

Implementing National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP): How Involved are the Stakeholders?

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Doi:10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n27p381

Abstract

After 1994, there was an emerging demand placed on stakeholders to act as organizational agents. When the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) was introduced schools were expected to determine if the working practices and relationships were healthy enough for the stakeholders to participate and be involved among the stakeholders at a district level. NSNP faced many challenges; non-delivery and delayed delivery of supplies and some stakeholders were not involved in the implementation of the programme. The centralization of the programme at the Provincial level was also an implementation challenge. Participative leadership model was adopted as this study looked at the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of NSNP in one education district from South Africa. Qualitative approach through interpretative paradigm was adopted. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Data revealed that the stakeholders are not fully involved in implementing the NSNP. Department of Education need to enhance the involvement of stakeholders through establishing clear guidelines that define the specific roles of SGB members in the NSNP.

Keywords: Implementation, Involvement, NSNP, Stakeholders

1. Introduction

Children have rights that are acknowledged worldwide, and the South African government has to fulfil that obligation and ensure that all children receive education and welfare. Convention of the Child (CRC) is bound by duty to make economic, cultural, civil and political rights available to children with compulsory education. The birth of democracy in 1994 led to a shift from authoritarian to democratic rule in South Africa (Jansen & Sayed, 2001). In the education sector, functions and decision making powers were devolved to different levels, namely; national, provincial and school levels to ensure participation by all stakeholders (Jansen & Sayed, 2001).

The NSNP is an intervention programme which is supposed to enable children access to education (Davids et. al., 2006). Donald et.al (2000) identify the purpose of this programme as enhancement of primary school pupils' learning capacity, school attendance and punctuality, and to contribute to the general health development of the child. The programme covers all primary school learners (from grade 1 to 7). Steyn and Labadios (2007) observed that all children from poor families from grades 1 – 7 benefit from the programme. Kleinman, et al (2002) believes that the availability of school nutrition is associated with both dietary and educational benefits. At school all learners especially those from low income families are encouraged to attend school more often as a result of the nutrition programme. In several schools, educators have noted that learners looked more alert and participated better in class after receiving a meal (Castle & Brialobrzaska, 2009). Powell et al (1998) believe that poor nutrition may hinder the learner's ability to learn effectively in school.

At school level, the democratically elected school governing body which comprises of parents, teachers, and non-teaching staff and (secondary school) learners have the responsibility and authority to govern schools (South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996). School governors represent the school community and their general function is to work together with the principal in organising and managing the school's activities in an effective and efficient way on behalf of the school community and in the interest of the learners of the school. The governing body is not involved in the day-to-day running of the school; however it must support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions. It contributes to or decides on policy for some or all of school policy, school development, school administration and school finance.

Although needy children have benefitted from NSNP, a number of studies have identified weaknesses such as

food irregularly distributed, stale food and often food of poor quality, lacking in variety, with no fruit and vegetables, food stolen by school care takers and teachers, and corruption by government officials as well as lack of proper monitoring (Bennel, 2003; Donald et al, 2000; Davids at.al., 2006). Hence in some schools, learners have gone for days without food. This has led to school dropouts and irregular attendance mostly by orphans (Davids et.al., 2006). Botswana introduced school feeding schemes along the same lines as South Africa and Bennell (2003) observed that unlike South Africa, in Botswana the programme has led to an increase in learner attendance and a substantial decrease in dropout rate among orphans and learners from poor households.

During the meeting of the Education and Recreation Select Committee in 2007, it was recommended that the stakeholders' involvement as active participants in the programme is very important and when selecting the necessary stakeholders to be part of the programme. It was also encouraged that the schools must ensure that those with appropriate training are selected and supported through on-going in-service training; so that they can value and emphasize the role they play in the health of the young people. In ensuring that this was met, the stakeholders were trained and inducted to capacitate them and become the rightful owners of the NSNP. Learners rely on the voices of school principals, teachers and parents to reinforce the importance of good nutrition and this will also help the learners in making healthy choices in life. If the stakeholders don't have the necessary knowledge and support, they will lack the power of making that positive impact and be positive role models of their learners and their kids. Their inputs are said to influence healthy eating patterns which are essential for learners to achieve their full academic potential, optimal physical and mental development and lifelong health and well-being. NSNP positively influence learners' eating habits.

