

Work Environment Factors as Correlate of School Management Teams' Productivity

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ABSTRACT There is a perception that SMTs are not effective in some schools in South Africa. Hence, a huge number of learners in the public schools, particularly in high schools are not getting a good pass percentage in their matric exams. To this end, the study was conducted to analyse work environment factors that affect productivity of school management teams' in Mount Frere Education District. Sixty-four schools, which formed the sample in this study, were selected randomly from the target of 210 schools (population) in Mount Frere Education District. Self-administered structured questionnaire was used to gather information. The results were analysed using descriptive statistics like frequency count, percentages, charts and tables, and inferential statistics of Pearson product moment correlation (PPMC). It was discovered that the work environmental factors as espoused by the literature, negatively affect the performance or productivity of SMTs. The findings in the data analysis prove beyond reasonable doubt that redeployment of educators negatively affects the productivity of School Management Teams in various schools.

INTRODUCTION

The force of changes towards the 'new' South Africa during the 1990s was experienced in many ways. Thus, this situation brought about a number of arrangements that led the apartheid system to be dismantled and replaced by the new order of government. Among all these changes it became evident that there is a need for recognition that the nation should nurture and develop its entire people through education, if it is to thrive in a global economy. To attest to this notion, Thurlow et al. (2003: 1) averred that education has a vital role to play in preparing children and young people to contribute to society and the economy on the basis of their ability and regardless of their colour.

However, some researchers argue that changing the education system to meet South Africa's present and future needs will not be easy (Graham and Jolly 2003: 208). In other words, while there is a widespread recognition that schools and learners should be developed on an equal basis, there are massive historical inequalities which have proved to be challenging (DOE 2001: 2). Hence, some advantageous schools like the former Model C schools in terms of resources have excellent facilities while others, notably in

rural areas, lack electricity, water, sanitation, telephones and basic equipment (Lumby and Bush 2000: 26). It appears that most public high schools are labour providers. The reason for this argument is that learners who pass their matric are not able to further continue their studies, they usually move to the big cities to look for job opportunities (Department of Finance, Intergovernmental Review 1999). On the other hand, those who manage to further carry on their studies at university become skilled labour and contribute to the economy of this country.

However, looking at Alfred Nzo Municipality, Eastern Cape in South Africa which is the focus of this study; a huge number of learners who did not pass matric with required university admission standards are just faced with the prospects of not getting decent jobs in the future. By the way, Alfred Nzo municipality is one of the most populated municipalities in the country (Statistics South Africa 2016). To give a bit of a background to Alfred Nzo Municipality, it is essential to reveal that the municipality is dominated by public high schools and has very few private high schools (DOE 1995b). The municipality is very rural, and even the people who are there are rural oriented. This simply means, there is a lack of civilization, for example, people are

not having access to information, and technological devices. Although this is unfavourable situation, but public high schools contribute to bringing insight, a brighter future and open-minded thinking to the people of that municipality.

Mwamwenda (2004: 7) supported the above assertion, by arguing that school and schooling play a leading role in determining learners' academic performance. Although, on the other hand, Kahlebenburg's (2001: 1,2) findings on schooling and the role of schools learners' achievement and development, reveal that learners' background accounts for variation in learners' performance. When all this information is taken into consideration, it can be argued that a learner's background should not be a determination for academic success. Critical to this view is the fact that school environment, which includes school management team (hereafter, SMT), teachers or educators, and the facilities should be a fertile ground for promoting learning and teaching. To that effect, school environment should be able to offset all other obstacles that could contribute to learners' achievement.

However, there is a perception that SMTs are not effective in some schools in South Africa. Hence, a large number of learners in the public schools, particularly in high schools are not getting a good pass percentage in their matric exams. For example, The Eastern Cape is still under performing with five of its 23 districts, namely, Mount Frere 55.1 percent, Fort Beaufort 56.9 percent, Butterworth 57.1 percent, Dutywa 57.9 percent and Queenstown 58 percent obtaining a pass rate of 50-59 percent (MYPE NEWS 2015). Alfred Nzo municipality's public high schools are not exception to this phenomenon. Hence, this study analyzed the work environment of schools in order to establish factors which could be contributing to the lack of SMT's productivity in Mount Frere.

