



S A C E

South African Council for Educators

Towards Excellence in Education

*Growing a
professionalised
agile teaching
profession*

PROFESSIONALISING FUTURE FORWARD AND ETHICAL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

SAPA GAUTENG

4-5 JUNE 2026

FUTURE-FORWARD LEADERSHIP: FROM FUNCTIONAL TO PROGRESSIVE SCHOOLS

SACE HAS A LEGISLATED AUTHORITY TO REGULATE AND PROFESSIONALISE THE TEACHING PROFESSION, INCLUDING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

YOUR ROLE IN LEADING THE PROFESSIONALISATION OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION IN OUR SCHOOLS IS PARAMOUNT

Professionalising school Leadership

- A process of improving the **status, esteem, prestige** and **standing** of the teaching as a profession and school leadership.
- It is also about enhancing professionalism but it does not happen automatically.
- **Ethically grounded and inclusive** — equity, social justice, contextual responsiveness (especially relevant in African and Global South discourse), and integrity anchor every decision.

Professionalising school leadership

- Being intentional in shifting the role of principals and School Management Teams
- **From** adhoc, functional, reactive, command and control practices, and administrative granted by seniority.
- **To** strategic, adaptive, transformative, ethical, digital, evidence-based instructional leaders of learning communities.
- It treats school leadership as a distinct profession , with its own **knowledge base, standards, continuing professional development credentialing pathways, and learning expectations** — rather than a senior teaching post
- Mandatory qualifications such as the Advanced Diploma in Education: School Leadership and Management (**ADE-SLM**).

**Developing and empowering self
and others is non-negotiable**

**BUILDING CAPABLE SCHOOL
LEADERS AND TEACHERS**



CHANGE IS THE ONLY
CONSTANT IN LIFE

PROGRESS IS VIEWED AS THE
ABILITY TO ADAPT TO CHANGE



Teaching is Knowledge Profession

- To master the challenges of teaching and leadership now and in the future, teachers and leaders need to be owners of **deep professional knowledge**.
- Content Knowledge, Pedagogical Knowledge, Pedagogical Content Knowledge – **Key for your Instructional Leadership and leading teaching and learning**
- Knowledge is a main pillar of professionalism and your leadership.
- Continuing Professional Development and Learning are at the centre of **Learning and Reading Leaders**
- **Prof Marawa: Those who do not read and learn should not lead.**

THEREFORE:

- **Anticipatory and adaptive mindset:** Leaders scan trends (AI in classrooms, climate disruption, shifting labour markets, demographic change) and redesign schooling so learners are ready for futures that don't yet exist.
- Developing yourself and teachers to be digitally fit, exposing them to the SACE programme on digital laboratories and digital libraries
- **Evidence-informed decision-making:** Use of data, research, and learning analytics to drive instructional improvement — a hallmark of any mature profession.
- **Systems thinking and ecosystem leadership:** Schools seen as nodes in wider learning ecosystems — partnering with families, NGOs, employers, and government.

THEREFORE:

- **Distributed and collaborative leadership, including teacher leadership:** Moves away from heroic, top-down principalship toward shared leadership across teachers, departmental heads, learners, and community.
- **Transformative Leadership for, equity, inclusivity and social justice:** Leading for every learner, dismantling structural barriers, and embedding wellbeing.
- These are leaders who are not just compliant managers of today's school, but architects of tomorrow's.

Lifelong

- **Lifelong Learning** focuses on time
- **Voluntary and Self-Initiated:** Driven by curiosity, passion, or purpose.
- **Inclusive of all ages and stages:** From cradle to grave, learning is always relevant.
- **Multi-modal:** It includes formal education, non-formal programs / activities, and informal experiences.

Life-wide

- **Life-wide learning** focuses of space
- **Learning Beyond Office /School:** communities, social interactions, travel, hobbies, relational learning
- **Learning in Real Time** - navigating a crisis, leading change, or celebrating success, leaders grow through action and reflection
- **Whole-Person Development:** It supports emotional, social, physical, and ethical growth. It is not just about academic achievement.
- **Authentic Contexts:** Leaders as learners engaging in real-world situations that foster creativity, problem-solving, and resilience –

PD MUST BE NEEDS-DRIVEN

These are the needs which are often relevant to teachers and principals' ever-changing and demanding roles.

