



[About the
Modules](#)

[Preface](#)

[General
Introduction](#)

[Contents](#)

[Introductory
Module](#)

[Module One](#)

[Module Two](#)

[Module Three](#)

[Module Four](#)

[Module Five](#)

[Module Six](#)

[Module Seven](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Home](#)

[Visit our
website](#)

MODULE SEVEN

UNIT FOUR

Relationships between Schools and Other Agencies

Introduction

An important aspect of the head's functions is establishing appropriate relationships with the various agencies which contribute to the quality of school governance. This unit aims to provide you with a greater operational knowledge of the various agencies which have authority in one way or the other over the way schools operate. The main focus is on the duties and rights of the various agencies which are responsible for helping to establish operational procedures and standards in schools.

Individual study time: 3 hours

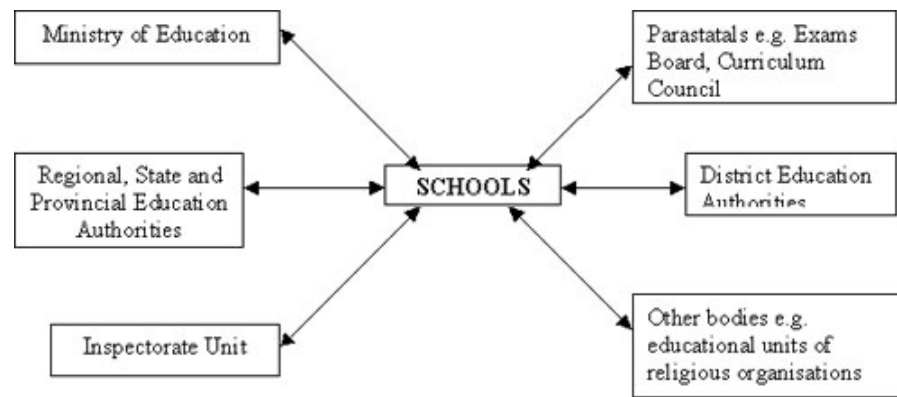
Learning outcomes

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

- describe the norm-setting role of the Ministry of Education
- identify the main levels of educational administration
- explain how relations with the national Ministry of Education, with state, regional or provincial authorities, with district authorities, with the inspectorate unit and with other bodies involved in the work of schools affect the nature and quality of school governance.

Fig 3 indicates some of the agencies who may exercise their responsibility for establishing procedures and standards in schools.

Fig 3 Relationships between schools and other agencies



The norm-setting role of the Ministry of Education

Activity 4.1

Identify some of the areas in which the Ministry of Education determines the way your school operates and list the main ones.

20 minutes

Comments

The list you have produced may include:

- the nature and type of physical facilities your school has such as classrooms, furniture, etc.
- the type of equipment in use in your school
- the curriculum components and content by course and by level
- your personnel, i.e. the types and number of teaching and non-teaching staff
- the management of your school finances.

The functions of the Ministry of Education at the national headquarters level with regard to school governance are mainly normative, that is, they establish norms or standards for the operation of schools.

By defining principles, setting standards and establishing guidelines for the operation of schools, the Ministry of Education is able to direct the educational system towards the national goals. This norm-setting role is often also described as strategic management.

Levels of educational administration

Activity 4.2

Consider the structure of the Ministry of Education in your country and identify the different levels of educational authority from the Ministry of Education headquarters down to the individual school.

10 minutes

Comments

Two clearly distinct levels of operation characterise all educational systems; there is always the Ministry of Education and various national agencies at the highest level,

and there is the level of individual schools where the actual teaching and learning take place. Between these two extremes are intermediate levels, and the number and range of these depends on the nature of the political administration of each country. We could have levels involving state, regional, provincial, district, sub-district, municipal and local administrations. Heads have to deal with authorities at each of the various levels in the running of their schools.

For a fuller account of the organisation and functions of the national government study [Unit 2 in Module 2, Principles of Educational Management](#).

Relations with the Ministry of Education and national parastatals

In view of the importance of education in the development of human resources of a country, every government has, to a varying extent, a direct involvement in the education of its people. The involvement of government in the provision of education is normally through its Ministry of Education and through national parastatals.

Activity 4.3

How are the following national bodies involved in the provision of education in your school?

- the National Council on Education (if your country has one);
- the Planning Unit;
- the Ministry of Finance;
- the Curriculum Unit;
- the Inspectorate;
- the Exams Board.

15 minutes

Comments

The involvement of national governments in the provision of education takes many forms and might include the following:

1 In some countries there is a permanent council, a National Educational Advisory Council, made up of senior representatives from a range of departments and bodies involved in education, which helps to determine and establish policies and may guide the implementation of educational programmes.

2 A Planning Unit is likely to provide an analysis of educational data which may be used to determine the age for entering formal education, the duration of schooling at different levels, the location of schools, student enrolments, etc.

3 The Ministry of Finance will probably control the flow of government resources to education.

4 A Curriculum and Educational Research Institute may oversee curriculum developments and the evaluation of the educational processes and outputs.

5 An Inspectorate monitors for the government educational practices and standards in schools, and advises teachers, heads, managers and policy-makers on ways to improve.

6 An Exams Board provides appropriate forms of pupil assessment in an efficient and reliable way.

Since government intervention in the provision of education is normally through the Ministry of Education or through a national parastatal, you need to know, as a school head, the different bodies and agencies within the Ministry of Education which deal with the different policies and regulations affecting the operation of your school.