1.1 Background and literature review

When the NSNP was implemented, the stakeholders were never taken on board about what is expected from them regarding this programme hence there are challenges facing this programme when it comes to implementation. The centralisation of decision making may be due to the fact that in some instances decentralisation is said to be time consuming. This is confirmed by Bottery (2004) who states that consultation has its own demerits in that it delays decision making and has the potential of confusing issues thus losing one's grip on issues. On the same matter, Boles and Troen (1994) argue that

First, there is the issue of time. The more you consult, the longer the decision making process will take...the more people you consult with, the higher the chances of being confused by the mass of views. Secondly, if too many people become involved you may lose your grip over the whole process (p.128).

This is the trend that is also followed by the NSNP, the instructions and orders always come from the provincial government without inviting the necessary stakeholders. Despite the fact that principals should be the key sources of information, Steyn and Labadios (2007) argue that principals and the necessary stakeholders do not know their roles in the implementation of the programme. If school principals, co-ordinator teachers and SGBs indicate that they were not prepared to deal with the challenges of the programme (Public Service Commission, 2008), this is a serious concern that shows that the most important stakeholders are not fully equipped for an effective implementation of the programme in their institutions.

This was worsened by the announcement that was made in January 2011 regarding the suspension of the programme in the Eastern Cape without any consultation and preparation for the stakeholders whose learners and children are the beneficiaries of the programme. The principals, teachers and parents are the only people who have to deal with such a situation to avoid conditions that had prevailed before the introduction of the NSNP in the schools. Quick measures had to be devised to see to it that needy learners are fed when they come to school to avoid absenteeism, learner dropout, truancy, and decreased performance levels, psychological and emotional disturbances.

The involvement of principals, teachers and parents was requested and there was a need for nutrition education regarding the nutrient content of menu items served to enhance the stakeholders' knowledge about food choices. For the programme to gain success involvement and obtaining support from the stakeholders was emphasized and this will in turn ensure transparency, accountability and sustainability of the program. Lambert (2003), found that principals, teachers and parent bodies all agreed that nutrition is valued at their schools but more funding is needed in order to support it. They also agreed that the necessary stakeholders should be actively involved in all the processes and thorough training is needed on nutrition education and menu selection. Inclusion of all even in the menu planning processes will allow the programme directors to educate participants on the nutritional content of menus, obtain input from the stakeholders and most importantly, secure support for the menu items offered at school (Lambert, 2003). Bound, Nettles, and Johnson

(2009) found that there are certain issues that are important for successfully implementing the nutrition programme. Issues rated as most important included having strong leadership for the programme, all involved parties working together to establish policy, and maintaining a positive attitude about the programme. Schools should utilise a team approach to fully examine all issues before implementing the programme. Team members should not only be limited to school teachers but parents as well. As communication and understanding of individual team members' roles increase, school teams can work together in planning and implementing the programme. This team approach can keep focus on what is best for the children and maintaining the instructional time while working through the specifics related to logistics, scheduling and personnel support (Bound, Nettles, & Johnson, 2009).

Some stakeholders felt that in the implementation process, their opinions were not highly valued in their districts (McDonnell, et al 2004). They felt that with their involvement, parents might become aware of the academic and behavioural benefits of the program as well as the stigma associated with participation. The inclusion of the necessary stakeholders helps to build a consensus on a policy and objectives that focus on how the program can effectively contribute to improving education and to meeting the nutrition and health needs of school-age children (Child Health Unit, 1997). In a meeting held in the Eastern Cape in 2007, it was suggested that monitoring should be done by SGB's, principals and teachers at schools. Members of that meeting were of the view that centralisation is not always applicable as the travelling distance could become cumbersome, so schools should take responsibility for the feeding of their children (NSNP: Briefing by National and Eastern Cape DOE, 2007). To date this has never taken place due to the fact that there were no guidelines and monitoring tools outlined for this to be done.

The involvement of the necessary stakeholders helps to build agreement on a policy and purposes that puts emphasis on how the programme can efficiently contribute to improving education and to meeting the nutrition and health needs of school-age children (Child Health Unit, 1997). Program managers and stakeholders have to agree on what situations or problems the programme will address, who the programme will serve and which programme models are feasible for implementation. Also, the inclusion of the stakeholders will make them aware of the financial implications of the programme and hence find means to raise funds. This will ensure that the benefit side of the programme is enhanced while controlling the cost side. Steyn and Labadios, (2007) are of the view that non-inclusion of the stakeholders has resulted in the many errors and problems encountered by the NSNP including not implementing the excellent recommendations made by the various surveys done.

