

School Management & Leadership

2007
Volume 1 Number 6

POLICY • LEADERSHIP • MANAGEMENT
for South African Schools

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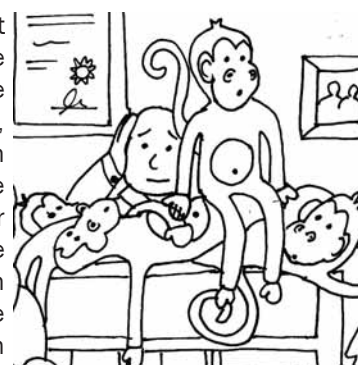
SM&L

Is published 10 times per year by Eduskills (Reg No.2002/011573/07). It is editorially and financially independent and 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 and management.

Monkey Management

Not those that climb trees, not those who fool around in classrooms and not those who chatter in the staffroom

In writing about monkeys I am not talking about those that climb trees nor am I talking about those that fool about in the classroom or chatter in the staffroom. What I am referring to are the ones that, if you are not careful, get dropped on your desk each day by those who either don't know how to manage them or would prefer you to manage them on their behalf. Monkeys, in management-speak, are the problems that other people bring to you and which you then take on, rather than insisting that you are brought a suggested solutions for follow-up action on the part of those with problems. Kenneth Blanchard, a prolific writer on management matters and co-author of the "One Minute Manager" series, provides - with his co-authors - some sage advice on how to deal with these kinds of monkeys in his book, "The One Minute Manager Meets the Monkey"¹.



Monkey problems are a common failing for new and inexperienced managers but even managers with considerable experience sometimes end up loading themselves with the monkeys of their subordinates.

Collecting other people's monkeys is the typical behaviour of inexperienced, enthusiastic and diligent managers. The startling thing about monkey problems is that they are self-inflicted and in dealing with them appropriately you not only help yourself but also help those who bring them to you to become better at their jobs.

A typical monkey passing goes as follows: The principal sits in her office or is waylaid by a member of staff in the staffroom or corridor about a problem that he has encountered. The principal considers the problem and then responds with "Leave it with me" or, "Let me think about it and I'll get back to you". At the start of the encounter, the monkey is firmly sitting on the shoulders of the staff member and the principal. When they part, the monkey has moved totally to the shoulders of the principal while the staff member walks away relieved and monkey free. What is likely to happen in the days that follow is that the staff member will begin to bug the principal to find out if she has dealt with the problem and may in the end become critical of the principal, either because she has taken too long to deal with the problem or because he is dissatisfied with the way in which has been dealt with. As Blanchard and his co-authors point out, the result of the transaction is that there has been a reversal of roles with the staff member assuming the role of the supervisor and the principal that of the subordinate. This, of course, should not be happening

but is a frequent shortcoming of many principals and senior members of staff who occupy management positions.

The important thing to remember in dealing with subordinates to whom responsibilities have been delegated is that they are made to understand that they are expected to solve the problems that are associated with the tasks that have been delegated to them. If they feel unsure about how best to deal with a problem or whether they have the necessary authority to make a certain decision, it is incumbent on them to approach their supervisor for advice but the advice should be on proposed solutions not on problems. Subordinates who constantly seek advice also need to be reminded that they are expected to solve their own problems and the fact that they constantly seek advice may indicate a level of incompetence on their part or at least that they do not yet have the competence to deal with the responsibilities that have been delegated to them.



Failure to deal with monkeys leads to at least five kinds of problems for the manager and the organisation:

- Subordinates learn that the manager is a monkey collector so they bring her more monkeys. They deal with fewer and fewer problems themselves preferring, whenever possible, to pass them on to their supervisor. In the case of schools, this is often the principal.
- The manager becomes increasingly loaded with other people's problems and ends up having to work longer and longer hours to deal with these problems.
- The manager loses focus and his/her own areas of responsibility are neglected because of the time and energy that he/she needs to devote to dealing with the problems of other people.
- Responsibility and accountability for the successful completion of tasks becomes confused. Does it belong with the staff member assigned the task or to the principal?
- Bottlenecks arise and tasks become stalled as those responsible wait for responses and/or decisions from their overburdened manager.

The result is that staff have less and less to do, the principal works harder and harder but less and less efficiently and everyone blames her for the delays and for their failure to meet deadlines. It is a no-win situation for the principal and sadly, in her effort to help and support her staff, she has been the cause of her own undoing.

So how does one manage monkeys?

Monkeys are best managed by applying a few simple rules to ensure that the right things are done in the right way at the right time by the right people, which of course it exactly what good management is about.

