Effective structures for collaboration as an aspect of school management: Implication for whole school development.

by

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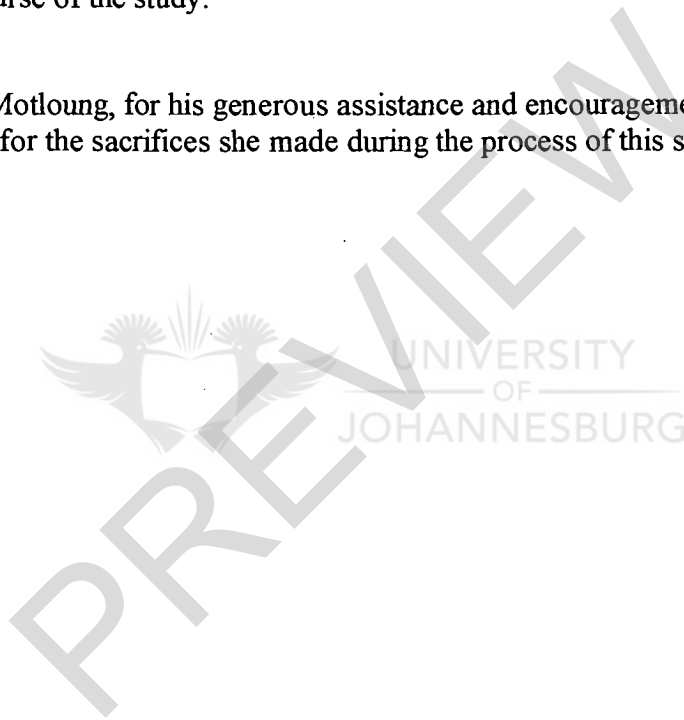This research is dedicated to my parents Maria and Molete.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SINOPSIS

Een van die groot uitdagings waarvoor skoolhooofde en onderwysers te staan kom, is om skole so effektief te bestuur dat die onderrig-leerkultuur bevorder word.

Die doel met hierdie navorsing was om effektiewe strukture vir samewerkings as 'n aspek van skoolbestuur en die implikasies daarvan vir heel-skoolontwikkeling te ondersoek. In die konteks van veranderende politieke en onderwysomstandighede wat 'n direkte uitwerking op onderwys het, is dit noodsaaklik dat skoolhoofde en onderwysers gepaste effektiewe strukture implementeer om skole te bestuur.

In hoofstuk een word die navorsingsprobleem duidelik uiteengesit. Die navorsingsdoel, navorsingsmetodologie, afbakening van die ondersoek en uitklaring van sentrale konsepte is ook bespreek.

Hoofstuk twee bestaan uit 'n literatuuroorsig oor effektiewe strukture vir samewerking as 'n aspek van skoolbestuur en die implikasies vir heel-skoolontwikkeling. Die literatuurondersoek dui daarop dat effektiewe strukture vir samewerking aspekte soos gedeelde verantwoordelikheid, betrokkenheid en samewerking insluit. Daar word ook aangetoon dat samewerking van onderwysers in die daaglikse bestuur van die skool noodsaaklik is om hoë prestasiestandaarde te behaal.

In hoofstuk drie word die navorsingsontwerp en –metodologie bespreek, asook die formulering van die vraelyste oor effektiewe strukture vir samewerking as 'n aspek van heel-skoolontwikkeling. 'n Kort uiteensetting van die respondente se vraelyste met betrekking tot die navorsing oor skoolhoofde en onderwysers se persepsie van die bestuur van hulle skole asook van biografiese inligting word gegee.

Hoofstuk vier handel oor die analise en interpretasie van 'n geselekteerde steekproef van die empiriese data.

In hoofstuk vyf word die verband tussen die navorsingsbevindings van hoofstuk twee, drie en vier aangetoon. Die belangrikste bevindings van hierdie navorsing is dat deelname en kollegiale ondersteuning van skoolhoofde en onderwysers lei tot positiewe werkverhoudings en beter bestuur van skole. Aanbevelings en onderwerpe vir verdere navorsing word gegee.

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION OF THE RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The research explores effective structures as an aspect of school management with implications for whole school development. One of the main tasks of a manager/principal is to create, maintain or adapt effective structures for collaboration that will promote efficiency and harmony of the school. Principals should be conversant with how these effective structures of collaboration will influence school's performance and explore ways of managing them. To form a logical argument, the first part of this chapter deals with the introduction of the research, followed by the problem statement, aims of the study, method of research, the demarcation of the research, clarification of concepts, plan of study and conclusion.

