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## MODULE ONE

### UNIT THREE

#### Needs Identification

##### Introduction

In your central role as head of your school you need to be clear in your mind about what factors will most likely result in the success of your administration. One of the key factors will be the clarity of your understanding of the various needs and requirements of the different sections or groups that make up the school. This clarity will depend on your understanding of your position in the school community.

The aim of this unit is to assist you, as the head, in the difficult task of identifying the needs of the school. To enable you to do this, you first should be able to identify the needs of the various components which, together, make up the sum total of the school's needs.

Individual study time: 6 hours

##### Learning outcomes

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

- explain the meaning of the title of this unit
- identify the various sections or groups whose needs constitute the needs of the school overall
- identify the needs of each of these groups and relate them to the school's overall needs
- suggest strategies that you could utilise to identify the needs of these groups
- attempt to work out evaluation strategies that can be used to check whether the various needs have been adequately identified and satisfied.

##### Terminology

##### *Activity 3.1*

Consider the meaning of the title of this unit 'needs identification' and briefly explain what you understand by it and why it may be difficult to do.

10 minutes

##### Comments

In considering the above activity you may have looked up in a dictionary where

various meanings of the root words 'need' and 'identify' and their derivatives are given. The remarks made in the introduction to this unit may also have helped.

Thus you should have deduced that 'needs identification' refers to what you require to enable you to do your work more effectively.

But to say this is easier than doing it for various reasons. Firstly, your own needs as an individual are forever changing as you grow older and more mature; secondly, the nature of your job, whether as teacher or head, continues to evolve, partly because of the results of the development of your own country, but also because of new inventions and the changing relationship of the human race to planet earth. Thus to identify and satisfy both our personal and professional needs is a complex business.

### **Identifying needs**

The needs of the head and the school

You no doubt noted that there is a lot of common ground between the head's needs and those of the school. However, it must be made clear that the head has needs of his or her own, over and above those that are purely the needs of the school.

### **Activity 3.2**

- (1) List and briefly describe five of your own individual needs as a school head.
- (2) In a second list write down five needs of your school.
- (3) What differences do you notice between these two sets of needs?

30 minutes

### **Comments**

Among the needs you may have as head of a school are:

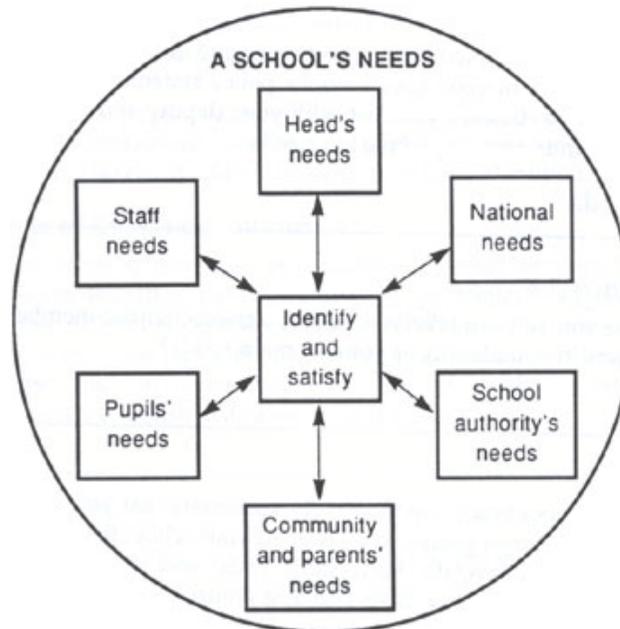
- adequate academic and professional qualifications
- a full knowledge of the methods and techniques of educational practice
- an ability to provide professional leadership to all sections of the school community
- an understanding of the interdependence of the various sections of the school community
- sound knowledge of school finance, including accounting procedures
- an ability to understand each part of the school curriculum and how each part relates to the learning programme as a whole
- an ability to plan ahead, and to bring such plans to full fruition
- an ability to communicate with, motivate and harmonise the various sections of the school community to work in the interests of the school
- a capacity for sound public relations with those sections of the public with an interest in the school
- a capacity to work effectively and efficiently with, and through, other people, singly and in groups
- a full understanding of both the national goals in education as well as the mission of the school.