In articulating these rules, Blanchard and his co-authors clarify their definition of a monkey. A monkey is not the whole problem; it is the first or next step in dealing with the problem. It is the solution to the question, "What must be done next?" and if we are to interpret these as they might apply in the school situation, then the first rule is this: the principal and staff member will not part company until the answer to the question, "What must be done next?" is decided. The answer must be a brief description of what must be done. If the problem or project is a large one, it is possible that the original monkey may spawn several smaller monkeys as part of the solution. Each of these must be subject to rule 1 and to the other rules that follow. If a decision cannot be made in the time that is available then the staff member needs to be sent away to think about it and to come back with a suggestion on what needs to be done. This is what Blanchard calls "the next move". Doing it in this way ensures that the monkey stays with the staff member and is not given to the principal.

The second rule stipulates that the discussion between the principal and staff members continues until a decision is made about ownership of the monkey (or monkeys, if smaller monkeys have been spawned). Assigning ownership is essential because with ownership comes accountability. The authors make it clear that ownership be assigned to the person lowest in the hierarchy of the organisation who is competent to handle the problem. This is an important management concept and one which is not often applied at schools. If a Post Level One teacher or a secretary or cleaner can do the job, then there is no value in assigning it to a senior member of staff and even less value in the principal's handling it. Senior members of staff and principals need to be doing the important and challenging tasks which cannot be done by those below them in the school's hierarchy. If they are to do

these jobs to the best of their abilities, they need to be relieved of the less important and trivial responsibilities that can be done by others less experienced, less qualified and less “well paid” than they are.

The third rule is that monkeys need to be insured and that this insurance should be taken out before the discussion between the principal and the staff member ends. The “insurance” in this instance is a mechanism to review decisions before they are made. This is to prevent damage being done by poor or mistaken decisions taken by subordinates. To prevent this, those carrying the monkey must present decisions for action as recommendations, requiring final approval from the principal or their immediate supervisor before implementation. Senior and more experienced members of staff can be given authority to make certain kinds of decisions depending on their experience and seniority. In these instances they would simply be required to advise on the decisions that have been made so that their principal and/or supervisor is aware of what has been done.

The fourth and final rule is that monkeys need to be assigned a check-up appointment before the discussion between the principal and staff member ends. The purpose of the check-up is to ensure that the monkey remains healthy and that if it has become unhealthy, this is identified in good time so that appropriate remedial action can be taken. The essential purpose of the check-up is to monitor progress and to ensure that the subordinate remains on track. The frequency of this kind of monitoring depends very much on the experience and seniority of the subordinate concerned, and the person’s level of expertise in the task or project that has been assigned to them.



In a nutshell, managing monkeys is about good people management principles. It is about the process of delegating tasks in a way that ensures that the person assigned a task is in a position to take full responsibility while providing the person assigning the task with a measure of control over their performance and the quality of the outcome.

References

Blanchard, K., Oncken, W., and Burrows, H. *The One Minute Manager Meets the Monkey*. Collins London (1990)



Jess Grundlingh with one of the works which will form part of her Senior Certificate Art portfolio

Jess Grundlingh

The artwork for this article was done on commission by Jess Grundlingh, a Grade 12 pupil at Westerford High School. Jessy is a gifted young artist and an excellent academic (Her SC subjects are English, Afrikaans, Mathematics, Physical Science, History and Art, all on the Higher Grade, and her aggregate in the mid-year examinations was 1866). She plans to enrol for Film Media and Visual Studies at UCT next year.

I first came across Jess’s work earlier this year at a Westerford Art exhibition. She had a drawing style which seemed well suited to illustrating material of the kind that is published in SM&L and I approached her on this basis. She was keen on the idea of becoming involved and despite the approaching “mock matric examinations” produced some delightful drawings some of which have been used to illustrate this article. This is her first published work.

Principal Profile

Alta van Heerden, Convenor of the 2007 SAPA National Conference and Principal of Sunlands Primary School

Alta van Heerden, Convenor of the 2007 SAPA National Conference, is Principal of Sunlands Primary School in Kenwyn, a working-class suburb of Cape Town. Alta first became involved with SAPA in 2001 and was persuaded by Alan Clarke, then president of SAPA: Western Cape, to take charge of the 2001 National Conference which was also held in Cape Town. Therefore the 2007 Conference will be the second occasion on which she has been willing to accept this challenging responsibility. The Conference, which takes place from 6 – 8 September in the Cape Town International Conference Centre, is expected to attract some 800 delegates and has an operating budget of nearly R1 million. Accepting responsibility for a project of this magnitude while continuing to run your school is a daunting task yet for principal van Heerden it seems to be all in a days work. Alta is also the current President of SAPA: Western Cape.