These effective structures of collaboration should be in line with transformation and democratisation that entails accountability and transparency. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996 (RSA, 1996: 14(b)) requires that schools be transformed and democratised. Educators are now expected to make critical decisions in the management of the school to ensure that the school is managed and administered efficiently and effectively.

One of the biggest challenges schools face is to determine what type of effective structures for collaboration best meet the school's needs (Kolb, Osland & Rubin, 1995: 523). It is evident that management structures in schools need to be reviewed. A major concern is the management structures used by the principals in schools that led to the decline of effective teaching and learning in the past.

The development of school effectiveness depends on educators' ability to diagnose the school's problems, to identify solutions and to adapt and adopt the solutions to the school's quality of life. The challenge that faces principals is to move away from inadequate management structures for managing educators and to adopt new ways of

thinking. They expect and accept much less from educators than is potentially available in the management of schools (Carnall, 1990: 27). Having discussed the introduction the researcher will then outline the problem statement.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In view of the preceding background the research problem can be encapsulated by means of the following questions:

- Which effective structures for collaboration are necessary as an aspect of school management for whole school development?
- What is the perception of principals and educators in respect of effective structures for collaboration as an aspect of school management?
- What guidelines are necessary to help principals to manage effective structures for collaboration towards whole school development?

Having outline the problem statement the researcher will then present the aims of the research.

1.3 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The general aim of this research is to explore the nature of effective structures for collaboration as an aspect of school management towards whole school development.

In order to achieve the general aim, the specific objectives of this specific research project are to:

- investigate the essential aspects of effective structures for collaboration as an aspect of school management towards whole school development.
- examine the perception of principals and educators in relation to effective structures for collaboration.
- determine the guidelines necessary to help principals to manage effective structures for collaboration.

The researcher will then discuss method of research.

1.4 METHOD OF RESEARCH

A literature study will be undertaken to form the theoretical foundation and for the empirical investigation. The essential aspects of effective structures for collaboration as an aspect of school management will be taken up in a structured questionnaire in order to investigate the perceptions of principals and educators as to which effective structures for collaboration they believe to be part of whole school development.

The quantitative method will be used as a research method. Data will be analysed statistically to infer meanings that lie hidden within the data (Leedy, 1993:248). As indicated above questionnaires will be used as the instrument to collect data. A questionnaire is an instrument with open or closed-ended statements to which the respondents must react (De Vos, 1998:89). In this research project closed–ended questionnaires will be used.

1.5 DERMACATION

This research will explore structures for collaboration and its implication for whole school development. The research on effective structures for collaboration is restricted to schools in the Free State Province. The research sample will include educators and principals in the Reitz District in the Free State Province. The procedures for sampling are discussed in chapter three of this research. The research project is on the management of whole school development (WSD) and 26 M.Ed students are involved with it. The management of WSD was assumed to consist of the following aspects, namely:

- management of the school;
- management of the community; and
- management of educators.

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1.6 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

1.6.1 Effective structures or organisational structures

Structure is simply a description of what people do and how they relate. Organisation structure is a grossly simplified description of jobs and relationships (Bush & West-Burnham, 1994:109). Structure embodies both a formal description of roles, authority, relationships and practices within the organisation; and also the pragmatic notion that structural design should promote and facilitate organisational effectiveness. Structures are created to distribute and co-ordinate the work of people in the pursuit of organisational goals and objectives. An organisational structure is a specific framework of establishment posts in which people carry out certain actions, and are so grouped that they can pursue a common goal (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:164).

Effective in the context of an organisation, is the optimal relationship among production, quality, efficiency, flexibility, satisfaction, competitiveness and development (Gibson, Ivancevich, & Donnelly, 1994:25). An effective organisation separates tasks and allocates them to appropriate individuals and groups without producing gaps and overlaps. It develops effective formal and informal work units. It effectively co-ordinates the work of different individuals and groups (Kolb, Osland & Rubin, 1995:514). Effective organisational structures encourage and support learning from change (Carnall, 1990:10). Principals are encouraged to implement effective structures in the management of schools.

1.6.2 Collaboration

Collaboration is a process where educators see each other as resources for professional growth (Freese, 1996:9). Educators observe each other teaching and strive to help one another to improve. The researcher argues that working together for whole school development by implementing effective structures for collaboration will support enhance teaching and learning. Through collaboration educators use their abilities to make maximum use of available resources and available time to realise the objectives of the organisation. Through collaboration educators build effective structures to improve teaching and learning and transform their own practices or respond to changing environmental circumstances collectively. According to Stoll and Fink (1996:88) collaboration is

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where educators choose, spontaneously and voluntarily to work together, without an external control agenda.

