

EXPLORING MANAGEMENT APPROACHES IN HIGH SCHOOLS AT KWAZULUNATAL PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA: A COMPARATIVE NARRATION OF MALES AND FEMALES' STYLES

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Abstract

The study explores the management approaches in High schools at KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. Two questions that guide the study was formulated. Qualitative research approach was used in the study. Interpretative paradigm is adopted to make sense on the participants' narrative. There are two thousand five hundred and fifty-nine principals in KwaZulu-Natal province. Purposive sampling technique was used to select twenty-two participants (twelve males and ten females). Fifteen structured interview schedule was designed, audio recorder and fieldnote were to get the information from the participants. Furthermore, the data was transcribed data and was subjected to open coding for the emergence of themes. The themes were analysed using thematic analysis. Findings indicated that male principals used autocratic and transformative management approaches. The reason adduced for the used of autocratic and transformative management approaches were due to poor attitude to work by staff and unity for common goal of the schools respectively. Furthermore, female principals used democratic and collaborative management approaches. Inclusivity of intelligence was the reason advanced for the adoption of the management approaches in the high schools. In line with the findings, it is recommended that principals should not stick to one management approach, rather, they should adopt as many management approaches as possible depending on the circumstance and the dynamic of the school's environment.

Keywords: Management approach, men principals, female principals, autocratic, transformative, democratic and collaborative

Introduction

Before the demise of apartheid in 1994, South African males dominated almost all the managerial positions in South African high schools in KwaZulu-Natal province particularly, and other eight provinces that make up South Africa (Van der Westhuizen, 2006; Davids, & Waghid, 2020). It has been observed that during the men domination of managerial positions, they also exhibited autocratic style of management which was in line with the style of governance within the country then. From all indications, the appointment of male school managers was associated with physical fitness and the psychological alertness, not by mental alertness, capability and competency (Mashele

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& Alagidede, 2022). However, with the demised of apartheid government and the enthronement of popular government in South Africa, efforts were put in place by the successive government to correct this negatively skewed appointment. Heystek, Nieman, van Rooyen, Mosoge and Bipath (2008) held that the 1996 South Africa's Constitution, Labour

Relations Act of 1995, South African Schools Act of 1996, Employment of Educators Act of 1998, Employment Equity Act of 1998, among others were some of the Acts that provided female employees with certain rights in the workplace. Again, some of these Acts mandates the employment of Black women into key managerial positions in schools, industries, ministries, and Non-government Organisations. Matotoka and Odeku (2021) clearly observed that Black women in South Africa are the most populous, despite being populous, they are mostly underrepresented at managerial positions in the South African public and private sectors. Similarly, Matotoka and Odeku (2021) mentioned that Black South African women are not equitably represented at managerial levels in all sectors. Rather, Bunnell and Gardner-McTaggart (2024) averred that male managers in high schools are more dominant at the managerial position in the country.

Aside from the issue of women underrepresentation at managerial position, there is another critical issue raised by Bush and Glover (2012), Sibanda (2017), Maqbool, Zafeer, Zeng, Mohammad, Khassawneh and Wu (2023) who reported that there is remarkably difference in the managerial approaches adopted by females and males in managing institutions of learning. In fact, Bush and Glover (2012) had earlier asserted that male and female managerial approaches in schools is entirely different from each other, therefore, unpredictable. Bush and Glover's (2012) position notwithstanding, Sibanda (2017) asserted that female managerial style is friendly and distributive in nature, unlike males' own which is autocratic and lacks human face. Similarly, using ten schools as a case study, Naidoo, Mncube and Potokri (2015) stated that six schools in which six male principals managed was not democratic in nature, rather, it was managed autocratically, while the managerial approaches of other four female principals were not only democratic, but distributive in nature. Botha and Triegaardt (2014) had explained how distributive management approach contributes effectively and efficiently to overall schools' improvement. The above narrative has compelled the researcher to unravel; what type of managerial approach(es) male and female managers adopt in high schools, and why do they adopt the management approach(es) they do in high school?

Literature

Theoretical framework

The study used Victor Vroom's expectancy theory of 1964. Expectancy theory advocates that persons are motivated to perform if they know that their extra performance will be recognized and rewarded (Swanepoel, Erasmus, & Schenk, 2008).