Objective of the Study

From the aforementioned assertion, the situation left behind a multiple of Grade 12 Learners without exemptions and not qualified to be admitted to various higher learning educational institutions around South Africa. In the final analysis, it appears though that SMTs' poor performance in some schools in South Africa, is exacerbated by other environmental factors which are perceived as inputs or elements of

poor performance. These environmental factors are issues such as, HIV/AIDS, redeployment, absenteeism, discipline, and resources, which are not managed properly. Hence the objective of the study is to analyse the environment factors as correlate of school management team's productivity in Mount frère Education District.

Research Questions

1. Do work environment factors significantly determine SMT's productivity?
2. What is the relative contribution of work environment factors to SMT's productivity?
3. Which of the work environment factors can best determine SMT's productivity?
4. What is the SMT's productivity?

Literature Review

Conceptualisation of School Management Team (SMT)

Wallace and Hall (2002) as cited by Catherine and Craiston (2009) explained a School Management Team as a structure that typically holds considerable responsibilities for the management of schools in South Africa and elsewhere. According to them, these responsibilities include making major decisions on behalf of the school about school policy and practice and the overall running of the school. Furthermore, Ehrich and Craiston (2009) continue to say that such SMTs occupy a powerful place in school-decision making and are key contributors to leadership in the school. Hence, according to Ndimande (2005), well productive school management is the most wanted aspect of any education service. Butler and Christie (1999: 42-43) cited by Ndimande (2005), who undertook a contrastive study of schools with good and poor academic results, have concluded that SMT effectiveness makes a big difference between schools with good academic performance and schools with poor academic performance. Ndimande (2005) highlighted three main features that often characterize schools that perform poorly due to ineffectiveness of their SMTs, namely:

- Unhealthy relationship among education stakeholders which led to low enthusiasm.
- Overlapping of jurisdictions as a result of tasks and responsibilities that are not cleared and specific.

- Educators, learners and management who may have lost a sense of purpose and do not understand why they are at school. They also often feel their daily activities have no direction or meaning. In contrast to the schools that perform poorly, those that perform well are often well-organised and have clear roles and responsibilities defined for everyone. Furthermore, they have clear lines of authority and communication which is perfect. Over and above, staff and learners know what is expected of them. Hence, report by South African National Task Team on Education and Culture (NDoE 1996: 8) stated that the task of management at all levels in the education system is ultimately the creation and support of conditions under which educators and their learners are able to achieve effective teaching and learning.

The very same report also argued that the extent to which effective learning is achieved, therefore, becomes the criterion against which the quality of management is to be measured. From the report, it may be deduced that good management practices coupled with sustained development and effective structures, systems and procedures are likely to lead to an improved culture of teaching and learning and ultimately improvement of academic performance. It can be argued, that effective teaching and learning in the school depends on its leadership and the way human resources are managed. These include the principal and his deputy, heads of departments, class educators, learning area educators, class representatives and learners.

Composition of the School Management Team

In South Africa the personnel composition of SMTs is often school specific with the inclusion of the principal, the deputy principals and deputy head(s). Internationally, Wallace and Hall's (2002) indicated that of SMTs in secondary schools in the UK, membership extended beyond the principal and deputy principal to include one or more senior teaching staff. Wallace and Huckman (2003) as cited by Catherine and Cranston (2004), revealed that in some small schools that consist of fewer than ten teachers all teaching staff could constitute the School Management Team. In their study, they also reported that membership of the team was not au-

tomatic. There are several principles that governing the formation of the SMT, these principles are as follows:

- The necessity of ensuring coverage of major areas of school-wide management.
- The conception of what constitutes a balanced team in terms of personalities and expertise.
- A recognition of existing senior post holders.
- The desirability of fluid membership to allow other staff interests to be included at a particular time (Wallace and Hall 2004: 184).

The Duties/Demands of School Management Teams

According to Ndou (2008) a school-based management structure presupposes a school management team, which consists of the school principal, the deputy principal, heads of department and senior teachers. Ndou (2008) further argued by saying such school management teams were put in place to ensure that the schools culture is dynamic and supportive of an effective teaching and learning culture (DoE 2000: 2). Therefore, it is the responsibility of the SMT to ensure that the school delivers according to its mission, curriculum goals and action plans. The SMT is expected to align the current practices and plans to strategies, structures and systems which bring the school closer to attaining the outcomes of the new curriculum. The DoE (2000: 2) suggested that the SMT is expected to select the best practices for the school to accommodate the diversity of needs which exists in the school as that is in line with its responsibilities. Hence, the School Management Team is supposed to bring practice as close as possible to the broader national intention of the education system with the aim of informing good practice and quality delivery within the whole school development (DoE 2000: 2).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this study, survey research design was adopted. According to Bryman and Bell (2011: 54), survey research design encompasses cross-sectional design, which emphasis the deployment of questionnaire or structured interview on various cases at a particular time with the

intention of collecting a body of quantitative or quantifiable data related to two or more variables. Drawing from the foregoing exposition, the use of survey research design is relevant to this study, since the focus of the study is on SMTs, who are making various cases in Mount Frere Education District.

