

Part 4

Higher Education, Lifelong Learning & Social Inclusion

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Training Middle Managers of South African Public Schools in Leadership and Management Skills

Abstract

The purpose of this conceptual explanatory research is to highlight the importance of training of Middle Managers or Heads of Department (HoDs) in leadership and management in South African public schools. Leadership responsibilities in schools are becoming more complex to the extent that principals can no longer be sole leaders in schools. The achievement of effective teaching and learning through leadership and management generally requires middle-level leaders such as heads of departments or subject leaders, to be trained. It focuses on “why” or “what caused” HoDs in schools to be trained in leadership and management. HoDs are former class teachers promoted to the role of supervising other teachers so their training and guidance about leadership and management skills by more experienced facilitators, may equip them with updated abilities, interests and knowledge for teacher leadership. Training facilitators guide HoDs who may not possess such skills, through formal training. The identified topics, aims and objectives, content regarding theoretical knowledge, practical skills to be acquired, attitude towards work and the necessary support materials were used in the presentation and these encouraged an interactive participation and engagement throughout the training process. The leadership and management programme was helpful in identifying what should be taken into consideration for leading and managing teachers and learning tasks. The skills developed by HoDs would assist them in producing a pool of highly qualified and committed teaching workforce in the field of education. A number of approaches were suggested for HoDs to increase their ability to act effectively and authoritatively based on ability and competence.

Keywords: Heads of Department, leadership and management, teaching and learning, teacher supervision, facilitation, teacher development, support

Introduction

This conceptual paper explores frameworks and innovative ways of supporting lifelong learning through school middle management training in leadership and management. The purpose of the paper is to highlight the importance of funding the training of HoDs in South African public schools because people are the main assets of schools. Leading and managing departments/phases and teachers in public

schools requires developing a highly skilled workforce (Crane & De Nobile, 2014). With the onset of the democratic era in South Africa, devolution of responsibility to schools and the growth of school-based management have impacted upon the role and workload of the team of school leaders (Swanepoel, 2008). Schools operate within a legislative framework set down by national, provincial or state parliaments and one of the key aspects of such a framework is the degree of decentralisation and changes in the educational system (Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu & Van Rooyen, 2010). These demands on education leadership are difficult tasks HoDs can perform since most HoDs from former disadvantaged public schools in South Africa lack experience and training in supervising teaching and learning in schools (Swanepoel, 2008). Therefore it is essential that training in leadership and management be part of lifelong learning for leadership and management excellence in schools.

Schools are important organisations in any educational system and therefore require experienced leaders with a positive attitude and the ability to create a school environment that encourages cooperation and communication among staff members, education stakeholders and learners. Leadership and management also impacts on how teachers teach and are managed in schools. A solid leadership is the most essential key to school success, thus the need to capacitate HoDs with leadership skills to bring the school into success. HoDs are middle managers and the term 'middle managers' is used to describe individuals who are in formal roles of responsibility and who form the middle leadership level in schools. In recognition of the increasingly important role they play in schools, recent literature has been referring to them as middle leaders (Gurr & Drysdale, 2013; Koh, Gurr, Drysdale & Ang, 2011), however in this chapter, the term 'Head of Department or HoD' will be used. Excellence in schools can only result from quality teaching and learning acquired through effective leadership and management (Kruger, 2003). HoDs with good leadership and management skills develop self-confidence and are able to improve performance during teacher leadership.

Professional development of HoDs in schools

Professional development of teachers is a priority that should be well managed for school performance to improve. Equipping HoDs in leadership and management skills may result in lifelong learning, personal development and professional development. The acquired knowledge should help improve schools, and most importantly, learner performance as well as maintain a high standard of teacher leadership and supervision (OECD, 2009). Therefore, all organisations should ensure effective teaching and learning takes place through leadership and management, using a sensible blend of tools, methodologies and approaches. Staff development should be an ongoing process carried out because of the needs of professions/occupations, citizens, and societal changes (Mizwell, 2010). The end result should be qualified leaders who are talented, determined, knowledgeable and capable.

HoD training for leadership in education was first conducted in October 2015 in the Mpumalanga Province for 10 days with 150 participants. All selected participants engaged in class teaching matters and were responsible for the effective functioning of their departments as well as organising relevant extra-curricular activities to ensure the subject discussed promoted learner education in a proper

manner (Kruger, 2003; Bambi, 2012). The facilitators involved in the programme had subject matter expertise in Leadership and Management; and they executed clear planning for the development and/or finalisation of the training through additional materials (power points, case studies, role plays, practicals, etc.) necessary for the module. The training highlighted the importance for all organisations to ensure effective leadership and management focusing on teaching and learning, assessment of teaching, implementation of the law and policies and educational administration matters in schools, at all levels of education. It was also deemed helpful to identify what should be taken into consideration for support of teaching and learning tasks. Training addressed the needs of HoDs and societal changes. The expert facilitators' core purpose was capacitating HoDs with leadership and management competence in education.