1.6.3 Whole school development

Whole school development means purposing the same, working together, having a sense of community, getting on with one another, acknowledging individuality, knowing what's going on in the school generally, having an effective leader/manager (Bennet, Crawford & Riches, 1992:72). Whole school development is a holistic growth, unfolding of knowledge, improvement, advancement and involvement by all the school inhabitants in the school's activities.

According to Gibson, Ivancevich and Donnelly (1994:67), school/organisation development has certain distinguishing characteristics:

- it is planned and long term;
- it is problem oriented;
- it reflects a systems approach;
- it is action-oriented;
- it involves change agent; and
- it involves learning principles.

School development is a planned process that relates collaboration among educators in two ways. Firstly, it requires collaboration among educators in the selection, planning, implementation and evaluation of selected priorities (Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1994:10-11). Secondly, it stimulates collaboration by bringing together educators to pursue various activities. If educators plan and work together they are more likely to achieve agreed goals than if they do not. Collaboration could increase the morale, confidence and effectiveness of individual educators as well as the effectiveness of the school as a whole. The purpose of whole school development is to ensure that everybody has a hand in painting the big picture—in this case to implement effective structures for collaboration (Wilkinson & Pedler, 1996:39), that is, getting everybody to improve education.

1.6.4 School Management

Management is a specific type of work in education which comprises those regulative tasks or actions executed by a person or body in a position of authority in a specific field or area of regulation, so as to allow formative education to take place (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:55-56). According to Lunenburg and Orstein (1991:15) most definitions of management emphasize the following:

- getting things done through and with people;

- the effective and efficient attainment of goals and objectives; and

- the process of planning, organising, leading and controlling.

In view of these definitions management is a specific type of work which is goal-oriented and consists of a process which involves people. School management can therefore be broadly defined as a process of working through people to accomplish school goals efficiently. The purpose is to enhance teaching and learning.

Having clarified important concepts, the plan of study will now follow.

1.7 PLAN OF STUDY

In **chapter one** the introduction and problem statement are provided to highlight the problem. It outlines the aims of the research, methodology of research employed, and it clarifies important concepts to be used in this research.

In **chapter two** a literature research will be undertaken to explore the concept of effective structures for collaboration in relation to school management as an aspect of whole school development.

In **chapter three** the research design, research instrument and sampling will be discussed. A description of the empirical investigation will be provided. The questionnaire will be discussed and the course of the research will be briefly discussed.

Chapter four deals with the analysis and interpretation of a selected sample of the empirical data. The discussion will include the validity and reliability of the research instrument and a comparison of the independent groups by stating hypotheses and analysing the appropriate statistical data.

Chapter five provides the summary and findings, recommendations as well as topics for further research.

1.8 CONCLUSION

The problem of the research project was provided and elucidated. The aims of the research were clearly stated to indicate what the researcher intends to achieve with effective structures for collaboration as an aspects of school management. The method of research was stated to indicate the area in which the study will be conducted. Important concepts were clarified. Lastly the plan of the research was provided. The discussion now turns to the relevant research literature on effective structures for collaboration.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the nature and scope of the problem under investigation in this research was highlighted. This chapter will provide the relevant research literature with regard to effective structures for collaboration as an aspect of school management. This chapter is organised in the following way: (1) importance of effective structures for collaboration, (2) organisational development, (3) collaboration, (4) creating favourable conditions for collaboration (5) effective structures for collaboration (6) collaborative leadership, (7) implications of effective structures for collaboration, and (8) conclusion.

The present learning system has profound implications for the way management structures in schools are structured. The new requirements for life long learning demand a move towards more collaborative structures in schools through contextualised learning experiences and cohesive curriculum. Furthermore the school inhabitants are challenged to re-think their current practices with regard to aunthentic assessments and instruction flexibility (Stoll & Fink, 1996:129).

2.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE STRUCTURE FOR COLLABORATION

Effective management structures are not permanent but subject to change and development in order to incorporate new demands made upon the school (Bush, & West-Burnham, 1994:10). Collaboration is essential for effective management structures. Principals cannot manage their schools in isolation but require the effort of every member of the staff. It is necessary to involve educators in one way or another in the management of the school. Various duties and tasks will be delegated to individuals and teams. In this way principals will include educators in the decision-making process

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and provide opportunities for them to experience a variety of responsibilities that can enhance whole school development.

