

MOTIVATION TO LEAD,  
MANAGE OR GOVERN SCHOOLS  
FOR RESULTS – WHICH RESULTS?

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*Motivation to lead, manage or govern schools for results – which results?*

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## Note

*In this paper, the concepts of leader, manager and governor or any reference to other people refer to the male and female representative and I will therefore use him or her in a non-gender context in the text without meaning specifically a man or a woman.*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Prof Jan Heystek started his professional career as a teacher in Pretoria in 1985. During the following years he continued with his studies, completing honours, master's and doctoral degrees while progressing from teacher to deputy principal.

He started his academic career as a senior lecturer at the University of Pretoria in 1995. During his term at the university he played a leading role in restructuring the honours degree, as well as the Advanced Certificate in Education Management delivered to students via a mixed-mode delivery model. These programmes were developed with the aim of “taking the university to the students”; this provided thousands of students in rural areas the opportunity to achieve a university qualification, which not only benefitted them as teachers, but also played an important part in the development of rural communities.

In August 2006 Prof Heystek was appointed as associate professor in the Department of Education Policy Studies at Stellenbosch University, and in July 2011 he was appointed Professor in Educational Leadership and Management in the same Department. In November 2010 he received a C2 academic rating.

Prof Heystek is the co-author of two textbooks, *Human resource management in education* (2005) and *People leadership in education* (2008), as well as the author of six chapters published in different international books.

Since 1995, four doctoral and 19 master's degree students have completed their research under his leadership.

Prof Heystek is the author or co-author of 26 articles published in nationally and internationally refereed and accredited journals, and has presented numerous papers at international and national conferences covering governance and leadership in the diverse and changing South African educational landscape.



# MOTIVATION TO LEAD, MANAGE OR GOVERN SCHOOLS FOR RESULTS – WHICH RESULTS?

## INTRODUCTION

In terms of leading, managing or governing, we may conceptualise or label the activity or post of the principal as the most senior post in a school. We may label the activity in the post as leading or managing or governing; or any combination of these. Although each of the concepts has a specific meaning, as well as connotations and interpretations, and much has been written about them, it does not really matter what the label is for that position and activity – specifically when the most important demand on the principal is to ensure that the required academic results are produced in the school. The emphasis therefore is on the outcome, and less on the process and agency to achieve the results. It is what, rather than the how and the why, that receives the most attention. In this paper, the emphasis will rather be on how to achieve it and why we may not be successful to achieve sustainable improvement over a longer period.

Principals work under diverse conditions – from the best facilities in the world, with computers and technology to support and assist the principal, to a shack or a container, with a car boot as the “office”. But we expect all of them to lead their schools to perform equally well, to prepare learners for a global technological world.

Principals must lead, manage and even govern; they must be leaders, managers and governors to achieve the externally determined academic results. And if they do not lead, manage or govern their schools to perform well enough, there is the possibility that the principal could be placed under administration (Department of Education 2007, Section 58B). But the schools are not only the buildings, infrastructure and physical facilities. Schools are organisations and organisations are made up of people; and people are unique and complex individuals. In the context of this paper, these people are together in a school, supposedly as a team to achieve certain goals and outcomes.

The functioning and management of the education system, and therefore also the work of principals, are

influenced by global discourses, principles and values. One of the current dominating discourses is the neo-liberal discourse, with the associated managerialistic discourse. The drive behind this discourse is financially driven values that have evolved into managerial and performance-driven criteria. We live in a global world driven by economic factors, and education cannot escape these discourses. Schools are part and parcel of the world and from the world; they cannot claim to be outside all the financial, political and humanitarian influences. In a universe proclaimed to be dominated by democratic values, school principals are accountable to the government, and therefore also to the citizens of the country and to the citizens of the world, for that matter, in terms of how they spend the funds allocated to them. This accountability is manifested in the assessment of principals through the academic (examination and test) results of learners as the most important (and maybe the only) criterion for their accountability.

