

Strategies in Managing Township Schools in South Africa: Management through Partnerships

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KEYWORDS Accountability. Collaboration. Empowerment. Trust. Communication. Motivation

ABSTRACT Relationships in schools determine the effectiveness of teaching and learning to a great degree. Managing township schools is about trust, acting in good faith, forming partnerships, and communicating. It involves solving problems, decision making, developing cooperative efforts among all stakeholders. It also deals with the sharing of responsibilities, involvement, supporting, obligations, collaboration, parenting, motivation, empowerment, volunteering, accountability, and being part of the team. If the relationships by learners and educators are not good, the following symptoms may appear between learners and educators, and between the school principal and the SGBs in schools, namely: Poor school attendance by learners; educators who do not have the desire to teach; tensions between various stakeholders of the school community; weak leadership- management and governance; a general feeling of hopelessness; demotivation; low morale, and disrupted authority.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is based on literature review. In managing township schools the state, the parents, the educator, the learner, the community, the business sector, the school principal and the School Governing Body are important. The focus in managing township schools should be on how are the relationships between the stakeholders. An effective relationship implies trust and acting in good faith. It is only in relation to group membership that we understand the community around us. Relationships are key to understanding both material and human interactions. We cannot understand facts in isolation but only in relation to ourselves and in our relationship with other people. Relationships with others affect our own sense of self. Education that is democratic offers all legitimate stakeholders opportunities to participate and make decisions in the school.

Democratic participation in decision making cannot be accomplished simply by issuing an invitation and holding an open meeting. It often requires teaching people how to participate, making them feel comfortable, and empowering them to feel competent and capable. Effective learning and teaching takes on meaning when embedded in the reality of caring human relationships. Effective leaders strive to perform at their peak levels amidst circumstances of complexity while drawing from areas of strength and weakness (Quirk and Fandt 2000: 61).

Schools that strive for social justice must be concerned with the quality of relationships among all those who constitute 'the school' and the nature of the school circumstances in which educators teach and learners learn. Democratisation of our schools needs a more collaborative relationship approach in which all stakeholders are engaged in a tradition of working together in open and collaborative ways. Effective managers must do more to ensure that the organization runs smoothly (Westwood 2001: 30).

The key features of effective relationships provide a framework that will help all stakeholders to clearly understand how they either inhibit or encourage strong relationships in schools. Relationships are the vehicles through which people accomplish the purposes for which they have developed their skills. Collaborations are purposeful institutional relationships.

Institutional relationships are particularly complicated because they work or do not work because they operate through the personalities and egos of the organisation's leaders and they impact on each organisation's individual culture, programmes, identity and relationships (Rubin 1998: 16).

In a relationship there is an on-going communication between all the stakeholders. A partnership is defined as an association between groups or individuals in some activity in which the expenses, profits and losses are proportionately shared (Matlin 2001: 11). Relationships are partnerships that depend on mutual trust.

A partnership is a strategic alliance where relationships are forged for purposes that may have a degree of mutual interest as well as a strong component of self-interest. Not all relationships are strategic alliances, for example, educator/learner. Partnerships often go through difficult transitions. In some instances these actually lead to the demise of the partnership. A partnership can benefit all stakeholders if there is a clear clarification of roles and responsibilities (Bergquist et al. 1995: 119-122).

In school governance, community members are expected to act collectively in the interest of the community. One of the collective forms of participation can be found in the work of SGBs. A School Governing Body comprises representatives of different stakeholders (parents, educators, learners, non-teaching staff and community members). The rationale behind parental participation in SGBs is concerned with efficiency and effectiveness of schools, as well as efficient management and democratic decision-making (Suzuki 2002: 247-248).

According to Section 16 of the South African Schools Act 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996), school principals and the Head of Department are responsible for the professional management of the school, while governance is vested in governing bodies of the schools. Parent and learner participation may be limited to governance only. Changes in the new system of governance in schools have, unfortunately, had to be implemented by school principals who are unprepared for the new role.

Principals, educators, learners and parents may also experience difficulty in adapting to their new roles and new channels of communication which result in role ambiguity (Steyn 2002: 255).

School-based management may also lead to a power struggle since school principals are now required to work with educators, learners, parents and others who may hold different values. The next sub-paragraphs deal with the relationships between the educator and the learner, the educator and the parent, and the educator and the community only.

