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Rewarding good school governance

THABO MOHLALA | JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA - Jan 20 2011 13:08

An annual national award that recognises schools which promote principles of good governance and discipline has been launched in Johannesburg and is believed to be a first in South Africa.

The award is an initiative of the Proudly South African Campaign and the CGF Research Institute, an organisation concerned about raising the awareness and need for sound governance practices within business and government.

Known as the CGF -- Proudly South African School Governance Award, the initiative is the brainchild of CGF's Chief Executive Officer, Terry Booysen, who has been a governance specialist for eight years and a partner of Proudly South African.

Several of South Africa's municipalities as well as provincial education departments, (notably the Eastern Cape) are facing serious financial and management problems, partly because of the lack of management expertise and good governance.

Booyesen said he "strongly believes that good governance is inextricably linked to discipline and that schools are the ideal places where this could be cultivated and promoted". He explained that schools that exercise a high level of discipline among its staff and learners perform well, academically and socially.

Booyesen said that principals, as leaders of schools, should be held accountable because it is part of their function to promote and instill discipline among their staff, teachers and learners and this is what good corporate governance is all about.

"The recent incidences of intimidation, violence and crime in our schools across the country, point to a total breakdown of discipline. It means principals as the chief executive officers of schools are failing to instill discipline in their schools and its subjects. Surely, similar to other CEO's in the private sector, school principals also have fiduciary responsibilities and they should also stand the same scrutiny as their business and government counterparts," said Booysen.

"And with this project we believe we can touch every school and positively influence them to put their shoulders to the wheel in promoting good discipline among the school's stakeholders. Moreover, we believe through the positive reinforcement of this initiative ... our children could become beacons of hope to some parents who have lost their ways."

Two respected education management experts, Dr Richard Hayward and Alan Clarke as well as the CGF Research Institute, the South African Quality Institute (SAQI) and Proudly South African will draw up the criteria to determine the winning school in one of the categories of the Proudly South African Homegrown Awards.

Although the criteria and weightings are still being fine-tuned, it will focus on aspects such as:

- individual accountability
- collective responsibility

- group performance
- principal's leadership capability
- the quality of school policy, and
- supporting and promoting local products and services.

Dalene du Preez, the Executive Manager of Marketing and Communications of Proudly South African, said, "we are very excited with this development and believe that the entire country stands to benefit from this initiative as it will, through its implementation and very nature, provide additional assurance of better scholars and future leaders for our businesses and industry."

Each year the winning school will receive a floating trophy and prize money. The award will be divided into three categories: winner, second runner-up and third runner-up. The prize money for the winning school is planned to be R100 000, followed by R50 000 for the second runner-up with the third runner-up receiving R25 000.

"While the main objective of the award is to enhance the capacity of principals to foster good governance and quality management to their schools, academic performance will not be used to determine a winning school. Instead all schools -- based at both urban and rural areas -- will compete on an equal footing," said Du Preez.

The organisers are hoping to raise R5-million to purchase and distribute copies of the seminal book by Hayward, *Making Quality Education Happen: A Guide for Every Teacher* as well as Clarke's book, *The Handbook for School Governors*.

The organizers believe that the books will improve the principals' understanding of governance as well as empower them to deal with practical challenges.

The Call for entry for the Awards will be announced by the Proudly South African Campaign in due course. For more information contact Dalene du Preez at: dalene@proudlysa.co.za / 011 - 327 7778

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