From all indications, this theory focuses on three variables, that is, valence, instrumentality and expectancy (Vroom, Porter & Lawler, 2015). Vroom, Porter and Lawler (2015) say that valence is the preference or values attached to the outcome by the employee, which varies from person to person. Instrumentality focuses on the extent to which one believes that performance at a given level will result in the desired outcome (Min, Tan, Kamioka & Sharif, 2020). Finally, expectancy is the probability that a certain outcome will ensue if certain behaviour is chosen (Mullins, 2010). Here, it is possible to submit that the decision to behave in a particular way as a leader, whether as a democratic, autocratic or transactional leader, is a function of the value held for such actions as well as the perception that certain outcomes (such as employees behaving in a certain way, e.g., increasing levels of productivity) could be achieved (Lokman, Hassan, Ustadi, Rahman, Zain & Rahmat, 2022). In line with this argument, Chen and Zhao (2013) had earlier averred that who used expectancy theory to examine factors that motivate business faculty members found that the value of rewards was the biggest determinant of research productivity. Chen and Zhao (2013) held that faculty members who were not tenured tended to be motivated by extrinsic rewards, whereas tenured faculty members tended to be intrinsically motivated by the respect earned through conducting research (Nhung & Do, 2020). Based on the above augment, the theory is used to understand why male and female principals adopt the management approach they chose in their school.

Types of Management Approaches

There are eight types of management approaches used in the management of schools (Chafwa, 2012). However, the paper would not dabble into discussing all the approaches. Rather, effort will be geared towards focusing on four types of management approaches used in this study. Here, an autocratic management approach puts the principal at the top of the pyramid on a team.

He or she take decisions and control without consulting other teachers in the school. Khan and Waheed (2019) averred that transformational management approach focuses on the principal inspiring and motivating teachers to think outside of the box to raise the bar in order to achieve school's goals collectively. Yusuf (2023) said that democratic management approach is the opposite of autocratic which puts the voice of all teachers and none teachers at the forefront of decision-making. Here, the principal seeks input from other employees to drive the vision and direction of the school. In the context of collaborative management approach, it is the alignment and mutual accountability between principal and other teachers in the school. In fact, the principal and other teachers share decision-making power and coordinate to reach school's common goals (Bello & Oredein, 2023)

Management approaches in school

A manager is a person who plans, organizes, directs, and controls the allocation of human, material, financial, and information resources in pursuit of the organisational

goals (Gupton & Slick, 1995). Debates about the managerial styles of women and men can be traced back to the 1990s, when men and women style of management came into existence in South Africa (Solomon & Steyn, 2017). Gunter (2001) argue that management approach is dependent upon the prevailing circumstance, therefore, managers should employ a range of management approaches and deploy them as appropriate. However, scholars such as Blackmore (1999), Nandraj (2003), Bush (2005) Baxter (2009) mentioned that women in educational institutions prefer a particular managerial style which made them acceptable to the workers. Gender role is an important personality trait that influence managerial styles (Baxter, 2009). It has been observed that masculinity has positive link with autocratic styles, while femininity has a significant relationship with democratic oriented managerial styles (Belasen 2012). Burke and Collins (2001) described a woman manager as being outspoken, possession of a strong personality and believe in using humour to deal with aggression or conflicts. Tyree (2005) and Wilson (2007) argued that men and women differ on how they manage managerial roles. These differences are as a result of different socialisation patterns and life experiences rather than innate sources (Al-maaitah, Alsoud & Al-maaitah, 2021). The significant domains in gender differences are evident in human relationships. Gray (1993) identifies two paradigms when examining gender issues in schools, that is, the feminine or nurturing paradigm and the masculine /defensive/ aggressive paradigm.

Under feminine paradigm it is listed as follows; caring, creative, intuitive, aware of individual difference, Vilkinas and Carton (1993) non-competitive, tolerant, subjective and informal, while the masculine paradigm include; highly regulated, conformist, normative, competitive, evaluative, disciplined, objective and formal (Bush and West-Burnham, 1994; Fjendbo, 2021). Women managers are on one hand tend to focus on care and empathy to their subordinates (Fjendbo, 2021). Meanwhile, Blackmore (1999) held that women particularly those in manufacturing institutions prefer collaborative management styles since this makes them better managers. The style in question which is less hierarchical, more democratic, flexible and sensitive, foster cohesiveness, value trust and openness and are more humane (Nandraj, 2003). In support of this assertion, Coleman (2000); Robson and Peetz (2020) in their study suggested that female managers identified themselves as collaborative and caring in their places of work. Using schools in Australia as a case study, Eagly and Johnson (1990) held that women managers perform excellently than their men counterparts because of their adoption and application of democratic style of management. It would have been on this basis of this that Kottis (1993); Wang, Cai, Zhu and Deng (2020) asserted that women are making a significant impact on national economies through participation in organizations and their ownership of business due to their efficient managerial competency. Some writers such as Almenberg and Dreber (2015) claim that feminine style of management which comprises of caring, creativity, intuition, awareness of individual differences, non-competitiveness, tolerance, subjectivity and informality is appropriate for educational accomplishment. This assertion is supported

by Morely (1993); Agnew and Cameron-Agnew (2015) who submitted that high academic performance among students is a function of efficient and effective management styles by female managers.