The fundamental purpose of schools is to organise and develop the learning process. Educators enter into the equation because they are the school's most important resource, and they also have the most direct impact on learners. No matter how well organised the school is, the vital factor is whether the child learns or not

is the educator (Bradley 1991:64). When a learner says something, writes something or does something, it is the educator who observes, thinks and reacts in a way which either helps the learner to consolidate knowledge, or extends thinking thus developing enthusiasm. For the community, it is the reason why they send their children to schools rather than sit them in front of television screens. It is the interaction with educators which matters (Bradley 1991: 64).

Effective teaching is essentially concerned with how best to bring about the desired learning by some educational activity. It focuses on activities in the classroom, in particular on the interaction between the educator and the learner (Kyriacou 1989: 9).

Parental involvement in the school is very important. It is seen as a mechanism for simultaneously raising education standards, developing new partnerships between schools and parents in the local community and promoting social inclusion (Brain and Reid 2003: 291). Parents are invited to take up a variety of roles as co-educators of their children, governance of schools, take responsibility for their children's attendance, behaviour and to provide practical help to schools. In return, schools are expected to support the involvement of parents through providing the necessary support and opportunities for parents to become involved in schools, and act as a resource in promoting the wider inclusion of families and the local community.

Parental involvement is about linking the school and the community and fostering good relationships. It provides schools with a way of contacting hard to reach parents. It extends the school's capacity to develop its services for parents in the community, as well as extending the school's capacity to provide learner and family support. Parental involvement may be one way of helping to improve attendance and behavioural change, as well as learner and school performance. Schools also need funds for their daily operations.

Parents also play a vital role in this aspect. Government alone cannot fulfil all our educational needs, so the parental component is very important in paying fees so that the schools can function. When the first democratically elected government in South Africa took power in 1994 there was a backlog left by the apartheid government, so there was a need to bring equity in all spheres. Parents are an important element in

addressing the imbalance of the past by assisting the government to bring about equity in schools.

KEY AREAS WHERE PARENTS CAN PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE

- ♦ Parents can play a role in fund-raising to supplement the funds provided by government;
- ♦ In helping the school by supporting learner attendance;
- ♦ In developing resources for the school, for example, learning support material;
- ♦ In publicising the school and developing the school image in the community;
- ♦ In liaison with agencies that can help the school, such as getting sponsors for the school and other related functions that can support teaching and learning.

Parental support helps to offer a sense of security and comfort to learners. When parents show an interest in their child's education by being actively involved, learners are likely to seek challenging tasks, persist through academic challenges, and experience satisfaction in their school work. In the context of a permissive parenting style and a lack of parental involvement, learners can easily turn to their peers for advice of which it can be misleading. The lack of parental control and excessive peer influence may lead to improper social attitudes and behaviours, as well as to a host of negative outcomes (McNeal and Ralph 2001: 171).

Parents probably know more about their children than does any professional in the school system (McNeal and Ralph 2001: 171). A healthier learning environment exists for all stakeholders when parents are active partners in the teaching process. Raising parents' awareness of school issues and teaching objectives encourages cooperation with educators. School principals have an important role in promoting parental involvement, making parents aware of conditions in which educators work, and encouraging respect for educators. Parents who are non-responsive or combative increase the stress experienced in the classroom (McNeal and Ralph 2001: 171).

School principals can provide relief by interceding and assisting educators in resolving persistent issues with parents. Support from the school principal is instrumental in reducing role

conflict and role ambiguity with the SGBs. Many schools have to establish vehicles to communicate with parents. If parents and schools can communicate effectively, greater trust and understanding can be established. Parents can contribute to the schools by spreading the word to other parents regarding efforts the school is making to meet the needs of their children, as well as resources that are available to learners and their families.

