

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.

INTRODUCTION

Since the advent of democracy in 1994, a wide range of educational legislation has been promulgated in South Africa. Amongst these the South African Schools Act, popularly known as SASA, is probably one of the most important examples (RSA 1996). The idea of school based management (SBM), self management or participative management was firmly entrenched with this act. The process and functioning of school management and leadership, including the roles and functioning of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and School Management Teams (SMTs) are in particular highlighted as key aspects in SBM. Provincial Education Departments have also given substance to the implementation of participative school management and gover-

nance by providing workshops and manuals such as the Induction Guide for School Management Teams (NWP 2007) to guide educational managers. In addition, various South African authors have debated the practical implications and implementation of this form of management in schools since 1994. Van der Mescht and Tyala (2008: 221) said that the formalisation of SMTs in South African schools has rested on the adoption of School Based Management SBMs. Moloi (2007: 463) also alluded to the same fact when she referred to the report of the Education Management Task Team (DoE 1996: 24) in which the view was expressed that self-management should be accompanied by internal devolution of power. This statement is in line with the DoE (1998: 11) who maintains "that it is the leaders, in the form of the principal, teacher, parent or governing body, who need to transform the previously top-down autocratic decision-making hierarchy to a more horizontal, participatory style of leadership". The rationale behind this statement is that the different stakeholders in the school, including the SMT and SGB, are supposed to play key roles in all school activities, including policy matters. More specifically, in

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terms of the amended provision of section 16 of SASA, it is stated that an SMT must be formed to assume responsibility for the day to day professional management of the school *and for the implementation of its policies*.

It is further important to note that schools are required by law to have written policies on a number of areas where it is desirable for such policies to be in place to guide the work of the school.

Policy Formulation and Implementation in Schools: A Brief Literature Review

Clarke (2007: 352) mentioned that the greatest challenge facing schools is to put policies and procedures in place to meet the statutory requirements of all the acts applying to schools, as well as those non-statutory policies and procedures which may be necessary for the operation of schools. In conducting this study we also kept in mind that since 1994 almost every aspect and level of education has been changed with the introduction of new policies. Most importantly, policies introduced at central government level are the foundation of provincial policies which in turn formed the basis of school policies (Van der Westhuizen 2002: 15).

Thus an attempt is made to find conceptual and practical coherence among the following inter-related aspects: policy formulation in schools, policy implementation in schools and the involvement of SMTs in policy matters. The coherence established serves as a conceptual framework for the study of SMT members' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of SMTs with regard to school policies.

Explanation of the Concept 'School Policy'

Various authors view the concept *policy* from different perspectives (Naidu et al. 2011: 85). This makes it difficult to provide a general accepted definition because it means different things to different people and reflects the fact that scholars approach the field of study from within different conceptual frameworks. Nevertheless some significant efforts have been made to describe the concept in comprehensible terms. In this study we aligned ourselves closely with Hanekom (1987: 7-8) who stressed that a policy can be seen as an action programme directed towards the accomplishment of some intended

or desired sets of goals. More specifically, in the field of education the Department of Education (DoE 2007: 91) stated that "a policy consists of plans of action intended to influence and determine decisions, actions and other matters". It is made up of rules and regulations that serve as guidelines or plans that are used to achieve objectives.

School policies can thus be defined as instruments that give direction to the day-to-day operations of a school by guiding the behaviours of educators, learners and parents whilst clarifying the school's expectations. School policies provide the basis for the structures and organisation of the school and are effective ways of communicating the core values that are inherent in a school's vision and mission statement. (DoE 2007: 80). School policies include macro policies such as SASA as well as any other policies that appear in the Induction Guide for School Management Teams (NWP 2007). Mncube (2008) mentioned that the following issues or aspects are usually covered by school policies:

- ♦ school budgets;
- ♦ developmental priorities;
- ♦ school uniforms;
- ♦ code of conduct for learners;
- ♦ staff and parents;
- ♦ broad goals on the educational quality;
- ♦ school-community relations; and
- ♦ the curriculum programme.