Alta is forthright in her views about the value of the South African Principals' Association. Besides the obvious benefits that she believes it offers such as opportunities for professional growth for school leaders, a forum for discussion on issues of leadership and management with other heads and deputies, and collegiality generated when principals gather, its unique strength is its independence and its focus on the needs of principals. The fact that it is a professional organisation serving school principals and that it is not involved in labour issues such as salaries and conditions of service means that it has the freedom to concentrate on issues relating to the work and needs of principals as they lead and manage their schools. What SAPA does best is to provide its members with a network of like-minded colleagues, friends who understand the demands of the job and to

whom they can turn to support and advice when they feel it is needed.

Sunlands has a total pupil enrolment of 817, with 55 of this number enrolled in Grade R. There are two Gr. R classes and three classes in each of the other grades with class sizes varying from 32 to 40. School fees are R2 500 per year. Mrs van Heerden sees funding and the collection of school fees as the school's biggest challenge. Based on past experience, the school expects approximately 70% of parents to pay the full fees with the balance having either a partial or full remission of fees. The school governing body works particularly hard to ensure that all parents who can afford the fees pay what is due and also works to encourage those that may meet the requirement for a full or partial remission to pay as much as they can because it is in the best interests of their children. Interestingly, she does not believe that the changes to the fees remission policy which were introduced this year have affected the level of payment of school fees by parents. While Alta sees funding as the school's biggest challenge, she is extremely positive about the support that the school receives from its parent body which she describes as "wonderful". This support is particularly in evidence at school functions and fundraising events, and when parents are needed to work with pupils.

As a community school, and in an effort to be as inclusive as possible for the community it serves, the school governing body funds a number of specialist subject and support staff. These include subject specialists in music (2), art, IT and a librarian, in addition to a social worker, an ELSEN teacher and a remedial teacher. Alta feels that these teachers contribute significantly to the overall success of the school because of their ability to identify and assist children who may be most in need of support. The support that they provide also contributes to the parents' perception that Sunlands is a caring school, which indeed it is. As one teacher put it, "Sunlands is a place where we talk with our hearts rather than our minds". That is not to say that Sunlands neglects the academic side of things; far from it. Walking along the corridors or visiting classes during lesson times one gets a very clear sense that it is a school where teaching and learning are important. There is a buzz, but it's the buzz of order and of thought. The school is spick and span and well maintained and the classrooms and corridors are decorated with the work and images of children.



Alta van Heerden with one of her Grade 7 classes

The professional development of staff is an integral part of the school programme with professional development activities taking place several times each term, normally in the afternoons after school.

Literacy is a particular focus and the school is planning to participate in the THRASS phonics programme, an IT based programme for teaching literacy skills. The Teaching Handwriting Reading and Spelling Skills (THRASS) programme was pioneered by British educational psychologist Alan Davies. (More information on the THRASS programme is provided elsewhere in this issue.) The national Grade 3 and 6 literacy and numeracy results are analysed by the staff to identify areas for improvement and strategies are then formulated to effect these improvements.

The commitment of Alta van Heerden and her staff to making Sunlands a “caring” school is demonstrated by the efforts to ensure that all pupils and teachers promote this concept through random acts of kindness. The idea is that people are inspired through random acts of kindness to reciprocate with similar acts of kindness to others. It is a noble idea and is based on the work of the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation, a privately held

and funded non-profit organisation, founded in 1995 in the USA. This is linked to a larger international organisation called the World Kindness Movement which joins similar organisations from 19 countries across the world. The only African country represented is Nigeria. The website of the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation provides school and classroom-specific ideas and activities which can be used to promote a more “generous human spirit” and greater kindness in human relationships.

Alta van Heerden is an example of the kind of principal who, through her commitment, leadership and vision, not only makes a difference in her school but is also prepared to do what she can to promote the professional growth and status of principals through her involvement with SAPA. **SM&L** salutes her for the working she is doing and we are sure will continue to do for education in South Africa.

References

THRASS phonics programme: www.thrass.co.uk

World Kindness Movement: <http://www.worldkindness.org>

Random Acts of Kindness Foundation: <http://www.actsofkindness.org>



Members of the 2007 National Conference Planning Committee meeting at Sunlands Primary School

The 2007 SAPA National Conference Planning Committee

Alta van Heerden - Sunlands Primary
 Cris John - Sunlands Primary
 Gavin Keller - Sun Valley Primary
 Meryl Hewett-Fourie - Synergy School
 Patiswa Qokweni - Isilimela Senior Secondary
 Blackie Swart - Hottentots Holland High School
 Greg Brown - The Grove Primary
 Mark Williams - Macassar Primary
 Anusha Naidoo - Observatory Junior

Tony Ryan - Rondebosch Boys Preparatory
 Wendy Condie - Wynberg Girls' Junior
 Charmaine Murray - Sans Souci Girls' High
 Ann Morton - Pinelands North Primary
 David de Korte - Camps Bay High

Conference Co-ordinating Company XL Millenium
 Linda Benwell, Tania Davids, Illana Kruger

Leadership roles

What kinds of leadership roles can and should be assigned to Senior Teachers and Master Teachers and how should these differ from the leadership roles assigned to HODs and Deputy-principals?