The Public Service Commission (2008) reported in its findings that, various stakeholders lacked awareness of the roles and responsibilities that they are supposed to play in the implementation of the programme. This is despite the fact that the stakeholders were trained and went through an induction process when they started to participate in the NSNP. Lack of knowledge of the stakeholders who are central to the successful implementation of the programme might affect the implementation of the programme and its intended goals. The introduction of direct fund allocation to the schools' bank account brought more need for capacity building which the DoE had promised to facilitate (Internal Memo, March 2011). The key challenges were lack of managerial skills among those involved in the programme. The stakeholders perceive, with a shared common understanding, the NSNP as having value and appreciate the value it has had on the lives of the school children and their communities. Parents and local people are employed to serve as food handlers and food suppliers which contribute to local economic development.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

Participative leadership model has informed this study. O' Connor and White, (2011) believe that participation is the mental and emotional involvement of a person that encourages the individual to contribute to group goals and to share responsibility. This means participation is the involvement of a particular person in giving and sharing ideas in an activity in order to achieve the desired results. Naidoo and Jordan (2004) also concurred to the latter statement when they say participation does not extend simply the right to elect representatives but translates into the right to influence views, change and development. The South African Constitution (RSA, 1996) shifted the authoritarian to democratic rule by emphasizing commitment to representative and participatory democracy, accountability, transparency and public involvement. Most stakeholders tend to accept the roles defined for them without, interrogating the discourse of participation that prevails, and accepting bogus participation "as the real thing" (Naidoo & Jordan, 2004).

Participation in the NSNP could be achieved if the stakeholders feel involved in the policy making and decisions taken. Ownership and genuine contribution in the programme resulted in its effectiveness and the objectives were met. The theory was highly relevant for the study because the NSNP was not only made up of district officials but also stakeholders in schools who needed to be involved, made contributions and lead in the programme.

1.3 Statement of the problem

The NSNP was introduced as the Presidential Lead Project in 1994 and again as a one of the intervention programmes to make education accessible to all. It was also an educational enhancement project by the government of South Africa to those needy and marginalised primary school learners of lessening hunger, promoting regular attendance and punctuality and improved learning abilities (Child Health Unit, 1997). Stakeholders, as the core people at schools, have the task of managing the implementation of the programme. However, some studies still show that stakeholders still do not know their responsibilities in the implementation of the programme (Steyn & Labadios, 2007). This is despite the fact that these stakeholders were trained and went through an induction process when they started to participate in the programme (Public Service Commission, Annual Report, 2008). Although there are excellent recommendations made in earlier evaluations of the programme, the problems still exist. Non-involvement of the stakeholders in decision making processes by the nutrition programme directors and it places extra responsibility on the stakeholders who have to find means of feeding the needy learners. Stakeholders are the people who are entrusted with the daily managing and leading roles of the schools in which they are placed. Also, these stakeholders have a duty to perform and an obligation to the parents and learners regarding the school affairs.

1.4 Research Questions

- How are stakeholders involved in the implementation of NSNP in primary schools?
- What preparation did stakeholders receive in implementing NSNP in primary schools?
- What challenges did stakeholders experience in implementing NSNP in primary schools?

1.5 Research Objectives

- Find out the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of NSNP in primary schools?
- Find out the preparation received by stakeholders in implementing NSNP in primary schools?
- Find out the challenges that stakeholders experience in implementing NSNP in primary schools?

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research Paradigm

The study has adopted an interpretivist paradigm and according to Babbie and Mouton (2005), this paradigm relies on the participants' views of the situation being studied and recognizes the impact on the research of their own background and experiences. Maree (2007) believes that a paradigm is a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality which gives rise to a particular world view. This paradigm was suitable for this study because the research questions were interpretative in nature.

2.2 Research Approach

The study adopted a qualitative approach that is concerned about understanding the individuals' perceptions of the world and seeks insight rather than statistical analysis (Bell, 2001). According to Yates (2004) qualitative research attempts to explore how individuals or group members give meaning to situations and expresses their understanding of themselves, their experiences and/ or their world. The researcher used the qualitative approach to find the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the NSNP.