Policy Formulation in Schools

In the educational context, the most critical policies are conceptualised, developed, documented and presented by authoritative bodies such as the National Government or a Provincial legislature (Mestry and Bisschoff 2011: 17). This function of policy formulation is, however, not reserved for legislative bodies only. SGBs and SMTs as well as other stakeholders such as educators and even learners are involved in policy formulation at school level. Furthermore, the policy formulation process always involves certain key aspects such as problem relatedness, consultation and communication.

The focus in this paper is on problems that have an impact on school policies. Some of these problems pertain to the existing education system, such as the availability of resources and managerial inefficiencies whilst others address

educational and societal problems at the local or grass roots level (Fowler 2000: 12).

Consultation goes hand in hand with democratic principles such as openness and transparency. At school level all stakeholders who are involved in the policy formulation process should adhere to these principles (Moja and Hayward 1999: 6). It is important to consult widely and to determine how the needs of those involved can best be met in the policy formulation process. Stakeholders' participation is in fact one of the main forces in shaping school policies.

Communication of policies usually takes on the form of presentations through meetings, workshops and conferences. This aspect of the policy formulation process is very important because it can improve understanding and interpretation of policies that should lead to enhanced policy implementation (Van der Walt et al. 2001: 187). It must also be noted that the written form of communication is normally used when a new policy is disseminated to interested parties (Fowler 2000: 9-10). In addition, it is sometimes necessary to use word of mouth to relay policies to some role-players (Wolf et al. 1999: 68). Oral communication provides valuable opportunities for the discussion of the policy. An added advantage with this method is that discussions about the policy can be in the language of the local people (Wolf et al. 1999: 64).

Policy Implementation in Schools

Authoritative sources do not always distinguish between the terms policy formulation and policy implementation as different processes. Sallis (1964: 96) says for example that "in reality it is difficult to draw a clear distinction between policy-making and its administration". However in a school context existing policies can be seen as the basis for the structures and organisation of the school or as the instruments that give direction to the day-to-day operations, whereas the implementation of policies have to do with actions by individuals or groups that are directed at the achievement of objectives set forth in policy decisions (Cloete et al. 2008: 183). Khalid (2001: 88) also says in this regard that "implementation is a mechanism for the translation of policy into practice". In a school situation the focus is usually on how to increase commitment to the plan by those responsible

for its implementation (Reimers and McGinn 1997: 34). What is also particularly applicable in the area of school policies is that new policies have to be implemented in a planned way. The different interdependent stages of policy implementation that Hanekom (1987: 60) distinguish can be applied. The first stage is the development of particular implementation guidelines. This dimension includes priority determination and budgeting. The second stage is the translation of the original policy into practical measures that should involve issues such as human resource provision, work procedures and organizational arrangement. The third stage deals with leadership of an enabling nature, that will ensure that corrective action and review may come about during implementation.

With the literature review it was further established that even if the above mentioned stages of policy implementation are consistently applied, policies originally formulated are not always implemented in an unchanged way in practice. Levin (2001: 143) explains this non-implementation of policies by stating that policies convey intentions and that policy implementation can only be understood in terms of actors' intentions. Policy implementation is not just a concrete text to be implemented but a transformation of intentions in which content, practices and consequences are generated in a dynamic environment (Brooks 1998: 66). The implementation of policies is therefore not an automatic process but demands strong impetus and coordinated effort. Policy failure can sometimes be attributed to poor implementation or a lack of insight into policy processes and not only as policies that are not properly formulated.

What is particularly relevant in the educational sector is that school officials as well as members of SGBs and SMTs must have implementation details available in writing so that all the role players involved in the implementation process know what is required from them (DoE 2007: 124). The acceptability and the eventual successful implementation of school policies also depend on the SMTs and other school leaders who have to provide motivation and resources for the implementation of new policies.