Nkhangweni Nemudzivhabi of Thengwe Secondary School in Limpopo, one of **SM&L's** most supportive subscribers, recently contacted me to ask if I would write something about the allocation of duties and the levels of responsibility that can or should be assigned to the different post levels within the school hierarchy.

Two important points should be made at the outset:

1 The formal post levels assigned to a school are a bureaucratic necessity for large organisations like public education departments. They are important because they are the mechanism that the state uses to assign posts and basic organizational and management structures to schools. The shortcoming of any bureaucratic system is that it has to use a generic model based on fairly crude data such as pupil numbers, poverty levels, school phase and subject offerings as the basis for these decisions. The decision about how to tailor the model to meet the specific needs of an individual school rests with the principal. It is incumbent on him to assign duties and responsibilities to the appointed staff at the school in a way that best meets the educational needs of pupil. That should be his mandate and all staff need to understand and accept that although the principal needs to consult them on their preferences, they have an obligation while employed at that school to perform whatever duties and responsibilities are assigned to them to the best of their ability.

2 Nearly all the literature suggests that management is improved and organizations work best where management structures are flexible rather than rigid and where the management structure is as flat as possible. A flat management structure is one that has few layers in its hierarchy. If schools are to be managed effectively it is therefore essential that the recently-introduced posts of senior teacher and master teacher are not seen as additional layers in the school hierarchy. For a school (even a very large school) to have a formal hierarchy with 6 layers such as that shown below would not only be ludicrous, it would also represent poor management practice.

Principal
Deputy-principal
Head of Department
Master Teacher
Senior Teacher
Teacher

Even the DoE realises this and has made it clear that it sees the progression from teacher to master teacher as an alternative to that of the one from teacher to principal. The DoE is trying with its new salary scales to reinforce

this view by making it possible for master teachers to earn salaries which are at least equivalent to those of HODs.

The kinds of duties and responsibilities that can be assigned to senior and master teachers are spelt out quite clearly in ELRC Collective Agreement No 5 of 2006. Master and Senior Teacher posts are also not considered to be promotion posts but are posts that are earned through performance rather than through application and selection as is the case with the posts of HODs, deputies and principals.

I would prefer to look at how a principal may look to assign duties and responsibilities within his/her school using Jim Collins's "5 levels of leadership" model.

Collins describes these levels as follows:

Level 1: Highly capable individual:

Makes productive contributions through talent, knowledge, skills and good work habits

Level 2: Contributing team member:

Contributes individual capabilities to the achievement of group objectives and works effectively with others in group settings

Level 3: Competent manager:

Organises people and resources towards the effective and efficient pursuit of pre-determined objectives

Level 4: Effective leader:

Catalyses commitment to and vigorous pursuit of a clear and compelling vision, stimulating high performance standards

Level 5: Executive:

Builds enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will.

How would I see the different post levels at schools fitting into Jim Collins' model?

One of the good things about schools is that they can, with good leadership, behave mostly like autonomous organisations rather than as subsets of the very large and not very efficient bureaucracy such as the DoE and the PEDs. This means that principals, if they are willing to stand their ground, can become level 4 and level 5 leaders. To me, the interesting things about the Collins model for schools are his descriptions of level 1 and level 2 leaders. Teachers who display these kinds of qualities and competencies are the heart and soul of any good school. They are the people who do the work in the classroom and who are the role models of what good teaching and good education is all about. These are not leadership and management roles in the traditional sense

of the word but they are people who make a difference through the exceptional way in which they deliver the core responsibility of schooling. They are at the business end of the work of schools and by nurturing them, acknowledging the value of their contribution and rewarding them well, principals can go a long way to ensuring that they continue to do what they do best, which is teaching and mentoring.

The descriptions below provide an example of the kinds of roles and responsibilities that are most suited to Collins's leadership levels as they might be applied to formal post-level structure of the DoE

Teacher: Perform the teaching, extra-curricular and administrative duties assigned by the principal to the best of his/her ability with the guidance and support of a subject/learning area/ phase specific senior teacher or master teacher. These are the beginner and less experienced teachers who are still learning the profession and who, with suitable mentoring, will in time become senior and master teachers or Heads of Department. Perhaps the most valuable contributions that senior and master teachers at a school can make are in the mentoring of beginner teachers, teachers new to the school, and inexperienced or struggling teachers. Because of their knowledge, experience and expertise they are ideally suited to a mentoring role. The fact that they are or may not be part of the school's formal management structure is an added benefit because those that they mentor will feel that they are being supported rather than being under close management supervision.