In your consideration of the needs of the school you may have included the following:

- adequate infrastructure and equipment
- adequate funding to meet capital and running costs
- a caring, helpful and involved community and parent body
- central government's support, funding and assistance in line with what other similar schools receive
- a committed head to manage the school effectively
- a suitably qualified, experienced and devoted staff, capable of delivering the curriculum
- a pupil population that is committed to making full use of the educational facilities provided, and obtaining an education that enables them to realise their fullest potential
- a sound, acceptable purpose or mission to guide the school towards worthwhile objectives and targets.

These comments should make it clear that, as the school head, you need to identify and satisfy both your own needs and those of the school. Fig 2 helps to illustrate this point.

Fig 2 A school's needs



As the head you will have to identify the school's needs, your own needs, as well as the needs of all the other sections and groups involved in the school. How this should be done should become clearer as you proceed with this unit.

### **National needs**

You will need to base your school's mission and objectives on a sound understanding of national policy statements made by the central government which affect education at school level. Apart from such documents as Education Acts, there may be such statements of intent as:

- education for self-reliance
- education for development
- education for affirmative action (to redress disadvantaged groups)
- commitment to policies for providing certain types of education, such as a polytechnic education.

It is absolutely necessary that you fully understand, after debate where necessary, and implement national policies in education as spelt out by your government. Thus you will need to ensure that your own school mission statement is in line with central government policy statements. No head should consider operating against the grain of a government's policies.

### ***Activity 3.3***

Identify and list the main needs in education as spelt out in your national education policies.

30 minutes

### **Comments**

The earlier discussion will have given you some ideas on the types of needs you may identify in your government's policy statements. As school head you will need to discuss your list with your deputy and senior teachers to verify your understanding of the key needs.

### **Staff needs**

#### ***Activity 3.4***

Imagine yourself as a relatively new and inexperienced member of staff. What would you identify as your six main needs?

20 minutes

### **Comments**

Clearly, as school head, you must fully appreciate that you can only accomplish the educational goals and mission of your school by working with and through others, especially your staff. Thus, you must understand your staff's needs both as individuals and as a group. For practical reasons much of the time their needs will be looked at from your point of view, rather than their own. However, from time to time it is necessary for you to ask them what they see as their needs. Some of their needs may include:

- a clear job description in writing
- provision for professional development and growth for all staff, including temporaries, probationers, senior teachers, heads of departments, and office, ground and hostel staff

- adequate supervision of their teaching
- sound deployment of both teaching and non-teaching staff
- a clear statement of the school's mission and objectives, and agreed targets
- adequate support materials and infrastructure
- a positive, supportive school climate.

### **The needs of the pupils**

#### ***Activity 3.5***

Using one of your classes ( at any level), ask the students, perhaps working in pairs, to list what they want from their school.

1 hour

#### **Comments**

If the above activity was clearly understood by the pupils, it should have generated a useful basis for identifying the pupils' needs.

Which of the following needs did your pupils identify:

- a relaxation of discipline by either the staff or prefects or both
- good exam results, which will enable them to go for further training or get a job
- more funds for co-curricular activities
- the removal of some teachers and/or the demotion of some prefects
- more learning materials and equipment
- longer or shorter school holidays?

It may be that the pupils' answers may be incomplete, or perhaps focus too much on their immediate needs, rather than on larger, longer-term needs. Perhaps, then, you could add to the items they have identified.

### **The needs of the school authority**

In most countries schools may be established, owned and run by individuals, local communities, private companies, parastatal organisations, religious bodies, or local or central governments. Whatever or whoever such an authority is, each one had a purpose when their school was founded. As a school head you must understand and identify with the needs of the authority which established and owns your school.

#### ***Activity 3.6***

The needs of the authority which owns your school may be very specific to it. Identify up to three needs of the authority of your school.