Population

Mokholo (2012) citing Goddard and Melville (2001: 31), explained population as a group of individuals or events from which a sample is drawn. He said that population is any group that is the subject of research interest. Therefore, the population of this study comprised of schools in the Mount Frere Education District.

Sampling and Sampling Technique

Mokholo (2012) quoting Creswell (2007: 79) succinctly described sampling as selection from population. To this effect, simple random sampling was used in this study. Cooper and Schindler (2003: 164) defined simple random sampling as a technique where a sample for the study is selected from the population. Therefore, 64 schools, which formed the sample in this study were selected randomly from the target of 210 schools (population) in Mount Frere Education District; out of these schools, the researchers randomly selected (87) members of SMT. These schools were considered to be adequate to provide the required information pertaining to the research questions in the study. The following section discusses research instrument used in the study.

Research Instrument

The instrument that was used to collect data was structured questionnaires: the SMT Productivity Questionnaire (SPQ) and the SMT performance appraisal form (SPAF). The main part of the questionnaire contained sections that were comprised of modified Likert scale items and each section was composed of items related to the four research questions. The instrument was sectionalized: Section A was designed to collect data on School Management Teams while other parts contained items on the indicators of variables under study like HIV/AIDS awareness, discipline, training, absenteeism and redeployment.

Validity and Reliability of the Research Instrument

The instrument that was used in this study to collect data which is structured questionnaires: the SMT Productivity Questionnaire (SPQ) and the SMT performance appraisal form (SMTPAF) was validated by the expert in the field of education management, leadership and policy and to ensure its reliability. A pilot study was conducted to verify the suitability of the questionnaires before they could be used to collect data from the respondents. The reliability of the instrument was measured using Cronbach Alpha with high co-efficient value of 8.1 after the pilot study.

Data Analysis

In this study the data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics by calculating the mean scores for the responses to the questionnaire items. For the purposes of this study, a score of below sixty percent (a mean score of 4.2 on a 7-point scale) was regarded as an indication of low organizational commitment given that the global organizational commitment average is from sixty to sixty-five percent. The data from the research instruments was coded, ranked and analysed. Furthermore, the participants' responses to the questionnaire were also coded, captured and analysed. The results were presented using descriptive statistics like frequency count, percentages, charts and tables for clarity. Similarly, regression analysis of inferential statistics was also used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: Do Work Environment Factors Significantly Determine School Management Teams' Productivity?

The results from Table 1 shows that work environment factors of SMTs were jointly significant in determining SMTs' productivity accounting for 3.7 percent variance in the productivity of the SMTs. The remaining 96.3 percent could be due to the effect of extraneous variables which are not accounted for in this model.

The significant joint determinants of SMTs productivity by work environment factors did not occur as a result of errors or chance. Ac-

Table 1: Composite contribution of work environment factors in determining SMT productivity

<i>Model</i>	<i>Sum of square</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>P</i>
Regression	281.547	5	56.309	0.64	0.193	0.037	0.67
Residual	7305.172	83	88.014				
Total	7586.719	88					

Key: SS= Sum of Square; DF= Degree of Freedom; MS= Mean Square; R= Coefficient of Determination; R² = Adjusted coefficient of Determination

According to the data analysis findings, it is very true that there are other salient variables which could account for higher variance of SMT productivity; hence these findings are also supported by Prew's (2007) study. According to Prew (2007), it is not only work environmental factors that affect SMTs' productivity, there are other silent factors like principal leadership style.

