

Educators and the quality of their work environment: an analysis of the organisational climate in primary schools

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The prevalent organisational climate in primary schools in the North West Province was determined in order to formulate management strategies to increase the organisational climate. For this purpose, a quantitative research method, founded in post-positivistic points of departure, was applied. In the process, the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire – Rutgers Elementary (OCDQ-RE) was applied in order to determine the behaviour of principals and school educators. The investigation indicated that the behaviour of the principals and that of the educators contributed only to an average degree to the establishment of a more effective organisational climate in the primary schools investigated. Furthermore the exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses indicated that certain items in the original climate questionnaire, which were grouped in the directive behaviour of the principal, were viewed by the respondents in South Africa as supportive but, in some instances, also as restrictive.

Keywords: educational environment; effective schools; improving organisational climate; improving school climate; management styles; Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ); organisational climate; primary schools; school climate; teacher morale and attitudes

Introduction

There is concern in educational ranks pertaining to the organisational climate in schools in the North West Province of South Africa (Vos, 2005:127-132; Jackson & Rothman, 2006:1-5; Van der Westhuizen, 2006:1-3; North West Department of Education, 2006:89). For example, there is evidence that the morale of educators in schools is low (Imants & Van Zoelen, 1995:77-85; Mentz, 2007:146-153). Regular strikes by educators could possibly also be proof of the negative experience of a school's organisational climate (Zigarmi & Sinclair, 2001:270-278).

In research performed on the wellbeing of South African educators, it was found that educators did not experience their work places as positive, and therefore experienced a negative organisational climate (Jackson & Rothmann, 2006:75-95). Jackson and Rothmann (2006) recommend that principals should, among their other concerns, pay more attention to the psychological wellbeing of educators as well as to reducing their workload. To determine how

educators currently experience the quality of their work life and organisational climate is therefore a research imperative. According to Hoy *et al.* (1991:33, 55, 160-163), the principal's behaviour as well as the educators' experience of their work environment are determinants of the organisational climate of the school. In the *Report of the Task Team on Education Development* (Department of Education, 1996:64), reference is made to: "A whole new way of doing business: education management must be more supportive than directive". Also pertaining to Total Quality Management, emphasis is placed on the principal's task with regard to aspects such as "develop a supportive and empowering environment; caring; empowering" (De Bruyn & Van der Westhuizen, 2007:289-335).

An ineffective or 'unhealthy' organisational climate in a school can lead to a collapse in school activities and could in the end cause a school to become dysfunctional. Determination of a school's organisational climate and formulation of management strategies in order to establish a more effective organisational climate is therefore of critical importance for the educational leader, in this case, the principal.

The research reported here was aimed at answering the question: How do primary school teachers experience the organizational climate in their schools? As a report on the research findings, the rest of the article is structured as follows: Firstly, the concepts *school climate* and *organisational climate* are defined and placed in context so that they are not confused with other concepts that also describe the quality of the work life within the school as organisation. Then follows a discussion of the determinants of organisational climate, as determined from the literature and this is followed by a discussion of the empirical research design, including the research method that was followed. Several important findings are then stated and discussed, followed by an overview of some management strategies that may flow from the latter. The article concludes with recommendations, aimed at improvement of the organisational climate of primary schools, and a final conclusion.

Theoretical foundation

In the next section, *school climate* is placed in context with reference to the involvement and influence that organisational climate and educational climate may have on school climate. Thereafter, *organisational climate* is placed in context by indicating how certain aspects influence the organisational climate of a school. The latter aspects include the following: quality of work life, organisational health and organisational culture.

School climate in context

There is a relationship between school climate and the organisational climate of a school (i.e. primary school) (Mentz, 2007:147-160). School climate is an over-arching description of the climate in the school as organisation. There are other aspects within the school climate that also show relationships with one another.