Senior Teacher (Level 1 Leadership): These are people who not only have the necessary knowledge and skills in their specific teaching field but have become excellent classroom practitioners. Their teaching is exciting and innovative, their classroom management is good and the pupils they teach perform well. They are meticulous in the way in which they perform all administrative and other tasks assigned to them. They are individuals with expertise doing an excellent job and this is where they differ from master teachers who can be differentiated from them by the wider contribution that they make in the area of expertise.

Master Teacher (Level 2 Leadership): One would expect a master teacher to have all the good habits of a senior teacher but would expect her to use her talents and special skills to enhance the performance of those that work with her and to the wider goals of the school. Senior and master teachers are best deployed in their area of expertise because this is where they can make their greatest contribution. The aim should be to use the expertise to add value to or leverage the quality of teaching of their less accomplished colleagues. Use them as mentors, as subject heads and to drive professional development in the school. Avoid assigning them to mundane organizational and administrative tasks or to tasks that are so onerous or time-consuming that their teaching suffers.

HoD and Deputy-Principals (Level 2 or 3 Leadership): People appointed to positions of Head of Department and Deputy-principal are on the first step of the "leadership and management" ladder and need to be competent at managing people and things. That does not mean that they should not be good teachers and one should expect HODs and Deputy-Principals to have at least the teaching competence of a senior teacher. Their interests, however, are more likely to be in the area of leadership and management. In assigning them tasks one needs to consider two things: their level of ability and experience in managing tasks and people; and the need to provide them with a range of different management and leadership experiences, so that, over time they learn about and take responsibility for a wide range school activities. Just because a person is good at managing the school's finances or pupil discipline or physical amenities, does not mean that they should be stuck with those responsibilities for the rest of the time that they are at the school. If we are to grow future school leaders, we need to make sure that HODs and Deputy-Principals gain wide experience in managing the different functions which constitute the operations of a school, particularly those who have ambitions to become Principals one day.

References

- J.C. Collins, and J.I. Porras, *Built to Last*, (London, Random House, 2000)
- J.C. Collins, *Good to Great*, (London, Random House, 2001)
- ELRC Collective Agreement No 5 of 2006 (from Website <http://www.elrc.co.za>)

Independent School in South Africa - continued from page 12

- The overall Grade 12 Mathematics participation rate is higher in independent schooling than public schooling but interestingly participation rates in the top fee category is lower than in the next lower fee category schools. The difference can be ascribed to the fact that significantly fewer African learners take mathematics and the top fee category schools than do in the next lower fee category.
- Total Grade 12 pass rates for independent schools in 2001 were 68,9% (compared to the 61,7% for public schools) but interestingly analysis of these results by fee sector showed once again that the best results were produced not by the top fee category schools which had a 65,2% pass rate but by the next lower fee category which produced an 85,9% pass rate. Surprisingly the top fee category schools produced the lowest overall pass rate of the four fee categories used in this survey. These were: R0 – R6 000; R6001 – R12 000; R12 001 – R18 000; R18 000 +

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- ¹ Du Toit J.L., *Independent Schooling in Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Quantitative Overview*. HSRC Publishers, Cape Town (2004)

Whole School Evaluation

Clinton Spencer, Principal of Mountain Road Primary School in the Western Cape provides personal insights into the process of Whole School Evaluation. Mountain Road Primary was the first school to be evaluated in the Western Cape. Clinton has also been party to the evaluation of other schools as a member of a WSE team.

Mountain Road Primary School was one of the first schools in the Western Cape to be evaluated using the Whole School Evaluation instrument developed by the DoE. Following this evaluation, principal Clinton Spencer was invited to train as an assessor for the Whole School Evaluation process and to form part of the team which evaluated other schools. Clinton therefore has good insight into the process from both perspectives and it was for this reason that *SM&L* approached him. We trust that the insight that he provides will prove to be useful to our readers.

Mountain Road is a community-based primary school in the working class inner-city suburb of Woodstock. More information on the school and principal Spencer is provided elsewhere on this page.

The Whole School Evaluation Process, conducted by a team from the Directorate: Quality Assurance of the WCED, took place in May 2006 and Clinton admits that he was surprised when he received the fax informing him that his school was to be assessed and became a little anxious as the date of the event loomed.

As was reported in our May issue, the first step in the WSE process, as far as a school is concerned, is the gathering together of the documents that the WSE team requires prior to its initial visit to the school. Schools are required to be advised of the planned on-site visit by the WSE monitoring team four weeks before the proposed date of the visit.

During the period between the date when the school is informed of the date of the intended visit and the scheduled pre-evaluation visit by the team leader of the WSE team, the principal and staff are expected to gather and complete all the required documentation. It is during this period that the principal and staff tend to become most anxious, particularly if they are not able to locate the required material.