It must further be kept in mind that those that are affected the most by policies such as educators and learners are not necessarily always excited about new policies. New policies will have to be "sold" to them. They must be

convinced of the value of new policies before they will accept such policies. Part and parcel of this process is consultation with the whole school community. In this regard the SMT in particular have an intimate understanding of the day to day running of the school, and know what is needed to guide the school in translating policy decisions into practice to achieve intended goals (De Clercq 2000: 9). What is needed of SMT members seem to be both their commitment as well as their skills to implement policies. Molale (2005: 3) expresses the same sentiments by stating that in South Africa too much attention has been focused on policy formulation without indicating how to translate such policy into measurable outcomes.

The Involvement of SMTs in Policy Matters

It has already been mentioned that apart from their legal responsibility, the SMTs are probably in the best position to guide schools in policy matters. The SMT is responsible for the professional management of the school which includes all activities that support teaching and learning (Heystek 2004: 308).

In so far as the North West Province in particular is concerned, the Induction Guide for School Management Teams serves as the main directive for SMTs. In the first part of this document an overview is provided of the role and functions of SMTs with references to different policy documents. The Policy Handbook for Educators (ELRC 2003) and the Employment of Educators Act (RSA 1998) are, for example, consistently indicated as sources of school policies. It is also stated that as professional management teams SMTs are given a critical role to play in policy matters and that they have to manage schools' business in accordance with the guidelines (policies) of the Department (NWP 2007: 11, 36-44).

The functioning and roles of SMTs with regard to policy matters can to a degree also be derived from the core duties of the principal as chief executive officer and senior member of the SMT. The principal is accountable for the effective functioning of the school, also in so far as policy matters are concerned. The principal's own position is however somewhat precarious with regard to policy matters. Heystek (2004: 308) explains that as a member of both the SMT and the SGB the principal "must try to balance the expectations of the government with the ex-

pectations from the parents, who expect that the principal will work to the advantage of the local community". As a member of the official policy-making body (SGB) the principal has the responsibility to "ensure that school policies and practices are sensitive to local circumstances and take account of national and local goals and needs" (NWP 2007: 74). As a member of the SMT the principal also have the responsibility to ensure that policies are applicable as well as practical for a particular school. In reality this means that policies must always be contextualized and formulated in accordance with local conditions and practice.

METHODOLOGY

Research Question and Objectives

The research question that can be asked in this study is: what is the role of School Management Teams in formulating and implementing school policies?

Since this problem is too encompassing to be solved on its own, it can be sub-divided into the following sub-problems or research objectives:

- ♦ What is the nature and characteristics of policies in education?
- ♦ What are the roles and responsibilities of SMTs with regard to the formulation of school policies?
- ♦ What are the roles and responsibilities of SMTs with regard to the implementation of school policies?

Research Orientation

A qualitative research design was selected. The reason for selecting this design is to describe and understand human attitudes in so called "natural settings" instead of artificial settings of experiments and surveys as applied by quantitative researchers (Nieuwenhuis 2008: 59). Above sentiments also indicate that qualitative research allows the researcher to become involved in the research process by applying research instruments such as participant observation and interviewing.

Research Participants

The sample size was limited to schools that function in the Delareyville Area Project Office.

Three SMT members per school were interviewed. In an effort to select information rich cases the Principal, Deputy Principal and a Head of Department were selected from each of the three schools.

Research Instruments

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were the main data-collection tools. These allowed for in-depth probing and extended responses (Nieuwenhuis 2008: 87). Questions focused on how respondents experienced and perceived the role of SMTs in policy making and implementation at school level. The researchers made every effort to encourage respondents to refer to lived experience and narrate examples of the perceptions they had shared.

Observation

To strengthen findings and provide the possibility of triangulation, observations were undertaken during discussions with the participants. Observation was regarded as a supportive or supplementary technique to collect data that may complement or set in perspective data obtained from interviews (Robson 1993: 238). The objective was not to check for accuracy of data, but to help gain a picture of how participants lived what they believed, hence to enrich rather than confirm findings.

CATEGORIES FOR ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Qualitative data from both the interviews and observations are presented, where appropriate.

Findings are presented in three categories identified in accordance with the research questions as categories one, two and three as follows:

Category One: discussion of findings on the nature and characteristics of policies in schools.

Category Two: discussion of findings on the roles and responsibilities of SMTs with regard to the formulation of school policies.