The following is a brief description of the most important aspects of school climate mentioned above:

School climate is the experience by the educators of their work environment as well as that of the learners of their learning environment, both inside and outside the classroom (Mentz, 2007:147-148; Hoy & Miskel, 2008:185). *Organisational climate*, on the other hand, more specifically has to do with the common experience by educators of the quality of their work environment in the school where they work (Mentz, 2007:157-160). *Educational climate*, in turn, has to do with the experience of learners of their total educational milieu in the school,

as well as outside the classroom (Kieft, 2005:49-83; Moller *et al.*, 2005:585-592). *Classroom climate* also relates to the realisation of learners, but describes more specifically the atmosphere wherein interaction between themselves and the educator takes place. This realisation or experience is influenced by factors that are controlled by the educator, and this consequently differs from classroom to classroom (Brucato, 2005; Van der Westhuizen *et al.*, 2005:89-105).

From this brief description of important organisational climate elements, one can deduce that organisational climate is not an isolated concept, but relates to several other influences in the organisation.

Organisational climate in context

A number of aspects that influence the *organisational climate* (the experience by educators of the quality of their work environment) of a school may also influence the quality of work life in a school. These aspects can be divided into two main categories, namely, the systemic and the personal or individual factors (Van der Westhuizen & Mentz, 2007:66-80). The systemic factors encompass, among other things, organisational culture and organisational health, while the individual or personal factors include, among others, job motivation, job satisfaction, work stress and work performance (Van der Westhuizen & Mentz, 2007:66-80).

In the investigation under discussion, the emphasis was on organisational climate as determinant of the quality of work life in a school. The inter-weavement of the systemic factors and the individual factors referred to above will be discussed next. Accordingly, note is taken of the influence of the quality of work life on organisational climate, on organisational health, also the influence of some systemic factors on organisational climate, and lastly, the influence of the individual factors on organisational climate.

The quality of work life of the educators is influenced by, among other things, their physical, psychological and social well-being in the school as organisation. Quality of work life therefore has an influence on the organisational climate of the school (Cilliers & Kossuth, 2002:8-11; Patterson *et al.*, 2004:3-10). *Organisational health* similarly has an influence on the organisational climate of a school. More than three decades ago Miles (1963:378) had already pointed out that there were three criteria against which an effective organization should be measured, *viz*:

- The task requirement: those involved understand the aims and objectives of the organization and accept them as feasible and practicable. Effective communication ensures that all interested parties are on top of the progress made in order to ensure that the aims are realized. Authority is divided by giving autonomy to those in positions of authority.
- The maintenance requirement: educators are not snowed under by work, but are applied where needed and as required. Personnel want to be part of the organization and a feeling of general contentment is the result.
- The development requirement: problems are solved, using the minimum of energy. New procedures are incorporated on an on-going basis in order to achieve new objectives, and where development are not satisfactory, adjustments are made. The organization acts pro-actively within the community and is not totally dependent on the community.

Two years prior to the above investigation, Parsons (1967:41-45) pointed out three levels within an organization, *viz*:

- The technical level: at this level educators are responsible for the effectual education and instruction of learners.
- The management level: the principal is responsible for effectively running the school.

This includes motivation of teachers, satisfying their professional needs, and gaining their confidence and loyalty.

- The organizational level: at this level the organization is reconciled with its environment. The trust of the community in the organization will encourage the support of all parties interested in the school.

When comparing the models of the two investigators, it becomes evident that three requirements within an organization (technical, management, and organization) figure in both. These three requirements exert an influence on the wellbeing of the organization and thus also on the organizational climate.

The above points of view are upheld by Hoy *et al.* (1987:30-37) and Hoy *et al.* (1991: 88-106), and also more recently, by Mentz (2007:171-179). All contend that there are still three different needs and levels of functioning within an organization which in turn influence the organizational climate.

Mentz (2007:151) adds two more criteria of a healthy organization, *viz*:

- external interrupting influences (e.g. socio-economic influences) which should be eliminated, and
- the organization should function within its aims and objectives.

Taking the above into account, an organization could be described as follows: the task, maintenance and developmental requirements are necessary for the healthy functioning of an organization in order to reach its aims and objectives on three levels (technical, management and organization) within the organization.