Parental involvement in schools is complex and multifaceted. According to Epstein (West 1991: 149), parental involvement can be categorized into five types, namely:

- ♦ Basic obligations of parents, such as providing for their children's health and safety and creating a home environment that support learning;
- ♦ Basic obligations of schools, such as communicating with parents about school programmes and their children's progress; parental involvement at the school site, for example, by attending sports events or by working as volunteers; parental involvement in learning activities at home, and parental involvement in school governance and advocacy. Parents cannot be easily involved by flooding them with information. Conducting participatory projects that may include the entire family and finding out why some parents are not involved may be one way of involving parents in the education of their children. Without parental involvement, a school's mission may not be possible. The chance of conflict can be minimized when parents approach the tasks assigned to their children in a consistently supportive manner. Fund raising is one obvious function that parents can be of help to the school in order to benefit the learners.
- ♦ Parental involvement is not the only key to success in school. The community is also essential to them.
- ♦ Parental involvement means what parents do naturally in the home to socialize their children, and what schools can do to help parents to be more effective in the home environment. Members from the community represent an important part of the school. The development of linkages between the community and the schools assists learners through the exchange of information and the provision of support services not available within the school.

- ♦ The South African community makes every effort to prepare their youth, such as sheltering the youth from the ills that may befall them. Taking learners into the community and bringing community representatives into the schools can provide learners with excellent learning opportunities. The relevance between school and the working world can be established or reinforced (West 1991: 211).

Strategies that the community can use to make a contribution to the school include the following:

- ♦ Community representatives can volunteer to serve on advisory committees for specific programmes in the school. Information about valuable community resources can be shared with other members of the school.
- ♦ Volunteer tutorial services can also be provided by the community (West 1991: 211-212).

Schools can experience problems due to some of the following reasons:

- ♦ Some people never accept their roles and responsibilities in relation to the school's goals, and they do not want things to change, while others are actively searching for new methods; some people are intimidated by the team leader(s) and therefore pretend to know things that they should be asking questions about; and tension or friction among team members makes it difficult for them to work together (West 1991: 213).

This paper argues that the key features of effective relationships are very important in managing township schools.

Collaboration

Collaboration, according to Epstein (2001) involves identifying and integrating appropriate resources and services from the community to support the family, the learner, and the learning process. The school principal can connect parents with community resources to support their child's learning in many ways, for example, provide parents with information concerning their child's activities in school and in the community; encourage participation and provide for opportunities outside of the school; help parents connect with the resources of local institutions such as the universities; distribute the announcements of activities in and around the

school; arranging for families to attend school activities; provide resources such as reference books, web sites or computer software; advise parents on issues pertaining to their child; and to guide parents.

Collaboration also means that the school provides services to the community, such as community services and other community projects. Developing meaningful opportunities for the community to learn about what is being taught at school, as well as meaningful opportunities for learners to demonstrate that learning to the community. Epstein's framework provides a powerful tool to help school principals understand parental involvement and to design activities that are meaningful and comprehensive. With this tool, school principals can analyse and refine their efforts to build strong partnerships with parents and communities on behalf of their learners (Smar 2002:48). Collaboration is more than communication and is needed to effectively ensure policy formation and implementation is carried out to everyone's satisfaction and best interest.

Why is Collaboration Important?

The problems and needs confronting our communities are far too complex for unilateral action and independent actors, no matter how well intentioned. It's become a cliché to note that it takes a whole village to raise a child. In a very real sense, collaboration is democracy's mandate. The government cannot solve our problems by itself. Some school principals never learned how to build, sustain, and direct relationships with the people and organizations with whom they must collaborate.

The people of South Africa are increasingly pushed toward collaboration by the growing belief that meeting educational, families and community needs requires a comprehensive and integrated approach that can be accomplished only through cooperative relationships with others. Leaders often fail to achieve their original visions because they fail to recognise the importance of collaboration, due to the fact that collaboration is more time consuming and challenging than is acting on one's own. Collaboration requires skills never taught before and in one way or the other may be in conflict with the traditional structures of doing things strictly according to the manager's way only (Rubin 1998:12-14).

A culture of collaboration between all the stakeholders will strengthen a sense of common purpose and enable them to interact assertively with external pressures for change-adopting changes that they value, selectively incorporating aspects of them that fit their agreed upon vision and goals, and rejecting those changes that are seen as educationally unsound or irrelevant. All stakeholders should be involved in authority and establishing the mission and purposes of the school.

In the researcher's view schools with effective relationships where collaboration is practiced there is more likely to be a clear vision and unity of purpose that is shared by all stakeholders and clearly communicated through the school aims and mission statement. There may be a clearer demarcation of roles with the SGB strictly playing a supportive role and the school principal responsible for the day-to-day management of the school. A collaborative ethos is promoted through joint decision making, effective channels of communication and developing a sense of partnership and encouraging the active participation of SGBs.