Category Three: Discussion of findings on the roles and responsibilities of SMTs in the implementation of school policies.

Themes for Discussion: Category One

Three distinguishable but interconnected themes were identified namely, *explaining the concept policy, describing the importance of policies and explaining the link between policies and the functioning of SMTs.*

The idea with the first theme was to establish the views of the participants on matters such as their understanding of the concept *policy* and how it is seen and applied in the field of education. Apart from defining the concept in a theoretical sense participants were also required to provide examples of policies that they know well or where they have been involved in the formulation thereof. It was also suggested to participants that they should consider whether there is a close link between policies on the one hand and rules and regulations on the other hand.

The second theme dealt with the *importance* of policies. Participants had to indicate whether policies are related and applicable to particular aspects of school life. It was also suggested that the necessity of having policies could be linked to problems or problem areas in the school. In this theme we also dealt with the importance of policies in the school context by asking the participants to give the purpose of policies *in a school* by explaining *how policies can be used*. The importance of and purposes of policies are closely linked. In this regard participants were required to give specific examples of macro policies that are of great importance for their schools.

The third theme dealt with the perceptions of the participants with regard to the link between policies and the functioning of SMTs. Participants were requested to indicate different ways in which policies can assist SMTs. The idea with this question was to establish if there were certain policies that support particular management functions.

Discussion of Findings: Category One

During the interviews participants explained that the concept *policy* form the basis of effective school management. One participant said that a *policy is a document that outlines how things should be done in a particular organisation*. As such policies can be seen as the rules and regulations of a school and should always be closely linked to accountability. It was

also mentioned that schools can only operate optimally if they are based on sound policies or as another participant said: *I think the concept policy is a sort of a guideline that basically assists us at school level, or in any organisation to be able to carry out our duties in a more consistent manner.* Another participant mentioned that policies' main purpose is to provide *direction in a school.* According to her this means *that the School Management Team can only run the school smoothly and effectively if managerial actions are based on policies.* She also provided an example of how decisions that are based on existing policies can help the SMT in functioning more effectively. In the example she referred to a conflict situation between a teacher and a learner and explained that the teacher functions in terms of the so called SACE regulations whereas the learner is entitled to be treated in accordance with the code of conduct for learners. So the whole conflict could actually be resolved in an amicable way if both parties *were dealt with in accordance with the policies that apply to their constituencies.* This example illustrates that policies are very important instruments in the school for taking decisions and solving day-to-day problems.

When asked to provide examples of policies that are of importance for their schools a number of school policies such as the admission policy, curriculum policy, safety and security policy, code of conduct for learners and language policy as well as macro policies such as the Constitution and the Schools Act, were mentioned.

Themes Designed for Discussion: Category Two

With regard to the analysis of the responses in this category, it must be stated clearly that the focus was on policy making or formulation *at school level.* The idea with the question on the role of provincial and central government for example, is thus not to emphasise their functions in policy making as such but rather to establish what influence these bodies have on policy formulation at school level. The following two themes have been designed for analysis purposes: *establishing the involvement of SMTs in policy formulation* and *determining the interest of other stakeholders in policy making.*

Firstly, the idea with theme one was to establish if SMTs indeed have a role to play in

school policy making. An attempt was made to determine the actual responsibility for policy making at school level and to establish the respective roles of the SGB and the SMT in this regard. There is a perception amongst educators that if the Schools Act is closely followed, the SGB and not the SMT is responsible for policy formulation. Obviously SMTs would then be responsible for policy implementation only. If, however, it was felt that SMTs should be involved in policy making it is important to make a case for their involvement and to establish in which policies or kind of policies they should be involved.

With regard to the second theme the researchers attempted to identify these "other" stakeholders and then tried to establish if it is important to involve them in school policy making. An attempt was also made to determine *how* these "other" stakeholders can be involved in policy making at school level.