Heithwood and Jantzi (2005) cited by Prew (2006), defined a transformational leader as the one who builds a school vision and mission, the one who provides intellectual stimulation to colleagues while providing individualized support that symbolises professional practices and values. Furthermore, transformational principals demonstrate high performance expectations and develop structures to foster participation in school decisions. Christensen (2006) quoting Fullan (2005) undertook a review of school effectiveness literature and found that principals of effective schools communicate goals, share decision-making, create and articulate the vision and support staff. Furthermore, Christensen and Fullan's (2006) study indicated that most critical is to foster the process, support staff, promote learning and promote parental involvement. According to Christensen (2006), the above mentioned management elements reflect those of the transformational leaders.

In many schools the principals assume that they are the only common factor in both the School Management Team (SMT) and School Governing Body (SGB). Brijraj's (2004) study revealed that, if principals use such a position carefully, the principals can control the schools either through the SMT or SGB. Furthermore, according to Prew (2007) citing SADE (2004), there are many recorded cases of principals using their position in the SMTs and SGBs to run the school without conferring with the school staff.

Therefore, various researchers like Motala and Pampallis (2001), Prinsloo et al. (2006) and Prew (2007) believed that redefining the role of

the school management would be another important factor in minimising factors that affect SMTs' productivity. Furthermore, Prew (2007) citing Simeka (2005), believed that there is a need for the promotion of the concept of the self-managing school as part of an overall decentralisation thrust. This was also explained clearly by the Minister of Education when she stated a new vision for the role of principals in South African Schools (Prew 2007 citing Simeka 2005). Therefore, with a change in political leadership occurring, there are a number of pressure points that had to begin to influence school managers and the education system leading to an environment that made change in school management appear inevitable.

According to Prew (2007), the success of any school depends on its relationship with the immediate environment. Hence, Prew (2003) believed that the linkages of trust between the school and the community as well as the local district office can be very rewarding to school management.

Research Question 2: What is the Relative Contribution of Work Environment Factors to SMTs' Productivity?

Table 2 reports the relative contribution of the identified work environment factors on the productivity of SMTs. It can be inferred that there is a positive relationship between the training factor and the HIV awareness factor. A one percent change in the supposed training given to SMTs will lead to a 0.407 increase in their productivity.

On the other hand, the redeployment factor, the discipline factor, and the absenteeism factor were found to negatively affect productivity of SMTs. Furthermore, according to data analysis findings, it was found that an increase in HIV/AIDS awareness resulted in an increase in SMTs' productivity. However, this is strongly supported by the Vasa (2008) study which suggested

Table 2: Relative contribution of work environment factors to SMTs productivity

<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Standard error</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Significance</i>	<i>Remark</i>
Constant	54.825	10.735	5.107	.000	
Training	.407	.283	1.439	.154	Not significant
Redeployment	-.113	.175	-.649	.518	Not significant
HIV/AIDs awareness	.058	.380	.153	.878	Not significant
Discipline	-.312	.425	-.734	.465	Not significant
Absenteeism	-.228	.373	-.612	.542	Not significant

Dependent variable: Total productivity; Level of significance= 5%

that workplace HIV/AIDs committees for awareness could play a key role in improving HIV/AIDs governance capacity in South African workplaces, especially in schools. The researcher further stated that such committees for HIV/AIDs awareness usually represents an opportunity for monitoring the implementation of mandatory rights, and also empowering employees in advocating and communicating such rights.

Hence, Vasa (2008) in his study suggested that an effective and representative stakeholders' committee for awareness offers one of the best means for effective mitigation of the HIV/AIDs impact and the extension of employees' rights and protection in the workplace. This strongly supports the findings of the data analysis of this study, which are that the good health of employees due to HIV/AIDs awareness will increase SMTs' productivity.

Research Question 3: Which of the Work Environment Factors can Best Determine SMTs' Productivity?

It could be stated that all the factors of proxy for work environment predicted SMTs' productivity. However, it was found that their contributions were not significant as shown in table 2; training factors ($B = .407$; $t = 1.439$; $p > 0.05$), redeployment ($B = -.113$; $t = -.649$; $p > 0.05$), HIV awareness ($B = .058$; $t = .153$; $p > 0.05$), discipline ($B = -.312$; $t = -.734$; $p > 0.05$), and absenteeism ($B = -.228$; $t = -.612$; $p > 0.05$).

In Motseka's (2012) study, it was revealed that the main reason for poor performance of many public schools is the SMTs' lack of management skills. Motseka further said that SMTs must be provided with effective management training. However, members of the SMT are supposed to be subjected to performance management contracts. These performance management contracts emphasise the importance of perform-

ing and meeting objectives as stated by the Department of Basic Education (Motseka 2012).

