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MODULE ONE

UNIT TWO

Styles of Management

Introduction

As we have seen, the head should play a critical and determining role in achieving the central purpose of a school. The extent to which a head succeeds in attaining the school objectives and fulfilling the principles included in the philosophy or mission statement depends on how skilfully a suitable management style is developed and used in a specific context. A successful management style will depend largely on the head's own personality, as well as on his/her training to realise that there is a range of ways of working with people. It should be remembered that the particular style of management will affect the school's tone either adversely or positively.

The aim of this unit is to explain the various styles of management that the head can develop and use.

Individual study time: 3 hours

Learning outcomes

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- explain various styles of management
- identify the strengths and weaknesses of each style
- describe the circumstances in which various styles of management may be best developed and used
- appreciate that there is not 'one best' style of management
- understand the importance of varying the style of management depending on the circumstances.

Styles of management

For you to be an effective head a knowledge of different styles of management that may help you to achieve the school objectives will certainly be useful.

Activity 2.1

- (1) From your own experiences, how would you describe your own everyday style of management?
- (2) Considering your line-manager (perhaps the District Education Officer), how would you describe his or her everyday style of management?

20 minutes

Comments

No two managers have exactly the same way of doing things; life would become too predictable and dull if they did. If a manager is regarded as successful by those whom he or she is managing as well as by society at large, then perhaps we might excuse almost any form of management style. Although management textbooks may argue for particular styles, in fact if you study famous leaders from within your own country you may well find that they display characteristics of less favoured styles. As you read the following descriptions, see if you can name people known to you, perhaps through the media, who fit each description. Note that we have included arguments both for and against each style.

Autocratic style

The head who subscribes to this style of management determines school policy alone and assigns duties to staff without consulting them. Directives are issued and must be carried out without question and in the prescribed manner.

Where people are coerced, controlled, directed and threatened, individual initiative may be stifled and self-motivation may be discouraged. This style involves very little sense of the leader being accountable to anyone; he or she may do very much what they like. In schools it may lead to low morale amongst both staff and pupils which may, in turn, become the root cause of strikes, riots, and staff turnover.

On the other hand, an autocratic style may provide a degree of certainty for those beneath the leader. They may feel safe because they do not have to be involved in solving problems. The autocratic leader usually has great self-confidence, a clear vision of what needs to be done, and the political skills to get things done. Many great figures in world history have been autocrats.

Laissez-faire style

In theory, the head who uses this style of management believes that there should be no rules and regulations since everyone has an 'inborn sense of responsibility'. Such a situation may well exist amongst mature, experienced teachers, but how would it work with new, young teachers fresh from the 'freedom years' of university or college? This style of management (or maybe mismanagement), where the head sits back and allows everyone to do as they please, might lead to anarchy and chaos, which would hardly be conducive to the provision of quality education.

But as the laissez-faire (literally let-do) style is opposite to the autocratic style, many of the criticisms of the latter become arguments in favour of the former. Thus individuals have to think for themselves and individual initiative and hard work may be well rewarded. A laissez-faire environment may be more creative and fulfilling for those involved.

Democratic style

In this style, the head believes that the staff should be involved in decision-making processes. Decisions are arrived at after consultation with the staff, and even with the

pupils. A democratic style allows freedom of thought and action within the framework of the mission and objectives of the school.

Available skills and talents can be used optimally through delegation and a sense of belonging, as well as promoting creativity and a higher degree of staff morale. This style is based on the belief that where people are committed to the service of ideas which they have helped to frame, they will exercise self-control, self-direction and be motivated. All these ideas will promote job interest and encourage both staff and students to set their own targets and find the best way of achieving them.

But democracy may not always work very well, when, for example, there is a lack of clarity as to how binding decisions will be reached. For example, in multi-party states where there are too many parties (or one party states where there are too many factions), it may be extremely difficult to reach a consensus. You might also like to consider how a democratic style differs from a laissez-faire style, and why clear leadership is still essential.

Transactional style

It has been argued that the transactional style (or Nomothetic-Idiographic in some textbooks) may be the most effective style since it seeks a compromise between stressing organisational demands or goals and individual needs.

The head who subscribes to this style appreciates the need to achieve organisational goals while at the same time ensuring that the individual needs of staff members are not ignored. Although the head sticks to the rules and procedures, he or she also aims at achieving school objectives without upsetting people too much in terms of their needs.

It may sound as though achieving this balance between the needs of the organisation and those of the individual is quite simple. In fact, heads have to make decisions like this many times every day. For example: Should Teacher A be allowed time off in order to chase up a personnel matter with the registry? Should the money raised by the PTA be used to purchase more textbooks or to renovate the place where food snacks are sold? Only by analysing many decisions like this will you be able to see whether he or she inclines more towards the needs of the organisation or the individuals, or achieves a true balance between them.

Contingency style

One important function of the head is to communicate effectively to the staff the philosophy and objectives of the school and thus to gain their commitment to them. The head needs to realise that effectiveness in management depends on being able to diagnose and adapt to the dynamics of ever-changing situations. A contingency management style is where the head 'rides the waves', or deals with each problem as it arises.

