

South African Standards for Principals: Connecting Theory, Policy, Practice and Context

R.N. (Nylon) Marishane

*Department of Education Management and Policy Studies, Faculty of Education,
Groenkloof Campus, University of Pretoria, 0002 South Africa
E-mail: nylon.marishane@up.ac.za*

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ABSTRACT School improvement is admittedly the main business of school leadership. However, for such improvement to be sustained, a focus on the quality of school leadership is indispensable. To address the issue of leadership quality, the South African Department of Basic Education has introduced a policy on the standard for principalship. The policy outlines the standard a typical South African school principal is expected to meet. Underpinned by the assumption that improving the quality of school leadership requires a strong connection between leadership theory, policy, practice and context, this paper seeks to examine the implications of the new policy for the South African school principals. The paper is based on the review of the literature on leadership practices and the emerging standards for school leadership applied in selected countries. It highlights the importance of providing policy implementation infrastructure and concludes by suggesting possible strategies for effective implementation of the policy.