Since organisational climate and organisational culture are inter-related, systemic factors in an organisation are viewed as determinants of organisational climate. These factors consist of those intangible and tangible aspects that have an influence on the organisational culture of the school and eventually also on the organisational climate of the school. The intangible aspects entail, among others (Swanepoel, 2003:46-50; Janson & Xaba, 2007:128-131), religious aspects, beliefs, philosophies, the vision, mission and ethos of the school, suppositions, norms and values. The tangible aspects include, among others (Wong & Ho-Ming, 2003:35-53; Janson & Xaba, 2007:132-137), verbal, behavioural and visual manifestations of persons and practices in the school.

Individual factors that have an influence on the organisational climate of a school include the following (Colangelo, 2004:1-5; Kieft, 2005:12-33; Group Risk Development (GRID), 2010:1-5):

- Job satisfaction: a combination of physiological and environmental aspects combined in an employee with regard to the quality of the work place which is also influenced by, among other things, the management style of the leader or principal.
- Work performance: The quality of the work that employees deliver at a specific time, as well as the degree of effectiveness with which objectives are reached.
- Job motivation: The driving force, disposition and energy with which employees approach their tasks to effectively reach the organisation's objectives which are largely determined by the intrinsic and extrinsic factors in the organisation.
- Work stress: Work stress occurs when a person's emotions are expressed through irritation, frustration and aggression when he/she has to perform a task and experiences the work place as negative.

Determinants of organisational climate: a few theoretical perspectives

Most experts' descriptions of determinants of an organisational climate are determined by the

different role-players in the organisation and therefore these descriptions are mostly in accordance with each other. From descriptions of the determinants of the organisational climate, two factors especially come to the fore. The first is the *behaviour of the leaders* in the school. The behaviour of especially the principal has an influence on the manner in which personnel experience him/her and his/her management style. His/her actions influence their view of the work environment. The manner in which the principal handles the management tasks or functions of the school influences how the personnel experience the activities in the school and can therefore influence the work atmosphere in the school. The second factor is the *behaviour of the personnel*. The general dispositions with which the personnel perform their tasks and their acceptance of the leadership of the school have an influence on the view of personnel pertaining to their work environment. The personnel, therefore, also contribute to the establishment of a specific organisational climate in the school. Several needs of the personnel should be met in order for a positive disposition to be fostered. The degree of need satisfaction has an influence on the organisational climate of the school and as such is seen as a determinant of the organisational climate in the specific school (Hoy *et al.*, 1991:33; Hoy & Tarter, 1997:15-29).

Determinants of organisational climate: methodological perspectives

Most measuring instruments find that there are mainly two main determinants of organisational climate, namely, the behaviour of the principal and the behaviour of the educators (Hoy & Tarter, 1997:15-29; Cilliers & Kossuth, 2002:8-11). The behaviour of these two sets of role-players are influenced by a number of sub-factors that can be found both inside and outside the organisation, and include environmental factors, the community, expected standards of parents and learners, interference by other role-players, personalities, infrastructure, available resources and safety (Hoy & Tarter, 1997:15-29).

Against the background of the preceding conceptual and theoretical discussion, an empirical investigation was launched to determine the state of organisational climate in a sample of primary schools, and to determine how its effectiveness can be improved.

Empirical investigation

Research design

A quantitative research design, contextualised by a post-positivistic investigative approach, was applied. As can be seen from the discussion of the post-positivistic approach below, the specific approach makes it possible for this research to make meaningful and statistically justifiable analyses, conclusions and generalisations (Maree & Pietersen, 2008:47-153; McMillan, 2008: 33-50; Creswell, 2009:145-171).

The post-positivistic approach is sometimes also typified as logical empiricism or viewed as a synonym for post-empiricism (Schwandt, 2001:203; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:143, 193-199). This approach makes provision for the fact that knowledge that has been obtained by the persons involved in the research is formulated and therefore influenced. Factors such as culture, political trends, social status, religion and value systems can influence the views of individuals from whom the knowledge was obtained (Niglas, 2001:1-5; Dancy, 2006:1-7; Maree & Pietersen, 2008:47-153).