Decision- making

Involving parents in meaningful decisions, as well as encouraging parental leadership and representation on important issues, is the key in decision making that is in line with the South African Schools Act, No. 84 of 1996. For the school principal this means that he or she must encourage and help parents find ways for their voices to be heard in decision making.

Parental involvement in decision-making may promote their active participation in SGBs. Involving parents can also occur indirectly. For example, the school principal could discuss ideas with parents before he or she can make a decision that affects learners. The school principal can also seek feedback from parents about their child's progress and activities. Involving parents in decision making is not without challenge to the school principals. Effective schools tend to have meaningful partnerships with parents. To build a strong partnership, the school principal needs to include a broad representation of parents in decision making processes (Smar 2002: 48). To be informed, thoughtful participants, parents need appropriate training, information and support. Furthermore, the school

principal needs to establish and maintain the focus of parents' participation on what is in the best interest of the school and its learners.

Trust

Parents can make an enormous contribution in support of a school if properly guided. Schools function best when parents and other members of the community feel a sense of belonging and ownership of the school and its activities (Clarke 2012: 174). Getting parents involved in schools means building trust. Parents need to be convinced that schools care about their child and will provide individual attention to meet their child's needs (Bafumo 2003: 12).

Welcoming parents to the school and communicating with them, especially good news about their child's efforts can help optimise parent cooperation and trusting in the school. A relationship is a partnership that depends on mutual trust.

According to section 16 (1-2) of SASA, No.84 of 1996, the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body. A governing body stands in a position of trust towards the school. The school principal and the SGB is their responsibility to establish the culture and ethics that ensure the relationships are conducive to effective communication and decision making. In an effective relationship no one should be powerless and to be mistrusted. Trust to me means if one acts in good faith towards me or towards the school that is what I regard as trust. In a trusting environment decision making can be carried out by one person after consultation with other stakeholders.

To build trust among stakeholders in a school there is a need to:

Cultivate a cooperative rather than a competitive or dominating mind; make involvement with parents understanding and concerned; be open about the school's objectives; and subtly demonstrate expertise without being oppressive or signalling superiority. Building trust cannot be rushed. It is an interactive process, involving the sharing of information, ideas, and feelings. The operative word in trust is reciprocity. It is important to share rather than concealing feelings. Thoughts, however, should be expressed in ways that parents can understand and appreciate. There are some strategies that can be used in a relationship that can initiate

and enhance trust building with parents, namely:

Accepting parents as they are and not trying to introduce fundamental changes. In conflict situations the less you try to change broad-based philosophical beliefs of people, the greater the chances of influencing them. When trust is high, parents may demonstrate their readiness to change by asking for assistance. Listen carefully and with empathy for the cognitive and emotional content of the parents' message. The principal should give complete, undivided, uninterrupted attention, and communicate with parents.

Help parents to feel comfortable and share information and resources with them when legally permissible. Providing help and requesting legitimate assistance from parents establishes natural trust-building opportunities. Sharing information, resources, and ideas is a powerful process in building trust. On the other hand, if you evade requests for information or obscuring pertinent facts immediately creates the impression that you are hiding something. This may heighten distrust and defensiveness. In managing township schools principals need to focus on the parents' hopes, aspirations, concerns, and needs. Unilaterally setting agendas for parents, rather than focusing on their concerns, only intensifies distrust and resistance. It is natural to like someone who is interested in you and your concerns. Attending to parents' concerns communicates caring.

Parents are knowledgeable about many aspects of their child's development. To gain trust from parents, allow their expertise to shine. If parents have a legitimate need to see you as the principal or any member of the school management of governance, do everything reasonable to meet them as soon as possible even if it creates a slight inconvenience (West 1991: 165-166).

Communication

Communication can either be verbal or non-verbal (other forms of communication, for example, written) depending on the nature of the relationship. It is important because the relationship problems between the principal and the SGB can be minimised if they are communicated. When communicating with parents, the school principal and the SGB must choose communication methods that are easy to use and accessi-

ble to everyone. For example, some families may not have access to e-mail or other forms of computer technology for communication. The school principal must use multiple methods of communication in order to reach a wider parent community. For example, materials may need to be bilingual. Asking parents what is the best way to communicate with them may be helpful.

