

More participation, better results

By [Arthee Rajkumar](#)

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Picture a headmaster. Did you imagine a man? You're not alone. In most people's minds, leadership positions in education are still reserved for men.



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Fortunately, this is changing. My own role as regional head at Curro Holdings, responsible for overseeing business operations at several schools within the group, is a case in point.

It is the job of school leaders to work with all stakeholders in co-creating a positive environment, so that learners can receive a well-balanced, enriching education. Women are especially well-suited to this task. As Sibongile Zulu noted in her 2016 research entitled: [Successful ways of managing schools: a story of a woman principal](#), the majority of women carry innate caring, empathetic traits and possess a tendency to regard school learners as their “own children”. This often translates into academic success for students.

Increasing female leadership is one of the most exciting prospects to emerge in the independent school sector in recent years. Alongside gender transformation in the education space, various other significant school management trends have emerged that are shaping the participative schooling community. These trends are paramount for our learners to thrive, and include:

1. Focus on management and delivery systems

Did anyone ever imagine that “influencer engagement manager” would be a real job title? It has become common knowledge that traditional career options will not necessarily exist for the children of the future. The problem, however, is that the nature of these *jobs of the future* cannot be predicted.

This is why schools should continually update not only their curriculum, but also their policies and procedures related to marking, examinations and reporting. This allows for an ideal environment where children are encouraged to internalise creativity and critical thinking as core skills that will future-proof their careers.

2. Ongoing continued professional development (CPD)

In the past, CPD was implemented only if it was believed that an educator needed extra training to improve their knowledge. That view is changing. Ongoing training is now understood to be an integral part of the education process for educators. Knowledge is constantly evolving, and by supporting staff through capacity building sessions, excellence is sustained.

3. A greater focus on departmental action plans and peak performance sheets

A study conducted by Harvard Business revealed remarkable statistics related to goal setting and success. Of the study sample, 14% had set goals, and these people were shown to be 10 times more successful than those who did not follow a goal-setting practice. Moreover, the 3% of the sample who had consolidated their goals by writing them down were three times more successful than their other goal-setting counterparts.

This study explains why planning must be a central pillar of any successful institution. Many schools are opting to compile departmental action plans and peak performance sheets at the beginning of the school year, using these as a base to track performance throughout the year. Typically, these sheets would detail where a school would want to go, what steps are needed to achieve results, as well as how areas of weakness can be improved.

Traditionally, planning has followed a top down approach, where school executives decided on the focus for the year. The new decentralised approach allows for greater autonomy among staff and ensures schools are working towards common goals. This clarity around goals is transferred into the classroom, with positive impacts on teaching and learning.

4. Empowered in-house committees

For the first time, all levels of staff are coming together to discuss issues impacting across all levels of the school – whether staff members are involved in cleaning, admin or teaching. All concerns are given equal value. Consequently, educators feel that they are recognised as individuals, and this creates a happier and healthier work environment – and happy staff output is crucial for learner achievement. Staff are, furthermore, encouraged to take ownership and responsibility for their departments, and have the autonomy to decide how they would like to develop their areas. This new accountability facilitates change.

5. The rise of Parent Advisory Committees

Learners perform better at school when their parents are involved in their education. The reality is that education is a shared responsibility. Parent Advisory Committees provide a platform where parents can offer meaningful input into the decision-making process, and make the school more accessible.

These trends are bringing about changes that will have a significant impact on how educators impart knowledge and how learners absorb it; a development that will serve our children well in a future that we cannot yet fully comprehend.

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