



BEING AN EFFECTIVE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT



Acknowledgements



Ministry of Education

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For information on OpenSTEM Africa see: www.open.ac.uk/ido



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OpenSTEM Africa: Ghana

The overarching aim of OpenSTEM Africa, Ghana, is to make a contribution to Government of Ghana/Ministry of Education policy to the effective teaching of practical science.

Effected by:

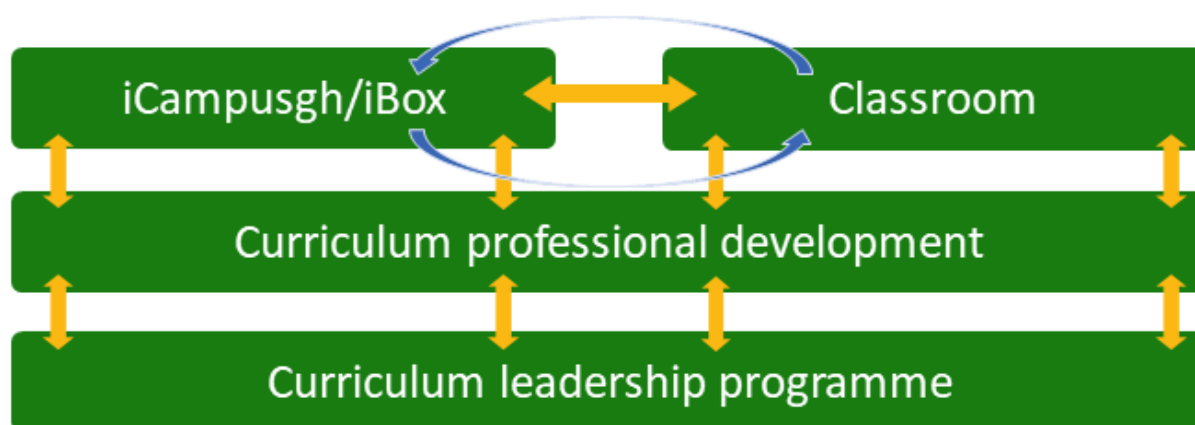
1. **Virtual Lab:** onscreen interactive science instruments using real data and with examples of science lessons, to improve the experiential teaching and learning of science in Senior High Schools, helping develop girls' and boys' practical science study skills, and building on the iCampusgh/iBox model developed by CENDLOS.

Underpinned by:

2. **Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for science teachers:** which develops confidence, skills and strategies to enable improved teaching and learning in the sciences, with a particular focus on ICT-based practical sciences, and which supports them in meeting the aspirations of the SHS elective science curriculum (Physics, Chemistry and Biology).

Embedded in Senior High Schools through:

3. **Curriculum Leadership Programme:** for Heads of Department/Heads of Subject, which enables them to effectively implement short- and long-term strategies to improve teaching and learning in the sciences, with a particular focus on ICT based practical science in their school.



The school-based professional development and leadership programmes will help more teachers use ICT-based science resources more and more effectively, with more learners. The support for school leaders' facilitates the development of a sustainable community of practice in science within the school, led by the Head of Department/Head of Subject and with the support of the Headmaster/Headmistress, in line with National Teaching Council Guidelines.

Curriculum leadership programme

This curriculum leadership programme is designed by experienced Senior High School Heads of Science, and SHS curriculum and Science Resource Centre developers, representing a wide range of Senior High Schools in Ghana. They are working with representatives from the Ministry of Education, from CENDLOS, from GES, from the University of Ghana and from Open University (UK) on OpenSTEM Africa (Ghana).

Improving teaching and learning in the sciences at SHS level is part of the Government of Ghana *Education Strategic Plan (2018–30)* to enable increasing numbers of SHS students to specialise in the sciences at tertiary level and then move into STEM careers. Government of Ghana policy points to the importance of in-service training for teachers for acquiring new skills and keeping abreast of new developments. The National Teacher Standards for Ghana (MoE/NTC) set out the importance of teachers continuing to learn as they teach and the importance of the school as the location of that learning. Ghanaian research suggests that continuous professional development (CPD) taking place within the school is more motivating, more coherent, more sustainable and likely to be more effective in the long term. This is the “growth approach” in which teachers are given the opportunity to try new opinions, gain new perspectives, and extend their professional capabilities in order to understand and find solutions to problems in their individual schools” (Asare et al., 2012).

The role of Head of Department is key to enabling this kind of teacher development to thrive. Heads of Science, or Heads of Physics/Biology/Chemistry already take responsibility for the professional practice of the teachers in the department. This programme is to enable these leaders to organise individual and group support to those teachers, to share their own expertise in the sciences, to lead on the development of skills among their teachers) with a particular focus on ICT-based teaching and learning) and to lead on building a community of practice among science teachers in the school.

Your role as a Head of Department in transforming STEM education

As a Head of Department, you are a middle leader and your role is a combination of leadership, management, administration and teaching. Your leadership role requires you to focus on your own expertise and that of your colleagues, with a commitment to continuing professional development (CPD) for all. You must pay attention to everyone’s professional and personal growth, with respect to teaching and learning.

In your classroom

As a subject expert, you are expected to model exemplary practice in your own teaching and learning. In the classroom, you are continuously developing your capacity to make lessons exciting, engaging and ultimately make science interesting for your students. The range of materials created to support the OpenSTEM Africa programme will provide key resources for you and your staff.