Communicating with parents builds a foundation to support learner progress, deal effectively with problems, and avoid problems before they start (Smar 2002: 48). For the relationship to succeed there must be an identification of feelings, who owns a problem in that particular relationship, and the mood in which the people involved are in. In a relationship where communication is good, everyone is involved and anything is open to discussion. There is always support and cooperation between all the stakeholders involved. Sometimes it is good for the people involved to ignore the undesirable behaviour so that the relationship can succeed. This is also supported by Bafumo (2003:9), who claims that "in communicating with parents, invite the SGBs beforehand for a briefing, involve parents whenever possible in planning school's activities and remind learners when doing announcements".

Parents might be unsure of the kind of contribution they can make to their child's education. They may avoid communicating with the school due to many reasons such as language and cultural differences as we are now a democratic country where everyone has a freedom of choosing a school of his or her choice. In trying to improve communication, the school principal could include computer training, and the development of communication skills. The school principal can take the initiative in supporting parental involvement by lightening (make easy) the duties of educators by making communication with parents a priority, so that educator-learner relationships can be enhanced. The school principal can communicate with parents using newsletters, telephone conversations, parent-educator evenings, workshops and many other ways of communication. School principals must communicate with parents on the specific roles and responsibilities parents will have in and outside the school.

Communication on these expectations has to be two-way, because many times school principals appear to dictate to parents what they

(principals) expect, which leaves parents with little influence on school matters (Plevyak 2003: 32). Parents may be unable to attend school events because of work obligations. Parents themselves can motivate each other through their own communication and support networks. The partnership should be between all the stakeholders in the school.

Accountability

To be accountable means to be able to justify decisions and actions taken in a relationship environment. School principals are formally accountable to the Education Department and to the parent community while the SGBs have a measure of accountability to the parents, educators, learners and the community. According to section 20 (1) (a-e) of SASA, No.84 of 1996, the governing body of a public school must-

- ♦ Promote the best interest of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school;
- ♦ Adopt a constitution;
- ♦ Develop the mission statement of the school;
- ♦ Adopt a code of conduct for learners at the school; and
- ♦ Support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions.

Accountability must be associated with a feeling of responsibility. It can be either moral (being answerable to all stakeholders) (parents, educators, state, community, SGB, school principal), professional (being responsible to oneself and colleagues), and contractual (being accountable to the employer) (Goddard and Leask 1992: 156). Each form of accountability on its own is inadequate in a relationship in schools. There is no lay person who has the specialist knowledge to know whether something has been properly done until it goes wrong.

In schools this is even more crucial as outcomes take several years to emerge. In effective relationships there is continuous accountability which aims to maintain the relationship at its desired level.

Volunteering

Parental help is important in teaching and learning activities of the school. The school

principal is expected to recruit a variety of volunteers and let all families know that their efforts are welcome. The community is the key for the success of any relationship between the school principal and the SGBs. Sometimes, volunteers may need training and it may take time to organise activities involving them. Parents can help with fundraising and other governance functions.

According to section 36 of SASA, Act. No.84 of 1996, a governing body of a public school must take all reasonable measures within its means to supplement the resources supplied by the State in order to improve the quality of education provided by the school to all learners at the school. School principals must be aware that some parents have skills, talents, or jobs that could support teaching and learning activities within schools (Smar 2002: 48). In terms of section 20 (1) (h) of SASA, Act. No.84 of 1996, the SGB must encourage parents, learners, educators and other staff at the school to render voluntary services to the school.

Primary Education

It refers to providing parents with information and ideas to help them support their child's work at home, as well as in other activities that support teaching and learning at school level (Smar 2002:48). The school principal can guide parents how to be involved in their child's education. According to Section 3 (1) of SASA, Act. No. 84 of 1996, and any applicable Provincial law, every parent must cause every learner for whom he or she is responsible to attend a school from the first school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of seven years until the last school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of fifteen years or the ninth grade, whichever occurs first.

Empowerment

To empower people in a relationship is when there is encouragement, motivation, supporting, and inspiring of people to think for themselves and to make sound decisions (Moloi 2002:70-71). When all stakeholders are given the opportunity to make decisions in a school, they will become more responsible for their actions. In all organisations there are rules of power that operate to the inclusion of some and the exclusion of others.