Research Methodology

In this study, the researcher adopts qualitative research method. Similarly, interpretive paradigm was used to make sense on why male and female principals adopts the managerial approach(es) he or she adopts in the management of high school. The official government document from the KwaZulu-Natal (UKN) Department of Education indicated that there are two thousand five hundred and fifty-nine (2559) principals in the province. Out of this figure, female principals constitute one thousand and twenty (1020), while the one thousand five hundred and thirty-nine (1539) are male principals. Purposive sampling technique was used to twelve (12) and ten (10) male and female principals respectively. However, the choice of 12 males and 10 females is for the representation of the population. Pseudonym was used instead of the real name of the participants such as Manzi, Siyanda, Nchobo, Msibi, Proven, Vusi, Bheki, Mngomezulu, Peter, Singh, Hlatshwayo and Vahed for males. While, female names are Thuli, Nyami, Suresh, Thoko, Moyo, Tshuma, Naicker, Sadhana, Muthuki and Thandeka for females. The researcher developed an instrument known as structured interview schedule (SIS) which addressed the research question. The SIS consist of fifteen (15) interview questions. Before the interview, the researcher wrote a letter of permission to conduct interview with the participants to Department of Education, UKZ. Furthermore, a consent form was designed for the participants to indicate their willingness to participate in the study.

Audio tape and fieldnote were used during the interview which last two weeks. The choice of audio tape and fieldnote was to ensure that the researcher record the participant's response verbatim and write down non-verbal communication and observations (Rutakumwa, Mugisha, Bernays, Kabunga, Tumwekwase, Mbonye & Seeley, 2020). After the interview, the researcher ensure that the data was transcribed. According to Rutakumwa, Mugisha, Bernays, Kabunga, Tumwekwase, Mbonye, and Seeley (2020), the importance of data transcription helps the researcher to better understand and analyse the content of the interviews, provides empirical and non-empirical evidence to the researcher, and in turn, assist at informing and adding weight to the research findings and conclusions. Furthermore, the transcribed data was subjected to open coding for the emergence of themes. The themes were analysed using thematic analysis.

Result

Question 1: What type of managerial approach(es) male and female managers adopt in high schools?

The emerging themes from question 1 indicated that male principals adopt two major types of managerial approaches such as autocratic and transformative approaches, while female counterparts usually adopt democratic and collaborative approaches.

Adoption of Autocratic Approach

When Manzi, Msibi, Proven and Vusi were asked the type of managerial approach they often adopted at ensuring that their schools are effectively managed, they responded that it is autocratic managerial approach. In fact, Proven and Manzi clearly stated that they cannot use any other managerial approach aside from autocratic. Manzi stated that the autocratic managerial approach is the easiest approach to adopt in an environment where one has different teachers and their various mannerisms. Vusi was very categorical on the issue of managerial approach adopted in his high school when he declared:

I use autocratic managerial approach in my school to ensure that every teacher adhere to the rules and regulations of the organisation. You do understand that human being is very dynamic, therefore, as a principal one has to issue order(s) in which all subordinates must comply without questioning.

Proven reported that autocratic managerial approach he adopted in his school, allow every teacher to carry out his or her task(s) promptly without complain. Proven went further to state that “*in autocratic managerial approach a teacher can only complain after he or she has done what he or she was asked to do.*” When Proven was interrogated why he does not allow his subordinates to voice their opinion towards the way the school is managed, he responded;

I did allow my teachers to contribute their opinion towards the way the school is managed. However, I can only accept their opinion if it is extremely necessary, otherwise, it is rejected.

From the above extract, we have come to the realisation that the majority of male principals in high schools in KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa adopted autocratic managerial approach due to perceived self-ego of ensuring effective management of the school.