Relations with State, Regional or Provincial Authorities

Activity 4.4

(1) Consider each of the 15 items included in Fig 4 and indicate at which level - national, regional, district, school - the responsibility lies for its provision. Note that in some areas the responsibility may be shared.

15 minutes

(2) To what extent would you judge that dealing with matters at the regional, state or provincial level of educational authority is more beneficial for the efficient and effective operation of your school than with the central government? State your reasons.

15 minutes

Fig 4 Levels of responsibility

	National	Regional	District	School
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- 1 Location of schools
- 2 Size (enrolment) of schools
- 3 Employment of teachers
- 4 Posting, promotions of teachers
- 5 Choice of curriculum
- 6 Choice and purchase of textbooks
- 7 Operation of exams
- 8 Inspection of schools
- 9 Appointment of board of governors
- 10 Payment of teachers' salaries
- 11 Budget allocation and control
- 12 Organisation of Parent Teachers' Association
- 13 School calendar
- 14 School rules and regulations
- 15 Educational management training

Comments

Education administration is increasingly being decentralised in line with the decentralisation of public administration in most countries of the world. In countries with a federal type of government, but also in unitary states which are rather large or

have a great diversity in their territories, the responsibility for formulating and implementing educational policies devolves to State, Regional or Provincial Authorities (or further, to district level). For example, standards for the type of physical facilities in schools, or the minimum and optimum numbers of students per class, may vary as amongst the states, regions or provinces within the same country.

Furthermore, funding for school operations may be provided both by central government through the Ministry of Education, by state, regional or provincial administrations as well as by district administrations. School heads should therefore be in a position to relate adequately with each level and type of educational authority.

The main argument for decentralising the management of education is to allow communities to decide what they want for themselves. Centralised systems may appear to promote fairness in the distribution of resources, but, in fact, the large bureaucracies which are created are often inefficient and slow to react to change and local needs. Decentralising does have problems in ensuring local accountability, otherwise the inefficiency of the centre may be replaced by local corruption. A lot of training in management skills is required to ensure that regional and local administrations are efficient and effective.

Relations with the District Education Authority

Activity 4.5

In what ways and to what extent would you say that in your system the district is the key level of authority influencing the ability of heads to manage their schools effectively?

20 minutes

Comments

The process of decentralisation of educational administration in many countries is according much more importance to the office of the District Education Officer. Very often it is the office of the District Education Officer which actually has to deal with issues affecting the implementation of educational programmes in schools. Generally speaking, the degree of decentralisation of functions from the centre to intermediate levels diminishes as one moves from the primary grade, through secondary, to the higher grades of education. At the primary school level, issues relating to planning and statistics, the management of teaching and supporting staff, the management of financing and budgeting, the management of facilities and equipment, the management of pedagogy and curricula and issues of school welfare, are dealt with at the municipal or district levels. At the secondary and higher levels of the educational system, most of these issues are dealt with at the state, regional or provincial levels. As a school head, you need to be aware of the distribution of these areas of authority and be skilled at relating to each appropriate authority.

Relations with the Inspectorate

Activity 4.6

Reflecting on the work of school inspectors in your school:

(1) Describe how inspectors may contribute towards the effective operations of your school.

10 minutes

(2) Suggest ways in which school inspectors could assist further to improve the effectiveness of your school.

10 minutes

(3) Would you say that inspectors should work to ensure minimum standards in all the schools in your country or to ensure the highest possible standards?

10 minutes

Comments

It is intended that the effectiveness of schools should be enhanced through the monitoring and evaluation activities of inspectors. For this reason, most countries have set up Inspectorate Units or Divisions and have charged them with the responsibility of conducting the periodic inspection of schools with a view to evaluating the quality of their work.

The function of the Inspectorate Unit is quite complex since it exists both to ensure the maintenance of minimum standards as well as the attainment of the highest possible standards in all schools. These include the following:

- standards of accommodation and equipment
- standards of teaching
- standards of achievement of pupils and students
- standards of management, discipline and the overall ethos of the school.

Given that the Inspectorate has this function to promote higher standards of operation in schools, it is essential for heads to maintain a close liaison with local inspectors so that they may be assisted in setting minimum standards and working for even higher standards in their schools.

Relations with other bodies involved in school management

The history of the development of education in Africa shows clearly that the Christian missionary churches and Islamic organisations played pioneering roles in establishing schools in most Sub-Saharan African countries. As a result of this, there are still many schools and institutions at all levels which are managed by these bodies.

In some countries religious bodies are involved in recruiting teachers for the schools they established even though the teachers' salaries are paid by government. In addition, they may provide other resources, including buildings, furniture and other physical facilities.

For the above reasons, school heads, particularly if they happen to be working in a school with religious affiliations, must relate with the education authorities of the religious body concerned and be conversant with their present and past roles in the provision of education.

In more recent times local communities have fulfilled a similar function. We consider their role in school governance in the next unit, Unit 5.

Summary

In this unit we have examined the relations which the school head needs to establish with the different agencies which play some part in the governance of schools.

The role of the Ministry of Education in setting standards and norms for school operations has been explained and the different levels of educational administration have been identified. The reasons why the school head should relate to the units in the Ministry of Education have been stressed.

The relationships of the school head with Regional, State or Provincial Authorities as well as the District Education Authorities, and the functions each performs have been clarified.

The role of the Inspectorate Unit in promoting both the minimum and the best standards in teaching and learning, as well as the overall management and ethos in schools, has also been emphasised.

Lastly, the need for heads of schools with religious affiliations to relate with the religious authorities, has been identified.

[Next](#)