The current management structures prevailing in schools should be restructured to move towards more collaboration. Effective structures for collaboration, that will enhance the culture of teaching and learning. To abandon the structures that are unproductive and obsolete in favour of effective structures for collaboration.

Effective structures for collaboration demand that principals should work with and through others, on objectives that are far too big for a person to achieve alone. This can be achieved by the use of appropriate processes and flexible structures and by treating educators as respected individuals who each have a valued contribution to make in the school (Mabey & Iles, 1994:30).

Effective organisational structures for collaboration will ensure that everyone is informed about expectations and other related activities (Reddy, 1999:181). If collaboration is built into the organisation there will naturally be open discussion and most importantly, life-giving communication through organisation.

The challenge is to create effective structures for collaboration that will enhance the potential of teaching and learning. With effective structures, educators are increasingly learning together (Holly & Southworth, 1989:79). The complexities introduced by the present learning system Curriculum 2005 creates one compelling reason for educators to learn to work together.

The researcher argues that introduction of whole school development is likely to raise a number of challenges for educators and pupils in schools. The adoption of this new approach, namely, whole school development may challenge the existing structures for teaching and learning and require educators to re-examine their current management structures

This research argues that educators should work together for success in schools.

Principals too, should work together with educators. The principals need to devise ways of working together, which will provide effective structure for collaboration to support the school's development into a unitary whole. The educators are urged to work together with the explicit aims of improving learner performance and the learning environment through effective structures of collaboration.

Collaboration, as part of effective structures is essential, noting that a school as an organisation, is collective. Without most or all members of the teaching staff being involved with and committed to teaching, the prevailing mission, namely, the culture of teaching and learning (COLTS) will not succeed. Collaboration is essential seeing that the principal can neither single-handedly imposes his mission nor does he always have sufficient time and resources to be free of other tasks (Holly & Southworth, 1989: 56).

Effective structures for collaboration will assist the principal to share tasks and share decisions with educators. Devolution of greater responsibility to educators improve decision-making and accountability through collaborative school development (Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1994: 29). Thus, ability of principals to foster effective structures for collaboration is vital for the whole school development. Hierarchical forms of decision - making are quickly disappearing with principals now expected to consult and reach consensus with a wide range of individuals and groups (Dimmock, 1993: 175).

Having discussed the importance of effective structures for collaboration, organisational development will follow.

2.3 ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (OD)

Organisational development (OD) is a set of behavioural science based- theories, values, strategies and techniques aimed at planned change of the organisational work (Porras & Robertson, 1992: 27). The purpose of OD is to enhance individual improvement and to improve organisational performance. According to Cummings and

Worley (1993: 22) organisational development is a system wide application of behavioural science knowledge of the planned development and processes for improving an organisation's effectiveness. French and Bell (1995: 28) define organisational development as long - term effort led and supported by top management to improve a school's visioning, empowerment, learning and problem solving process through an ongoing collaborative management of organisational culture.

The researcher aligns himself with the three preceding definitions. Problems like poor morale of educators, low productivity of results and inappropriate structures, that is, structures that do not encourage collaborative structures, will be challenge / considered to increase teaching and learning in schools.

Effective structures for collaboration are essential for whole school development. The basic aims of organisational development are to enhance congruence between organisational structure, processes, strategy, people and culture, to develop new and creative organisational solutions; and to develop the school's self - renewing capacity (Beer,1994:27).

According to French and Bell (1995:53 and Beer 1994:29) organisational development (OD) encourages collaboration between organisation managers and members in managing culture processes. OD encourages participation in problem solving and decision - making by all levels of the organisation that are hallmarks of organisational development. The researcher asserts that organisational improvement is an ongoing process in the context of a constantly changing environment.

Having done the discussed organisational development, the discussion of collaboration will follow.

2.4 COLLABORATION

This research argues that educator– learner relationship is the major obligation to

which educators are held responsible for teaching and learning as the primary source of rewards in teaching (Liebermann, 1990: 167). The relationship that educators establish with fellow educators or with other adults will and must be judged by their ability to make educators' relationship with learners more productive and more satisfying. Effective structures for collaboration enhance the relationship among educators and learners, educator with educator as well as educators and parents. This relationship will help towards achieving whole school development by involving all stakeholders in the management of the schools.

Effective structures for collaboration enhances co-operation among educators. Co-operation serves educators well as they work to understand and apply new ideas, methods and materials to improve teaching and learning. Educators who work closely together on matters of the curriculum and instruction find themselves better equipped for classroom work (Liebermann, 1990: 68).

