

Principals benefit from Unisa HR workshops

Forty-eight principals from under-resourced schools in Gauteng were privileged to be able to attend two workshops on labour relations management at Unisa this year.

The workshops were made possible by the generosity of the Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM) of the School for Business Management at Unisa.

School principals are tasked with ensuring that their schools are managed satisfactorily and in compliance with applicable legislation and regulations, which includes labour relations matters such as misconduct and staff grievances. However, principals often feel that they are not equipped to do this, as they don't possess the necessary knowledge of labour law and procedures.

In order to help to address this need, the DHRM presented two workshops in 2015 aimed at exposing principals to the relevant legislative requirements and management practices when dealing with these matters.

The workshops included practical scenarios and role plays illustrating typical scenarios in a school environment. Participants thus had the opportunity to apply what they had learnt in the workshop in a simulated context.

The first two-day workshop, hosted at the end of February 2015, was attended by 24 principals from underprivileged schools in Gauteng. Maggie Holtzhausen (project leader, DHRM), Monica Kirsten (also from the DHRM); and Adv. Rean Fourie (a labour law expert) facilitated the two-day workshop.

The second two-day workshop, hosted in early November 2015, was



These principals attended the February workshop.

attended by 24 principals from underprivileged schools in Gauteng, as well as from schools in the Rustenburg area. The workshop was facilitated by the same team as before, with the addition of Adv. Steyn Fourie (a labour law expert), as well as Melanie Buys (an expert in education management matters).

Participants were introduced to the principles relating to discipline in a school environment, with particular focus on the disciplining of educators and other staff members. They learned how to distinguish between misconduct and incapacity (fault and no-fault behaviour of staff members) and how to deal with the disciplinary procedure in each instance.

They were also guided in terms of the legislation, policies and procedures applicable to their specific working environment.

During the first workshop, they learned how grievances should be handled within the school environment, taking into account the

grievance procedure of the Gauteng Department of Education. During the second workshop, criminal law as it may pertain to the school environment was also addressed.

The workshop forms part of a bigger community engagement project, Partners for Possibility, which aims to assist under-resourced schools by strengthening leadership capacity in school principals. Business leaders partner with a school principal for a year with the aim of mobilising and engaging individual school communities to find their own solutions for transforming the school.

Maggie Holtzhausen has been partnered with Elizabeth Lebeze of Mveldezh Primary in the Partners for Possibility programme, which is how Unisa became involved in the project. She is assisted by nine of her colleagues within the DHRM.

Feedback from the workshops was overwhelmingly positive. All the participants said they had benefited beyond their expectations.