Needs Determine the Level and Type of PD

LEVELS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Personal Level.....Demand Driven

- Teacher / Principal / Self-Initiated
- Self / Personal Development
- Independence, agency, decisional capital, autonomy, self-directedness and being self-initiative
- **SACE Professional Teaching Standards (PTS no.2) –**
 - Teachers are responsible for their ongoing personal, academic and professional growth through reflection, studying, reading, and research.
 - Teachers participate in endorsed continuing professional teacher development activities/programmes organised by their subject or professional associations, professional learning communities (PLCs), teacher unions and others –
Learning by Association and Affiliation - SAPA

School Level PD..... Demand & Supply Driven



- School- Initiated
- Whole-School Development

School-Based PD

- collaborative learning that occurs within the school environment to enhance teachers and SMTs' knowledge, skills, and approaches to teaching – PLCs / COPs
- Aims to improve learners' learning outcomes in all the school phases.
- Distributive /Shared Leadership Driven with Principal Leading and playing oversight.
- Teachers provide supportive environments for the induction, coaching and mentoring of colleagues who are new to their school, as well as for pre-service (**student teachers**) and newly-qualified teachers (**SACE PTS no.2**).

School Level PD.....

School-embedded professional development

- Also known as **Job-Embedded PD**
- Occurs directly within the daily teaching context of the school and classroom.
- Problem-Focused – PD and learning that is grounded in real practical issues and challenges that teachers and school leaders face in their day-to-day work.
- It involves collaboration with colleagues to improve instructional strategies to enhance learning outcomes.
- Opposite of traditional, one-off workshop sessions by making learning highly relevant, actionable, and reflective, with teachers applying new knowledge in their classrooms and then discussing the impact with peers.
- **Promotes Agency, Professional Judgement in Action Research / Practitioner-Based Research Projects**

School Level PD.... Demand & Supply Driven

School-focused professional development

- Whole-school development
- Alignment with school vision, strategic plans, policies, values and culture of ongoing PD
- **May need Cultural Leadership** for the teachers to be empowered on:
 - embracing the diversity of cultures within the school
 - positive values and ethical so that they will have as much respect for the cultural practices of others and of the school as they have for their own cultural practices

School Level PD – Demand & Supply Driven

- support and uphold the traditions, symbols, values and norms of the school community
- understand the school community and how to connect with the traditions of the people who make up that community
- ensure that policies on religion and language are adhered
- acknowledge that a variety of sexual orientations exist among human beings and to ensure that there is respect and tolerance for the orientation of every person at / or involved in the school.

STANDARD OF PRINCIPALSHIP

EXTERNAL LEVEL....SUPPLY-DRIVEN

•System-Wide

- Gauteng Education Department / Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance / Scibono
- Teacher Unions
- Higher Education Institutions
- Private Providers
- NGOs / FBOs
- SACE Approved Providers and SACE Endorsed Programmes and Activities.

EXTERNAL INITIATION OF PD –Standard of Principalship States That...

- The DBE, with the Provincial Education Departments (PEDs - GDE), has identified **differentiated developmental** needs for **professionalising principals** and for the **development of their role**.
- **They are the:**
 - enhancement of the skills and competencies of principals
 - improvement of the procedures for recruiting and selecting principals
 - induction and mentoring of principals
 - professional preparation of principals.

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF SCHOOL LEADERS AND MANAGERS MATTER

