

Quality Education News

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Issue 15

August 2010

A quarterly publication issued by the South African Quality Institute in the interest of promoting educational excellence.

The Editor blows the vuvuzela too ...



Eish! What a World Cup! What cause for celebration for South Africa as a nation! There was rave worldwide publicity. Our stadiums are on par to the best anywhere. TV commentators were often using words, such as 'beautiful' and 'spectacular' to describe them. The World Cup brought huge improvements to roads in the major cities. Crime levels dropped off significantly. As a country we proved that we can take on, tackle and triumph over daunting challenges such as organising a World Cup soccer tournament.

Bafana Bafana did us proud in spite of their early exit. Siphwe Tshabala's goal in the very first match was a brilliant start to the goal fest that was to follow. He set the benchmark of goal-scoring skills. The nation shouted and screamed for the team in their 2-1 victory over the mighty French. As a nation our morale soared and we became one united team of Bafana Bafana supporters.

Now that the World Cup is over, analysts are studying how South Africa was able to achieve such a successful tournament. Theories abound. One crucial explanation is 'teamwork'. To put on an event of such a magnitude requires everybody to play their part. Everyone needs to focus on the goal of staging a superlative World Cup no matter how big or small their role. The volunteers who showed ticket holders to their seats at matches contributed to the success story just as the stadium architects did.

What can be learnt from hosting the World Cup in the leadership and management of our education system? We do have the human resources if we look in the right places. We need to use the knowledge, skills and passion of such people. We need to look critically and honestly at who is doing what and how they are doing it. Professional competency and dedication should be found in all our schools, district and head offices. Historian, RW Johnson, made this comment in *Business Day* (7 July 2010, page 7):

The big lesson is that a proper South African nationalism means putting our best foot forward and not caring about race. Nobody bothered about the skin colour of the architects, surveyors, engineers and contractors who built the stadiums or the Gautrain – we just used the best available.

Isn't that an ideal that we should strive for in education? The most capable should be teaching the children in the classroom, working in the principal's office and nurturing from the education department office.

You are most likely already part of a team. You might be a member of a particular subject/learning area or phase. You could be a team leader or facilitator in positions such as that of District Director, Head of Department or Principal. Whatever role you play in the team you will be aware of the ever-changing human dynamics. One team could be high achieving and happy, another could be seething with below-the-surface anger and poor results.

One of the techniques used by Quality organisations is teamwork. It's a technique that lifts the levels of quality. This newsletter looks at teamwork. As a country we've been celebrating our ability to host a World Cup. May we use teamwork to create even more schools that are cause for celebration.

Sincerely

Richard Hayward



This newsletter is edited by SAQI and distributed to those schools benefiting from their participation in the MySchool programme. MySchool acts as a conduit which raises and delivers essential funding for education and social development on a sustainable basis. This enables members of the community to participate in the future development of our nation.



What makes for a winning team?



Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.
Helen Keller

Individual brilliance doesn't guarantee success. The soccer teams that were knocked out in the early stages of the World Cup proved this truism. Many of those teams had players who have millions of fans across the world. Yet when it was time to perform as a member of a team there was an underperformance. Success is achieved when people pull together to achieve common goals.

Teams that excel are able to answer, 'Yes' about themselves to most of these ten questions:

1 Is there open communication within the team?

Team members talk openly and honestly with each other. There are no politics. Even if members disagree at times, that disagreement is always imbued with mutual respect.

2 Is everyone focussed on the goal?

Bert van Marwijk, the coach of the Dutch team that played Spain in the final match, commented that he was glad that the World Cup was not being played in Holland. Otherwise, the players would have been distracted by all the fans and hysteria around the team. Teams need to keep 'their eye on the ball' as they move towards their goals.

3 Are basic resources available?

Good intentions aren't enough to achieve a team's goals. Basic resources are needed too. There should be sufficient people in the team so as ensure that individuals aren't overloaded and become too stressed. Equipment and finances should be on hand to help the team along the journey.

4 Are team members accountable?

A potential weakness of a team is that when things go wrong, everybody hides behind 'collective responsibility'. In the soccer World Cup there were 64 games. Every single match started precisely on time. For each match there was a FIFA official who was responsible to enforce punctuality. Honest and strong teams give individual members authority to make decisions but hold them accountable to achieve agreed-on goals.