Clinton admits that he did not have all the policies required and, in the intervening weeks, attempted to correct this by preparing new policies to fill these gaps. He cautions against this approach, however, as he notes that during the on-site visit by the WSE team, it soon becomes obvious whether the school operates in terms of its policies or whether the policies are a superficial and meaningless facade. Schools are therefore advised to review their policies on a regular (annual) basis to ensure that they comply with education legislation and directives, and governing body decisions. They must also



form the basis of the school's operational systems and procedures.

Immediately prior to the on-site visit the leader of the WSE team makes a presentation to the staff explaining what is required and how they plan to operate. The WSE team needs a venue such as an office or classroom from which it can operate and where team members can meet during the period that they are on site. The principal needs to delegate a senior member of staff to act as the WSE co-ordinator, with the responsibility of liaising with the leader of the WSE during the period when they are on site. It is unlikely that this person will be in a position to fulfil his/her normal school responsibilities during this period and arrangements need to be made to free him/her of these.

Clinton emphasises that schools need to understand that the purpose of the on-site visit is to gather evidence about the operational effectiveness of the school. This is done by:

- testing the extent to which the school meets its legislative obligations in terms of its policies and procedures
- testing the extent to which the school operates according to these external policies and its own internal policies and procedures
- verifying that the data provided by the school accurately reflects the current status of the school

In a nutshell, the WSE process is essentially a detailed audit of the school's operational procedures in order to measure their effectiveness.

Clinton Spencer

- 16 years in teaching
- 11 years at Mountain Road Primary School
- 7 years as principal
- Specialised field: Senior Primary – English and Geography
- Special interests: Helping pupils with special needs integrate into main-stream schooling.

Mountain Road Primary School

- 680 pupils
- 28 teachers including principal
- 21 classes. Grade R + 3 classes in each of Grades 1 – 6. 2 Grade 7 classes
- Budget R1,6 million
- Fees: R3 050 per year.
- Norms and Standards Poverty Quintile: 5
- Socio-economic: Mostly working class/artisans and self-employed.
- School employs a part-time counsellor/educational psychologist
- Art teacher has a qualification in Art therapy.

The school has a close working relationship with Alpha School; a special needs school for pupils with Autism. Alpha school is only a few blocks away from Mountain Road Primary.

Part of the partnership involves Mountain Road Primary hosting a weekly visit by some of the high-functioning pupils from Alpha School who attend Art and some Technology classes with the Mountain Road Grade 5 pupils. They also come to Grade R for story time. In exchange the specialist educational psychologists at Alpha School routinely assess Mountain Road Primary pupils where there is a specific need. They also provide professional support and guidance to staff at Mountain Road Primary on appropriate remedial interventions where this is required.

Besides their counselling support structures Mountain Road Primary also implements two interventions to support the literacy development of its pupils particularly those who enter school with poorly developed literacy skills, or who require additional support as a result of some barrier to learning.

The two programmes used are:

The *Read-Right Centre* which is an internally developed phonics base programme supporting literacy development, and

Help-2-Read which is run by an outside agency that provides both the trainers and the material.

Understandably, the staff is likely to become anxious as the time approaches for the on-site visit. Their concerns can, however, be allayed to an extent if the principal and senior management team remain calm and adopt a “business as usual” approach to the approaching event. Union representatives attended for some time during the on-site visit at Mountain Road Primary but were not evident at the schools Clinton visited as a WSE supervisor.

In the case of Mountain Road Primary, the process was time-consuming but relatively painless according to Spencer: time-consuming because of the time needed to negotiate times of class visits as well as the time needed for individual feedback following these visits. The verbal feedback to the full staff on the last day of the visit was also less daunting than he had expected - partly, no doubt, because the school was given a very favourable report. What he found constructive about the way in which this verbal report was presented was that the positives were highlighted while shortcomings were treated as “areas for development” rather than problem areas. The written report which must be handed to the school within 4 weeks includes an “overview” or executive summary which is presented to the staff by the team leader of the WSE team. The overview includes the scoring for different learning areas and for the 9 focus areas.

The timing of Mountain Road Primary's WSE meant that it was completed before the school had completed its own annual IQMS process. This resulted in some anomalies, with the IQMS process in some instances throwing up areas for development which were different from those identified by the WSE process. As a result Mountain Road Primary ended up with two slightly different School Improvement Plans (SIP) for the following year. The one based on the WSE process and in response to it, had to be submitted within two weeks to the school's receipt of the written report. To date, there has been no follow-up or response to this from the EMDC (District Office) or from the Directorate: Quality Assurance to the school's SIP but Spencer believes this is may be because their WSE report was mostly favourable.