Adoption of Transformative Approach

The conversation held with Bheki, Mngomezulu, Peter, Singh, Hlatshwayo and Vahed concerning the type of managerial approach adopted in their schools indicated that they prefer the adoption of transformative approach. Singh and Mngomezulu held that transformative managerial approach encourages and inspires teachers to innovate and develop new ways to grow and improve the path to the school future success. Hlatshwayo and Vahed stated that using transformative approach permitted them to

give trusted teachers the independence to take decisions and support new problem-solving approaches. Bheki is of the view that transformative approach adopted allows him to encourage teachers' actions that help the school in achieving its set goals and vision, thereby motivating employees by appealing to their own self-interest. Bheki went further to reiterate that his application of transformative managerial approach allows other teachers in the school to be part of the decision-making process, which ultimately leads to more buy-in of agreed-upon goals.

From the above narrative, it may be concluded that male principals in some high schools in KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa are in the habit of applying transformative approach in managing their schools. It is belief that the adoption and application of the approach is that they intent to inspire teachers of their schools to strive beyond required expectations to work toward a shared vision of the schools.

Adoption of Democratic approach

The issue of adoption of democratic management approach was raised by female principals such as Thuli, Nyami, Suresh, Muthuki and Thandeka. These participants were unanimous in saying that democratic approach adopted encourages open conversation and it assists their teachers to accomplish set goals, appraise their performance which motivates them to grow. Nyami particularly reported that the democratic approach she used enable her to distributes responsibilities to all teachers in order to foster team participation in decision-making. In the same vein, Thandeka declared that "*democratic management approach used in her school allows everyone including non-academic staff to participate, exchange ideas, and have their opinions heard in the affair of the school.*" When Suresh's opinion was sought on the merit of using democratic management approach, she replied;

In democratic approach teachers and other members of the school community are encouraged to share ideas and opinions, even though I still have the final say over all decisions reached. Furthermore, this approach encourages teamwork, collaboration, transparency and effective communication among teachers.

From the excerpt above, it is clear that the majority of female principals often used democratic management approach in their schools. These principals were of the view that the approach adopted did not only promote teamwork and collaboration, it also enhance good communication and transparency in the school environment.

Adoption of collaborative approach

On the issue of collaborative approach adopted by female principals, Thoko, Moyo, Tshuma, Naicker and Sadhana clearly reported that this approach facilitate a team climate which place premium on knowledge sharing and connection. In fact, Thoko held that collaborative management approach functions best for diverse teachers who

come from different social strata to collectively work for overall goals of the school. Naicker said that she used collaborative approach in managing her school due to its importance of teamwork and shared responsibility for achieving the institutional goals. Notwithstanding the position of Thoko and Naicker, Moyo stated that collaborative management approach adopted in her school allows for building of trust among her teachers, delegation of task to teachers, ensure good communication, transparency and reduces conflict among teachers in the school.

From the above narrative, it was established that female principals adopted collaborative management approach in their schools. They were of the opinion that collaborative approach allowed for the building of trust, delegation of duties to various teachers in the school, ensuring good communication, transparency and minimize conflict in the school.

Question 2: why do they adopt the management approach (es) they do in high school?

Poor Attitude to work

The analysed interview indicated reasons why male and female principals adopted the kind of management approached they do. Concerning the male principals who adopted autocratic approach in managing their schools said that they adopted the approach because it allows for prompt decision to be taken without any delay. In fact, Manzi reported that he adopted autocratic approach in managing his school because it allows for effective control of all the staff. When Manzi was asked whether he could not effectively control his staff with other approaches such as democratic, he responded;

I cannot see any other approach working in my school, the reason is that some of my staff are very stubborn, therefore, they need force to ensure that they perform their official assignment.

In the same vein, Proven and Vusi declared;

We the principals have seen some difficult staff that refuses to act or perform any official assignment except they are being force to do it, hence our adoption of autocratic managing approach.

From the above narrative, it is obvious that most male principals adopted autocratic managing approach due to their poor attitude to work. From all indications, it was indicated that some academic and non-academic staff refused to perform their official assignment or duty, it is on the basis of this that the principals used autocratic approach to manage their school.

Unity for common goal

When the researcher questioned Bheki and Hlatshwayo on the reason for the adoption of transformative management approach in school, they responded that they used this approach because it communicates the vision and mission of the school to all the employees and ensure that everyone is on board for the achievement of the common goal of the school. Peter further explained that all employees in the school sees the accomplishment of the school goals as common, therefore, every member of the school community must ensure that great productivity is achieved. In line with Bheki, peter and Hlatshwayo's view, Mngomezulu and Singh reported that they applied transformative management approach in the schools based on the ground that it provides clear and consistent messages to rally other of their colleagues behind the vision of the school. In drawing home their point, Singh stated that he applied this approach to articulate the school's message clearly and reminding his colleagues of the reason they are doing what they are doing.