GREAT MINDS THIK ALIKE

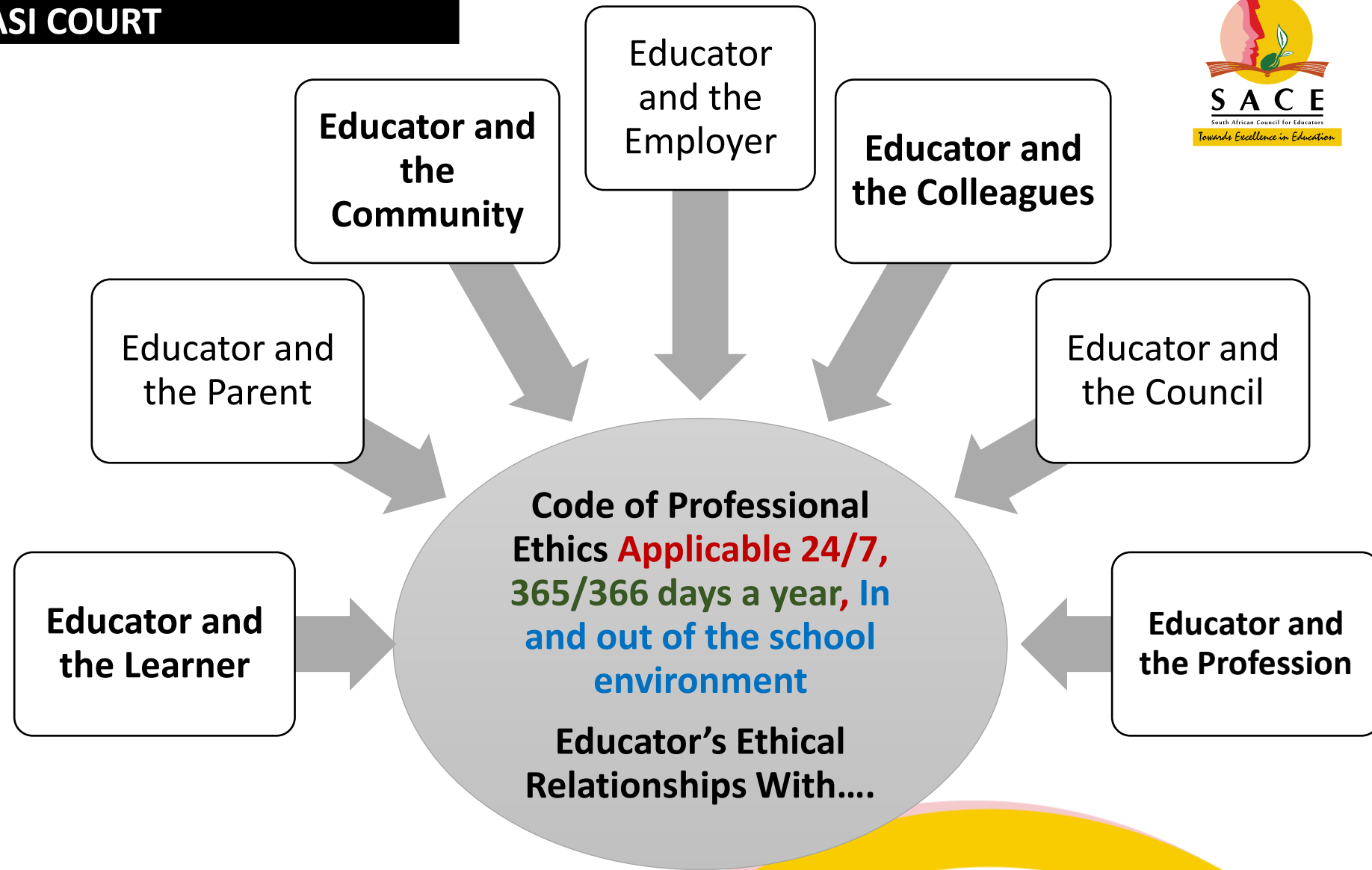
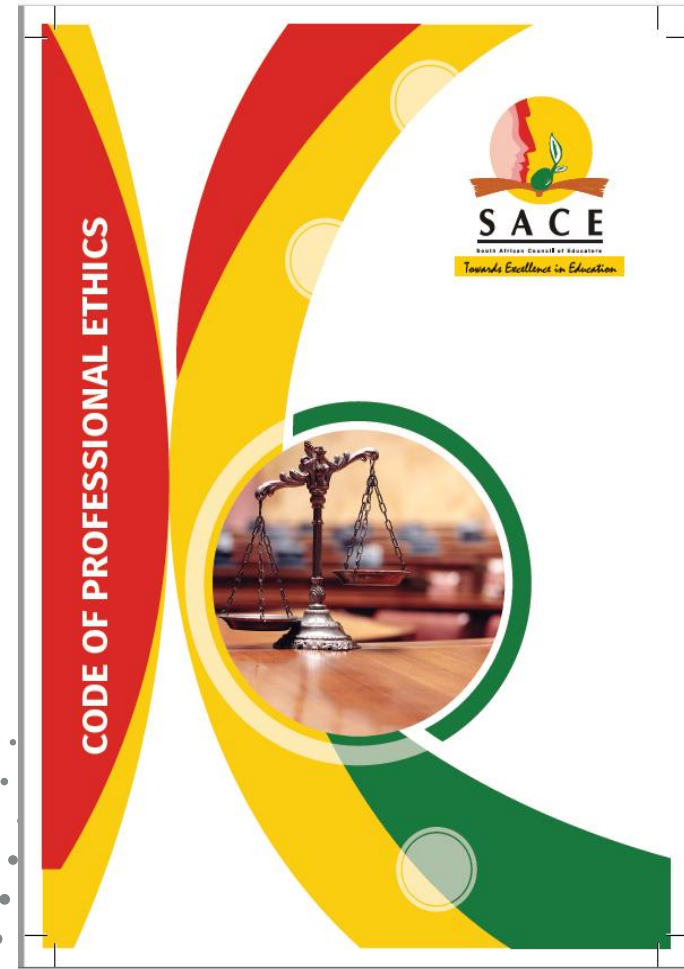
- **Yesterday, I saw, through FS Government Facebook, that yesterday the Free State Government held the Senior Management Indaba titled:**
- **AN OPPURTUNITY TO RENEW THE ENTIRE PROVINCE'S LEADERSHIP ETHOS**
- **In doing so, its key objective was to REINFORCE ETHICAL LEADERSHIP, INTEGRITY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY WITHIN THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP COHORT AND TO IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIVENESS AND CITIZEN-CENTRED APPROACHES.**
- **This Is About Giving SM An Opportunity To Renew And Reinforce To Gain Improved Service Delivery Responsiveness And Citizen-centred Approaches**