2.3 Research Design

A research design is the logic that links the data to be collected and the conclusions to be drawn to initial questions of a study hence it ensures coherence. It should ensure clarity of what is to be achieved by the case study. This study adopted a case study design which according to Cohen et al, (2007) is a specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate principle, the study of an instance in action. In this study, it helped to explain involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the NSNP in schools. With that view, the researcher used primary schools to gain in-depth information

about studied phenomenon.

2.4 Population and sampling

Babbie and Mouton (2005) describe the population as the theoretically specified aggregation of study elements. The population of the study were the teachers and SGB members of the schools where the NSNP is implemented.

Cohen et.al (2007) describes a sample as a smaller group or subset of the population where the researcher endeavours to collect information from; in such a way that the knowledge gained is representative of the total population under study. For the purpose of the study, the researcher used purposive sampling because the selected schools and the selected respondents were chosen for a purpose regarding what their roles in the NSNP as stakeholders are. In purposive sampling, the researcher's concern is important and the researcher satisfies the study's specific needs (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Three primary schools were purposively selected for the study in one district of South Africa. One principal, one teacher coordinator of NSNP and one SGB member were selected from each school in the district.

2.5 Data collection Instruments

2.5.1 Face –to- face interviews

In this study, the researcher collected data through interviews. Gratton and Jones (2004) sees it as a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining relevant information and is focused on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation. This study used semi-structured interviews because questions were specified yet there was a freedom to probe beyond the answer if the interviewer has difficulty answering a question or gives only one brief response.

2.5.2 Document Analysis

According to Maree (2007), document analysis means focusing on all types of written material that could shed light on the studied phenomenon. The study of documents involves the analysis of any written material that contains information about the phenomenon being researched (de Vos et al, 2011). The study of documents may help answer questions that interviews may have missed to address. The researcher would study official documents in order to fill in the gaps left open by other data gathering strategies, such as the interviews in this case. In relation to this study, the researcher analysed documents such as the NSNP meeting attendance register, NSNP minutes for meetings held, and NSNP memos to schools. A major advantage of document analysis is that documents showed the reality of the situation and a clear picture of what was going on in schools' implementation of the program.

2.6 Data Trustworthiness

In order to convince a reader, the study findings in a qualitative research must be credible. Credibility refers to that which can be seen and believed. The key criterion or principle of good qualitative research is found in the notion of trustworthiness and neutrality of its findings or decisions (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). Just as a quantitative study cannot be considered valid unless it is reliable, a qualitative study cannot be called transferable unless it is credible, and it cannot be deemed credible unless it is dependable.

Trustworthiness entails credibility and transferability, which is the extent to which the findings can be transferred to other context (Bassegy 1999). Babbie and Mouton (2005) explain that transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied in other contexts or with other respondents. In a qualitative study, the obligation for demonstrating transferability rests on those who wish to apply to it to the receiving context, (Babbie & Mouton 2005).

In ensuring that the study has credibility and trustworthiness, the researcher used multiple data collection instruments, for an example, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Again the researcher ensured that the participants confirm whether the transcript of the data analysed is a correct reflection of the information provided to the researcher by allowing them to have access to read the data collected or by giving the participants a report back.

2.7 Data Analysis

Maree (2007) believes that data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected

data. Data analysis consists of examining, categorising, tabulating and recombining (Bell, 2001). The process of data analysis takes place once data collection and checking have been completed. Data analysis may begin informally during interviews and continue during transcriptions, when recurring patterns, themes and categories become evident. Once written records are available, analysis involves the coding of data and the identification of salient points or structures. Qualitative data which forms the gist of this research was subjected through data analysis techniques which find compatibility in each other. The technique to be used in the study is the content analysis. The data collected was analysed according to themes.

2.8 Ethical Issues

All the ethical considerations were observed and adhered to by the researcher in this study. Ethics are defined as a set of widely accepted moral principles that offer rules for and behavioural expectations of the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students (de Vos, 2011). Social research necessitates obtaining the consent and co-operation of subjects who are to assist in investigations (Cohen et.al. 2007). Before participants were interviewed, the researcher first sat down with them and carefully explained the nature and purpose of the study. The researcher tried to obtain voluntary participation which requires that participants will not be coerced into participating in the research.

Anonymity and confidentiality was assured to the participants as well as respecting the time of each participant. Anonymity is a stronger guarantee of privacy (Maree, 2007).

