and multiculturalism in South Africa
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continuous staff development. These are often supported with practical activities and management tasks.

Given the increased democratisation of education since 1994 of particular use to education managers and aspirant managers is the generous guidance and advice provided on the encouragement and management of school – community collaboration. Internally, within the school itself, the setting out of the duties and responsibilities of school governance will help equip potential school principals to make a constructive contribution in this vital area.

It is encouraging to find two detailed chapters devoted to teaching and learning – the activities central to what schools are and for which they are increasingly coming under pressure. How the principal manages the curriculum and leads the educator staff in classroom practice lie at the heart of effective schools. Education Management and Leadership: A South African Perspective provides a great deal of useful guidance in these areas.

Comprehensive references are provided as is a detailed index. These add to the usefulness of what is an easy text to work with.

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