IN INVESTING IN THE SM OF THE PROVINCE THE MEC FOR FINANCE ALSO CALLED FOR ETHICAL LEADERSHIP WITIN SM Ranks

- He implored Stop doing things that are outside the guidelines of the law.
- Refuse to take unlawful instruction – Not from myself and not from any politician,
- Do not do wrong to appease anyone.
- He also said:
- Many of you are Christians , but a slightest intimidation, you succumb to pressure and break the law. He concluded by quoting from the Bible and said :
:”Ha tsohle di etsweka Tshwanelo, latela molao”

TEACHING IS A RELATIONAL, SOCIAL AND COLLABORATIVE PROFESSION

FLOWING FROM THE SACE ACT – LEADING TO SACE BEING A QUASI COURT



WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN ETHICAL PRINCIPAL AND CIRCUIT MANAGER

Professional and Peer-Based Accountability, Commitment, Responsibility, Judgement

FINANCIAL MISCONDUCT REPORTED

- Embezzlement of school funds,
- Procurement fraud,
- Irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure
- Mismanagement of funds,
- Unauthorized expenditures
- Theft and fraud
- Poor and inaccurate record-keeping
- School funds used without following budget
- School budget not presented to parents for adoption as expected
- Creating unauthorized "money lending schemes".
- Failure to deposit collected funds into official accounts