3. Results/Findings

3.1 Involvement of stakeholders

There were divergent views amongst the respondents in as far as their involvement in the NSNP is concerned, at school level and at district level. All the respondents felt that they are not involved in the decision making processes of the NSNP by the DoE. Decisions are taken for them on what, how and when to do things in the programme. Policies are laid down autocratically without inviting them as stakeholders to discuss and share with them. They are of the view that the DoE uses the top down approach when communicating with the SMTs and SGBs in schools. A consequence of this approach is that of an authoritarian ethos which persists in many South African schools is the fact; it militates against the establishment of the free space in which creative interaction and deliberative exchanges are encouraged. The department communicates with them only through the meetings held with the principals.

On the one hand, what is required are district managers who can provide structural framework required for distributed leadership. Distributed leadership can only come to fruition in a well-structured organization which is characterized by shared values and beliefs. This type of leadership requires those in formal leadership positions to relinquish power to others. Apart from the challenge to authority and ego, this potentially places the head or principal in a vulnerable position because of lack of direct control over certain activities

The following were the comments from school A principal and SGB:

Principal "As far as the decision making is concerned in the NSNP at district, provincial and national level, SMTs and SGBs are not involved at all".

Teacher "We are not involved at all, because what has to be done is only communicated to us through school principals, nobody is interested and talking with us or hear our opinions".

Parent "Maybe they see us as uneducated, illiterate people whom they can never communicate with, yet it is our children and schools they decide about. Without us as parents and our children, there will be no school. We are the most important people who have the child's interest at heart".

The above comments also reiterate the non-involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of NSNP. It was clear from the above responses that the involvement of SMTs and SGBs in the NSNP only went as far as the school level and was limited to the reports they received from school principals who communicate the government policies that had to be endorsed at schools. These responses from all the stakeholders echoed their frustration and despair of their non-involvement in areas like decision making, policy making and administration in the NSNP at district provincial and national level. Full participation will make the stakeholders own these decisions and abide by them. By doing so, people adopt an "all sink or all swim" approach in that they will enjoy the successes together and accept their failures gracefully.

Thurlow (2003) further argues that teacher leaders need opportunities for continuous development in order to

improve in their roles. Thurlow (2003) further asserts that where teachers feel confident in their own capacity, school improvement is more likely to be effective. This means that when the confidence of the teachers has been built, the whole school morale is boosted. Stakeholder leadership roles need to be made available to all involved; otherwise some members will end up as leaders, while others as merely technicians, creating a two-tier system. If leadership is not distributed, some members will develop a tendency of not partaking in leadership roles. This clearly means that school improvement is more likely to occur when leadership is distributed and when all stakeholders have a vested interest in the development of the school, (Gronn, 2002).

The NSNP was entrusted to District coordinators, by the Provincial Department of Education. The district coordinators took decisions together with the rest of the principals in district or circuit meetings. Respondent expressed their dissatisfaction below:

SMT member "they never invite us to nutrition meetings as the so-called co-ordinators; it seems as if we are just puppets for them to play with".

SGB (parent component) "we have never gone to any meeting or workshop whatsoever. Maybe they see us as uneducated or illiterate people who they can never talk with, yet it is our children that are in those schools. Without our children and us as parents, there will be no school at all".

The above statements are just an indication that many other times, issues related to NSNP are first discussed at the district level where not all the stakeholders are represented and apply a top-down approach (May & Winter 2009; Evan, et al (2006).

The document analysed failed to reveal any invitation to a circuit or district meeting where decisions were made. When the SGB minute books were viewed the only evidence found were report back meetings where all the school principals had given reports to SGBs on matters from district meetings and NSNP matters were found.

3.1.1 Capacity building workshops

The respondents had different views regarding the support they received in implementing NSNP. The responses given by the respondents indicated that at school level, meetings are communicated by notices given to the learners by the school SGB secretary. At the meetings, the principal communicates the instructions of the district regarding the NSNP or gives a report of what has been said about NSNP, what has to be done, changes and expectations. Not a single respondent gave an indication of attending NSNP meetings at district level. Instead, the majority of the respondents complained of being undermined and not being given the respect they deserve and the duty they are supposed to carry or do. The respondents felt that stakeholders need to be invited to all decision making processes, so as to empower them about their duties in the NSNP. The respondents felt that problems will always be encountered as long as the stakeholders are not involved in decision making processes. There appears to be no stance taken to grant stakeholders greater formal authority to initiate and formulate policy in the central domains of budget, personnel and program implementation