In your school

As Head of Department, you have the management responsibility of observing others teach and providing critical and constructive feedback on aspects of their work. This is a great opportunity to influence practice by drawing your colleagues' attention to good practices in STEM teaching and learning. This may be through formally organised professional development sessions for a group of teachers, or through one-to-one interactions with colleagues.

The aim of the OpenSTEM Africa CPD programme is to support the development of a “community of practice”. As you will know, the National Teachers' Standards for Ghana place community of practice as within the domain of teachers 'professional values and attitudes' and give the following definition:

“A group of teachers who share a concern or passion for the teaching profession and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.”

(NTC 2017, pp. 51)

The community needs to be a safe space in which science teachers feel supported and enthusiastic about developing their practice, in order to improve learning. In a “community of practice”, learning is seen as a joint enterprise of negotiation and reflection, taking place through mutual engagement in practice, with all participants being valued equally (Wenger, 1998). The conditions required for a 'community of practice' are:

- engagement in action (which will come through the activities in the CPD units),
- shared knowledge (which will come through discussion, and reflection on practice),
- interpersonal relations based on mutual respect and support.

Your leadership role is to create the conditions for a community of practice to develop. You will be a facilitator and supporter, rather than inspector and monitor. This programme is designed to develop your skills in this area, with other units including *Designing and implementing CPD programmes in your school*, *Coaching your science teachers* and *Embedding the use of ICT across your department* (https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/HoD_units).

Beyond the school

As a “critically reflective practitioner” (NTC 2017 pp. 16) it is important to recognise your science department as more than an administrative unit within a school. Your department should be conceived as community that involve practitioners who can have great influence on teaching and learning in the school and beyond. So, connecting with STEM educators beyond your school boundaries, and with employers and advocacy groups, is a great way to extend opportunities for you staff and students. This could involve school visits to STEM employers, inviting guest teachers from other schools, inviting STEM role models from business and public life into school to talk to students, STEM career days, science fair or STEM project exhibitions etc. Your role here is to make learning and teaching of STEM-based subjects very relevant and practical for your students.

Being an effective Head of Department

Introduction

In order to realise the vision of transforming schools in Ghana as set out in the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2018–2030, all school leaders (HoDs, headmistresses and headmasters) must play a critical role. In addition to providing vision, direction and leadership, they must take personal responsibility for renewing and updating their skills and knowledge throughout their working lives as specified in the National Teaching Standards (2017).

Personal development is a lifelong process of nurturing, shaping and improving your skills and knowledge in order to ensure maximum effectiveness in your duties. Personal development as a middle leader does not necessarily imply upward movement (e.g. promotion). Instead, it is about enabling you to improve your performance and providing effective leadership in your department and beyond.

“Middle managers are crucial drivers of strategic change. They face many challenges in performing this role. They implement new strategies mandated by top management... It is clear that there is changing orientation of middle management work. The present orientation requires middle level managers to create relationships across boundaries, champion innovations, synthesize information, and also facilitate learning to their subordinates.”

(Mwangi and Okello, 2016)

Your role as Head of Department, as explained earlier, means developing and honing your skills, which will greatly benefit you and those you lead. This unit introduces you to a range of ideas to help you become a more effective HoD. By the end of this unit, you will learn how to:

- prioritise your work, manage your time effectively and set clear goals
- delegate more effectively
- lead and manage change
- deal with conflict in the workplace
- manage school-based projects
- plan your learning and development.

During your work on this unit you are encouraged to make notes – just for your own use so that you collect your thoughts and plans together in one place. You could do this in a notebook, or on a computer or laptop. You may be working through this unit alone or as a group; either way it is good to discuss your learning with peers to help foreground some of the ideas you will be introduced to. This can be done in an organised way or on a more

informal basis, but it is good to model the practice of collaborative learning as it forms part of the OpenSTEM Africa learning strategy.

Decision making

An important aspect of leadership and management in any area of work is decision making. Whether you are doing this alone or as part of a team, it is essential that you act with confidence. In your school, your role as Head of Department means you are a decision maker, therefore, once the discussion of a decision is complete, you are expected to signal the intent to act.

According to the *National Teachers Standards for Ghana (2017)*, educational leaders and managers are expected to mobilise, allocate and manage a range of resources. The standards

“Rank 3: Make efforts to secure resources to support teaching and learning in the school

Rank 4–6: Plan, mobilise and manage necessary resources to implement education plan for school.”

As a HoD, focusing on the following decision-making skills will enhance your capacity to deliver on these competency requirements:

- prioritising your work
- setting clear goals.

Prioritising your work and managing your time effectively as a middle leader

Middle leaders/HoDs have competing demands for their time during any school day. In addition to your teaching duties you work with colleague teachers, parents, students or education officials who visit your school. One potential source of pressure is your colleagues’ and students’ dependence on you to solve all day-to-day problems, which often leaves little or no time for you to do other, equally important strategic school tasks. This requires identifying priorities and making decisions about the most pressing issues first. This takes discipline, because some decisions appear to require immediate attention and yet lack genuine urgency or importance for the long term. This can lead to unintended consequences, as the next case study highlights.

