

### **Interview questions (general template):**

This template was used to interview school staff (principal, head of department, two teachers, chair of the School Governing Body, teacher union representative and circuit manager/district subject advisor) in 4 schools in Gauteng (low and high performing) and 4 schools in KwaZulu-Natal end of 2018/beginning of 2019.

#### *A. General:*

1. How long have you worked in/with this school?
2. Is the school population (staff and students) stable or is there a high turn-over?
3. Can you tell me what a typical week looks like?
4. What does performance of children look like in this school? How would you explain high/low performance?
5. Who do you think has the power to improve education, in your school and in general (if anyone, any organisation)? How would they need to do that? What stops them?

#### *B. Relations (trust, accountability and capacity)*

6. Can you draw a picture of the people in the school you work/interact with (the school-internal network)?
7. Can you tell me what you work/interact on with each of these people?
8. Do you consider (one of) these colleagues a personal friend (e.g. you meet them outside of school)?
9. Can you answer the following questions for each of these people:
  - a. .... is capable of performing its job/role (1. disagree strongly –5. agree strongly)
  - b. .... looks out for what is important to me
  - c. .... would not knowingly do anything to hurt me
  - d. .... has a strong sense of justice
  - e. .... actions and behaviours are very consistent
  - f. I like ....'s values
  - g. I would let .... have influence over my future/issues that are important to me
  - h. I think .... is fair to me/would not take advantage of me
  - i. It's important to check whether .... meets its obligations to me/my organisation
  - j. .... would manipulate others to gain a personal advantage
  - k. .... keeps commitments
  - l. .... takes advantage of ambiguous situations
  - m. .... would not use confidential information to their own advantage
  - n. .... would not mislead me on purpose
  - o. .... would keep their promise
  - p. .... will keep their commitments
  - q. .... will be honest about their own strengths and weaknesses and capabilities
  - r. I will share information openly with ....
  - s. .... takes advantage of people who are vulnerable
  - t. .... would not mislead us
  - u. .... communicates open and honestly with me
  - v. .... checks up on me (or tries to)
  - w. .... monitors my performance
10. Can you draw a picture of the people/organisations outside of the school you work/interact with?
11. Can you tell me what you work/interact on with each of these people?
12. Do you consider any of these people a personal friend (e.g. you meet them outside of work)?
13. Can you answer the following questions for each of these people:
  - a. .... is capable of performing its job/role (1. disagree strongly –5. agree strongly)
  - b. .... looks out for what is important to me

- c. .... would not knowingly do anything to hurt me
- d. .... has a strong sense of justice
- e. .... actions and behaviours are very consistent
- f. I like ....'s values
- g. I would let .... have influence over my future/issues that are important to me
- h. I think .... is fair to me/would not take advantage of me
- i. It's important to check whether .... meets its obligations to me/my organisation
- j. .... would manipulate others to gain a personal advantage
- k. .... keeps commitments
- l. .... takes advantage of ambiguous situations
- m. .... would not use confidential information to their own advantage
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- w. .... monitors my performance

#### *B. Trust*

1. Do staff feel they are treated fairly by colleagues, principal, management team, SGB, district, provincial, national policy-makers?
2. Who do you trust in your school? Why?
3. Who do you consider to be a role model in your school, as well as outside of the school? Why?
4. Who would you call on when you need a favour (e.g....)? Would they expect the favour to be returned?
5. How would you describe the culture in this school? Do people care about one another (including students, school community)? Is there a sense of shared values? What are they?
6. Do people generally keep their word in this school?
7. Do you feel that your colleagues care for you?
8. Do students/parents feel cared for/respected?
9. How long do you expect to continue working in this school? In the same role or not? Why?
10. How satisfied are people to work in this school? Why/why not?
11. Who would you go to in the school if you had a question/problem with one of your students and needed some advice?
12. How would you describe the school community: are people generally from the same background (culture, religion, race, class, gender)?
13. Do children trust their teachers?

#### *Capacity*

1. What are structures and policies to support collaboration between staff and community (open door policy of principal)?
2. Who are boundary spanners in bringing in new knowledge, connecting the school to other schools/organisations?
3. Who do you collaborate with and about what?
4. Can you explain how school fees were set in this school? Who decided and what were reasons?
5. When/how was the principal appointed to the school? How was he/she selected/ appointed?

6. Competence of teachers: do teachers/you feel competent to teach basic subjects? What initial teacher training and CPD have you received, and still have access to?
7. When was the last time there was a strike/conflict in this school? What was it about? Did the entire staff support the strike/what were differing viewpoints? Were viewpoints reconciled?
8. Do children master the instructional language? Is there support for those who don't?
9. Who was last promoted within the school? What informed the promotion and what did the process of promotion look like (e.g. who was involved, criteria for promotion)?
10. Availability of resources and infrastructure: sufficient?
11. Financial planning in the school: how are budgets decided on and allocated and monitored?
12. Number of days staff were out of school over the last 6 months and why?
13. Do you think students get a high quality education in this school? Why? If not, what could be better? What is needed for this?
14. Would you have liked to go to this school as a child? Why/why not?
15. How would you describe the role of the principal: what is on his/her agenda in a regular week (administrative duties versus instructional leadership)?
16. How would you describe behaviour/motivation to learn of children in the school?
17. After school (private) tuition? Provided by whom, and who goes, how is it paid for, what is the benefit of going (access to exam training)?
18. Does school staff have (paid) jobs outside of school? Why/who/how much time?
19. Is it safe to come to school (both for staff and children)?
20. How would children/parents define the purpose of education/why would parents send their children to school? Are children supported at home to do well in school?

#### *Accountability*

1. Who sits on the SGB?
2. How are principals, teachers, SMT members and SGB members recruited/selected and appointed into their role?
3. How is the SGB performing; are they critical of the SMT, supporting school policy, what were the recent topics of discussion?
4. Is your work evaluated or monitored in some way (formally and informally)? Is so, how and by whom? What would be considered a high standard of work?
5. Have parents actively chosen this school (or is there no alternative)? If yes, what are their reasons for choosing this school?
6. Has the school received visits from the district? When/how often/purpose/outcome of the visit and did it lead to changes in the school?
7. Is there any control over how resources are spent? What happens if resources are not spent according to budget/legislation?
8. Does the school use an EMIS? Who is involved in planning and decision-making and monitoring of implementation of school policy? What does this process look like?
9. Availability and use of student performance data (e.g. AnA)?
10. Is your work reviewed? If yes, by whom, on the basis of what indicators and how often?
11. Are your chances of moving up improved if you perform well?
12. Is the quality and amount of your work important for whether you get a raise or a promotion?
13. Is it important that your supervisor likes you? In what ways, how?
14. Are staff in this school member of a union? Which union has the highest representation in this school? Have they been involved in the school in any way and how?