According to the seminal work of Burns (1978:530), this drive to use examination or test results is normal and therefore it is understandable that the government uses the results to achieve political motives. From the contemporary influence of neo-liberal discourse, these political motives emerge in terms of organisational (the government, the education department or the school) success. If the organisation is not performing, somebody must be held accountable. Governments spend large amounts of money on education. This is the normal and acceptable expectation of governments as part of their social responsibility, but the neo-liberal discourse may provide another lens to look at this social responsibility. Neo-liberalism supposes that the government’s decentralisation of funds to schools makes the schools (principals) the accountable persons for political decisions. Hence the schools (principals) must provide evidence (examination and test results) that the political decisions have had positive results; and this in order for the politicians to be re-elected. At this stage it may be the principals who become the scapegoats if the school, as part or subunit of the organisation, does not achieve the aims of the organisation. Therefore the

test results are supposed to serve as motivational tools to achieve social (political) educational aims. As a result, school principals may be in a lose–lose situation; if they provide the results, even under difficult or unreasonable circumstances, the politicians can claim that their financial (political) influence was responsible for the success; if the principals do not succeed in motivating their staff to achieve the required results, the principals can be blamed, and not the lack of financial (political) support. The possibility of introducing specific performance contracts for principals in South Africa is therefore the (political) logical solution to moving the accountability to the principals. These contracts may place principals in a difficult situation; the principals – but actually the teachers and learners – must perform according to externally predetermined standards, irrespective of the local cultural and circumstances (WCED, 2011).

Principals already have their duties and responsibilities explained in the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM), with more detail in the South African Schools Act 1996 as amended by the 2007 Education Laws Amendment Act (ELAA). Hence the question can be posed: Why is it necessary to have a performance contract if a professional person (which is what we expect principals to be) already has a job description? On the basis of this question, this paper will explore performance agreements as potential motivational factors or threatening forces for principals.

To achieve the required academic results, principals must lead or manage their schools. Leader or leadership will be used as the generic term to describe and refer to the activity acted out by principals. English (2008:233) explains that to lead is universal, but that leadership as a specific leader's functions is contextual and culturally specific. Therefore, the activity of leading is performed by a leader in a specific context and position as an act of leadership. A leader, by definition, is performing the activity in and with people, not with buildings or facilities. Leaders do not lead a building; leaders lead people. Hence, leadership implies interaction with people; a context; a milieu; a field. I can manage a building or facilities; I can govern with people and buildings and facilities in mind, but I can only lead people and not buildings and structures and facilities. This concurs with what English (2008:233) said, namely that principals, as leaders, must motivate or drive the teachers and learners to achieve the performance indicators. The type or format of motivation may differ between the actions used by leaders

and managers. Managers have the policies and the rules behind them to drive people to achieve. That is predominantly external motivation, which normally is not sustainable in the longer term. Hence the emphasis on performance agreements within strict, predetermined outcomes and boundaries is an indication that principals are perceived as managers and must perform according to the managerialistic approach to education.

## PEOPLE PERCEPTIONS AND PERFORMANCE IN A NEO-LIBERALISTIC GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

One of the current dominant discourses is the neo-liberalistic influence on human activity; the management and leadership in organisations. For the purpose of this paper, neo-liberalism is conceptualised as governments accepting the free market system of public management. The implicit aim of this was the government's intention to be less involved in the direct management of schools and to decentralise much of the decision making to the local school (Gewirtz & Ball, 2000:253). The change to a more decentralised system of school governance is part of the contemporary global neo-liberal tendency (Moos, 2003:19). The implication is supposed to be that the principal, as one of the important decision makers in the school, must have more power to make decisions, but that the decision making power has been restricted by managerialistic measures.

Managerialism in education was a result of the neo-liberal context in America. Neo-liberalism emphasises the dominance of a free market economy (Apple 2004) and refers to these two seemingly opposing perspectives as a marriage between neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism. The neo-conservatives are afraid of declining educational standards in a market-driven education system, hence they want to ensure quality or traditional education through control processes, resulting in the managerialistic style of governance. Managerialism may be effective and more acceptable in business and industry because the private sector does not have the same social responsibility as a government and a department of education. In adopting the neo-liberal approach, governments abandon their social responsibility but they accepted the managerialistic approach in an attempt to

keep control over the standards and quality of the education (McInerney, 2003:57).