5 Is there sound leadership?

Sound leadership gives the team members the space to use their initiative. Yet the leadership also ensures that everyone keeps the 'big picture' in mind. Leadership ongoingly monitors the progress of the team. There'll be those times when the leadership needs to keep the members' morale up.

6 Is a logical plan in place?

There's a huge gap between a vision and a reality. Good planning helps you close the space. The team needs to work out the logical steps to be followed to achieve the goal. This planning involves time-frames. Dates are decided on by which times specific stages of a project have been achieved.

7 Is there continual evaluation of progress?

No project goes strictly according to plan. Were time-frames for completion adhered to? Even the successful World Cup didn't go off seamlessly. Think of the strike by security guards at four of the stadia at the start of the tournament. Safety and security plans were adjusted to allow the police to rescue the situation. Continual evaluation and – at times – adjustments to the planning need to be made.

8 Does the team use tools and techniques?

The team will need to use a range of methods to reach its' goals. Amongst the wide range of tools and techniques are benchmarking and brainstorming. The benchmarking tool involves studying what other people and organisations did to achieve goals similar to your own. Brainstorming is used when every member is encouraged to give ideas on how to achieve a plan or solve a problem.

9 Is the individual supported?

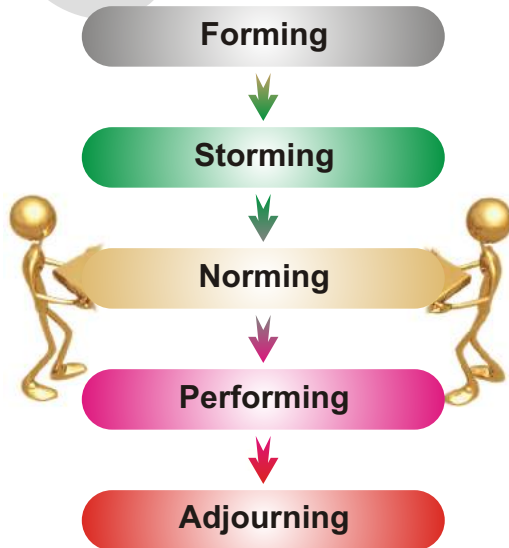
One reason why teams are so valued is that its' members can turn to each other for support. You might not know how to do something but others in the team might be able to help you. Effective teams tap into the different talents of its' members and share them.

10 Does the team welcome diversity?

Dysfunctional teams give a 'No' answer to this question. The members don't get along well with each other. There's little or no respect for each other. Functional teams welcome diversity. They're enriched by the different languages, religions, political affiliations and the like of its' members. The members learn to live harmoniously with each other and to find creative solutions.

Stages of a team

No two teams work in identical ways. Yet all teams go through similar stages. American psychologist, Bruce Tushman famously identified the sequential stages as: forming, storming, norming and performing. More than a decade later he added a fifth stage which he described as 'adjourning/mourning'.



Forming (birth) is the first stage. The team members come together. Goals are explained as well as procedures that need to be followed. At this starting point there is usually a politeness and a sense of cooperation. Team members could be a little wary of each other and slight nervousness might be evident. Members want to sense that they belong in the group and that they've a meaningful contribution to make.

Storming (childhood) is the scary stage. Members clash with each other. There are arguments over people's different roles, the route to follow to achieve goals as well as the behaviour of other group members. Conflict is to be expected. At this stage there are leaders who despair. They feel that no progress will be made. This stage demands that conflicting issues aren't avoided but rather confronted. Resolving conflict isn't left solely for the team leader to handle. Conflict is a group issue. It's to be dealt with openly by all as they look for acceptable alternatives.

There's a proviso about conflict in a group. A person who is continually obstructive, unpleasant and unreasonable might not be suitable as a team member. Such people do exist and can destroy a team! They need to be shown the red card and asked to leave the team.

Norming (adolescence) is the time when teams settle down. Members accept their different duties and roles. There's a goal to be achieved and there's agreement (not always unanimous) on the way forward. Members acknowledge each other's idiosyncrasies and realise that they need each other.

Performing (adulthood) is the 'All for one and one for all' stage. The team is focussed and works hard to achieve agreed-on goals. Different knowledge and skills found amongst members are shared for the benefit of all. Quality schools strive for continuous improvement. Once certain goals have been achieved, there's a striving for new challenges.