A useful contingency approach is that of the Path-Goal Model, which states that an effective manager clarifies the means or paths by which subordinates can achieve

both a high performance and job satisfaction. The motivation may be an appropriate reward and a focusing on paths or behaviours which can lead to successful job completion. This suggests that if some of the hurdles and barriers to motivation can be removed, a better performance by subordinates will result. Whatever approach is adopted will depend on individual employee characteristics (for example, ability, self-confidence and needs) and the task characteristics (for example, the objectives and targets required).

In more simple terms, this style suggests that because we know that heads and teachers will be faced by problems and issues every day, what we need to plan is how best to equip them to be able to handle these issues confidently and with a minimum of stress.

Activity 2.2

Here we want you to review how a teacher in your school might improve his or her performance. Consider a representative teacher in your school.

- (1) List some of the hurdles and barriers faced by this teacher.
- (2) Suggest six actions you could realistically take to enable the teacher become more effective in the school.

45 minutes

Comments

Everyone is faced with hurdles and barriers every day. Perhaps the best thing we can do is to develop in ourselves and our staff (and the pupils) skills to be able to handle many different types of situation. Thus developing oral and writing skills, and interpersonal skills (relating and working with other people) should give us more confidence to handle difficulties and to be more effective. Of course, you will also need to help both individual teachers and the staff as a whole with personal welfare and employment matters and in their professional development.

Activity 2.3

Consider yourself and each of the five management styles considered above.

- (1) For each style give an example of a recent occasion when you have behaved in a style similar to the description.
- (2) Place the five styles in a rank order which reflects your own preferred approach to management. You might compare your answer with someone else who has done this exercise.
- (3) Get a colleague to tell you what style or styles he or she thinks you display.

20 minutes

Comments

You will probably find that you display elements of each style. It would be wrong to suggest that any one style is right and another wrong, since each may work in a particular situation. You might be surprised by the difference between how you perceive yourself and how others perceive you!

Case study

Read carefully through the case study below:

Pleasantways High School

Pleasantways is a middle to high income co-educational high school located in a low-density residential suburb of a large city. The grounds cover 25 hectares and there are 32 classrooms, ten science laboratories and eight technical/vocational rooms. There is an administration block with all the usual offices and incorporating a staffroom, hall and library.

There are 45 members on the teaching staff including the head and his deputy, senior master and senior lady and they are all graduates. The support staff comprises a bursar, two typist/clerks, four office orderlies/messengers and 20 general workers, who are directly supervised by a caretaker. Only 20 of these staff live in the local area, the rest travelling up to 20km to reach the school.

The student body numbers 1056 and are drawn not only from the local area (53 per cent) but also from two satellite high-density (low to middle income) areas up to 20km away. Students from the satellite zones are served by the city's bus company. Buses, however, do not enter the school grounds, instead they drop and collect students at a bus stop on an extremely busy public road.

There is a prefect body to assist in the smooth running of the school. They are led by a head boy and girl and are entrusted with certain duties, delegated by the school executive, with whom they meet once a fortnight.

The academic week is five days of eight 35 minute periods. Every student does a core course of English, Local Language, History, Geography, Mathematics, Science (either general or specific discipline) as well as one subject from Art, Technical Graphics, Woodwork, Food and Nutrition or Fashion and Fabrics. There are ministry-appointed heads of department for each subject except the technical/vocational group where there is one each for Technical Subjects and Home Economics. The number of periods to be taught per week for each subject/year group is laid down by the ministry.

The head expects every staff member and student to participate in the co-curricular programme by enrolling for one sport and one club option. Sports options include (in the appropriate season) Cricket, Soccer, Rugby Football, Hockey, Tennis, Volleyball, Basketball, Badminton, Table Tennis, Athletics, Swimming and Netball. Club options include Needlework, Music, Chess, First Aid, Debate, Current Affairs, Drama, Art, Science, Woodwork, Weightlifting, Fitness and Gymnastics. Sports practices are held on two afternoons each week as are clubs, and inter-school fixtures for sport occur each week.

Assembly for the whole school is held three times a week in the hall, conducted in rotation by two members of the executive, who only enter the hall once the staff and student bodies have assembled. Attendance is compulsory for all.

Activity 2.4

Many management decisions are needed to ensure that Pleasantways High School runs smoothly and effectively:

(1) Which style of management would you use to reach decisions on the following components of decision-making in the school:

- the timetable;
- the co-curricular programmes;
- a fire in one of the laboratories;
- homework policies;
- the prefects' duties;
- a bus strike?

(2) Why would you use the particular style you have selected in each case?

30 minutes

Comments

We are not going to suggest a particular answer here, since the answers will vary with the initiative and the personality of the individual. In all these areas clear policies are needed. The way in which you decide to form them will depend on such factors as:

- your own expertise in each area
- the extent to which other people (whether individuals or groups) have a vested interest in the policy
- the level of expertise of these people and their ability to communicate effectively
- the degree of urgency of the task.

Summary

From the above discussions and activities on management styles, you should now be able to see that no single style can solve or be a cure for all problems arising in management situations. Problems do not arise so much from a 'bad' style of management but rather from the wrong choice of style for that occasion. Success in the management of a school by a head will be more certainly assured if the appropriate style of management for a particular situation is used.

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