As a result, principals, as decision makers and leaders, are supposed to have more freedom, but they are bound by stricter directives about standards and performance criteria; hence a contradiction in terms and application. Principals, teachers and children are individuals with their own needs, interests, personalities and issues, but our mass production and small global world make it impossible for most of us to be and live out our individualism (Elliott & Turnbull, 2005:210). Fridman (2010:271) refers to people as *Homo economicus* and links this description to the neo-liberal influence. This means we see and experience ourselves as being at the service and in the service of the economy. The human being becomes a resource to be utilised in the service of the economy. This has a direct impact on the way we act, manage and treat people, also as managers in schools. We are one small part in the machine; worth not much more than slaves were worth in the days of owners and slaves, or, after the “liberation”, workers during the industrial revolution. Therefore one could regard us as slaves to the economy – only we are in a more technical and complex world. Now we have unions who represent the workers (slaves), but the masses are still captured as workers, depending on the generosity of the owners (boss, director, CEO, principal) as employers.

## LEAD AND MOTIVATE TO PERFORM

In line with the emphasise on performance in a managerialistic environment and a world view of people as economic resources or commodities, a recent development in the Western Cape specifically was the possibility that principals would be required to sign a performance contract, known as the Education Measurement System (EMS). It is expected that principals will be accountable for the quality of their school’s performance (WCED 2011). SADTU (South African Democratic Teachers’ Union) is against this agreement, because they say that these principals do not have sufficient power to comply with the accountability that the performance agreement will place on them (WCED 2011). I will pay more attention to power in later sections of the paper.

The potential and actual influence of principals on the performance of learners is a vague and under-researched

theme in South Africa, according to Hallinger (2011:125) and Heck and Hallinger (2010:867). The international literature is also not conclusive on whether principals really make a difference. There are sufficient small-scale and anecdotal examples of school performing being much better than it may be expected in the context where the school is located. There are strong indications that principals as leaders play an important role in these schools, but there is still limited large-scale scientific evidence to unanimously claim that leaders can be the solution to all the underperforming schools. This restricted perspective of the principal’s direct influence on educational improvement must also be considered when principals are required to sign performance agreements.

The focus and question is why will principals be motivated to enter into a performance agreement such as the EMS. According to the Department of Education (WCED 2011:22), about 70% of schools are not performing well (see Table 1); hence, why will a principal be motivated to enter into a performance agreement that may potentially be negative for his/her position if the department may act against schools that are not performing as expected? It could be argued that the low level of achievement may be a great challenge and opportunity to improve and therefore may be a great motivational factor. But the opposite may be more applicable, namely that the low level may scare them so much that they may not be willing to take the risk to be principals under these threatening circumstances. This means that it is very important to clarify what this message of the EMS entails and how it is communicated to the principals. Other questions to be asked are: What are principals’ first impressions of the EMS? Do principals view the system as a thread or an opportunity; in other words, will it be motivational or demotivational?

There is nothing wrong in principle with a performance agreement. It may help many principals to focus and structure their work. But it is the way in which it is implemented that is the factor that will make or break it. How the principals experience and perceive the EMS is more important than the actual document. This may again influence the motivational levels and consequent efforts of principals to achieve the predetermined academic goals for the school.

**Table 1:** Average percentage scores after re-markin

Province	Grade 3		Grade 6	
	Literacy	Numeracy	Languages	Mathematics
Eastern Cape	39	35	29	29
Free State	37	26	23	28
Gauteng	35	30	35	37
KwaZulu Natal	39	31	29	32
Limpopo	30	20	21	25
Mpumalanga	27	19	20	25
Northern Cape	28	21	27	28
North West	30	21	22	26
Western Cape	43	36	40	41
South Africa	35	28	28	30

## PEOPLE VERSUS HUMAN RESOURCES

One of the important questions for this paper may be: Do we believe that all people are internally driven, or motivated, to improve their own situation; to become something better or to improve their fellow human beings' existence? In essence, it is a question of the reason for my existence and why I make an effort to do something meaningful with my life. It is just survival, or is there a higher driving force? A simplistic example may be the way we see people. In a neo-liberal and managerialistically driven world, people are human resources. If the resource (the teacher) is not good enough anymore (not producing as expected), we get a newer, better version. A more people-balanced (humanistic) approach would be to see people as human beings, as talents that add value – not only as disposable resources like a chair or table.