Clinton has been a member of WSE teams on two occasions since Mountain Road Primary was evaluated and in both instances it was to evaluate schools which were functioning poorly. In one instance the school did not have a functioning governing body and as a result was not in a position to produce much of the documentation and data that is required - there was not even a budget. In both instances the staff was very guarded initially but became less so during the course of the on-site visit, and as they came to realise that the intention of evaluation team was to be constructive rather than destructive or punitive. A factor that helped in this process was the presence on the WSE team of supervisors who had the same demographic profile and mother tongue as the majority of the staff. And it was these members of the team who were the first to break the ice

and elicit a more open approach from the staff. It was also apparent that the absence of clear policies and policy guidelines at these schools left the teachers vulnerable and insecure about what was required of them in the day-to-day operations of the school.

Despite these problems, Clinton felt that the relationships between members of staff and the members of the WSE team improved steadily during the course of the on-site visit resulting, in relationship that was far more open, honest and constructive in the final days. As a result, school staff was far more willing to accept and act on suggestions and advice from WSE supervisors.

In a number of instances Clinton came across incidents where teachers were clearly not following the requirements of the curriculum in terms of their approaches to both teaching and assessment despite providing documentation that gave the impression that they were complying. In every instance their subterfuge was revealed when they were unable to provide evidence to support their contentions. Teachers therefore need to be made aware of the fact from the outset, that they will be required to provide evidence to support their claims. The same applies to projects and activities which the school may claim form part of its educational offering but which exist on paper only. An honest and open approach to the school's achievements and failings therefore seems to be best.

It was apparent at both of the schools he visited as part of the WSE team that members of staff were aware of some of the weaknesses and shortcomings of the school, and were relieved that these issues were raised in the oral report of the findings of the evaluation team. It seemed therefore that in these schools the relationships between the staff, the school management team and the principal made open and honest dialogue about operational problems difficult. Once again, this is something for principals to take note of and to put structures in place if they do not already exist, which enable staff to raise concerns without fear of victimisation or disparagement.

One of Clinton's observations provides a classic insight into the difference between effective and ineffective leadership. He noted that "struggling schools/ principals/ teachers tended to blame the Department or the District Office for their problems while their more successful colleagues considered the success of their school or the effective performance of their duties to be their responsibility". This is what good leadership and management are about and one hopes that this message is driven home during the WSE process. This of course does not mean that the Circuit Managers and District Offices are let off the hook. Far from it, **SM&L** feels very strongly about the need for district offices to be held accountable for the performance of the schools under their care. Sadly, this does not seem to be the case and **SM&L** has anecdotal evidence of instances where Circuit

Managers and District Offices are more of a liability than a help to schools.

Clinton responded positively when asked whether he thought the WSE process provided value and whether he felt it would result in a general improvement in the quality and effectiveness of schools. His only rider was the need for follow-up by Circuit Managers and the District Offices for those schools that are found to be underperforming. Linda Rose, Director: Quality Assurance for the Western Cape Education Department has given the assurance that this would indeed be the case and that her directorate saw the monitoring of this process as their responsibility. One hopes that this will be so, not only in the Western Cape but across the country, because WSE evaluation can make a difference if those responsible for its implementation have the will to do so.

SAHISA "Principals for Principles"

The Southern African Heads of Independent Schools Association (SAHISA) held its annual conference in Grahamstown from 12 – 16 August under the theme "Principals for Principles".

Following an address by a panel of academics - drawn mainly from Rhodes University – on the issue "Crisis in South African Education: 'What can be done?'" the conference formed breakaway discussion groups to interrogate the issues raised. What emerged from these discussions were a set of principals, grouped under four headings, which were tabled in plenary and endorsed for further action. These were:

- Education
- Discipline
- Democracy
- What is to be done?

Under the heading "What is to be done?" the following proposals are listed:

- A Bill of Responsibilities shall be fashioned and adopted for compliance;
- Education for the "public good" shall be nurtured and promoted in South Africa;
- Regular review of the curriculum is required;
- Constant guidance on the changing context of young people is needed for all adults;
- All principals should be professionally equipped and trained;
- Mentorship for initiate-educators should be developed;
- SAHISA shall contribute to the debate on, and the development of, education in Southern Africa;
- SAHISA shall consider developing as a "Think-tank" on issues around Education.

Time-frames for the WSE process as it affects schools

- Initiating the process: 4 weeks before proposed date of on-site visit the school is informed of intention to evaluate the school in terms of the WSE process. Principals are provided with a list of documents that are required to produce and the dates and deadlines for the various processes are agreed upon.

