

SECTION 8

Staff Development

Introduction

Staff development in the education service may be defined as the planned process designed to improve the effectiveness of teachers, individually and collectively, by enhancing their knowledge and skills in response to modern information, fresh ideas and changing circumstances with the intent of improving, directly or indirectly, the quality of pupils' education.

Staff development programmes, therefore, must aim at raising the competence of teachers, stimulating their attitudes and improving their theoretical and practical understanding of the subject matter they profess. Teachers, being individuals, have differing needs and, for that reason, a wide range of training opportunities must be available in all schools.

Checklist:

- (1) Have guidelines been issued by the Ministry of Education on staff development?
- (2) Has guidance been given on when and how often staff development should take place?
- (3) Through training, have Headteachers been made aware of the wide range of professional development opportunities which exist within schools?
- (4) Are teachers' professional associations encouraged to participate in the provision of in-service training?
- (5) For those courses which lead to additional qualifications do guidelines exist on how to identify the most suitable teachers?

Policy Suggestions

It is essential that a policy statement is formulated by the Ministry of Education and issued to all schools. This should cover the provision of:

- planned and structured learning experiences for groups of teachers;
- short courses or experiences which benefit the individual;
- approved courses which lead to additional qualification.

To implement such a range of programmes adequate time and finance must be made available.

Time could be found by:

- utilising part of the holiday period when pupils are out of school;
- having a longer day for teachers than for their pupils;
- regulating a specified number of days, say, one or two each term, to be set aside for staff development.

The budget for professional development must cover three main areas:

- in-school training;
- local in-service courses;
- longer courses leading to additional qualifications.

To ensure that a comprehensive staff development programme is provided by every school within a restricted budget the emphasis must be on the first of these three areas.

The staff of teacher training institutions must be involved in both school and local training initiatives. By doing so, teacher trainers will come to see and understand current problems faced by teachers and, as a result, pre-service training should become more relevant, fitting and realistic.

Procedures for Consideration

A comprehensive staff development programme should place more emphasis on the 'on-the-job' component than others which take place out of school. Good leadership which encourages self-help developments, designed by staff and taking place within the school, must be the backbone of professional development activities. The release of teachers, with the possible provision of temporary appointments to cover teachers away from school on courses, makes longer courses much more costly.

The appraisal process identifies strengths and weaknesses of individual teachers. This can be analysed for the school as a whole, allowing an appropriate staff development programme to be designed by the Headteacher. In addition to training sessions for all other forms of staff, training for individual teachers should be considered. These could include preparation of a discussion paper for a departmental meeting, visiting other departments or schools, participating in team teaching and a range of other activities which expose the teacher to a wider horizon of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

The introduction of school development planning also has a major influence on the content of in-school programmes. In essence the process is cyclical with Development Planning leading to self-evaluation; this in turn is related to appraisal, hence professional development without which development planning would fail. Finally, if it is found that the teachers in the school are not adequately updated in their knowledge and skills the development plan will have to be modified.

References:

Turning the Tables on Teacher Management

Chapters 6, pages 27-30
8, pages 37-38
14, page 59
22, pages 91-93

Why Delegate?

Chapters 2, page 15
6, pages 27-28

Training and Support for Headship in Africa

Chapter 5, pages 38-46

Teacher Morale and Motivation in Sub-Saharan Africa: Making Practical Improvements

pages 18-20