Our own basic assumptions, or world view, about human beings also determine our actions and interactions with each other. One example of this people perspective is McGregor's perception of an X and Y approach to people in terms of how we see, perceive and believe what

people are and then lead or manage them accordingly (Kopelman, Prottas & Davis, 2008:255). X people are naturally not inclined to work hard and must be driven, therefore a more autocratic form of management and leadership is required, while Y people are naturally motivated and will work hard and therefore need a more democratic kind of management and leadership (English, 2008:233). All of us, including the school principals, have these basic assumptions about people. If I trust you and believe you will do your work as a professional teacher (a Y person), it is not necessary to assess and invigilate and scrutinise what you are doing. But if I believe that you are an X person, I as manager will put structures of assessment in place, determine standards and manage you to achieve these standards because I am a part of the machine that must deliver the product. It is about trust and respect for each other. Do we have it or do we demand it? Respect cannot be demanded or forced; it must be earned.

The perspective of X and Y can also be related to how much we trust people and if we believe people will be self-motivated or need special motivation to perform the work they are supposed to do. Hoy and Tarter (2011:427) illustrate the important relationship between



trust in the day-to-day operation of schools and its significance in creating a learning culture that improves student performance. The understanding of trust is also embedded in the way we see people and what we expect from them – our philosophy about humans. Trust will be much easier to establish and maintain if the principal has a positive view of human nature – the Y people in McGregor's theory. Trust relies on actual evidence of activities and action that proves that people can depend on you. Hoy and Tarter (2011:427) assert that principals should be aware of the facts that (a) successful leadership is contingent on the trust of followers, as without trust there is no leadership; (b) teachers' trust in parents and students is critical for enhanced student achievement; (c) a culture of school trust is often as important as socioeconomic level in promoting learning; and (d) trust is a necessary condition for effective professional learning communities. Thus, it will benefit principals to be open and transparent in their behaviour, as well as constructive and optimistic in their dealings with the students, parents and teachers. The research on optimism gives rise to another set of practical applications. Clearly, trust and efficacy are anchored and reinforced by optimism. Teacher efficiency is optimistic at its core; in fact, efficiency guarantees optimism, according to Bandura cited in Hoy & Tarter (2011). Optimism affects people's goals and ambitions, drive and motivation, and perseverance and resilience. The evidence from a number of meta-analyses suggests that both efficiency and optimism contribute to high motivation, increased performance, and a sense of emotional well-being (Hoy & Tarter, 2011:427). It is questionable if a performance agreement will have the abovementioned positive influence on people's attitudes and trust relationships, since Nicholls (1984:328) indicates that performance agreements tend to have a negative motivational effect on personnel in state departments.

Hoy and Tarter (2011:427) advocate in a similar vein and distinguish between humanistic (e.g. psychologists such as Maslow (1954, 1962) and Rogers (1951)) and positive psychology. Humanistic psychology is characterised by the idea that people are fundamentally good and strive to make the most of their potential through a process called self-actualisation (Maslow and Rogers cited in Hoy & Tarter, 2011). This viewpoint of the positive psychologists coincides with the theories about locus of control and self-determination (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). People who feel that they have personal control over their own circumstances, including goals for their work and life, may be more motivated to achieve these goals and cooperate and work hard to achieve

them. This coincides with self-determination theory, in terms of which people feel they have some power over their own destiny, and that they want to be engaged in activities because they want to be involved and not because they are forced to do so. It is the responsibility of the principal to find this balance to motivate teachers to be engaged with their work, accomplish achievable standards and be willing to develop themselves.

Humanistic psychologists assert that people are basically good, but that the process of self-actualisation as an improvement is not understood; humanistic psychologists are exceedingly optimistic about people's ability to change for the better (Hoy & Tarter, 2011:427). This optimistic perspective and a misunderstanding of human nature and reaction to motivation from the influence of neo-liberal financially driven goals might be the reason why we have the setting of demanding, or rather commanding, standards. It seems as if this approach to people coincides with the X people expectation of McGregor, namely that people can or must be driven to change because somebody out there has decided that there must be another change in the curriculum or methods or standards. Policy on its own is not motivational and therefore also does not provide a guarantee that any change or development will occur.