During the training of HoDs the starting point was to enable HoDs to lead staff and students to achieve common goals. Long term skills would be a continuous and indefinite establishment of relationships. Formal training of HoDs involved problem solving and hands-on activities about leadership and management to equip HoDs with skills to address practice based issues in the school environment. The identification of the learning goal was the starting point and training focused on leadership and management support for the achievement of set goals and accountability for actions (Borko, 2012; ACME, 2002). Current constraints were challenged while new possibilities were explored to ensure accountability and support for the achievement of goals and for sustaining development (Clutterbuck, 2011). The facilitators used various core skills and were able to create rapport; paying attention to content and process; keeping an open mind; reflecting on development issues; asking and probing questions; and identifying limiting assumptions and beliefs to be able to give and receive feedback (Clutterbuck, 2011). Relationships built developed into friendship. Trained HoDs may later become expert leaders to newly appointed teachers in schools.

The preparation and training gap that exists in the leadership and management of HoDs was addressed through extensive discussions about importance of leadership and management. Individual and group presentations encouraged the different participants to discuss the ongoing controversy over what constitutes leadership and management to support teaching and learning. During such interactions, a relationship of trust and collaboration developed (Borko, 2012). Throughout the training, the focus was on identified topics, aims and objectives, content regarding theoretical knowledge, practical skills to be acquired, attitude towards work and the necessary support materials to be used in the presentation of leadership and management. Training materials and needs were adapted to the local situation in line with the changing requirements, and consideration was given to work related developments.

Participants' roles and responsibilities included managing the curriculum in compliance with applicable legislation, regulations, ELRC resolutions and Personnel Administration Measures (PAM). The selected participants had no prior training on leadership and management so the teaching philosophy adopted was a learner (adult) centred approach. The teaching approaches used were community of inquiry requiring a social and cognitive presence; mastery of learning entrenched through instructions, assessment, feedback; and corrective procedures. The participants were

grouped in teams to encourage peer assisted learning through learner engagement and collaborations. The experts facilitated the training process using resources such as data projectors, laptops, worksheets, study guides, readers and links to articles on leadership and management. At the end of the 10 days' training, all participants were evaluated in leadership and management skills to assess the achievement of outcomes.

Leadership and management by HoDs

The concepts leadership and management, though used interchangeably in South African school context, studies show that they are different (Bush, 2008; Christie & Lingard, 2001). Leading and managing are distinct, but both are important for influencing people, working with people and for the achievement of common goals. These goals if shared by leaders and their followers are achieved more effectively and easily because followers and leaders work together (Yukl, 2006). The influence process is purposeful in that it is intended to lead to specific outcomes of being able to lead and motivate the actions of others to achieve certain goals by taking initiatives and risks (Kotter, 2010). Leadership and management are different in that, managers though willing to work with people to solve problems, do so with minimal emotional involvement while on the other hand; leaders are emotionally involved and seek to shape ideas instead of reacting to others' ideas (Kotter, 2010). The central concept is influence rather than authority but both are dimensions of power.

HoDs develop the ability to enforce policy during their leadership of teachers while giving support to teachers' areas of need. Both leadership and management are important because schools require the objective perspective of the manager as well as the vision and commitment that wise leadership provides. Managing teaching and learning should be a practice concerned with the agreed operations of educational organisations and Bambi (2012) states that management activities should be directed towards efficient and effective utilisation of organisational resources in order to achieve organisational goals. Therefore the achievement of educational aims must be purposes agreed by the school and its community. Caution is made against organisations which are over managed but under led because they may eventually lose any sense of spirit or purpose and crash shortly thereafter.

The quality of leadership is what makes a significant difference to school and learner achievements in many parts of the world, including South Africa. Schools require effective leaders and managers if they are to provide the best possible education for their learners (Bush, 2008). HoDs as teacher leaders play a dual role function; they are teachers as well as leaders/supervisors of particular phases and subject areas in the schools. Gary Yukl (2006) defines this leadership as "the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" (Yukl, 2006, p. 8). Bush (2008) has argued consistently that educational management should be centrally concerned with the purpose or aims of education. Therefore HoDs' engagement in class teaching are being responsible for the effective functioning of the department and organising relevant/related extra-curricular activities to ensure that the subject/learning area or phase and the

education of the learners, should be promoted in a proper manner (Kruger, 2003; Bambi, 2012).

HoDs should shape the goals and motivate the actions of others by initiating change to reach existing and new goals. Therefore their training in leadership and management should influence others' actions to achieving components central to the phenomenon of leadership (Crane & De Nobile, 2014). While we can distinguish management from leadership conceptually, in reality we often find the two roles coexisting in the same positions and the same person. Teacher leadership also 'coexists' in one person because teacher leadership roles have been performed by teachers who are responsible for teaching as well as providing leadership (Bambi, 2012).

