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Effective Teamwork of Educators in Promoting Colts in Secondary Schools in Vhembe District

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ABSTRACT Teamwork in education between all major stakeholders is regarded as a major contributor to the promotion of effective culture of teaching and learning. The literature review highlighted the reasons why teamwork is essential in secondary schools, types of teams that could be used, team decision-making, problem solving and team evaluation. This study focused on the extent to which the various stakeholders of the secondary schools participate in the effective management of the school. The study also highlighted the various management tools, which contribute to effective teamwork in the schools, namely, organizing, planning, leadership and control.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education aims at helping the learners to obtain or acquire the necessary learning outcomes, skills or knowledge. According to Van der Aardweg (1993), education is purposeful and conscious intervention by an adult in the life of a non-adult with specific purpose of bringing the non-adult successfully to adulthood. For this purpose to be realized, effective teamwork of

educators is essential. Teamwork is an essential tool in different institutions around the whole world. Effective teamwork is of a fundamental importance to educators in secondary schools because without it there will be no effective teaching-learning situation.

According to Bateman (1996) a real team is a group of people with complementary skills who trust each other and are committed to common goals. In the secondary schools, working as a team helps the educators to increase worker interactions and create comrade spirit amongst the members of staff. If groups are to be successful and perform effectively there must be a spirit of unity and co-operation. Members of the team must work well together as a team (Van de Venter and Kruger 2003).

Educators are agents of change and generators of information and knowledge and they should therefore be equipped with effective teamwork spirit that will promote the culture of teaching and learning in schools (Ravhudzulo 1997). Effective teamwork amongst educators should therefore enable educators to work together and complement one another in all school activities. Jacobs (2000) maintains that learning is more of a social activity than an individual one. This implies that we learn from other people and they in turn learn from us. As educators are isolated, they are ineffective in what they do. For teamwork to be effective in secondary schools, both principals, deputy principals, heads of departments, subject heads and the educators should be committed in team spirit (Jacobs 2000).

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

It has been realized that in secondary schools teaching and learning is not easily implemented due to the situation of educators who are unable to work as a team. Lack of effective teamwork leads the secondary schools into the following:

- Poor discipline since educators are divided and thus they can't discipline learners.
- Educators are uncertain, they are not sure if they are doing things the right way.
- Poor results at the end of the year.

3. AIMS OF THE STUDY

In this study, this paper addresses the following aims:

- The main aim of this study is to investigate the importance of effective teamwork with regard to educators in secondary schools.
- The study will also attempt to determine personal attributes, skills or qualities that educators should accumulate in order to describe them as successful during their time of service.

The study will include the following subsidiary aims:

- To determine whether teamwork is necessary.
- Identify barriers of effective teamwork amongst educators.
- Identify the consequences of poor teamwork in secondary schools.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided this study.

The main question of this study is: Can teamwork help to improve the culture of teaching and learning in secondary schools?

The following sub-questions will also be used in order to collect data for this study:

- What are the characteristics of effective teamwork?
- What are the advantages of effective teamwork?
- What are the consequences of poor teamwork?

5. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researcher adopted a descriptive survey design for this study. The design was deemed appropriate since data was to be collected from a relatively large sample over a short period of time. Moreover, the descriptive survey research design was employed because of its suitability in the exploration of social phenomena at a given time. In the same vein, Haralambos and Holborn (2010) maintain that data can be collected over a large sample in a short space of time through survey methods.

Population and sample

A sample of hundred (100) school managers was purposively selected from a population of 300 school principals in secondary schools in Venda. The researcher had to target those school principals in which there was a high probability of honesty furnishing the researcher with the information on the effective teamwork of the educators in their secondary schools.

Data collection instruments

The instruments used to gather data in this study were the semi-structured interviews and observations. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they offered the researcher the opportunity to deviate from the pre-determined questions on the interview guide to explore any unexpected but relevant issues raised by the respondents during interview sessions (Bernard, Burgess and Kirby 2004). The researcher relied also on non-participant observations to complement the data collected through semi-structured interviews. The data collected through the interviews was corroborated with data collected through observations.

6. TYPES OF TEAMWORK

Different types of teams are emerging in different organizations. Even in the secondary schools there are many teams which are being formed from one whole team. This results from many responsibilities and duties to be offered and rendered for the effectiveness and efficiency amongst the educators.

6.1. Vertical teams

A vertical team is sometimes called a command team which is composed of the school manager (principal) and the subordinates (staff) in the formal chain of command who co-ordinate their work for the purpose of achieving a common objective. for example. the school management team (SMT) in their administrative duties (Department of Education 2000).

6.2. Horizontal teams

Three common kinds of horizontal teams are task forces, cross-functional and the committees.

6.2.1. A task force

A task force is designed to accomplish a limited number of objectives or tasks, and is composed of educators from different departments. e.g. a task force responsible for motivational meetings, organizing school days, rewarding best achievements or good behaviour as well as encouraging parents to be more involved in the education of their children (Department of Education 2000).

6.2.2. Cross functional teams

A cross functional team is composed of educators with knowledge to solve operational problems. for example, educators with the necessary computer knowledge to help solve problems in the computer room (Department of Education 2000).

6.2.3. A committee

In the secondary school situation, committees like disciplinary, catering, financial, sports, building, appraisal or fundraising committees can be set aside to handle their areas of responsibilities for the interest of such a school.