Priorities have two features: urgency and importance. The leader’s task is to identify these and act upon them. The ‘grid of urgency’ is a simple way to prioritise your work by clustering all tasks into categories, such as those that need your urgent attention and should be carried out by you, and those that you can easily delegate to someone else. Figure 1 is a representation of how you could cluster your tasks.

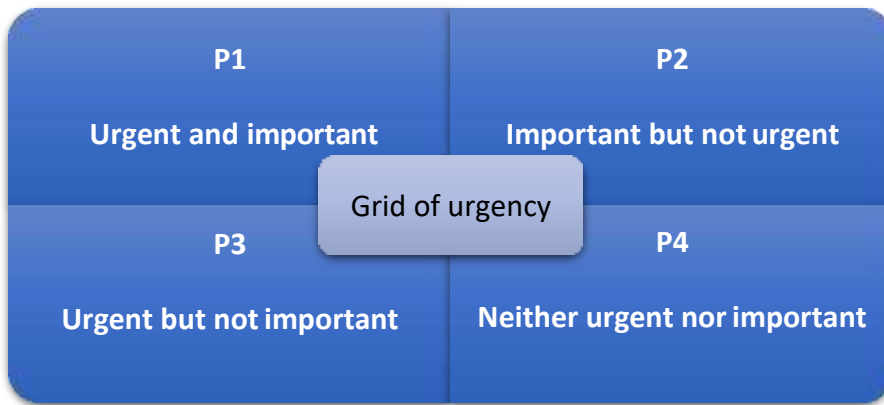


Figure 1 The grid of urgency

The priorities in the grid are as follows:

Priority 1: Urgent and important (U & I): These tasks have to be prioritised over everything. Although you may involve others, you are ultimately responsible and therefore have to ensure that the tasks are carried out effectively and on time.

Priority 2: Important but not urgent (I not U): These tasks are not priorities, but you would usually want to do them yourself because they are important. Because they are important it is a good idea not to leave them too late, otherwise they will become a priority 1 task. If you decide to delegate such a task, it is important that you supervise and/or provide the appropriate support to that person to ensure the level of quality is what you require.

Priority 3: Urgent but not important (U not I): Whatever the reason, these tasks require an urgent response, but they are not important to your role. Because these are not important, you should avoid putting too much time into these tasks. These are the tasks you can often be pressured into doing because they are presented as urgent, but after a few minutes of working on them you realise they aren't. To avoid a delayed response, it is better to delegate them to someone else.

Priority 4: Neither urgent nor important (neither U nor I): You should ask yourself whether you need to do these tasks at all. Such tasks are distractions and are not a good use of your time, so delegate where appropriate.

It is worth noting that others may present some tasks to you as urgent and/or important, although you may think otherwise. As a leader determined to manage your time effectively, you have to stand your ground and be firm. The grid of urgency offers a model for you to prioritise your tasks and activities.



Activity 1: Using the grid of urgency to prioritise your work

Create your own version of the grid of urgency, labelling the boxes 'P1', 'P2', 'P3' and 'P4'. Now consider the tasks that have come to you in the past two weeks and write them down in the various categories on the grid. They do not have to be tasks that have been completed, but they will be tasks which vary in importance and urgency.

When you have done this think about what, if anything, has been done so far about each task.

Look at whether any section of the grid has more completed tasks than the other sections, and the extent to which you have delegated completed tasks.

Finally think about which tasks might be delegated, and to whom.

Comment

When considering which tasks might be delegated and to whom you might consider the following:

- **The urgency of the task:** Urgent tasks always must be prioritised, but this does not mean they have to be completed by you. You can easily delegate them or involve others.
- **The importance of the task:** These are tasks that you will want to do yourself, although they may be time-consuming. You must prioritise these, but if for any reason you feel the need to delegate them, you will have to monitor them to ensure they are delivered in a timely and efficient way.
- **The ability of the individual who will be taking up the task:** This matters because you will expect the quality of the solution to be the same as though you took on the task yourself. Therefore, it is advisable to delegate to those you are confident can deliver. Experience sometimes counts!
- **Most importantly, how much time you both have:** If it will take the person you are delegating too much longer to complete the task than if you had done it yourself, think again. You may also want to reconsider delegating if the person will require a lot of supervision to be able to tackle the task satisfactorily.

Setting clear goals

As discussed earlier, being able to identify your priorities will allow you to focus on the urgent and important issues and decisions first. Prioritising allows you to set clear goals and from these you are more likely to achieve successful outcomes.

“A goal is a general and realistic aim for achievement. In decision-making, it makes explicit the requirements and the desired result for the decision.”

(O'Connor, 2016)

Goals give direction to the decision-making process and as a Head of Department and middle leader you will be setting goals regularly to direct your decision-making processes. Here are some tips.

Defining goals

The following are examples of school related goals that you may be familiar with:

- Goal 1: To raise my school's reputation in Ghana
- Goal 2: To encourage all STEM teachers to engage with OpenSTEM Africa's Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs) and iCampusgh/iBox resources
- Goal 3: Set up a two-hour professional development session on the weekly timetable for science teachers by September
- Goal 4: Improve Physics pass rates in the WASSCE by 7%
- Goal 5: Improve girls' Biology pass rates in the WASSCE by 10%

These statements are all worthy but provide varying degrees of clarity. For example, in Goal 1 you have a very broad and generalised goal which is a good starting point for further detailed discussion. It states, in general terms, an ambition and end result around which you and your colleagues can brainstorm a variety of solutions. These solutions can then be examined individually. As the discussion continues, some clarity will emerge to help narrow the focus and concentrate your efforts.