The use of a structured questionnaire, such as used in this research, makes it possible to analyse and verify the facts. This epistemological approach within the framework of the post-positivistic paradigm offers the researcher the opportunity to prove the points of reference and

the knowledge obtained based on the facts obtained during the research (Maree & Pietersen, 2008:47-153; McMillan, 2008:33-50; Creswell, 2009:6-171).

Purpose of the investigation

The purpose of the investigation was to empirically determine the nature of the different determinants of the organisational climate in a sample of primary schools; secondly, to analyse the current state of the organisational climate in primary schools in North West primary schools; and lastly, to formulate management strategies in order to ensure an effective organisational climate.

Study population

The study population consisted of educators in job levels one and two from a random selection of 80 primary schools ($n = 80$) from the 472 primary schools with more than 400 learners each, distributed in the four districts of the North West Province of South Africa. Due to the fact that the province is divided into four districts, we decided to select schools from each district, to be able to get a reasonably clear picture of what the reality in the province is. Eighteen ($n = 18$) were selected from the Ngaka Modiri Molema District, 22 ($n = 22$) from the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District and 20 schools each from the Bojanala and the Dr Ruth Segomotsi Districts. From the 80 selected schools, 66 responded with 904 respondents. The reason we could only get information back from 66 schools was logistical reasons. This means that 82.5% of the selected schools provided feedback. We delivered the questionnaires to the head office of each district and explained the importance of the completion of the questionnaires. After three weeks we collected the completed questionnaires at the same offices. The officials were positive and helpful with distributing and collecting the questionnaires.

Measuring instrument

The *Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire – Rutgers Elementary (OCDQ – RE)* questionnaire was designed to reflect 10 different types of socio-economic categories in New Jersey in the United States of America. These categories occurred in both rural and urban areas. The characteristics (different socio-economic categories and different demographic fields) of the OCDQ-RE questionnaire form a favourable point of departure for a questionnaire that could be used in primary schools in South Africa, because the composition of the South African primary schools also displays these two aspects, to a large degree. For this reason, Pretorius and De Villiers (2009:33-52) used the OCDQ-RE along with the Organizational Health Index for Primary Schools (OHI-E) as measuring instruments in the southern Cape (South Africa). The first division of the questionnaire (OCDQ-RE) consists of eight items pertaining to the general information of the respondents. The next division consists of 42 items. The latter items are divided into two groupings that, respectively, investigate the behaviour of the principal and that of the educators. The behaviour of the principal is divided into three concepts, namely: supportive behaviour (9 items), directive behaviour (9 items), and restrictive behaviour (5 items). The behaviour of the educators is also divided into three concepts: collegial behaviour (8 items), intimate behaviour (7 items), and disengaged behaviour (4 items). Opportunity is also provided for respondents to add items/comments that do not appear in the structured questionnaire (Hoy & Tarter, 1997:15-30).

Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted in an Afrikaans and an English/Setswana medium school. The

respondents were requested to make notes on the questionnaires if the questions were unclear or difficult to interpret to determine whether the items were correctly interpreted by the respondents. No corrections were required.

Reliability aspects

The reliability of the data was determined by means of Cronbach alpha coefficient values and Inter-item correlation values (Maree & Pietersen, 2008:47-153; McMillan, 2008:33-50; Creswell, 2009:145-171; Onwuegbuzie *et al.*, 2009:30-37). Most of the Cronbach alpha coefficients were higher than 0.5 and the inter-item correlation values were between 0.194 and 0.440, indicating that most of the above factors of the measuring instrument were reliable.

Ethical aspects

Written permission was obtained from Kottkamp (Kottkamp, 2008) and Hoy (Hoy, 2008) to use the OCDQ-RE questionnaire in the South African context. The Ethics Committee of the university, under whose auspices the research was done, approved the project. Written permission was obtained from the Area project manager of Matlosana to distribute the questionnaires to two schools in the Matlosana District for the pilot study. Written permission was further obtained from the Superintendent-General of the North West Department of Education to distribute the questionnaire in primary schools in the North West Province. Assurance was given to the respondents that the information would be treated confidentially and that their anonymity was guaranteed. Respondents were under no obligation to complete the questionnaire.