Discussion of Findings: Category Two

The findings on the responses about these two themes are as follows:

All the participants indicated that SMTs are involved in policy making at their schools. One said that *SMTs are involved in policy making because they are the management of the school. On all the policies that are to be done or implemented they are the first to see to it that the school is having policies and those policies are followed and implemented to the letter.* He further explained that *at his school they have a large number of committees that are involved in policy matters and that SMT members are involved in all of these.* It is clear that SMTs play a crucial role in policy making and that the principal in particular act as custodian of policies on behalf of the SMT. It was further indicated that SMTs are in the first place involved in policies that deal with teaching and learning such as the curriculum policy.

In so far as SGBs as stakeholders and the relationship between SGBs and SMTs are concerned some participants explained the official position with regard to policy matters, namely, *that the SGB should attend to all governance matters like developing the vision and mission statements of the school, adopting the code of conduct for learners and managing the schools' finances* or as another participant said the SGB

is the governance of the school, their work is to see to it that all governance matters are attended to and that the SMT are the management of the school in terms of daily activities. Another participant however indicated that in their case the SGB members are not well informed with current legislation and major policies, therefore SMT members have to explain and give guidance to them on the functioning and role of policies. On this point the researcher observed that although participants understand the official role of SGBs with regard to policy making they are operating in situations where most of the SGB members are illiterate and have to be guided very closely to perform their duties efficiently. Another participant said that the SMT coordinate everything that has to do with learners, educators and parents, they organise activities, they support teaching and learning, administer teaching and learning, perform professional functions and decide on income of an activity, what to buy and ensure quality education.

In replying to the question on the involvement of so called 'other' stakeholders in policy formulation the participants obviously indicated SGBs as important but they also mentioned that the National and Provincial governments as well as the principal, educators, parents and even learners should be involved. The involvement of these stakeholders is of critical importance to the school and can be motivated on the basis of the so called idea of "ownership" which means that they will only be able to make meaningful contributions in school policy formulation if they believe in what the school stands for and what it is doing. There must be so called "buy in" from their side. It further goes without saying that, because of the importance of stakeholder contributions, they must be consulted in the process of policy formulation whenever applicable and practical. In this regard a participant said for example: *time must be set aside to consult with stakeholders prior to the formulation of policies to check whether such policies have flaws.*

Different participants further indicated meetings and circulars as ways in which stakeholders can be informed and consulted. As can be expected it was said that these consultations are usually focussed on specific matters that have an effect on a group of learners and/or a particular school activity. A specific stakeholder

or stakeholder group will normally take part in activities that affect them directly.

Themes Designed for Discussion: Category Three

In the third category two themes were identified namely, *understanding problems associated with the implementation of policies* and *communicating policies for effective implementation.*

With the design of the first theme it was kept in mind that policy details are usually provided in writing so that all stakeholders can know exactly what is required of them. The final implementation can however only be seen when policies operate smoothly or efficiently in practical situations. What is investigated in this theme is, therefore, to get an understanding of the problems that are associated with the final implementation of school policies.

In the second theme the communication of policies are investigated. More specifically the researcher looked at ways in which school policies are currently been communicated to schools and at school level. The role and responsibilities of SMTs in effective communication of school policies was also investigated.

Discussion of Findings: Category Three

During the interviews the problem about the effective implementation or rather ineffective implementation of policies was mentioned quite a few times. One participant said *good policies remain policies that are good on paper but if they do not enjoy effective practice, it means there is a problem.* Other participants also indicated that the main problems that they experienced in this regard was that changes were not easily accepted and that those who are playing a crucial role in the implementation did not always understand the policies themselves. The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) was specifically mentioned as a comprehensive and complicated change that took place in the field of education. One participant indicated *it is just normal for people to resist this kind of change. People who are facilitating this new curriculum, sometimes do not have clear information and even the workshops that are being conducted are done in a very short space of time.* Part of this problem is thus that the implications