Goals 1 & 2 are very general ambitions that can instigate discussion. They state, in general terms, ambitions which would be shared by all teachers and school leaders, therefore, provide some impetus for brainstorming.

For example, for Goal 1, options that could emerge include: winning the National Science and Maths Quiz (NSMQ) winning sport competitions, improving WASSCE results, etc. Based on the ideas and solutions that emerge, you and the team can then reach a shared meaning and/or understanding of what is required to raise the reputation of your school. This process is important because consensus helps in refining the goal.

Goal 3, on the other hand, is quite concise. It limits decision making to those options which help set up the desired action by a particular date. This kind of goal is often associated with tasks where you have already determined what needs to be done. Your next step is to

generate options in order to decide the best course of action.

Goal 4 is quite specific, because it states a clear 7% increase target in pass rates for a particular subject in the WASSCE. Having a measurable indicator helps in decision making, because only options that will impact directly on the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) will be considered.

State intentions

Your goals set out what you as a school leader are trying to achieve. This does not necessarily mean that you will have to undertake all the tasks associated with the objective(s). As some tasks will need to be delegated it is important that the objectives are clearly understood by everyone associated with the processes. If they are, they will be successfully implemented.

When formulating goals, you should make explicit what you want to achieve during any discussion(s). The more important the decision, the more time may be required, so everyone involved may need to be patient.

Using the SMART principle in goal setting

There are ways in which you can construct the statements in your goals to ensure that your objectives are carefully planned, concise and achievable. Although a carefully constructed objective does not necessarily guarantee that it will be achieved, it is a good start, because it has key aspects that stimulate you to make sure it happens. You are going to write objectives shortly for your department, but the discipline of writing good objectives can be used in many contexts. A very popular acronym used to describe the key aspects of a good objective is 'SMART', meaning:

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**chievable
- **R**ealistic
- **T**imely (or **T**ime-bound).

It is important that you are *specific* and have clear and *measurable* indicators, because they provide a definition of the success of the initiative at hand. *Achievable* and *realistic* objectives engage and motivate individuals. When your objectives look unrealistic, you put yourself and others under immense pressure. This can have a knock-on effect on people's level of commitment or their abilities to meet these unrealistic and unattainable objective(s). It is important to have clear *time* indicators, so that all the stakeholders know when the objective must be achieved by – or, if it is not likely to be achieved, whether to put in place measures to address any mitigating issues.

Now let's look at some key action verbs that can help in constructing SMART objectives.

Specific

To be specific, an objective should have a description of a precise or specific behaviours, achievement or outcome. It is also helpful if it can be related to a percentage, frequency, rate or number. To increase specificity, use verbs that are action-orientated to describe those actions that need to be taken to fulfil the objective(s).

Action verbs include 'create', 'develop', 'design', 'analyse', 'execute', 'change', 'modify', 'identify' and 'prepare'.

Measurable

Ensuring that your objective is measurable is hugely important, because it tells you whether you have achieved your objective or not. You will gather evidence through a data collection instrument (observing, tracking and recording behaviours, asking questions, etc.) or using a predefined system or procedure in your school as required by the state authority. The instrument you use to measure your objective should help you to generate the required evidence to support your claims of success. You should consider the following questions:

How will I know that the change has occurred? How can these measurements be obtained?

Achievable

An objective is achievable if you know it is measurable and you can gather evidence to ascertain the impact or change expected. If others have already done it, then in principle it is possible to achieve it by carefully considering all limitations and constraints. It is not worth setting an objective that relies heavily on resources that are not readily available or may be difficult to obtain in the future. It is a risk that must be carefully managed if the target is to be achieved.

Realistic

Another important aspect of a realistic objective is whether it is worth undertaking. While objectives should be realistic, this does not mean that they need to be easy.

Objectives can be set that are demanding, but not to the extent that the chance of success is small. Realistic objectives consider the available resources, such as skills required, financial resources, equipment and so on. You should consider:

- Is it possible to achieve this objective?
- Are the resources available to achieve this objective?
- Is it worth doing? While this is a value judgement, it is worth considering because it may influence your level of motivation.

Timely (or time-bound)

Allocating a deadline to an objective is closely linked to ensuring that it is measurable. Because you will be collecting evidence at a specified time to ascertain whether you have met the objective, it is imperative that you specify when you expect the objective to be achieved. A deadline also helps to create the necessary urgency, prompts action and focuses the minds of those who are accountable.



Activity 2: Setting your own SMART objectives individually and for your school

The objective-setting process can seem daunting, but it doesn't have to be. It can be as simple as sitting down with your broad development goals and using SMART to reconstruct them.

At department level, you can do this by going through a departmental or school year plan and considering how it can be met. Doing this is the foundation for setting the objectives, and everyone within the school should have a clear understanding of the objectives, as well as an awareness of their own roles and responsibilities in achieving them.

Spend some time with some of your team members and work through your department or school's objectives and make them SMART. Consider when you hope to complete the objectives, how you will undertake them and the resources you will need.