According to section 19 (1) (a-b) of SASA, Act. No.84 of 1996, out of funds appropriated for the enhancement of capacity of governing bodies, the Head of Department must establish a programme to:

- ♦ Provide introductory training for newly elected governing bodies to enable them to be able to plan and organize work, perform their functions; and
- ♦ Provide continuing training to governing bodies to promote the effective performance of their functions or to enable them to assume additional functions.
- ♦ The Head of Department must ensure that principals and other officers of the Education Department render all necessary assistance to governing bodies in the performance of their functions in terms of this Act. It is those who have little or no power who are most in need of empowerment. It is necessary to provide those stakeholders with less information more empowerment so that they can participate fully in the schools' activities.

Motivation

Motivation is those conditions responsible for variations in the intensity, quality and direction of on-going behaviour in a relationship. It is a concept that is intended to explain why we do what we do. Motivation is something that can be neither directly observed nor precisely measured (Ginsberg and Wlodkowski 2000: 1). Motivation can be either intrinsic (natural for people to be curious, active, and to initiate thought and behaviour) or extrinsic (external influences such as reward motivate). Principals should motivate all stakeholders involved in the school.

Parenting

Parenting, in this context, means helping families establish a home environment that supports teaching and learning (Smar 2002: 48). To benefit from parenting, the school principal should get information to all parents, not just those who might attend meetings. The school principal is expected to be in a position to balance the individual and community rights by forging a sound and healthy relationships in schools. For the school to have sound human relationships, the

school principal should be able to work and lead others; to analyse problems and make decisions; to communicate orally and in writing; to perceive the needs and concerns of others; and to perform under pressure.

CONCLUSION

Commitment to any endeavour is strengthened greatly when others have the freedom to express their own vision of what should be and are encouraged to contribute to teaching and learning activities. A school principal would be considered a leader if he or she identifies problems in relationships and be able to conceptualise new avenues for change. Transformational leadership inspires others toward collaboration and interdependence as they work toward a purpose to which they are all deeply committed.

The school principal cannot neglect leadership activities while performing as a manager. The management part of the school principal's job consists of keeping the school running in an efficient manner. Leadership, on the other hand, is more creative. Leadership can be defined as the force that motivates people to do things they would not ordinarily do. In the case of the school principal, the leadership he or she provides motivates educators to improve the overall teaching and learning environment of the school. To be effective, the school principal must perform well in both functions. Whether the school principal does the work or delegates tasks to other stakeholders, he or she is still accountable.

The school principal is responsible for the division of responsibilities, communication, collaboration and all other related activities that are necessary for effective teaching and learning. The SGBs and the principalship structures must reflect the cultures and aspirations of the communities they serve, and must not be in the best interest of individuals within these structures. Progress needs to legitimise these structures in such a way that everyone can appreciate democracy and everyone to carry out his or her functions to serve the interest of the school as a whole. Decentralisation of power from the central government in the form of SGBs to schools requires all stakeholders to change the way they view their roles. Such a change is likely to be resisted, since many who might be affected by decentralisation and relationship changes might also struggle to maintain their positions and

unwilling to surrender their authority and influence easily. The success of decentralisation and relationship changes in schools depend on the mechanisms that are used to bring about the desired relationship.

Problems that must be expected when there is delegation of authority to SGBs and school principals could be educators, parents, learners, non-educators, and community members who might prefer not to participate in school governance decisions, school principals who might be unwilling to share their power with SGBs.

Effective schools have sound and healthy relationships. In schools where there is effective teaching and learning the following are the identifying factors:

- ♦ Support of parents is solicited; time is made available for learners to learn; all stakeholders have a clear sense of the school's mission and direction; educators believe that all learners can master the basic skills, and they (educators) are capable of providing the necessary instructions to accomplish the school's objectives; someone in the school, usually the school principal, interprets the school's mission to learners and staff and serves to facilitate communication between all stakeholders involved. Learners' progress is continually monitored.
- ♦ In managing township schools, the school principal must exert leadership by supporting and encouraging the staff and by serving as an advocate or agent of change. The school principal will be able to accomplish this by being accessible and responsive to all stakeholders. Thus, the school principal is a central figure in bringing about improvements in a school.

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