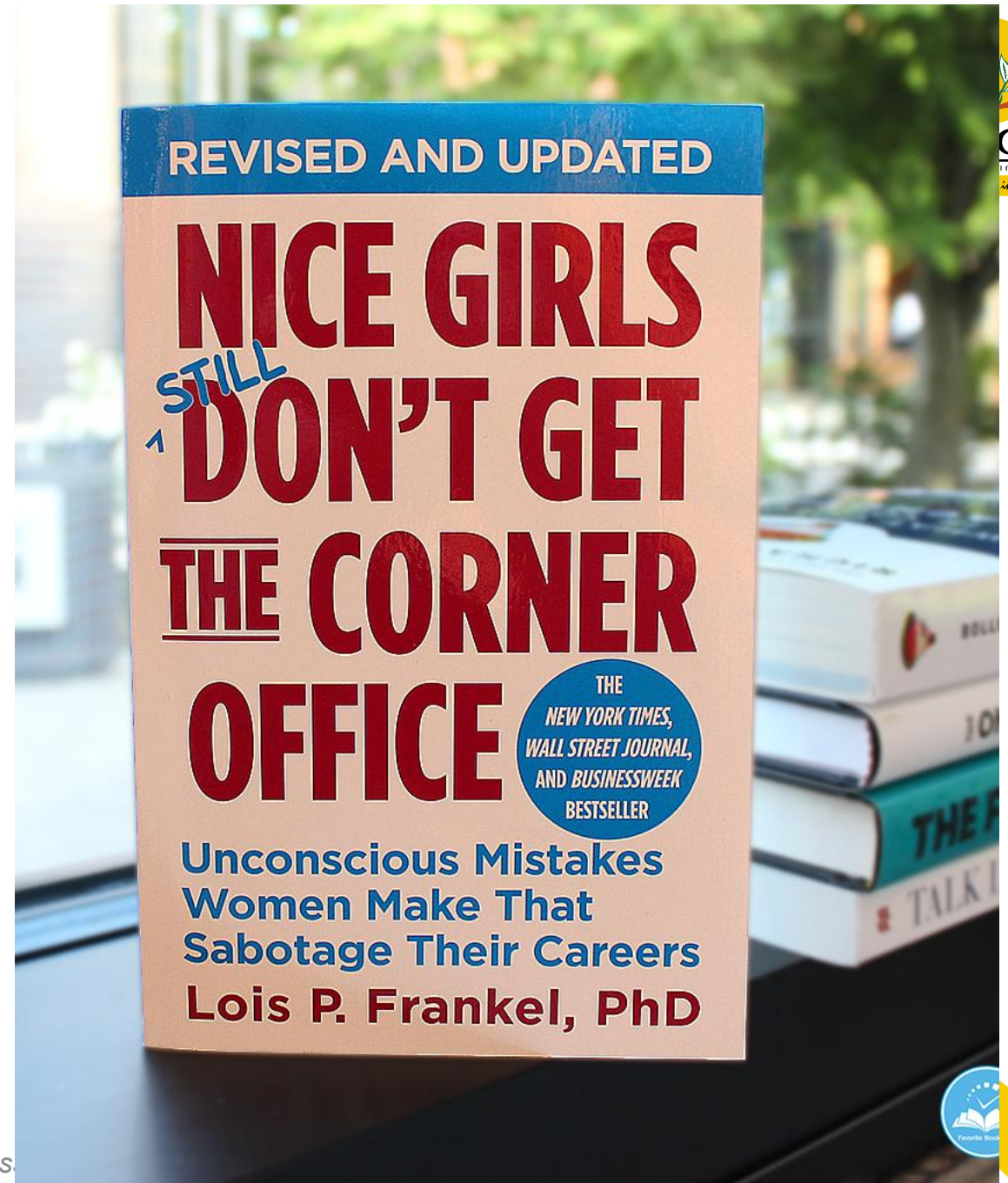
1. The Invisible Barriers

- **Unconscious Bias:** Understanding Microaggressions/subtle and Stereotypes
- **Socialization and Cultural Norms:** How Society Shapes Ambition
- **Imposter Syndrome:** Self-Doubt and Confidence Gaps

2. The Systemic Obstacle

- **Glass Ceiling:** Institutional Practices and Policies barriers that prevents women from going up the ladder
- **Networking and Sponsorship:** Accessing Informal Power Structures
- **Work-Life Balance:** Managing Expectations and Responsibilities
- **TOKENIZATION**

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WOMEN AS THEIR OWN WORST ENEMIES

Book

Perfect Landing Wrong Airport (Ella Ford-Mthethwa)

BULLYING AT WORK:

8 SIGNS YOU SHOULD NEVER IGNORE

by Victoria Ripps



CHECK YOUR CHARACTER, PERSONALITY AND ITS IMPACT ON THE SCHOOL AND OTHERS

A row of five wooden figures on a white surface. Four are light-colored and one in the center is red. The figures are simple, rounded, and have a flat base.

MANAGE YOUR EMOTIONS AND KEEP THEM IN CHECK / ANGER MANAGEMENT – Emotional Awareness is Important

Remain Professional and Ethical Even Under Pressure

Principals / School Leaders: The backbone of Effective School Leadership and Professional Accountability

MAINTAINING ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP MATTER AND COUNTS

Ethical behaviour is asking this fundamental question:

WHO ARE YOU AS A SCHOOL LEADER WHEN NO ONE IS WATCHING??

TEACHING AND LEADING WITH PERSONAL INTEGRITY FIRST IN ORDER TO LEAD OTHERS AND BUILD ETHICAL CULTURE IN YOUR SCHOOL



Check on Your Integrity gaps: values vs behaviour

- Misalignment between what leaders say, reward, and tolerate.
- Small “everyday ethics” failures (favouritism, excuses, bending rules) set the real culture.