However, this is also supported by Hellriegel et al. (2012) when emphasising that employees have to undergo management training in order to perform very well. According to Hellriegel et al. (2012: 90), training is a learning experience aimed at improving the ability of staff members to perform their jobs. These writers further say that training focuses on improving the productivity of staff members in their current jobs. This strongly supports the data analysis's findings that training contributes best to SMTs' productivity.

Research Question 4: What is the Level of the SMTs' Productivity?

In Table 3, only six respondents have a score of between 0 to 30 while 84.7 percent have score of 31 to 60 but these findings contradict the findings of the study conducted by Motseka (2012). However, according to Motseka (2012) citing Huysmanas and Dyers (2006), the management of schools is not as easy as one might think. Hence, the researchers believed that the management of schools is generally a complex matter. Therefore, researchers like Motseka (2012) and others believed that silent factors such as the size of the school buildings, the curriculum, funding, staffing and enrolment figures require well-trained people to manage schools. Hence, according to Motseka (2012) citing Doty and Salas (2010), management training, work experience and the leadership qualities of the school managers are panacea to effective management of schools. Motseka (2012) quoting Ardington

Table 3: Frequency distribution of SMTs level of productivity

<i>Productivity score</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
0-30	6	5.1
31-60	112	84.7

and Leibbrandt (2012), said that ineffective school administration leads to a chaotic school environment. They further said that in the African school system the management of schools is undertaken by the School Management Teams (SMTs), which are composed of the school principal, the deputy principal(s) and the head(s) of department.

The findings of the research conducted by Motseke (2012) in township schools revealed that the SMTs in the majority of township schools were generally ineffective. The researcher cited a number of reasons like the poor management of township schools, the apartheid system and its impact on schooling, lack of training for school managers, lack of resources, and overcrowding. This was also emphasized by Jansen (2003) and Selod and Zenou (2003). Therefore, it was revealed that poor management of township schools contributed negatively to effective teaching and learning, and also led to higher stress levels among township school teachers and that affected negatively SMTs' productivity in those schools.

CONCLUSION

As the Department of Education is seen as failing to manage the HIV/AIDs pandemic within schools, it is the responsibility of the Department to provide proper guidance to SMTs on how to deal with the impact of HIV/AIDs in various schools. In this study, it was revealed that in many instances redeployment took place against the will of educators involved making them lose morale and become demotivated. Hence, there is an urgent need for proper guidelines to be followed by SMTs on how redeployment must unfold.

As shown in this study, the Department of Education is not providing enough training for SMTs, yet the departmental policies are ever changing. Therefore, it is advisable that trainings provided by the Department must be continuous as new teachers are coming and old ones going. In this study it was revealed that educators are frequently leaving the teaching fraternity as a result of frustration because of the lack of resources. Most respondents said that the Department of Education (Eastern Cape) is putting very little effort into distributing enough

resources in schools. Therefore, it must be noted by the government that public schools depend solely upon the Department of Education in terms of resource allocation. In other words, it should be known that the availability of resources is the key for any business productivity. Furthermore, in this study it was found that the Department of Education was complacent by its lack of adherence to the law, at all levels turning a blind eye to what is happening on a daily basis in the schools. So the SMTs should be equipped with various ways and strategies of dealing with unruly students as well as teachers.

Absenteeism of both educators and learners became a norm or culture of schooling especially in black public schools. In this study, it was shown that school management is unable to control absenteeism as a result of certain rights of educators and students such as sick leave and maternity leave. Hence, it is advisable that interventions as well as control measures should be provided by the Department of Education in order to deal with this persisting problem of absenteeism. Furthermore, it is the researcher's view that if all the relevant stakeholders in education can partner together, the impact of negative work environment factors affecting SMTs' productivity can be minimised.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department of Basic Education should fully equip schools with resources that are necessary for the smooth running of the school. The Department of Basic Education must supply schools with well-trained educators. It means that teachers to be redeployed are supposed to be teachers who are qualified to teach in those posts, and should not be teachers who are redeployed with the aim of finding space for them because they are in excess at their respective schools. It is advisable that the Department of Basic Education should revise the current disciplinary strategies because by the look of things the current disciplinary strategies are not working well for the schools. The Department of Basic Education should provide training to SMTs as well as teachers. No one should be allowed to be an SMT member without proper training, especially on leadership and management, financial management, project management and other matters.

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