6.3. Functional teamwork

Functional teamwork include members of a single department who jointly consider issues and solve problems common to their area of responsibility and expertise e.g. educators who teach Mathematics can form a team in which they will discuss and organize mathematical issues. These teams can be called subject committees (Department of Education 2000).

6.4. School management team

In the secondary schools the school management team is composed of the school manager, the deputy principal, heads of departments, as well as the representatives from the educators. They frequently meet for planning to benefit the whole school.

7. THE BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK

Traditionally teams have not been used heavily in the South African schools but during the last decade the tendency to use teams meaningfully in schools has been increasing. Many top schools today use teams not only to increase productivity but also to solve complex problems, to

create a sense of direction for the school. and to help the school to increase its chances of surviving in increasingly competitive world (Garner 1995). The benefits of effective teamwork are as follows:

7.1. Teamwork is geared for high productivity

Teamwork ensures not only that a job gets done. but also that it gets done efficiently and harmoniously (Reece and Brandt 1990). Teams are also able to achieve a superior level of performance that surpasses not only the performance expectations of individual team members. but also the expectations held by management (Manning and Schmidt 1995).

Sharing responsibility as well as authority across roles and hierarchical levels will create schools in which the various stakeholders of the school respect and trust each other and draw on each other's talents. Blasé and Blasé (1994) are also of the opinion that school managers must encourage and support the expansion of power for each educator. each team operating in the school as a whole.

7.2. Reduction of professional isolation

Teamwork has an immense potential for reducing the professional isolation of educators. allowing the codification and sharing of successful practices and the provision of support (Fullan 1994). Dunham (1995) on the other hand asserts that teamwork enables staff to have a sense of belonging and of shared value and satisfies staff needs for recognition. responsibility and achievement.

7.3. Teamwork is geared for organizational learning

Many researchers argued that teamwork is essential for organizational learning. This means that educators are invited to learn what is going on at every level of the organization so that they can understand how their actions influence others. Senge (1994) argue. however. that people are more intelligent together than they are apart and if you want something really creative done. you ask a team to do it instead of sending one person off to do it on his or her own.

7.4. Teamwork improves school management

Bush and Middlewood (1997) contend that teamwork improves school management and it does so by encouraging norms of openness, interdependence and clarity of focus together with a clear task-driven purpose and explicitly collaborative process.

7.5. Teamwork results in better decisions

Garner (1995) points out that by using teams, it is possible to actively involve a large number of people in making decisions. Active meaningful involvement is the first step in building ownership and commitment. Where teams are involved in making critical decisions, team members are more likely to assume responsibility for their choices and actions and committed to improving their school meaningful ways (Schuler 1995).

8. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study established that many top secondary schools today use teams not only to increase productivity but also to solve complex problems. The majority of the schools have basic structures already in place, for practicing effective teamwork, such as school management teams and school governing bodies. The majority of schools have already established committees, such as the policy making committees, admission committees, budget committees, disciplinary committees and sports committees.

A variety of reasons were advanced by the participants to justify that effective teamwork by educators promote the culture of teaching and learning. Teamwork enables staff to have a sense of belonging and shared value and satisfies staff needs for recognition, responsibility and achievement. Teamwork further enables educators to work together and complement one another in all school activities.

Another striking observation was that in secondary schools, working as a team helps the educators to increase work interactions and create comrade spirit amongst the members of staff. In some secondary schools, parents are allowed to participate in the formulation of school curricula and school policies, determine extra-mural activities, recommend the appointment of educators and assist in the organization of school matters.

Although some teams may be present in the secondary schools, there is no guarantee that there is effective teamwork. These teams need to conform to the basic features of effective teamwork. In addition, the success of these structures depends on the educators who work within them.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Educators should adopt the notion of team planning and team-teaching, especially when they deal with learners with learning problems.
- Educators should be encouraged to consider that collaborative and co-operative approach is essential in secondary schools. Educators who learn together will improve together.
- Principals and heads of departments (SMT) should consider themselves as resource educators because they have a vast experience on school matters because they do attend meetings on school management. They should share their knowledge and experience with the rest of the staff members in their schools.
- Principals should initiate and encourage teamwork spirit among educators. They should organize workshops on effective teamwork at the school level.
- Principals should create and establish a positive and healthy conducive teaching-learning situation, keep educators well informed about what is going on in the schools. This will cause the educators to be involved positively with the feeling that school is theirs.
- Principals should discourage the spirit of selfishness among the educators. Instead educators should be helped that when they share information and their experiences they are enriching themselves and others for the benefit of the learners.

10. CONCLUSION

The study has established that effective teamwork by secondary school educators is an essential tool which improves school management, high productivity and organizational learning. It became apparent from the literature review and the responses that teamwork approach improves the effective teaching-learning situation.

The study has therefore brought out in clear terms that teamwork invites all educators to learn what is going on at school. It enables staff to have a sense of belonging and satisfies the staff's

needs for recognition, responsibility and achievement. Teamwork further encourages norms of openness, interdependence and transparency.

The author concludes that it is therefore imperative that all people charged with the task of leading and managing schools should adopt democratic ways of running the schools. The Department of Education in South Africa requires that all schools be transformed and all relevant stakeholders should be involved in the running of the schools.

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