15 minutes

#### **Comments**

The majority of owners of schools have the intention of providing educational opportunities for more children. They will wish their schools to produce well-qualified and responsible graduates who achieve, according to their capacities, in their chosen field and in society at large, and thus bring credit and benefits to the owner. Each authority may have more specific needs. Thus companies and parastatals

seek to provide 'fringe benefits' which help to keep their workforce motivated. Religious bodies are clearly concerned with the moral and spiritual qualities of the pupils and how these feed back to the community as a whole.

### **The needs of the community and parents**

#### ***Activity 3.7***

Next time you organise a meeting of the Parent-Teacher Association, or have a meeting with leading community members, ask them to identify for you some of the things which they seek or need from the school of which you are the head. Don't make it too difficult by asking them to list everything; just ask them for, say, six ideas.

30 minutes

#### **Comments**

There are likely to be differences in the types of response you get from both parents and communities according to their own levels of education. Where these are relatively low, where, maybe, a significant proportion of the parents are illiterate, the parents may be surprised to be asked such a question. They may feel as though this is something the school head should know, indeed be one reason why he or she was employed. Their lack of experience in articulating their needs should not be used by you as an excuse for not pursuing this question further.

More literate parents and communities are likely to be more demanding, as, of course, is their right. By involving parents and community members more, the school staff and pupils will be made much more aware of the fact that they are accountable for the content and the processes of the curriculum, and for the standards of achievement reached by the pupils.

### **Strategies for identifying needs**

#### ***Activity 3.8***

Explain what you understand by the meaning of the word 'strategies'.

5 minutes

#### **Comments**

The meaning of 'strategy' hinges on plans or approaches towards accomplishing desired goals. There is the implication here that the school mission and objectives are not easy to accomplish because many alternative paths are available, each of which requires careful consideration before a choice is made.

The discussion on needs identification so far has concentrated on identifying what the needs are likely to be rather than on the strategies required to be able to find out what these needs are.

### **Strategies for the head and the school**

#### ***Activity 3.9***

Summarise five main strategies that you might use to enable you as the head to

identify your own needs and those of your school. (You may find it helpful to go over the needs you identified in the section 'The needs of the head and the school'.)

30 minutes

### **Comments**

Which of the following strategies did you come up with?

- 1 Study management, organisational, behavioural and educational theories.
- 2 Attend staff development courses, seminars and workshops for heads in particular, and managers in general.
- 3 Through informal discussion, draw from the professional experience and advice of your fellow heads.
- 4 Join and participate fully in professional associations, unions or organisations for heads (and managers).
- 5 Visit an industrial or commercial organisation to learn about how they set about identifying needs.
- 6 Analyse the responses given by individual teachers during their annual appraisal or evaluation interviews.
- 7 Utilise inputs from your staff obtained during staff meetings, and informal discussions with individuals or groups.
- 8 Note the needs identified by parents during Parent-Teacher Association meetings, as well as those obtained in informal discussions with individuals or groups of parents.
- 9 Draw from, and directly request, inputs from your deputy, senior teachers, heads of departments, and other promoted staff.
- 10 Your pupils can contribute through channelling information through the prefects and directly during contact lessons with form teachers and the head.
- 11 Study current educational and professional journals and magazines to gather ideas about your needs.
- 12 Obtain documents on national policy and statements by the school authority on its mission and current targets.

### **Strategies for the nation**

#### ***Activity 3.10***

What strategies might you use to identify the national needs in education? (First, re-read 'National needs' above and your responses to Activity 3.3.)

15 minutes

### **Comments**

You may have come up with the following strategies:

- the thorough study and understanding of the Education Acts, policy statements, and central government's position papers on education - it is likely that these will also be described and debated fully in the press and the broadcasting media
- wherever and whenever possible, direct consultation with national policy makers and senior staff in your ministry.

Having identified the needs at national level you will need to blend these into the mission statement, objectives and targets of your school.

### **Strategies for the staff**

#### ***Activity 3.11***

What strategies might you use to identify the needs of your staff? (First, re-read 'Staff needs' above and your responses to Activity 3.4.)