When you have finished, try out your SMART technique by addressing the goals in your school's development plans rather than your department. Use a new template (provided in the appendix) to write a SMART objective for your school at an operational or strategic level. You can have more than one objective for a goal that is expressed in broad terms, like the one used in this example.

Delegation

Delegation involves giving someone the authority to carry out a task or make a decision on your behalf. However, you will still be accountable and ultimately responsible. Although you can delegate leadership responsibilities, as a Head of Department you are ultimately responsible, and you will be the person that the School Management Committee (SMC) and/or the government education supervisor will hold to account.

Delegation is recognised as a management technique that improves efficiency, offers the manager some space to tackle other duties and can provide opportunities for others to develop themselves, too.



Activity 3: Analysing the HoD role and responsibilities

Think about your typical day and list all the activities that you lead on. These could include:

- leadership actions such as welcoming students and staff to school
- leading the morning assembly
- reviewing lesson notes of other teachers
- ensuring all lessons start on time.

Now reflect on the activities you have listed and rank them in order of importance (i.e., activities that have the most impact on your students' ability to learn). Prioritising these tasks may be difficult because you deem all tasks to be equally important. Nonetheless, you will need to identify those activities where you as a Head of Department will have the most impact (by separating the tasks that can only be done by you from those that could be done by others but have the same impact).

For each of the activities, identify a member of your staff who can lead in your absence.

You may find it useful to make a copy of the table below and fill it in, adding as many rows as you need.

Do you have a job description for your role? If you do not have a clear-cut job description, list out all the tasks that you need to undertake and complete. Some could be immediate, whereas others are long term in nature

How far does your daily activity list reflect your job description or job list? Do you do any activities that are not in the job description or job list?

Activity	Staff to lead in my absence

Prioritising your work and choosing what to delegate is never an easy task, because you have to make sure that seniority is observed (e.g. that you delegate to Heads of Subject where appropriate) and the job gets done. Issues relating to trust and the appropriate support from the person on the task are further reasons why care should be taken when delegating. But reluctance to delegate can leave you jaded and overwhelmed, which can ultimately affect your performance.

Tips for successful delegation

As you think about the tasks you would like to delegate, consider the following tips:

- Analyse your own abilities, and the limits of your time. This way you can identify what can best be delegated.
- By delegating, leave yourself free to do the work that only you can do.
- Re-examine the tasks you find particularly easy – it may be appropriate to delegate these tasks as well as the tasks you don't wish to do.
- Do not delegate exceptional tasks, such as tasks only you can do in time or to the required standard.
- Do not delegate tasks involving confidentiality or sensitivity.
- Use the delegation of important tasks to develop a team member's role, improve their performance and raise their morale.
- Real delegation requires courage, judgement and faith in others – seek to exercise these qualities whenever you delegate.

Being able to assign – or delegate – some of your duties (or activities) to others will also allow you to start to prioritise your work, manage your time better and more effectively and develop trustworthy relationships. But clearly you'll be able to do this better if you have a way of deciding which are the most pressing and important tasks that you are responsible for.

Being proactive in leading change

The National Teaching Council competency framework states the following competency as a requirement for ranks 3–4:

“Support the development, implementation and monitoring of school/district work plans which lead to improvement of education in collaboration with stakeholders.”

(NTC competency requirement rank 3–4)

This requirement places an onus on middle leaders including HoDs to share responsibility in the development, planning and delivery of initiatives that lead to school improvements, so you must be proactive.

There are three important things worth bearing in mind when leading or managing change:

- There is an element of **uncertainty**: no one knows what the future holds, but reasonable plans can be made to reach the future goal.
- Change requires **leadership**: there should be someone, or a group of people, who may not necessarily be a leader by job description, but who takes control and provides direction throughout the change period.
- Change has an **emotional impact**: it affects people differently and they react in different ways – some negative, some positive.

In the next sections, you will look at school-level change and begin to consider how you, as a school leader, can work with your staff to bring about change. You will also consider some ways in which you can overcome barriers to change and foster an environment that allows others to try new approaches.

Heads of Department and teachers often face challenges when making changes. Leadership example 1 shows how teachers and others have set out to make a difference by initiating a change.



Leadership example 1

Theme: Additional activities to boost attendance Teacher: Mr Kwamina Otoo

Context: SHS in Western region

Problem statement: Mr Otoo noticed that the short length of the school day and pressure to complete the curriculum meant that little time was available for students to participate in creative or sporting activities. These activities are important for the students' overall development. In addition, he was concerned about student attendance and wanted a means of motivating pupils to be at school.

The change: Mr Otoo proposed to address this challenge by lengthening the school day. By adding an extra half-hour at the end of each school day, Mr Otoo could create time and space for unique activities without compromising the school's focus on the core curriculum. Activities such as sports and reading time are rotated. Students don't know which activity they will participate in at the end of each day, which adds an element of surprise and generates additional interest in coming to school. The value of the innovation lies in its contribution to the holistic development of the student, while increasing both their enjoyment of school and the time available for learning.

Why this is interesting: It seeks to address the current situation whereby a student typically spends fewer hours at school, compared to between six and eight hours in other countries.

In addition, it recognises the need to create an enjoyable environment at school to improve attendance.