The role of Heads of Departments in schools

Globally, HoDs are perceived as resource providers, administrators, monitors, liaison officers, managers, department representatives, communicators and mediators (DBE, 2011). HoDs or phase and subject leaders are teachers with knowledge of the subject area, and are responsible for managing teachers and subjects in the grades and across the phases (DoE, 2000; DBE, 2011). Their roles and responsibilities also include managing the curriculum in compliance with applicable legislation, regulations, Education Labour Relations Committee (ELRC) resolutions and Personnel Administration Measures (PAM). Therefore, both leadership and management are expected from the same individual (Day, Harris & Hadfield, 2001). As teacher leaders they are accountable for teaching and learning outcomes whereas previously their accountability was for input into learning processes only (Loius et al., 2010). HoDs also have to coordinate intervention strategies as well as approaches within the subject department to ensure teachers teach accordingly.

The recognition and importance of HoDs has led to increased attention to preparing them, not only as individual leaders, but also on the context in which they work, to best use their leadership competencies to improve learner performance (McCauley & Brutus, 2011). Acquisition of this powerful source of learning for enhancing leadership skills requires HoDs to know far more than they already do. Key to HoD leadership is teacher development for organisational success and improvement emanating from HoD teaching and leadership competency (Gurr & Drysdale, 2013). For HoDs to acquire competency, they require support and guidance in leadership and management to enhance their teacher support skills. Therefore HoDs should be "hands-on" leaders, who engage with curriculum and instruction issues; are not afraid to work directly with teachers; and are involved in teaching themselves (Hornig & Loeb, 2010).

Methodological approach

This conceptual research focuses on the concept or theory that explains or describes the phenomenon Middle Managers Training on School Leadership and Management in South African Public Schools. The term HoDs or 'middle managers' refers to individuals who are in formal roles of responsibility and who form the middle leadership level in schools (Hannay & Ross, 1999; Wise, 2001). Heads of

Department (HoDs) are phase and subject leaders. In recognition of the increasingly important role they play in schools, it is important that middle leaders be trained, developed and supported with leadership and management skills to manage teachers and the constant changes in curricula (Gurr & Drysdale, 2013; Koh, Gurr, Drysdale & Ang, 2011; Turner & Sykes, 2007). In order to manage and supervise teachers they have to have knowledge of the subject area, and manage teachers and subjects in the grades and across the phases (DoE, 2000; DBE, 2011; Sharitha, 2013). They coordinate intervention strategies as well as approaches within the subject department to ensure that teachers teach accordingly (Louis, Dretzke & Wahlstrom, 2010; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson, 2010). All these skills require innovative ways of support and training. Training HoDs should be part of lifelong learning for solving problems of non-preparation and lack of training in leadership and management.

Implications for practice within the South African context

Different HoDs have different needs based on their leadership experience, knowledge, skills, and expertise. In most cases formal leadership training may prove to be of necessity while in other cases HoDs may possess some knowledge of leadership and management from having acted in such a position. Most newly appointed HoDs struggle to manage issues related to teacher supervision, and such HoDs appreciate development in leadership and management to become effective in teacher and learner supervision. This means school leaders have to explore the full potential of the HoDs before organising the leadership and management training, to help support HoDs for teacher supervision in schools (Feilden, 2005). All HoDs, in the training programme, experienced and inexperienced, face different teacher leadership and supervision challenges because of the constant changes in: the curriculum, the new instructional methods, the advances in technology, the changed laws and procedures, and learners' learning needs. This means that being in the HoD position does not necessarily mean HoDs have required skills and capabilities of leadership and management. Every new position requires keenness to learn and develop. Therefore it is important that HoDs take advantage of training related to teacher supervision to become better at what they do as well as become indispensable to the employer (Clutterbuck, 2011). Through professional development HoDs may experience better and more rewarding working days because of the acquired expertise, a key quality of an effective leader. Feedback given during training sessions regarding leadership and management skills brings in new knowledge while different experiences of addressing challenges gives HoDs the opportunity to talk about their professional development (Feilden, 2005) and to share how they have improved in expertise and work abilities (Mizwell, 2010).

Conclusion

This paper makes a contribution to the understanding of the importance of funding the development of HoD leadership and management skills for a more effective teacher commitment. The study found that the acquisition of leadership and management skills for effective teaching and learning by HoDs were positively related to improving learner performance and teacher commitment. This means that

improved leadership behaviours may result in improved teaching and learning, teacher motivation and individual commitment. The more empowered the HoDs are in leadership and management skills, the better the performance in schools. Leadership and management play important roles in determining levels of commitment of the teachers in the particular school. This study suggests that funding should be provided for HoDs to be trained to provide guidance, information and expertise through leadership and management. The aim is to accomplish the core business of the school, namely, effective teaching and learning. There is a need for more leadership and management training programmes to improve performance in schools through effective leadership and management. HoD leadership and management skills might be an effective strategy to boost teacher's commitment towards effective teaching and learning in the school, thus, the emphasis on specific and sustained attention to the development of HoD leadership skills, as a central part of the wider teacher's development agenda. Trained HoDs will help the schools to practise suitable leadership style in order ensure teachers are committed and responsible in their work.

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