This perception of trust and optimism relates to the expectancy theory, of which Vroom was one of the early exponents. This theory explains that we will live according to the expectations that are determined for us. If you expect that I can achieve and will do my work, that I am motivated and can and will do more than what is expected of me, then I will live up to that expectation; this is in accordance with the Y people approach of McGregor. If the expectation is too low, or the expectation is that I cannot do the work or am lazy, then I will also act in accordance with this expectation. If I believe that the expectations determined for me are too high, this will be demotivational and therefore will not be able to motivate me to achieve the required standards (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). The implications for principals are that they need to get the balance right between high expectations and realistic expectations for each teacher, but also for the school, which is situated in a specific community and environment that may be less conducive to high academic achievement by the children at that stage. But the expectations may be adjusted annually in a process in which all the participants are involved, which may be a good example of democratic leadership. The question for principals and their employers emphasising the performance agreement is whether this agreement will communicate the positive expectation that the

principal is able to fulfil it, or rather whether it is a threat that if school principals do not deliver, their work or post may be in jeopardy.

## MOTIVATION, POWER AND CHANGE

The issue behind the performance agreement is that the standard and quality of education is not acceptable. It must change. In this sense, change implies that people must move from what and how they are doing their work currently to a different or new method. But change at this level and on this scale is not just a change in the curriculum or methodology, as we have seen in South Africa since 1994. This change implicates a change of heart; a change of values, of attitude and of determination. This will require a deep level of change; not a superficial change just to show that we have changed.

Change is also associated with resistance. Any change has some kind or form of resistance as a parallel process. Hence the change, along with the resistance, must be accommodated in the process. Change also suggests or expects development and improvement. And development has its own implications and process. This process does not happen automatically just because there is change in policy or curriculum. Therefore, to get people involved in accepting and implementing the change, and in participating and carrying out the development, they must be convinced that they will benefit from it. In other words, they must be motivated to change and to develop.

Change and development are also something that idealistically will be lasting in the medium to longer term, and will require a process of sustainable development and change. In a big, complicated and diverse system like education, sustainability and real change with a deep level of understanding are complicated and difficult to achieve. They cannot be achieved in the shorter term, namely in a year or even in five years. It therefore is a process. Short-term changes and quick-fix changes are possible to achieve to show success for political and financial short-term goals. But the real and deep level of change needs motivated, dedicated people.

De Vries (2009:343) has indicated that leaders (and principals can be supposed to be leaders) in successful organisations provide focus (a vision), are decisive, and possess integrity and honesty; but overall they realise the importance of motivational needs systems. Hence, in education, leaders must be able to create this

motivational need for all the participants, the teachers, learners and parents, as well as closely associated role players like unions and other stakeholders. Motivation therefore is crucial as a concept and as an activity for the change and development process.

School principals are the people who are expected to lead and implement the change and to make sure that people develop in order to get the new skills, knowledge, attitudes and values required for their change to be successful. Motivation is therefore the cornerstone for all these activities. When motivation is associated with concepts such as manipulation, bribes, power, force and threat, it generally has a negative connotation. Therefore motivation must be a positive activity associated with success and positive feelings and experiences. Motivation should therefore rather be associated with concepts such as conviction, encouragement, invitation and stimulus. What constitutes motivation may therefore also be in the eye of the beholder; it is contextual, contingent and individual. For example, a typical external motivational factor may be money. If I give you a salary increase of 100% if you achieve the goal of doing what I expect from you, is that motivation or manipulation, or misuse of power? If I have the money I may not see it as manipulation, but the person performing the task may experience it as manipulation because he needs the money but is not internally motivated or dedicated to the task, because the task is not aligned with his values. This same argument may be applicable to the implementation of policy. The government as policy maker and implementer may see performance contracts as being motivational because they have the power to make the legislation and determine the terms of the agreement, while the ground-level implementers, the “contractors”, may not agree with the terms of the agreement for different reasons. However, because the power is with the originator of the agreement, the motivational factor may be reduced or lost in the use of power to enforce the agreement.

Motivation and power are therefore the fundamental activities and actions necessary to achieve successful change and development. Motivation, in its original Latin form of “*movere*”, means to move or be able or willing to move; it means your motivation level is what moves you to participate in an activity and it affects your desire to continue with the activity (*Enhanced motivation*, 2004). An important associated concept is power, with its original meaning in Latin being “to be able” or having the ability to do or act, or having the capability of doing or accomplishing something (*Dictionary.com*, 2011).