Statistical processing methods

The following processes and calculations were performed by making use of SPSS (SPSS Inc., 2009): descriptive statistics of biographic information and individual questions, factor analysis and structural equation models, Cronbach alpha coefficient and inter-item correlations (Hoy & Tarter, 1997:15-29), *t* tests, ANOVAs, and practical significance of differences.

An exploratory principal component factor analysis with Oblimin rotation was performed on the data in order to determine how the items grouped as factors. According to Kaiser's criteria, nine factors were identified which explained 53.8% of the variance. The percentage of each item's variance explained (communalities) was greater than 0.3 for all items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of 0.92 indicated that enough data were obtained to identify the factors.

The factor analysis indicated an important deviance from the findings for the USA in the OCDQ-RE, when it was found that the *directive behaviour* of the principal consisted of two factors for the South African data. The first factor correlated positively ($r = 0.78$) with supportive behaviour of the principal, which indicates that certain actions of the principal, e.g. the principal checks lesson plans and closely supervises educators, were experienced as supportive rather than directive by personnel. The second factor negatively correlated with the first and consisted of the two items: the principal is autocratic and the principal rules with an iron fist. The second factor of the *directive behaviour* of the principal correlated positively (correlation value: 0.43) with the *restrictive behaviour* of the principal. Such a division of the directive behaviour of the principal is a unique finding in the South African context and does not tie in with findings of the American research (Hoy *et al.*, 1991:167-169).

By means of a confirmatory factor analysis in a structural equation model (SEM), it was

determined whether the standardised regression coefficients of the factors differed for different cultural groups. No significant differences were found, however.

The effect size (Cohen's *d* value) indicates whether differences that occur in the population can be seen as practically significant. Seeing that the study population was very large, it is easy to obtain statistical significance (*p* value), so that practical significance is more applicable (Ellis & Steyn, 2003:51-53).

Standard scores for each person were calculated as follows for all the indices:

$$S = 100 * (\text{Index} - \text{Mean of index}) / \text{Standard deviation of index} + 500$$

These standard scores have a mean of 500 and a standard deviation of 100 for the norm population. This makes it possible to measure a specific school's results with regard to the norm of 500. The openness indices of the principal and the educators were calculated as follows (Hoy *et al.*, 1991:167):

Principal Open:

This is an adaptation of Hoy *et al.*'s (1991:167) formula for purposes of the North West Province's population pertaining to the factor analysis results. Directive behaviour was divided into two factors based on the exploratory factor analysis's results, and the openness index was adjusted according to the following formula:

$$\text{Principal Openness} = [(S \text{ Principal Supportive behaviour}) + (S \text{ Principal Directive behaviour 1}) + (1000 - S \text{ Principal Directive behaviour 2}) + (1000 - S \text{ Principal of Restrictive behaviour})] / 4$$

$$\text{Educator Openness} = [(S \text{ Educator Collegial behaviour}) + (S \text{ Educator Intimate behaviour}) + (1000 - S \text{ Educator Disengaged behaviour})] / 3 \text{ (As prescribed in the OCDQ-RE)}$$

Total: Principal-openness + Educator-openness (As prescribed in the OCDQ-RE)

Table 1 Means and standard deviations of RSA norm population for use of standard scores calculation

| Index | Mean | SD |
|----------------------------------|-------|------|
| Principal Supportive | 24.13 | 7.03 |
| Principal Directive | 22.91 | 5.31 |
| Principal Directive (autocratic) | 3.71 | 1.82 |
| Principal Directive (supportive) | 19.30 | 5.09 |
| Principal Restrictive | 12.01 | 3.47 |
| Educator Collegial | 23.07 | 4.6 |
| Educator disengaged | 7.17 | 2.64 |
| Educator intimate | 15.94 | 4.11 |

The means of the three types of behaviour of the principal, and the three types of behaviour of the educators are given in Table 1. Any school in South Africa can make use of these results and the above formulas to determine the openness of their school as compared to the RSA norm population's values of 500 (Hoy *et al.*, 1991:169).

