

The Role and Functioning of School Management Teams in Policy Formulation and Implementation at School Level

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ABSTRACT The notion of school based management was firmly entrenched in South Africa with the Schools Act of 1996. This act also provides substance to the functioning of school management and leadership structures such as School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and School Management Teams (SMTs). More specifically, in so far as this article is concerned, the focus is on the amended provision of section 16 of the Schools Act where it is stated that, amongst other functions, the School Management Team must accept responsibility for the implementation of its policies. We are reporting on a study in which the perceptions of School Management Team members in Delareyville with regard to the role and functioning of School Management Teams in policy formulation and implementation are explored. More specifically, the research question that was investigated can be asked as, what is the role of School Management Teams (SMTs) in formulating and implementing school policies?. The study was interpretive in orientation and utilised qualitative data gathering techniques. Findings suggested that there is a good understanding about the central and even critical place of policies in school management and about the fact that policies have an important role to play as directives or guidelines for the day-to-day operations of a school. It was further found that, in the South African situation where school based management is used widely, school policies are consistently seen as decision-making and problem solving instruments. It was also established that, although School Governing Bodies (SGBs) were officially designated in the new educational dispensation to play the most important role in school policy issues, in practise SMTs have become a more important policy making and implementation body.