THEREFORE, IT IS IMPORTANT TO:

‘walk the talk’

**‘Ensure a fish does not rot from the head’ in
you.**

the importance of the personal ethical integrity of leaders
and how this impact on the organisation

PROFESSIONALISM

- Knowledge you possess
- How we do our work
- Human Relations
- Your values and ethics
- What we say, how, when and to whom
- Dress Code
- Role Model

- Values and ethics are at the centre of your ethical leadership in terms of,

- Accountability
- Dignity,
- Respect,
- Fairness,
- Tolerance
- Transparency
- ensuring decisions align with your moral principles rather than short-term gains.

- Fullan (2003): *“Moral purpose is the essence of leadership. Without it, professional identity becomes hollow and disconnected from the needs of learners.”*

- Leaders' professional identity should reflect both personal values (honesty, respect) and national education priorities (quality, inclusivity, transformation).
- **Values-based school leadership is non-negotiable**
- **A school leader who fails to uphold ethics and values will not be leading, but **Misleading.**"**

VALUE AND PRINCIPLE-BASED TEACHING AND ETHICAL / PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP

**APPLIED TO DECISION-MAKING, CONDUCT, AND
THE RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS /
ORGANISATIONS / STRUCTUERS AND BROADER
SOCIETY.**

RACHEL KOLISI (Ex-wife of Siya) – Falling Forward

**Giving A Book to Gain Women Emancipation / Empowerment / Leadership Insights
Released on the 12th March 2026**

**How Many Heard About It?
How Many Read It?**

Choosing to Rise: Visionary and Courageous Leadership

The metaphor of *falling forward*—

- Using setbacks as an opportunity for growth—captures the essence of visionary school leadership (**seize the moment**)
- Principals who rise with renewed vision after crisis / challenges **embody ethical courage and professional integrity.**
- **Their identity** is defined not by the **absence of challenges** but by **their capacity to transform adversity into progress.**
- Courage leadership ensures that principals not only rise but **lead boldly, inspiring staff and learners to embrace change and innovation**

THEY SAY:

YOU DON'T DROWN BY FALLING IN THE WATER, YOU
DROWN BY STAYING THERE

Challenges and failures might be there, but if you
do not rise above them you will remain with
them.

This encourages, long-term resilience, perseverance
and overcoming adversity,

What Rachel Kolisi and her book's got to do with ethical leadership and professional identity?

- Leadership in education is not only about administrative or instructional function but a moral and ethical responsibility.
- School leaders are expected to embody resilience, authenticity, and integrity while navigating complex challenges.

What Rachel Kolisi and her book's got to do with ethical leadership and professional identity?

- Rachel Kolisi's *Falling Forward* (2026), offers profound insights into the qualities of ethical and courageous leadership.
- Her narrative of vulnerability (exposure / helplessness), independence, and resilience provides a valuable lens through which to examine the professional identity of school principals and ethical leadership.

Then, What is Professional identity?

- **Professional identity is the answer to:**

“Who am I, and what do I stand for, when nobody is watching?” It is formed through values, standards, reflection, personality / character, and the expectations of the profession and community.

It is your internal compass.

Professional Identity is also not fixed; it is shaped and reshaped by practice, reflection, and context.

SO,

Professional identity is also how leaders see themselves and how they are perceived by others.

- **Positioning leaders as intentional mentors:** Giving time and knowledge to gain others builds your positive **reputation**.
- **Embedding inclusivity into your identity, because** Leaders are recognised not just for results but for how they empower others.
- **Collective growth and Creating lasting personal and professional legacy:** Leaders who give create sustainable cultures where women thrive, reinforcing their professional credibility.
- **Promotes Shared power, distributed leadership**

Charlotte Maxeke says to me & you:

- If you can rise, bring someone with you"
- This quote reflects deep leadership and management commitment to the growth and transformation of people, including teachers and learners in your school.