Potential implementation challenges: As HoD Mr Otoo will require buy-in from stakeholders, especially the School Leadership Team and parents. There may be significant resource challenges to providing extra-curricular activities. Schools should be careful to offer activities that students are actually interested in and to ensure that girls and boys benefit equally e.g., by carrying out a student survey, and including questions on the expense of the resources needed and ascertaining whether the parents of female students will respond differently to the parents of the boys.

Some strategies for leading and managing change

Change in its various forms is common in education and within schools. The drivers may be external, internal or a combination of both. Change may be imposed on you or started by you. In most cases the aim is to improve, which within a school context ultimately relates to improving student learning, either through direct changes to teaching and learning, or by improving the effectiveness of school structures and systems to support learning.

Regardless of whether it is internally or externally driven, there are two ways of looking at how change is actually initiated within a school: **Top-down and/or bottom-up change** (Figure 2).

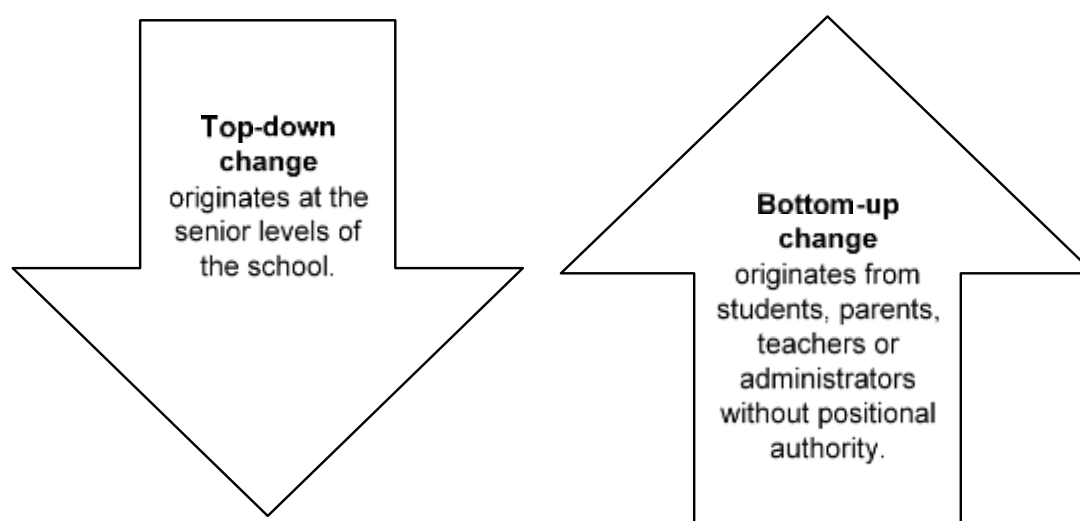


Figure 2 Top-down and bottom-up change

(TESS India OER- Perspective on leadership: planning and leading change in your school).

Top-down change can be relatively easy and straightforward to put into practice across the school, provided it is negotiated and agreed by staff, School Management Committee (SMC) members and the trade unions – which is not always the case. It usually takes a school-wide approach, and so has the advantage of promoting a consistent approach to the change at hand. Top-down change usually involves some degree of consultation with those implementing the change. However, particularly in times of crisis, top-down change can be imposed in a directive and coercive way without staff consultation. This may have severe consequences for motivation and morale, but if organisational survival is at stake, school staff may well accept the need for rapid and drastic action without a consultation process.

Bottom-up change, on the other hand, has the advantage of being designed by the school community itself. This is an expectation from the Ghana Education Service (GES) and encapsulated in the development plans of schools. As a Head of Department, you play a pivotal role in implementing and monitoring plans and promoting this type of change across the department. Bottom-up change may also be suggested by anyone in the school and then implemented by senior staff who have the authority to influence and drive it through. However, change of this kind often requires a high degree of negotiation, and a school community may not readily agree on a change, so it raises other challenging issues. For this

reason, bottom-up change is sometimes considered to be unpredictable and it takes time for it to be adopted across the organisation.

To minimise problems in any change initiative, some school leaders implement their change in one area of the school as a pilot scheme to try out new ways of working, assess problems and issues that arise, and make any necessary adjustments before rolling it out across the whole school. This means that any major weaknesses can be sorted before introducing the change on a larger scale.



Activity 4: Reflecting on your experience of educational change

Spend some time thinking of three significant changes that have taken place in your school in the last year or two. They might be large or small changes, but they will have meant that people had to change their priorities, behaviours or processes. In your Learning Journal, make notes related to the following questions:

- What was the driver or initiator for each change?
- How did you and others respond to that driver?
- What were the challenges of implementing the change?
- How did you and your colleagues cope with the change?
- What has been the impact of the change on student learning?

Comment

Educational change initiatives can embrace a broad range of issues: classroom practice, school-level change or larger-scale transformation at state or national level. Your own response will vary from that of other school leaders, because change affects everyone differently. Some colleagues may have a wealth of experience of change; others may be witnessing it for the first time. While some may be anxious about change and their role, others may seize the opportunity to steer and influence.



Leadership example 2

Theme: Maintaining practical lessons **Teacher:** Mrs Rashida Alhassan

Context: SHS in Accra

Problem statement: Over the years the school has spent significant money on biological specimens such as tilapia, goat and plant species for Biology practicals. Because of concerns about school funding, Biology practical lessons have, of late, been reduced and in some cases stopped altogether during normal instructional time. The performance of students in Biology in the WASSCE had dropped drastically.