The above conversation clearly indicated that male principals who used transformative management approach did that on the basis of all employers of the school being encouraged to focus on what is/are good for the institution, instead of their own self-interests.

Inclusivity of intelligence

The reason stated by Thoko, Moyo, Tshuma, Naicker and Sadhana for using collaborative managing approach in their schools was due to their strong belief that the inclusivity of intelligence and diverse capabilities of all the workers are far more valuable than the isolated expertise of one principal. In fact, Moyo highlighted that the foundation of collaborative management approach is the creation of an environment where every teacher feels valued and their input is actively sought. She went on to submit that as a principal has no monopoly of knowledge, therefore, she needs the contributions of everyone irrespective of the teacher's rank to manage the school successfully. In a similar vein, Sadhana held that she adopted collaborative management approach because she knows that to accomplish the goals and objectives of the school, she needs to harness the power of the team's collective intelligence. Tshuma declared; *"I use this approach because I am moving away from the notion that the principal must be the foremost expert in the school and rather, understanding that her true strength lies in the ability to bring out the best in other teachers."*

Discussion

From the findings, it was discovered that male principals in high schools KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa adopted autocratic management approach. From all indications, the adoption of the approach by these male principals were based the notion that they are 'Bosses' of the schools therefore, every subordinate has to abide by their directives. It was equally discovered from the findings that the adopted autocratic management approach allows little or no input from other teachers hence he

is the only one that decides how the school is managed. Peker, İnandı and Gılıç (2018) earlier submitted that autocratic management approach makes the employees to do their job without right to participate in the decision-making process. Similarly, Benfar (1999) asserted that in autocratic management the principal maintains the strict hierarchical structure of the school and prioritize the work rather than engaging in good human relations.

On the issue of the adoption of transformative management approach, findings have shown that some male principals usually employed transformative approach in order to inspire teachers of their schools to strive beyond required expectations and to work toward a common vision of the schools. One of the principals reported that he used transformative management due to its high value on creating community bonds, encouraging principal and educators to greater levels of achievement. This assertion is in agreement with Okere and Wike's (2023) position that transformational management should be used today based on its potential to inspire subordinates to do their best, develop their skills for overall good of the organization.

Findings indicated that most female principals employed democratic management approach in their schools. These principals were of the view that application of democratic governance is based on human rights values, empowerment and involvement of all staff in all important decisions in the school. It was also shown that the majority of them deployed this method because of its involvement of every member of the school community in the decision-making process which may lead to work effectiveness. This position is collaborated by Itheme and Owhondah (2020) who reported that democratic management allows the teachers to participate in decision making thereby making the teacher feel more appreciated which can lead to an increase in teacher productivity, quality and morale.

Findings showed that in spite of the fact that most female principals deployed democratic process in managing their schools, others adopted collaborative management approach in their schools. They were of the view that collaborative approach allowed for the building of trust, delegation of duties to various teachers in the school, ensuring good communication, transparency and minimise conflict in the school hence its usage. This finding is in line with position advanced by Alabar, Gbande and Lim (2015) that collaborative management involving every employee around and getting lot of feedback from your staff before coming to a conclusion and making a decision.

Conclusion

The functionality of any education institution is a reflection of the way in which the manager adopts various management strategies to run such institution. High schools in KwaZulu-Natal province were subjected to different kinds of management approaches, and the results has been fair depending on the management strategy adopted by the

principal. The study unraveled the managerial approach male and female managers adopt and why they adopt such management approach in their schools. It was found out from the findings that majority of male principals used autocratic and transformative management approaches. The reason adduced for the used of autocratic and transformative management approaches were due to poor attitude to work by staff and unity for common goal of the schools respectively. Furthermore, female principals used democratic and collaborative management approaches. Participation of every employee and inclusivity of intelligence were the reasons advanced for the adoption of these management approaches in the high schools.

Recommendation

In line with findings of the study, the researcher recommends that principals should not stick to one management approach in the management of the school. Rather, they should adopt as many management approaches as possible depending on the circumstance and the dynamic of the school's environment. Deployment of many management approaches depending on the particular situation the principal find his/herself serve as the best for the school and every employee in the school.

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