The means of the openness index of the organisational climate for the RSA norm population were also calculated and compared to the American norm population (Hoy *et al.*, 1991: 169).

Findings

Openness indices of North West norm population compared to the American norm population

Principal: Supportive behaviour

With a score of 502.93, it places the supportive behaviour of principals, as experienced by the respondents, in the category where the respondents experienced the support from their principals as average. From this one can argue that principals are challenged to act more supportively towards the educators in order to establish a positive organisational climate.

Principal: Directive behaviour

The respondents experienced the directive behaviour of the principals as high (599.82). From this one can deduce that the principals in the study population were experienced as utterly directive. However, one has to note that the South African educators experienced most of the directive-grouped behaviour as positive, and not as negative. In this regard one should, however, remember that most of the items in directive behaviour were viewed as supportive behaviour by the NW respondents. This makes it difficult to compare this factor to the American values.

Principal: Restrictive behaviour

The respondents were of the opinion that principals were categorised low (444.18) when it came to restrictive behaviour. From this can be deduced that, in general, principals mostly did not display restrictive behaviour.

Principal: Open

The respondents experienced principals' openness when they acted as average (498.69). In this case, principals would again have to accept the challenge to be more 'open'.

Educator: Collegial behaviour

A score of 488.87 indicates that the respondents experienced the collegial behaviour of their colleagues as below average. The degree to which colleagues showed collegiality towards each other needs some attention.

Educator: Intimate behaviour

The respondents labelled the intimate behaviour of their colleagues as low (429.74). The latter factor, as with the other factors, is a very important determinant for the establishment of a positive organisational climate in the school and will therefore require attention.

Educator: Disengaged behaviour

With a score of 517.40, the respondents indicated that they experienced the uninvolved behaviour of their colleagues as above average. Colleagues' involvement with the school's activities is of cardinal importance for the establishment of a positive organisational climate in a school and will also require considerable attention.

Educator: Open

The respondents experienced the openness with which their colleagues acted as average (496.33). From this, one can also deduce that there is room for improvement with regard to the degree to which educators appear to be 'open'.

Categorisation

The schools ($n = 66$) were categorised in the four categories of organisational climate, namely: *Open, Closed, Engaged and Disengaged organisational climate*.

Table 2 Categories of organisational climate

| Categories | Schools (N) | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Disengaged climate | 15 | 22.73 |
| Closed climate | 15 | 22.73 |
| Open climate | 14 | 21.21 |
| Engaged climate | 22 | 33.33 |
| Total | 66 | 100.00 |

Table 2 indicates that a disengaged and closed climate prevailed in nearly half the schools in the study population. Only 14 schools in the study population could be categorised as schools with the desired open organisational climate. The number of schools with an engaged organisational climate was also in the minority; only 22 schools could be placed in this category. One should, however, take note of the fact that not all the characteristics of an engaged organisational climate are acceptable. The following characteristics are undesired characteristics of an engaged organisational climate: the principal acts autocratically, the principal overloads educators with unnecessary work, educators do not heed the principal's control measures and the principal applies unsuccessful attempts to provide leadership. One can, therefore, not assume that an engaged organisational climate is necessarily the most desirable organisational climate for a school.

Recommendations

The following critical factors that occurred at the different constructs require further attention and need to be improved in order to establish a more effective organisational climate in primary schools.

Behaviour of the principal (some critical factors)

Supportive behaviour: The degree, to which the principal applies constructive criticism, provides reasons for criticism and looks after the well-being of educators.

The following suggestions can be applied to address the above critical factors: The principal should consider the general interests of the educators by conversing at least once every term during a communication period with each educator and taking note of each one's interests. The conversations should take place when decisions are made. Educators should be praised by the principal during hall openings and parent nights for the good work that they do.