The researcher reasons that effective structures for collaboration will not only assist educators to be better equipped for classroom work, but will also encourage group-work among educators. The habits and structures of group-work have enabled educators to attempt innovations in the curriculum and instruction that they could not have implemented as individuals. Educators who work together will achieve a level of instructional sophistication, which they would not ordinarily reach by working alone. In this regard effective structures for collaboration encourage collaborative group-work processes.

Collaboration seems to support learning best if it makes thinking explicit (Biott & Easen, 1994:96). One's mental processes are reflected when one has to put ideas into words when talking. Effective structures for collaboration play an important role when educators put their ideas into action towards whole school development. Effective structures for collaboration are for a joint venture or effort. Through working and learning together both learners and educators develop a sense of who they are and what they can or cannot do (Biott & Easen, 1994:203). They learn about their own and each

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each other's strengths and weaknesses as those are revealed in particular circumstances and contexts. Thus the researcher espouses the implementation of effective structures for collaboration.

Effective structures for collaboration enable educators to take an active role in the management of their classes, structuring the learning process in response to learners' production and create an orderly climate to which learners are expected to contribute (Jordan, 1994:92). An active role by educators and learners will assist in improving teaching and learning in the school. That is, educators and learners will be active participants to ensure the existence of a collaborative school.

In collaborative schools, educators see each other as resources for professional growth and work with the principal toward the common goal of school improvement. According to Smith (1991:127) there are certain elements of a collaborative school, namely:

- the belief that the quality of educators is greatly determined by what happens at the school site ;
- the conviction that instruction is most effective in a school environment characterised by norms of collegiality and continuos improvement;
- the belief that educators are responsible for the instructional process and accountable for its outcomes;
- the use of the wide range of practices and structures that enable administrators and educators to work together on school improvement; and
- the involvement of educators in decisions about school goals and means for implementing them.

Having discussed collaboration discussion on creative favourable conditions for collaborative learning will follow.

2.5. CREATING FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS FOR COLLABORATIVE LEARNING.

Effective structures for collaboration assist in creating a conducive environment for learners to learn. It is important that educators create conditions for learners to belong and contribute in classrooms, both for their own benefit and for them to learn to support one another's learning.

According to Biott & Easen, (1994 : 207) educators should create conditions like:
- offering opportunities for learners to learn social competence in situations where they can make and act upon, sharing understandings of how to be co-operative with others and assertive for themselves;
- providing a wide range of paired and group activities and also to encourage learners to consider working with partners on some occasions when they are completing the same individual tasks, so that they compare and talk about what they are doing; and
- spending time and listening to learners when they are working collaboratively and giving learners time both to find ways to work together and to develop ideas.

It is not learners only who should work collaboratively, educators and principals and stakeholders should also work collaboratively for whole school development. That is, educators and principals should work as colleagues. In order for educators and principals to work often and fruitfully as colleagues action on all fronts is required. The value that is placed on shared work must be both said and shown (Liebermann, 1990:88). The opportunity for shared work should be prominent in the schedule for the day, the week, the year. The purpose for working by implementing effective structures for collaboration should be compelling and the task sufficiently challenging. Through the collaborative structures, educators and principals acquire the capacity to understand to challenge and ultimately to transform their management structures to be effective.

Having discussed favourable conditions for collaborative learning, effective structures for collaboration will now follow.

2.6 EFFECTIVE STRUCTURES FOR COLLABORATION

According to Carnall (1990:66) an effective organisation provides conditions for innovation, shares responsibility, expression of thoughts and needs, meaningful partnerships, dialogue, reflection on feedback and participation and lack of status differential. From the researcher's schema an effective school should allow the pursuit of common goals and implementation of plans. In a collaborative schools educators are allocated certain tasks to pursue common goals and implement plans. These tasks are performed without enforcement. Co-ordination is provided through appropriate and effective structure for collaboration. Effective structures for collaboration assist to perform these tasks to ensure that the sharing of responsibility is done correctly. That is, all stakeholders will be actively involved in whole school development through proper co-ordination of activities.

The process of managing whole school improvement needs careful planning and consideration if development is going to affect whole school development (Osler, 1994:135). Educators and principals should work together with a sense of common purpose and a feeling of a common aim and ethos for the school. That is, trust, expression of needs, flexible leadership and collaboration should be part of the daily management of the school.

It is not effective to predetermine organisational structures to meet the demands of a turbulent environment and uncertain tasks (the present changing and amendments of educational policies), thus, the growth of interest in more flexible effective organisational structures for collaboration. These organisational structures are determined by the demands of the task and the shared values of organisational members (Bush & West Burnham,1994:113).

The researcher will then discuss collaborative leadership.

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