These are:

- Pre-evaluation visit: 2 – 3 days before the on-site evaluation. This is also the deadline for completion of the school self-evaluation questionnaire, the completion of the required forms which provide information on the school, as well as the handing over of the required policy documents

- On-site evaluation: 3 – 5 days. During the on-site evaluation the WSE supervisors will:

- observe teachers teaching in the classroom
- observe pupils outside of the classroom
- evaluate the school's physical amenities and the resources available to teacher
- Interview groups of parents, pupils, SGB representatives, teachers, non-teaching staff, the principal and/or WSE coordinator.

Questionnaires will also be used to gather information from these people.

- Oral report to the school: This must be presented to the staff and principal on the final day of the on-site visit. This must include recommendations on how the school might improve its practice

- WSE Written report: The WSE team leader must provide the school with a written report on their findings within four weeks of the on-site evaluation.

- School response: The school must respond to the findings of the WSE written report within two weeks of receiving it



WSE: Document and Policy Checklist

If schools are to meet their policy requirements in terms of the Whole School Evaluation process they need to make sure not only that they have copies of the following policies and documents but that these documents are used to guide and monitor their operational effectiveness.

- Finance policy
- Code of Conduct (Educators)
- Code of Conduct (Learners)
- Admission policy
- Absenteeism and late-coming policies
- Learning and Teaching Support Materials Policy
- Maintenance policy
- Subject/Learning area policies:
 - FET subjects
 - Senior Phase (8 Learning areas)
 - Intermediate phase (8 Learning Areas or Learning programmes)
 - Foundation phase (3 Learning programmes)
- Assessment policy
- Religion policy
- Language policy
- Extra-curricular policy
- Environmental policy
- HIV/Aids policy
- Safety and Security policy
- Learner transport policy
- Staff development and induction policy
- Vision and mission statements
- Job descriptions
- Timebooks (Educators)
- Timetables
- Substitution timetables
- Play ground duty roster
- Learner register
- School Improvement plan
- Budget
- Logbook
- Year plan which lists all activities for the year
- Registers for: admission, assets, attendance, leave, and accident reports
 - Minutes of meetings of the various management and governance structures of the school (School Governing Body, Senior Management Team, etc)

This list was compiled from the WCED Whole School Evaluation Resource file but it likely that the policy and document requirements of other provinces will be similar.

THRASS & THRASS Absa TalkTogether Project

THRASS stands for Teaching Handwriting, Reading And Spelling Skills. It is a whole-school “synthetic phonics” programme for teaching people of all ages and abilities, using pictures and key words. A key feature of THRASS is the way that it teaches learners to understand how the 44 phonemes (speech sounds) and 120 graphemes (spelling choices) form the basic building blocks of spoken English and written English respectively. Pupils are taught to understand that when spelling we change phonemes to graphemes and when reading graphemes are changed to phonemes. Integral to the programme is the THRASS Phoneme Machine, a computer software programme which uses moving human lips to pronounce the sounds of hundreds of English words.

Like most commercial programmes it offers a whole host of training, teaching and learning resources some of which is available for free. It was initially developed in the UK by Education Psychologist Alan Davies and has been approved for use in schools in the UK. It is now in use in a number of countries in Africa, Europe and the Caribbean and its use in South Africa is growing. Areas in which it is in use include the Kweni Basin, Mpumalanga and township schools in Orange Farm, Johannesburg. More recently Absa has agreed to sponsor the introduction of the programme at a number of schools under the banner of the “THRASS Absa TalkTogether Project”. A special feature of this programme will be its use of all 11 of our official languages with illustrative charts and children’s voices saying the days of the week, dates, the months of the year, numbers one to twenty, main colours and the names of the 26 lower-case letters and their associated capitals. Interestingly THRASS teaches the names of the letters not the phonic sounds they represent which was the more traditional way of teaching reading and spelling.

More information on the THRASS programmes can be obtained from the following websites:

<http://www.thrass.co.uk/>

<http://www.talktogether.co.za/>



Independent Schooling in South Africa

How significant is its role?

SM&L recently came across the HSRC publication “*Independent Schooling in Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Quantitative Overview*”¹ which provides some interesting insights into the Independent school sector.

In the abstract of this paper the author notes that “The current landscape of independent schooling appears to have a segmented profile characterised by two types of schools: smaller predominantly African low-to average fee schools, and larger, predominantly white high-fee schools. Black learners currently constitute more than 70% of all learners in independent schools. More than 50% of all independent schools have low to average fees. However, there is evidence that despite diversification and increased opportunities, historical patterns of inequity continue to prevail in the sector.”

Some of the key findings (note the paper was published in 2004) include:

- The number of formal (registered) independent schools in 2004 was 1 287 (there are approximately 27 000 public schools in this country)
- There has been a significant growth in the number of independent schools over the past decade with 61.1% registering after 1990.
- The vast majority of independent schools are co-educational, but there are a larger percentage of girls’ schools than boys’ schools. More girls than boys are registered at independent schools.
- White female educators constitute the majority of educators in this sector.

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