It therefore is important that school principals, as the people responsible for the change and development of

all, but specifically of non-performing, schools, must be motivated and able to motivate the staff and learners to change, to develop and to improve the current situation. The contextualisation and diversity of South African schools makes this a very difficult and unique process and definitely one in which a one-size-fits-all approach cannot be applied. West-Burnham (2003:173) indicates that specifically new policy as a one-size-fits-all approach is not motivational, hence it is important that principals have something more to offer than only the performance agreements to provide them with the necessary drive, energy and power (the ability) to motivate themselves and to motivate others.

It is significant to realise that most of the motivational theories used in the management and leadership literature were developed in a western context. Dimmock and Walker (2005:218) warn against the use of these theories in every community and context. They mention that western-developed theories emphasise individual needs and goals, while those of other societies, for example China (and African societies – JH) are more socially and communally orientated, with a more holistic sense of achievement. The implementation of performance agreements, which is typical of a capitalistic, neo-liberalistic and western performance-driven culture, therefore may not have the same potential motivational influence on members from the more holistic African cultures.

## MOTIVATION

Martin and Dowson (2009:327) define motivation as a set of interrelated beliefs and emotions that influence and direct behaviour. We propose that relationships affect achievement motivation by directly influencing the constituent beliefs and emotions of motivation. Interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships will influence motivational levels if principals must sign agreements. A positive self-relationship, but also positive relationships with superiors and followers, may be significant motivational factors to minimise the potential demotivational factors of these agreements.

Motivation as a field in human science is not an exact science. There are too many factors, both external (environment or fellow human beings) and internal (personality, values) to the individual that may influence the motivational levels of a person. The complexity for principals as motivators increases because there also are the individuals (principal or teacher or child) and the team of teachers or group of children and parents that have to be motivated to be willing or able to achieve. Each individual, as a cognitive, emotional and

religious (values)-driven entity will influence the kind of motivation needed to make the person move to achieve or do what is expected. The circumstantial effects, external to the individual, are also determined in the kind and level of motivation. Hence this complexity, the internal and external influences as well as the individual group activities makes it difficult to motivate other people. Morrison (2002:215) has indicated that schools have ignored the importance of motivation for too long. Motivation, from internal to external motivation, may play an important role in individual, but also in team, performance and development. It therefore is essential that leaders at the school level, but especially at the macro- and meso-levels in the management hierarchy, recognise the importance of motivation, use it and ensure that the individual but also the team or the organisation benefits from it.

Hong, Catano and Liao (2011:320) emphasise that leaders use emotions to motivate their followers, and that individuals who can manage and use their emotions are more likely to be self-motivated to lead. Harris (2007:193) links emotional competence or intelligence strongly to the successful achievement of goals. Emotional intelligence can therefore be linked to the ability to work with people for whom motivation is an important component of goal achievement (Fullan, 2001:162). Hence the energy, or the motivation, must be in or with the principal to be able to move the rest of the participants to achieve the goal.

There are many motivational theories, and they differ in their approach or emphasis. For example, some theories emphasise the individual, while others may stress the role of the environment or attempt to combine the individual and the environment. But the issue is the bigger argument about the agency and structure – what has the most potential influence on the action and movement of the individual or group. According to Pintrich and Schunk (2002) there has been a swing from a more emotive approach to a more cognitive approach towards motivational theories. Although theories, especially motivational theories, may go out of favour for different reasons, most of them are still applicable and have some importance for the context in which a principal is working. The neo-liberal and managerialistic environment will demand a specific motivational and contextual theory. Hence knowledge, acknowledgement and exposure to the theories may assist in the achievement of goals.

## PERFORMANCE AGREEMENTS AS MOTIVATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

In a performance-driven culture the emphasis is on the assessment of visible and measurable criteria. According to Penney, David and Witt (2011:297), it is important for the purposes of validating personality measures to focus on performance measures that reflect employee behaviours (i.e., “goal-relevant actions that are under the control of the individual”, as opposed to the effectiveness of those actions). Measures of effectiveness, such as sales volume (or examination results – JH), are certainly important from an organisation’s standpoint, but they are likely to be more reflective of individual differences in abilities or skills (e.g., cognitive ability, social skill) and are frequently contaminated by factors beyond the control of employees (e.g., size and location of school). In contrast, employee behaviour and effort (e.g., diligently following up on leads; developing and maintaining positive relationships with customers) are more likely to be determined by individual differences in motivation and personality. Hence it will be important not to focus on examination results, throughput and literacy and numeracy results if and when principals sign performance agreements.