When the principal criticises, it should be constructive. Criticism should be discussed beforehand with the management committee of the school. It should be thoroughly thought through, and it could even be noted in the minutes of the meeting. Principals should respect and acknowledge the professional competencies of educators by delegating certain tasks to them, thereby recognising the autonomy to the educator.

Directive behaviour (grouped with supportive): The principal goes over the register on a daily basis and reminds personnel to sign it, the principal schedules work for the educators, etc.

The following suggestions could be applied to address the above critical factors: Educators should work according to policy and do their lesson planning, and the principal should only exercise control over it once a month. Educators should fill in the register every day so that it would not be necessary for the principal to verify it every day and remind educators to sign it. Educators should limit mistakes to the minimum so that it would not be necessary for the principal to continually rectify mistakes. Mistakes that have to be rectified by the principal should be recorded, so that control can be exercised. Educators should accept ownership and responsibility for that which takes place in the classroom, so that it would not be necessary for the principal to exercise control over every event in the classroom. Control over events in the classroom should be exercised by the subject heads so that they can report back to the principal.

Directive behaviour (grouped with autocratic behaviour): Principals who follow an autocratic management style and manage schools with an “iron fist” display this behaviour.

The following suggestions could be applied to address the above critical factors: Principals should follow alternative management styles that are not experienced as autocratic. Principals who follow the so-called “iron fist” approach with regard to the general management of the school should cease to do so or should apply it sensibly in accordance with the demands of the situation.

Restrictive behaviour: Educators have too many committee obligations, and administrative work is a burden at the school.

The following suggestions could be applied to address the above critical factors: Principals should not burden educators with unnecessary challenges, such as unnecessary paper work and administrative work. Assignments should be recorded and verified on a weekly basis. Principals should not force educators to serve on every committee.

Behaviour of the educators (Critical factors)

Collegial behaviour: Educators do not accept other colleagues’ shortcomings, leave for home directly after school hours and socialise in small select groups.

The following suggestions could be applied to address the above critical factors: Educators should support one another openly on both professional and personal level and should also foster a sense of pride towards their school. Educators should be discouraged to leave the school directly after school hours; work should be completed first and colleagues ought to first help one another. Professional interaction and socialising should be encouraged so that they can work together happily and enthusiastically. Educators should accept one another — including the other’s shortcomings.

Intimate behaviour: Colleagues do not invite each other for visits at home, are not familiar with the others’ family backgrounds, enjoy socialising in work time and do not organise social events for one another.

The following suggestions could be applied to address the above critical factors: Social interactions should be encouraged among educators and social skills should be learnt during these interactions. Mutual support among educators and friendship bonds should be encouraged. A feeling of togetherness and unanimity among educators should be fostered during teamwork and staff functions.

Disengaged behaviour: Staff meetings are viewed as useless, educators pressure those who do not wish to join the majority and there is a minority group of educators who always go against the majority group.

The following suggestions could be applied to address the above critical factors: The educators' involvement and cooperation in school activities should be set as a requisite in order to reach common objectives. Negative or destructive actions, comments and negative criticism should not be tolerated. The importance of staff meetings should be emphasised and the behaviour of, for example, small groups of educators who undermine and oppose the decisions of the majority, should be eliminated. Negative group pressure should be eliminated and unacceptable behaviour, such as chatting during meetings should be stopped.

Concluding remarks

The behaviour of principals as well as educators, according to this investigation, did not contribute positively towards the development and establishment of an effective organisational climate in this particular sample of primary schools of the North West Province. The total openness indices of the behaviour of principals as well as of educators were only average, thereby indicating that teachers in this investigation did not experience the organizational climate in their schools as sufficiently positive for creating an environment conducive to teaching and learning. These findings furthermore suggest that the total openness index of the schools can only be described as average. As mentioned in the introduction, a measuring instrument specifically validated for the South African context and schools could possibly shed more light on these findings as well as help to bring about an effective organisational climate in primary schools in this country.

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