EMPOWERING PRINCIPALS TO TRANSFORM SCHOOLS

Graduate School of BUSINESS UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

THE PRINCIPALS ACADEMY

Capitec Foundation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2012, the Principals Academy Trust (PAT) partnered with the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business (GSB) to co-create the Principals Management Development Programme (PMDP), partially funded by Capitec Foundation.

The majority of schools in South Africa's Western Cape Province serve marginalised communities that suffer from destitution, unemployment and high levels of crime—the devastating effects of deeply unequal education and racial discrimination during apartheid.

Recognising principals as the key levers for change, the unique initiative capacitates heads of borderline dysfunctional schools with critical leadership and management skills to:

- Improve the operations and culture of their schools
- Boost learners' academic outcomes and
- Ripple positive change into their communities

The PMDP has evolved over 13 years and is now the cornerstone of a three-year development journey of individual principal mentoring by PAT's proficient former education managers.

Starting with **23 principals**, the programme has by now **enrolled 273 school executives across 11 cohorts**, representing a **positive reach into 25%** of marginalised schools.

It garners an over **90% participant satisfaction rate** in anonymous surveys.

The programme has shown significant gains in shifting principals' behaviour, thought processes and actions, resulting in positive changes in school ecosystems and improved academic results. Until the COVID-19 disruption, participating schools showed double-digit increases in independently assessed systemic tests and school-leaving examination results—since the pandemic-induced set-back, results are improving again.

The initiative has successfully evolved from a postgraduate to a management development programme and has expanded its pipeline to include deputy principals and senior teachers. The Department of Education regularly promotes PMDP alumni to become circuit managers, which extends the reach of the principal peer network.

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Coached principals promoted to circuit manager with Western Cape Education since PAT was established.