Official performance agreements are also not unique to South Africa. Forrester (2011:5) has indicated that although the official policy on performance management was promulgated in England in 2000, they had already used some performance and assessment processes since 1992. Policy makers regard performance management as a motivating mechanism with the potential to ‘incentivise’ teachers to perform to higher standards in exchange for greater financial gain. The process of performance management would facilitate the development of a performance-driven culture in education, and advance the raising of standards in schools. The proposed performance agreements with principals in South Africa are therefore a textbook copy of the UK system. In another example, the Gauteng province established an Ofsted office, similar to the British system even in name. It is just that South follows these policies about 10 to 20 years later, when there already is evidence that the policies have not achieved what was expected of them. Hence a careful assessment of the applicability of performance agreements as motivational tools and to enforce an improvement in standards must be higher on the priority list of the Department of Education, rather than forcing the performance agreements onto principals.

A performance agreement is directly associated with goal-oriented motivation, and is an external motivational

factor. Motivational theory distinguishes broadly between internal or intrinsic (in a person; intrapersonal) motivational factors and external or extrinsic factors. Internally motivated people and intrinsic motivation are accepted as motivation that will enhance longer term achievement and therefore may be more suitable for sustainable improvement and change, which is what is needed to improve the large number of low-performing schools (Hong, Catano & Liao, 2011:320). External motivation, for example an increase in salaries, may have shorter term and quick results, but is not a longer or even medium-term solution for the underperforming school context. A performance agreement is an example of an external motivational factor. If it is implemented with the consent of the participants, it may have some internal motivational value; but if it is not willingly accepted by the participants, it may remain an external motivational factor because it is “enforced onto the participants”. Hong *et al.* (2011:320) also state that individuals who are able to use emotion (an internal motivational factor) to motivate themselves are often more confident and goal-oriented, which in turn enables them to emerge as leaders of problem-solving teams.

Pintrich (2002:460) indicates the possible motivational influence of performance agreements by distinguishing between goal orientation and goal content approach. Goal orientation is a stronger driver, a motivational factor. It has the power to release energy; it helps to focus on achieving the task. A specific task as goal orientation (Pintrich 2002:233) has internal motivational value if there is diversity, less public comparison of performance, the level of difficulty is such that the person or team experiences it as a challenge but not unachievable, and depending on how the task is presented to the person or team. Two of these criteria pose potential problems when a performance agreement is used as a motivational tool for principals. There is high risk in the agreement because schools academic marks are in the public domain and the task (agreement) is presented from outside the principal’s own locus of control. It is presented in a powerful manner, which makes the person feel disempowered and hence the task loses its motivational value and even becomes demotivational. Jackson and Carter (2000:302) have indicated that a desire or need, or goals as Pintrich has labelled it, is a primary motivating force. This may be a conscious or even unconscious desire (Jackson & Carter, 2000:302; Pintrich, 2002:460), but it has significant motivational influence on individuals and teams in an organisation. A goal to improve or change the school’s performance must therefore rather be a personal or team desire and task, rather than an

externally enforced agreement. The power relationship between the Department of Education as employer and the principal as employee makes this vertical power relationship work against the potential motivational value it might have had if the agreement was internally constructed and developed.

Jackson and Carter (2000:302) motivate this from a business and capitalistic perspective. They argue that the workers do not necessarily have a desire to work, but that the incentives associated with the work may make the work desirable or not. This incentive may be physical or psychological, but it must be strong enough to be a driver to move towards the goal. This perspective coincides with McGregor's classification of X people – they are not intrinsically motivated to work, but can be driven with external motivators. Thrupp and Willmott (2003:281) argue that motivation is also strongly linked to the meaning of the work. The implication is that any performance agreement will not be a motivational factor if the work linked to the agreement is not meaningful enough to drive the person to enhance his energy to achieve the determined goals. If there are substantial incentives linked to the agreement it may also have motivational value; but most of the time incentives are external, e.g. a salary increase or bonus, and these motivational factors traditionally do not have a long-term orientation. Hence the incentives will only be motivational in the long term if the incentives are adjusted significantly (become bigger) every year, and education does not have sufficient funds for this to be a probability.