The change: What will you do to address this leadership and management challenge?

Why is this interesting and important?

What are the potential implementation challenges?



Leadership example 3

Theme: School infrastructure

Teacher: Mr Jerry Ashong

Context: SHS in Kumasi

Problem statement: At one time during the oral English and Physics practical exam for the WASSCE, there was a power outage which affected the students. Student results in both oral English and Physics were very low for that year in question.

The change: What would you do to address this?

Why is this interesting and important?

What are the potential implementation challenges?

Managing school-based projects

In the typical Ghanaian Senior High School there are at least three categories or classifications of projects that a Head of Department may have to contend with: (i) those that are externally initiated as part of a national reform or programme, (ii) those that are internally initiated as part of the whole-school development plan and (iii) those that are internally initiated by individuals and teams to enrich the curriculum.

Categories of school-based projects

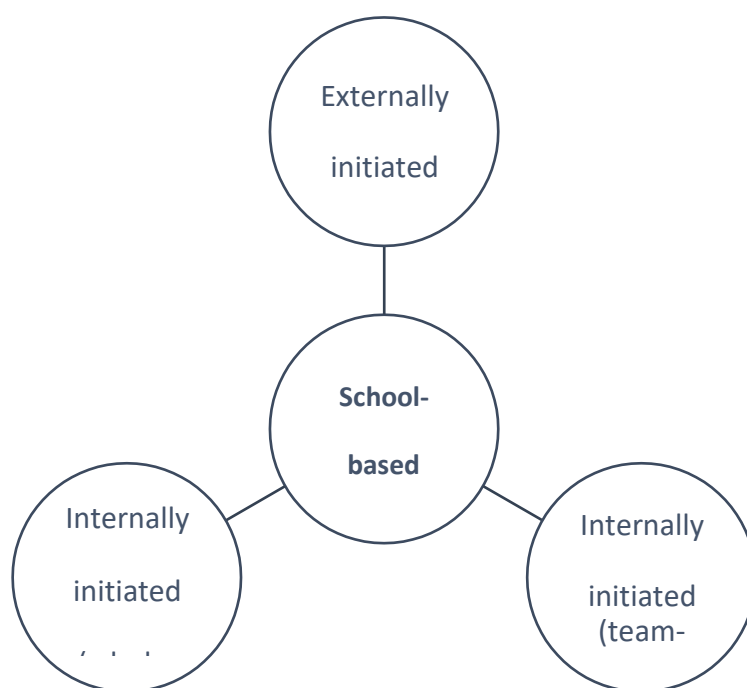


Figure 3: Three categories of school-based projects

Externally initiated projects

These are projects often initiated by Ghana Education Service (GES), alumni associations, universities, charities and international development partners. They range from interventions such as new approaches to teacher professional development to large-scale infrastructure projects, such as building STEM laboratories.

School development plans

These are projects derived from school development plans and mainly focus on key performance indicators (KPIs).

Curriculum

These types of projects are often initiated by teachers and students to enrich the curriculum. Most of these projects involve teachers and teaching therefore take up some of your time.

However, in this unit we are focusing on those projects that you initiate as a HoD in

response to curriculum delivery, teaching, learning, assessment, and any other aspects of school life that impact the student experience. Whilst this section does not provide a through and in-depth discussion about project management, there are four issues worth exploring:

- justifying the school-based project
- making a case for evidence-informed decision making in relation to the project
- thinking about how you will evaluate the impact of the project and share your impact stories within and beyond your school
- deciding how you will build on any new learning that results from your evaluation of the project.

With each type of project, as a HoD you should consider:

- questions for participants in the project to bring out creative thinking
- sourcing for funding and logistics (from the PTA, old students, corporate organisations, etc.)
- time management
- supervision and monitoring
- SWOT analysis.

Managing conflict in the workplace

Regardless of the size of your department or school, one of your key roles as Head of Department will be managing people and behaviours. This means that there will be times when you will encounter conflict between people or even possibly conflict that might involve you personally. As a middle leader you need to be prepared to deal with conflict when it arises. Don't see this as unusual or unique to your department or school.

Your role as a leader/HoD is to attempt to resolve any issues to the best of your ability, ensuring at all times that you are fair and you follow your school or GES's procedures/policies/guidelines wherever appropriate.



Activity 5: Causes of conflict

What are some of the most common causes of conflict in your team/department/school? List a few and reflect on why they occur in your department or school.



Activity 6: Change of Head of Department

In a Senior High School in Ghana, the HoD of Science has been changed, but the former HoD is not happy in letting go of his position. The new HoD approaches him, hoping to establish teamwork and tap into the experience of the former HoD to improve the system, but she is met with resistance and silence.

If you were the new HoD how would you resolve this conflict?

Comment

Very common causes of conflict include issues around differences in belief systems, personal styles, ineffective communication, irrational hostility, or unachievable objectives etc. We will explore some of these issues next.



Activity 7: Managing conflict

The HoD assigns a dynamic, creative, young Physics teacher as Lab Assistant for practical preparation for the WASSCE exams. The WASSCE practical comes with benefits. The Physics Head of Subject was not very happy, and so attacked and questioned the HoD's judgement.