and the possible advantages of big changes are not properly understood by different stakeholders and as another participant explained *...sometimes when you read a policy you may find that it speaks volumes but if it is not cascaded down to educators effectively ... it is not user friendly*. Another participant indicated that in this kind of situation that was just explained it was imperative that the *SMT take all stakeholders on board to explain the intentions, aims and objectives of the school policies to them*. In this sense “taking on board” means that SMTs have the responsibility to communicate policies in such a way that these policies are functioning effectively. Various ways or methods of communicating policies were also mentioned during the interviews. These include circulars, workshops and different kinds of meetings. A participant mentioned in this regard that *policies are usually being communicated through circulars but it is also the duty of the principal and members of the SMT to communicate those policies to educators through meetings... and the policies will also have to be cascaded to the parents, through parents meetings and the annual general meeting*. The researcher also observed that schools are very dependant on departmental circulars or official documents for correct information about policies. The Induction Guide for School Management Teams (NWP 2007) is a good example of such a document. This guide has been distributed to schools in the North West Province and most schools seem to use it without making too many adjustments for their own contexts.

CONCLUSION

During the study it became clear that there is a good understanding about the central and even critical place of policies in school management and also 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 SBM is used widely, school policies are consistently seen as decision making and problem solving instruments. The effective functioning of SMTs is thus closely related to the degree that they base their decisions on accepted policies.

From the literature in particular it was further established that policy formulation and imple-

mentation could be distinguished as different processes. Policy formulation is where an organisation’s foundational framework is conceptualised into distinguishable sections (policies). In this regard the greatest challenge facing schools is to put policies and procedures in place to meet the statutory requirements of all the acts applying to schools, as well as those non-statutory policies and procedures that may apply. It is obvious that SGBs and SMTs as well as other stakeholders such as educators and even learners are involved in policy formulation at school level. Policy implementation is the process whereby policies are turned into practical measures and achievable outcomes. During the policy implementation phase it is essential to show sensitivity for the local situation and to obtain the commitment of different role players. The involvement of these role players is of critical importance to the school and can only be achieved by obtaining their commitment.

In the study it came out clearly that although 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. This is firstly so because staff members such as the principal, deputy principal and head of department who form the nucleus of the SMT are on a daily basis involved in management matters, including policy issues. As senior staff members they are in the best position to judge on the applicability and urgency for the implementation of existing and new school policies. It is also up to them to ensure that decisions are based on the correct policies. Secondly, the importance of SMTs in policy matters has to do with the relative inexperience of the majority of SMT members in rural areas such as the Delareyville area. One of the participants indicated that *most of the SGB members are illiterate and have to be guided very closely to perform their duties efficiently*. This means in effect that SMTs are in a position where they have to accept responsibility for school policy making and the implementation of such policies

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations can be derived from the study

- ♦ School policies, including relevant national and provincial documents, must be regarded as having an important and central place in the management and organizational set-up of any school. Policies should be seen and implemented as “living documents” that have a direct influence on the effectiveness of learning and teaching in schools. Documents such as The South African Schools Act and different school’s code of conduct documents must for example be used as guiding instruments for day-to-day operations. If schools implement policies as discussed in this paragraph it is crucial that they understand the links between different school policies and aspects such as discipline, decision making and accountability.
- ♦ SMTs must play a leading role in policy formulation and implementation. They have to accept the main responsibility for the quality of policies and for effective implementation. Their responsibilities in this regard include regular communication through circulars and conducting meetings with other stakeholders. It can actually be said that the acceptability and the eventual successful SMTs implementation of school policies depend on the degree to which SMTs can provide motivation and resources for the implementation of new policies.
- ♦ It is imperative that not only principals but also other SMT members be capacitated on a continuous basis with school management skills. The Department of Education in particular has the main responsibility to train all SMT members so that they can keep abreast with the current thinking and practice with regard to school matters and specifically on the formulation and implementation of school policies. Principals should also play a leading role in developing other members of the SMT, specifically on the relevance and importance school policies. Obviously individual members of SMTs also have a responsibility towards self improvement in this area, where they have been selected to represent the community.
- ♦ It is important that *ownership of policies* be regarded as a crucial element in school policy formulation and implementation.

This means that the wider community, including learners, parents, departmental officials and other stakeholders must be involved in policy matters in such a way that they feel responsible and accountable for school policies. In order to achieve this intention all policies should be dealt with in a transparent way with the emphasis on effective communication and continuous consultation.

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