Even if the task is meaningful or desirable, in an organisation like education, with more than 20 000 schools (principals) in diverse circumstances, a one-size-fits-all kind of agreement may have limited success to motivate many of the principals because of the schools' local needs (e.g. poverty) or the principal's individual drive and needs in relation to externally determined goals. Principals are important people in their small communities, and their personal significance and power in the communities may invariably be tarnished if they sign an agreement that may destroy or negatively affect their position. Therefore why should they sign the agreement?

Martin and Dowson (2009:327) indicate that the achievement- and goal-orientated motivational theories link very strongly to relationships. Hence it seems as if factors like the relations between principals and staff or other role players may be more important as motivational factors than using a performance agreement to achieve the goals. It is specifically the following social

cognitive theories, namely attribution, expectancy-value theory, goal theory, self-determination theory, self-efficacy theory and self-worth motivation theory, which emphasise the relational aspect to achieve goals. The attribution theory will be explained in more detail to illustrate how these theories may be motivational with regard to performance agreements for principals. Marin and Dowson (2009:327) and Pintrich (2002:460) explain that these theories may have motivational factors linked to performance agreements if the following issues and conditions are attended to:

Attribution theory associates an individual's attributes to events which may have an impact on the way they cognitively, affectively, and behaviourally respond on future occasions. Four attributes are typically identified, namely luck, task difficulty, ability, and effort. These attributes' motivational value is also influenced by locus, stability, and controllability. In the case of the performance agreement, for it to be motivational the principals will consider how difficult this task will be to complete; if it is perceived as being too difficult, it loses its motivational energy. Furthermore, the principal's own as well as the teachers' and learners' ability to perform the expected tasks may be motivational if the principals perceive all the role players as at least have the ability, or the potential, to achieve the goals, namely higher examination marks. The motivational influence will also be determined by the effort the participants – firstly the principals as agreement contractors, but also the teachers, learners, parents, departmental support staff and other influential role players – have to make to achieve the goals. If the effort (hard work, time, and other unavailable resources) does not seem to be related to the "prize" at the end of the effort, the agreement as attribution factor loses its motivational value. The causes of the event (performance agreement) are similarly influenced by the origin of the cause (who originated the agreement), in other words is the origin located in the principal or external to the principal. A further influence is how stable or unstable the environment is in which the principal must carry out this agreement, and how much control the principal has over the context and situation. In most of the schools there are permanent change, such as instability caused by new policies, and environmental factors like parental support and income; influences that are outside the direct control of principals. This may have a demotivational effect on the principal as contractor and indicates very strongly that the principal has limited control over most of the people and the environment. Principals have limited power to make sure that teachers who are not

performing well can be pressured, motivated or forced to improve their work. There are processes to discipline underperforming teachers, but the processes are time and effort consuming, hence they do not really put power in the hands of principals. Principals have limited control over circumstantial but highly influential factors, for example the socio-economic status of the school community.

Hence, when principals have to consider all these factors linked to attribution theories before they sign the agreement contracts, they may realise that they are most probably creating an unachievable contract for themselves and therefore may not be willing or motivated to sign the agreements. If they have to sign the contracts, the motivational reasons for the agreements may be very low or even demotivational (Eyal & Roth, 2011:256).

## CONCLUSION

Performance agreements are not the opposite of motivation; they also are a form of motivation. Hence the argument in the paper is not that there should not be any performance agreements. It is the format and the aim and goal of the performance management agreements

that are at stake in this paper. Performance agreements as a long- or medium-term motivational factor must be part of the normal professional work of any principal. They should not serve as a threat. The initial step may be for these agreements to serve as a threat – to get the stagnated or underperforming principal to feel that if he does not move now there may be a serious threat – either financial or some form of action – to the person or post. But with the threatening agreement there should be sufficient other motivational or support structures in place to make sure that the motivation is sustainable over a longer term – even a few years. A failing or underperforming school cannot be changed around in one year and sustain the stress related to that change. The new attitude, the commitment, the work ethics must become part of the normal working process. These elements should not be neglected as soon as the “inspectors” or short-term support teams have left the school. It is a long-term development strategy – shorter term losses may still occur, but the longer term benefit must be sustainable for a wider range of children; threatening a few school principals may cause a short-term burst of improvement but not sustainable growth and development in quality.

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