She also argues that

"This work/giving is not for yourselves, **kill** that spirit of self and do not live above your people but live with them"

So, Professional Identity Plays an immense Role in Decision-Making:

- Shapes **moral reasoning** and ethical awareness.
- Guides consistent behaviour across different workplace contexts.
- Reinforces credibility and authority in leadership roles.
- **A strong professional identity ensures managers act ethically even under pressure, aligning personal values with organizational goals**

TODAY I HEARD PRECIOUS MOLOI
(PATRICE MOTSEPE'S WIFE) SAYING

“Put Your Mask First (Ethical Mask) On
First, in Surviving High Pressure
Leadership” – Principle of safety in
aviation should the airplane cabin loose
pressure

Identity Beyond External Roles: Professional Identity Formation

- Do not loose your identity beyond your school leadership position.
- **Rachel Kolisi's personal identity is linked to being Siya Kolisi's wife /**
- **I did the same deliberately earlier linking Dr Precious Moloi's personal identity to Patrice Motsepe.**
- **Rachel reclaimed her identity beyond her role as "Siya Kolisi's wife" so did, Dr Precious Moloi**
- This equals the necessity for school leaders to define themselves beyond their titles – **Principal, Deputy Principal, Departmental Head.**
- **Professional identity in education is not only positional / title;**
- **It is rooted in values, vision, and ethical commitments.**

Identity Beyond External Roles: Professional Identity Formation....

- Therefore, Principals must consciously construct identities that reflect their role as educators, mentors, and community leaders.
- Sachs (2001) emphasizes that your professional identity is dynamic, shaped by both personal values and institutional contexts and culture.
- So, Rachel's journey illustrates the importance of **self-definition** in **sustaining ethical and courageous leadership**.

Independence and Integrity: Ethical Resource Management

- Rachel's reflections on financial dependence highlight the broader principle of **autonomy in decision-making**.
- For school leaders, ethical leadership demands independence of judgment, particularly in resource management and policy implementation.

Independence and Integrity: Ethical Resource Management....

- Integrity in financial and administrative practices strengthens credibility and reinforces professional identity as custodians of fairness and transparency.
- Starratt's (1994) ethical framework for school leadership underscores responsibility, authenticity, and integrity as cornerstones of ethical practice.

Risks & Challenges

- **Ethical Blind Spots:** Leaders may unintentionally prioritize profit over principles – loan scheme with school funds
- **Identity Conflicts:** Misalignment between personal values and organizational culture can cause stress.
- **Pressure & Short-Termism:** External demands may tempt leaders to compromise ethics – paying for your promotion with money, sexually and other forms

Courageous Leadership: Moral and Ethical Bravery

- Rachel's narrative demonstrates that **courage is not the absence of fear** but the willingness to act despite it.
- For principals, **courageous leadership** involves making difficult decisions that prioritise learners' well-being, even when such choices are unpopular or contested.
- Courage is expressed in confronting injustice, challenging unethical norms and practices, and advocating for equity in education.
- Moral courage as a leadership competency (not just a personality trait).

Sinek (2014) argues that:

Courageous leaders inspire trust by standing firmly for values, even under pressure.

Therefore, courage becomes a critical part of professional identity, ensuring that principals lead with moral conviction.

CHOOSING TO BE A CONSCIOUS ETHICAL LEADER MATTER FOR YOUR LONG-TIME REPUTATION, BRAND AND IMAGE

Rachel Kolisi's *Falling Forward* illustrates that:

- Ultimately, principals who “**fall forward**” embody the essence of ethical and courageous leadership: rising with vision, moral bravery, and unwavering commitment to values.
- Rachel’s narrative therefore, serves as a powerful metaphor for educational leadership, reminding principals that professional identity is forged not in perfection, but in the courage to rise after every fall.

Own your own brand story

- You are Powerhouse women in the teaching profession
- Define what success is for you beyond achieving learning outcomes
- Remember success is not just measured in results inly, it's about building legacies, creating opportunities, and owning your brand for your personal and professional identity and independence.

ATTITUDES ARE CONTAGIOUS, MAKE YOURS WORTH CATCHING

PLEASE NOTE THAT

- **Your school leader title gives you authority;**
- “License to lead” comes from ethics and values-in-action, not position.
- **Professional identity is built one decision at a time.**
- Your values and ethics give **you legitimacy.**
- **You must also note that Trust deficit and legitimacy of leadership are important,**
- Public and employee trust is fragile; credibility now depends on visible ethical consistency.

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So,

- **Choose the decisions you will be proud to defend publicly tomorrow.**
- **Remember Brene Brown says**
- **“You are the average of the five people you spend most of your time with”. So, choose your leadership and management circle wisely.**

The Pessimist complains about the wind.

The optimist expects it to change.

BUT

**THE ETHICAL, CAPABLE, AND LEARNING
LEADER ADJUST THE SAILS.**



“A principal is not just the head of a school, but the heartbeat of its vision.”

Thank you

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