

Resource Base of Schools

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Increasingly, modern educators are recognising that schools need to concentrate more on how they make use of resources, if they are to function at optimum effectiveness and efficiency.

Current thinking on school administration advocates that in order to promote effective resource allocation, school administrators should: (a) keep teachers focused on the vision, mission, goals, objectives, and strategic plan of the school; (b) encourage teachers to reflect on the context within which they operate; (c) ensure that teachers recognise and accept the need for effective logistical support to curriculum delivery; (d) impress on their staff that staff development and team building are critical to addressing the ongoing and turbulent changes in the internal and external environment of the school; and (e) inform staff that every opportunity must be seized to extend the resource base of the school.

In addition, some researchers caution that personnel in schools must not only see resources in schools in terms of chalk, paper, equipment, and so on. They insist that time and goodwill are also important to school effectiveness.

Local educators generally believe that the Ministry of Education, parents, and even former students of the school should help to provide the necessary resources for the school. Time is never factored into the matrix of supplies. Even the Ministry and the political directorate seem to hold this view. No one appears to be making a conscious effort to relate time to the philosophy, mission, and goals of the school or to show appreciation for time and its use in the school calendar and master timetable. To my mind, both the calendar and timetable are often formulated without really looking at the impact of the dynamics that they can generate.

Some writers on time management see the principal as critical in institutionalising the effective and efficient use of time in schools. According to them, how principals manage themselves will determine how effectively they manage their time. They further point out that principals who have learnt to use some time management techniques effectively are more able to have time to work with staff in the area of instructional improvement. Indeed, they insist that time management should help the principal to become organised and efficient in taking care of office routines so that there will be more time for staff interaction and development. The literature emphasises that capitalising on the human potential and the development of the human resource must be a high priority for principals; that capitalising on teacher power is a skill that successful principals have developed to a high level of perfection.

Experience and research have provided several ways in which principals can capitalise on the potential of their staff. First, they should establish a working climate to foster staff involvement and, at the same time, introduce professional development programmes to enable teachers to grow and to develop their skills. Also, the manner in which a principal

delegates, as a means of capitalising on the talents of a staff, is crucial. Some writers believe that successful delegation depends on the quality of the school climate, and many submit that focusing on improving school climate must be one of the principal's main responsibilities. Edward E. Taylor, for example, in his 1989 article, "A plan for improving school climate," points out that the elements which create a positive school climate include trust, respecting people by recognising their worth, involving others in meaningful ways, providing opportunities for social and academic growth, fostering a high level of collegiality by sharing and caring, and taking steps to develop high morale.

Unless principals effectively manage community relations, it will be difficult for the school to successfully explore goodwill as a resource. School-community relations, without doubt, can help to achieve a cooperative working relationship among staff, students, and parents of the school. Also, positive school-community relations can enhance the contribution that the community can make to the school. Indeed, through better communications and working relationships between the school and community, members of the community can reach a greater awareness of the purposes and achievements of the school.

As I see it, quality education in Trinidad and Tobago depends on a number of variables. Both the Ministry of Education and school leaders must accept that for schools to provide quality education there must be functional school buildings, a well-trained and committed cadre of academic and auxiliary staff, and, of course, effective extension of the resource base of schools.

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