Adjourning/mourning (demise) When the team has achieved its' goals, the time has arrived to celebrate. There's an adjournment or pause. Think of the way in which Madrid packed the streets when the Spanish soccer team had their victory parade through the city. Yet amidst all the celebrations there is a tinge of sadness. All teams eventually disband. 'The band of brothers' will start to go their different ways. Team members have often become friends. That inevitable parting needs to be acknowledged and honoured.

What's your role in the team?

The best teams make the best use of their team members. As the quip goes, they put the best people on the bus but they also make sure that they're sitting in the right seats on the bus.

The most familiar role (or type of work) on a team is that of *leader* or *facilitator*. Senior management team members and principals often take up that role. However, there are times when that role is best filled by other staff members or even parents. An example would be the School Governing Body team which is discussing a legal issue. A wise principal would encourage the parent who is a practising lawyer to give leadership direction in this field. There's a niche or role for every member in a well-functioning team. Your niche changes according to the team you're in.

Here are eight roles that most team members use according to the team they're in (Murgatroyd S 1994 in [Total quality management and the school](#) pages 147-148):

- *Advisor* gathers all the necessary information so that team members can be guided towards making sound decisions;
- *Innovator* creates new ways of thinking or working that will help the team each its goals;
- *Promoter* takes innovative ideas and 'sells' them to team members in a compelling but non-confrontational manner;
- *Developer* outlines the best possible ways to turn great ideas into practical realities;
- *Organiser* turns the work outlines into action by organising the actual implementation;
- *Producer* does the nitty-gritty of ensuring that the plan is carried out by him or herself or others;
- *Inspector* examines the work that has been done to ensure acceptable quality and advises on areas for further improvement;
- *Maintainer* ensures that the work done by the team is maintained

Sometimes two people create a beautiful team that teams up beautifully.

Sharing everything

The little old couple walked into McDonald's on a cold winter evening. They looked out of place amid the young families and couples eating there that night. The frail old woman hung on her husband's arm and he looked at her lovingly.

The old man walked up to the counter and ordered the meal. The couple took a table near the back and started taking food off the tray. There was one hamburger, one plate of chips and a glass of soft drink.

Diners at nearby tables watched as the old man unwrapped the plain hamburger and cut it in half. He placed one half in front of his wife. Then he carefully counted out the chips, divided them in two piles and neatly placed one pile in front of his wife. He took a sip from the glass; his wife took a sip and then set the glass between them.

As the man began to eat his few bites of hamburger, everyone around them became restless. You know what they were thinking, "That poor old couple. All they can afford is one meal for the two of them."

A young man came over to their table and politely offered to buy another meal for them. The old man replied that they were fine. They were used to sharing everything.

Then the crowd noticed that the old woman hadn't eaten a bite. She just sat there watching her husband eat and occasionally taking turns sipping the drink. Again the young man came over and begged them to let him buy them something to eat. This time the woman explained that no, they shared everything.

As the old man finished eating and was wiping his face neatly with a napkin, the young man couldn't stand it any longer. Again he came over and politely offered to buy them some food. After being politely refused again he finally asked the old woman, "Ma'am why aren't you eating? You said that you shared everything. What is it that you're waiting for?"

She answered simply, "The teeth."

(Acknowledgement: Maxwell, J C 2010. Lead for success Cape Town: Struik)



Mrs Noria Miyen, principal of Khamanyani Lower Primary School, in the school garden

A few weeks ago SAQI did a workshop at a beautiful school in rural Limpopo. In fact it's officially recognised by education department officials as such a school. It's called Khamanyani Lower Primary School in the Vhembe district. All the children at this non-fee paying school are given a meal every day. Money is minimal but beauty abounds. When Mrs Noria Miyen accepted the Beautiful School winner's trophy, she spoke of certain attributes that made it possible: "...cooperation amongst the educators, commitment, dedication and teamwork spirit."

Scoring Quality goals

Once goals are set, Quality achievements start happening. School leadership and management courses are done by SAQI in all nine provinces. Programmes are structured to meet the specific requests of schools. Poor schools are sponsored. Please contact Vanessa du Toit on 012-349-5006 (vanessa@saqi.co.za) or Richard Hayward on 011-888-3262 (rpdhayward@yahoo.com) for more details.

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