15 minutes

### **Comments**

Of particular importance in this regard is the crucial role of the staff in the delivery of the curriculum. For them to perform this function effectively they, in turn, need your professional guidance. You can only give meaningful support in this regard if you first establish strategies to identify, as far as possible, the needs of each and every one of your teachers. In particular both you and your staff will wish to identify the performance gaps of each of them.

The strategies you may have identified include:

- 1 You appraise each teacher, through a formal cycle of contact once a year, to establish their strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes. Most countries have an appraisal (or evaluation) system which is applied to all civil servants. Such systems must, of course, be especially adapted for use with teachers. A fuller discussion about appraisal procedures is covered in [Unit 4 of Module 3](#), Personnel Management.
- 2 You supervise all your staff every day, as well as meeting with them on both formal and informal occasions.
- 3 You study the subject evaluation reports compiled by inspectors.
- 4 You require your staff to complete carefully designed questionnaires that identify staff, pupil and school needs.
- 5 You check schemes of work, lesson plan books, and other school records at regular intervals. The pupils' exercise books should be regularly monitored in every subject and at every level.

Once you have established the needs of individual teachers and groups, or categories of teachers or departments, then your duty becomes one of finding ways of closing the performance gaps. These might include:

- purposeful programmes of school-based and school-managed staff development
- staff meetings which are centred on professional topics
- closer positive supervision of those members of staff whose performance gaps require it
- more direct assistance by you, the head, to individual teachers and groups who require any assistance: you should also utilise those of your staff whose good performance is such that they may give assistance to their colleagues, since peer support amongst teachers is always to be encouraged.

### **Strategies for the pupils**

#### ***Activity 3.12***

We have already suggested in Activity 3.5 that you might be able to identify the needs of the pupils by asking them directly. What other strategies might be used?

15 minutes

### **Comments**

Which of the following did you suggest?

- 1 As the head you should involve yourself in all teaching/learning programmes - in and out of the classroom - to enable you to gain insights into the needs of your pupils on a first-hand basis.
- 2 Use your contact periods with various classes to learn about pupils' needs.
- 3 Use the prefect and monitor systems to channel information about pupils' needs to both yourself as the head and to your staff.
- 4 Invite your staff individually and in groups to discuss and report on pupils' needs to you regularly.
- 5 Utilise a suggestions/needs box to collect information, confidentially, from the pupils.
- 6 Undertake audits and physical checks on all school supplies: this may indicate areas of deficiency.
- 7 You and your staff - particularly your senior staff - should regularly audit and check the curriculum for relevance and balance, and for the effectiveness of delivery.

### **Strategies for the school authority**

#### ***Activity 3.13***

What strategies might you use to identify the needs of your school authority? (First, re-read 'The needs of the school authority' and your answers to Activity 3.6.)

15 minutes

### **Comments**

Appropriate strategies might include:

- holding regular meetings and consultations with the school authority to ensure that you fully identify with their needs for the school
- involving yourself in formal and informal get-togethers with representatives of the authority
- requesting information directly from the authority
- involving the more articulate of the authority's representatives to directly identify their needs to the staff and pupils.

### **Strategies for the community and parents**

#### ***Activity 3.14***

We have already suggested in Activity 3.7 that you might be able to identify the needs of the community and of parents by asking them directly. What other strategies might be used?

15 minutes

## Comments

Appropriate strategies might include:

- 1 You could seek to develop and maintain sound communication and good public relations with both the community and more especially the parents. This will assist you in identifying their needs and expectations for the school.
- 2 You could involve parents more directly in relevant school programmes, for example, special school functions, sporting competitions, etc. Such involvement should enable a less formal relationship to develop.
- 3 Parent-Teacher meetings involving representatives of the community should be used to identify needs.
- 4 Pay close attention to school-related information and ideas in the local and national press and other media, for example, letters to the editor and editorials, as well as anonymous letters or telephone calls received in the school.

## Summary

The purpose of this unit has been to help you recognise the importance of finding out from others what they want from your school. Different people need different things, and the nature and balance of these will vary with time. Knowing how to find out what people want is one key to enable you, as the school head, to provide effective leadership.

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