If you were the HoD, how would you resolve this conflict?

Comment

Some suggestions from practitioners (heads of department) in Ghana:

Teacher 1

“I would put the benefits together and share between the teacher and the subject head. I had a similar problem in my school and that is how it was resolved.”

Teacher 2

“The subject head might have been hurt thinking that his/her position is at risk. If I were the HoD, I would call in the subject head and the teacher and advise them to work as a team for the benefit of the department.”

Teacher 3

“It would be good to know the personality of the teachers if I was the HoD I would sacrifice my benefit to the subject teacher to make peace or I will be firm to address the deviant teacher. I would be flexible and have good communication with my subordinates to ensure the conflict is resolved.”

Planning your learning and development

This final section in this unit requires you to reflect on the purpose of your role as a middle leader/HoD and establish alignment between your personal purpose and your school's aims and objectives, this will inform how you plan your development in the short, medium and long term.

The National Teachers' Standards for Ghana (2017) states that every teacher and indeed every school leader should be able to "identify their own training needs and take responsibility to addressing them through lifelong learning" (pp.7).

A personal or Professional Development Plan (PDP) is a carefully planned document that highlights the key areas that you have identified for development in any planning cycle.

The PDP process involves:

- assessing your current skills, competencies and ambitions
- identifying new skills, knowledge or competencies needed
- establishing aims and objectives – what you want to achieve in the short, medium or long term as a school leader
- selecting appropriate training and development activities to meet those perceived needs in order to help you reach your goal(s).

In your school this process is tied into the monitoring and evaluation system where you have the opportunity to discuss your development needs with your mentor or manager. Your manager, especially if s/he is the Headmaster/Headmistress has an important role in the process because they control access to the resources that may support your plan. You may need to prepare for an evaluation. In this case, you will need to:

- reflect on your skills and practice
- review your performance and capabilities
- draw up a plan of action (with specific goals and/or objectives) to ensure you are successful.

Having a good PDP and acting on it helps to ensure that you are developing and maintaining your professional competency. It is essential for you to keep up to date in this rapidly changing environment. You need to ensure that your students have appropriate skills and knowledge to go forward as active and productive citizens.

The following points outline the PDP process.

1. Establish where you are up to and clearly define your aspirations

The purpose of any development activity needs to be identified. You may do this either by yourself or with the help of your manager, mentor, colleagues or friends. This involves:

- gaining a measure of what you are good at and interested in whilst considering the school's realities, as well as any potential challenges
- ensuring your plans support the needs of your school.

2. Identify development needs

Identifying your development needs may emerge from your tasks or responsibilities, discussions with your manager or colleagues, changes in your school, teachers' and or students' needs or through some formal appraisal process. Various instruments, such as self-assessment tests, may be available to help you assess your skills in a structured way. Most of your development needs will be associated with your current duties and responsibilities, although it is always worth considering any development you may require to help prepare you for a promotion.

3. Identify learning opportunities

As a result of one, or several of the assessment processes above, draw up a list of the skills and/or knowledge you need to acquire, update or improve. Compare this list with your current skills and knowledge base and identify the gaps.

4. Formulate an action plan

For each of the skills and knowledge gaps you identify, set yourself development objectives. There must be an element of challenge in any objective, so that they stretch you as an individual and carry you on to new ground. But they must also be attainable and viable within the existing school and founded in reality and with a realistic time frame.

5. Undertake the development

Once you have discussed your plan with the local education authorities and key functionaries you need to put it into action. What you do and how you do it should be your choice. In addition to training courses, options include work shadowing (following another school leader in their daily routine), a secondment (a formal arrangement to take on another role with the purpose of learning new skills), project work, networking and community involvement.

6. Record the outcomes

Keeping records serves to remind you – and others, such as the local education authorities – what you have done. Most importantly, your records will help you to focus on what you have got out of your development activity. Record the date, the development need identified, the chosen method of meeting those needs, the date(s) when PDP was undertaken, the outcomes, and any further action needed.

7. Monitor, evaluate and review

Evaluation is a key stage in the self-development cycle. There are two issues that you should reflect on: whether the development activity you have undertaken was appropriate; and whether and how your skills or working behaviour have improved as a result.

Summary

In this Unit you have considered several of the key areas which are central to the role of a Head of Department. You have also questioned the basis on which you make effective decisions as a HoD. Through this unit you have also considered how you lead on change in your own department, how to manage school based projects, manage conflicts and make plans for your personal professional development in order to remain relevant in your work.

A full list of the Head of Department units can be found at:

https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/HoD_units

A full list of the CPD units can be found at:

https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/Teacher_units

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Appendix A: Setting a SMART goal

Goal (expressed in broad terms)	
Example: Developing an online teaching and tuition policy (in collaboration with parents, teachers and other stakeholders)	
What?	When?
I will create an online teaching and tuition policy	By the end of the third term
How?	Resources
By working with staff, students and parents to identify the appropriate platform, access issues and privacy level.	Time will be required to hold meetings and to engage with stakeholders during the drafting and explanation of how the policy will be implemented.

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topdown-bottomup-change-arrows (pp. 15): TESS-India: All India Resources (in English): <https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/course/index.php?categoryid=45>. This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike Licence <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>

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