

Unit 4: Fire Fighting: Some Common Issues Encountered by Inspectors

INTRODUCTION

As a community, the school has its own administrative structures and has managerial problems which have to be resolved or quenched effectively. These issues which directly affect teaching and learning are encountered frequently by inspectors in their daily operations.

Examples of these common issues which require “fire-fighting” include those related to: ambiguities in school organisational structures, effects of local cultures on education, how to effect curriculum changes, how to cope with stress in a working environment and how to resolve conflicts.

As an inspector of schools you should be acquainted with effective methods of approaching these commonly occurring issues.

AIM

To enable you, as an inspector, to understand some of the problems and issues you are likely to encounter when supervising or inspecting schools and to identify some strategies which can assist in overcoming them.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of this unit, you as an inspector will be able to:

- describe the administrative structures of different types of schools and relate them to curriculum management requirements
- list main types of culture groups found in the immediate community
- identify cultural norms prevailing in different types of schools and how these influence teaching and learning
- describe how inspectors facilitate and implement curricular policy change
- list common causes of stress in schools and devise methods of reducing it in the work environment
- use effective methods of resolving conflicts.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES

Various schools have different administrative structures depending on the level of education provided, size of school and type of proprietorship. These structures should facilitate the achievement of the pupils in the school. Unfortunately some structures have not changed to meet the demands of delivering the present curricula.

Activity 4a

Draw an organisational chart of a typical primary or secondary school in your district.

How does this structure help in the improvement of the teaching and learning of the pupils?

As an inspector you should be aware of existing school administrative structures. You should support acceptable structures, but either remove or modify structures that are a hindrance to educational development.

CULTURAL NORMS

For the purpose of this unit, culture is defined as the way of life, beliefs and traditions observed by a particular community.

Cultural norms are expected standards of behaviour, beliefs and ways of life of a particular community. Elements of culture in a community include language, dress, beliefs and traditions.

Some elements of school culture are: language, dress, school regulations, routines, school mission and motto. Examples of influences of culture on teaching and learning include influence on communication style, class management and curriculum.

Activity 4b

List types of cultural practices found in your district.

How are these cultural practices likely to influence the teaching and learning activities?

Which of these cultural practices would you promote and which ones would you discourage?

MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM CHANGE

From time to time, most governments decide that change in education is necessary because of the need to:

- improve the education system
- respond to change in society or technology

One of your roles as an inspector is to assist schools to introduce new curricula as directed by government.

Activity 4c

What curricular changes have been taking place in your district?

What role have you played in these changes?

What problems have you encountered and what steps have you taken to overcome these problems?

Activity 4d

The Ministry of Education has identified the need to change the content and methods of teaching geography in schools. What steps should you take in order to introduce the change?

As an inspector, you should be aware of certain steps worth following when introducing curriculum changes. Some of the steps are:

- interaction with curriculum developers to change the curriculum
- sensitization of teachers
- trialling of material if appropriate
- evaluation and reviewing of the material
- dissemination of material to schools
- training of teachers in the implementation of the curriculum
- monitoring and evaluation
- reporting on the findings

Activity 4e

As an inspector you have identified the need to introduce computer science in schools. However, you are aware that the schools lack a relevant syllabus and equipment.

How would you assist these schools to introduce computer science?

MANAGEMENT OF STRESS

Stress in a working environment, or on an individual is a condition during which there is a feeling of tension and unpleasantness due to high demands on the individual both physically and mentally.

The following are some of the common causes of stress among teachers and heads of schools:

- poor planning
- poor time management
- shortage of support resources
- poor management structures
- poor human relations among workmates
- inability to cope with changes in roles
- poor school environment
- excessive workloads.

Activity 4f

Describe how an inspector can help to alleviate the causes of stress listed above.

An individual officer can cope with stress by undertaking the following:

- know the signs and symptoms of stress
- understand the stages of stress
- understand how the stress response works
- know what causes your own stress
- know how to cope with it.

Activity 4g

List the physical signs of stress that you see in teachers, and forms of behaviour that indicate stress.

From your own experience, identify a typical school situation that caused anger and unpleasantness among staff members. How did you as an inspector, assist members of staff to cope with this situation?

Would you still do it the same way today?

People reveal stress in a number of ways. Among these may be:

- overdrinking and oversmoking
- sweating easily
- lack of concentration and interest
- indecision
- feeling helpless
- being resentful
- giving up easily
- being moody and holding grudges.

RESOLVING CONFLICTS

A conflict is an open and serious disagreement between two parties with clashing opinions, beliefs or values.

In a working environment conflicts are not good because they cause stress and disrupt normal working programmes.

The following are examples of causes of conflicts:

- clash of personalities
- lack of management skills
- poor communication skills
- clash of professional expectations
- tribal prejudices
- jealousy

Activity 4h

List common conflicts in schools, and explain their causes.

An inspector should be aware of a variety of strategies for resolving conflicts. Some of these are:

- use of clear communication
- consultation with adversaries
- transparency in dealing with all parties
- separate conflicting parties
- identify and isolate the causes of the particular conflict
- use of available regulations
- use arbitration methods
- use of counselling skills

Activity 4i

Read the following case study carefully:

A new headteacher posted to a school makes new rules and regulations which are very unpopular with teachers, pupils and parents. Eventually, both teachers and students boycott classes while parents call for the removal of the headteacher. The matter is reported to the inspector.

How would you resolve this conflict, if you were the inspector to whom the matter was reported?

SUMMARY

This unit should enable you, as an inspector to become conversant with some of the common management issues encountered in schools and how to approach them. This aspect of the inspector's work is often called "fire-fighting".

It normally requires tact, resourcefulness, transparency, respect for all parties and their opinions, impartiality and above all good human relations.

REFLECTION

Having gone through the strategies on fire fighting, do you think that given an unexpected situation, you would be able to select appropriate strategies to deal with the situation?

REFERENCES

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