3.2 Challenges facing non-involvement of all stakeholders

When the important stakeholders are not involved in the implementation of the NSNP, challenges may arise that might jeopardize the smooth running of the programme. This will have detrimental effects in the smooth operation of the programmes of the school. It is imperative that each stakeholder, regardless of race, creed or colour be part of the every happening in the program. The respondents all cited: high demotivation, regular absenteeism in important meetings, low morale, lack of sense of ownership in decisions they were not part of. Stakeholders are reluctant to implement decisions they were not part of when they were taken. If the core aim of the NSNP is negatively impacted, teaching and learning will do likewise. Lack of commitment will occur because stakeholders will be reluctant to implement decisions they were not part of. The data disclose that the stakeholders view involvement as a tool that encourages collaborative team work. Ownership of ideas is a result of active participation by relevant stakeholders in decision making.

4. Discussion of Findings

4.1 Non-involvement of stakeholders

Active community involvement is key and central to the success of the NSNP (Public Service Commission, 2008). This

involvement is ensured through active participation of the whole school community which is made up of teachers, parents and learners. In schools, all teachers despite the position they hold, make academic and administrative decisions on different events in the school. When this does not happen, they tend to be frustrated and as a result all the stakeholders become confused, angry and frustrated because the NSNP coordinators are not handling matters in an expected manner. They feel undermined, underestimated and unrecognized. The issue of participation in decision making was seen by the respondents as something that reduces tension in the school. A rational tenet in decision making is that regardless of the manner of options presented on an issue, decisions should be taken in tandem with guidelines set.

The study found that stakeholders felt that it is imperative that they are included and involved in any decision making processes so as to fully partake in the implementation of the programme willingly. The stakeholders were of the view that this involvement must begin at national level down to school level. In all three schools, data reveals that stakeholders were not part of policy crafting but they are expected to implement it. Stakeholders' perceptions indicated that proper involvement produces a boosted morale and enthusiasm became very high resulting in improved implementation of the NSNP amongst the members of the programme. Stakeholders perceived their involvement as something that was the key to their active participation in decisions taken as they will be owners of the ideas. They were of the opinion that participation creates collegial approach to work and shared ideas and participation in all that can be done within the NSNP. Non-involvement causes demotivation which will have a negative impact on the running of the programme in the school as the stakeholders will not own any decisions taken without their consultation. This will in turn have detrimental effects in the smooth operation of the school.

Van der Mescht (2008) found that the importance of participation in decision making is emphasized by the DoE when it puts it as a rule that schools should be based on the democratic principles that enables broader participation by those 'on site' dealing directly with issues that need to be resolved, people who have expertise.

4.2 Lack of proper capacity building programs

Capacity building is concerned with increasing the ability of the recipients of development projects or programs to continue their future development without external support or to function independently on its own. Capacity building is parallel to sustainability. Despite the DoE's promise to effect capacity building workshops to be facilitated by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) focusing on Program Implementation, Meal Planning and Preparation, as well as Food Production (Internal Memo, March 2011) none were reported to have been attended by the stakeholders at the time of the research study. The DoE had also promised special attention would be given to Financial Management skills which all the stakeholders had reported to be lacking in but all these had been empty promises and the deadlines that have been set were in vain.

Futile attempts are done at schools when the school principal comes back from district or circuit meetings and gives feedback on NSNP matters discussed there. Principals have reported that sometimes they are also not informed of how things should be done but are just given empty forms to fill which they complete through trial and error methods. So one can deduce that even the principals who are said to be accounting officers are not capable enough to plough back the information they have received to the stakeholders. Lack of proper capacity building programs has resulted in pandemonium at schools. The NSNP guidelines state that learners must be fed by ten o'clock every morning to give them energy to concentrate and be alert in class (Memorandum, 14 April 2011). This is not easily achieved as meal servers report for duty at the same time as the learners and teachers. Also, the stipend received by the meal servers does not allow them flexible time at the school. This causes the teaching and learning to be disturbed for many days.

The provincial Departments of Education are the custodians of the program and are well informed as to how the program should be implemented. Yet they fail to see to it that the districts set up effective workshops to capacitate the involved stakeholders. Findings also show that lack of training and monitoring has led to schools not following proper guidelines and stipulation as far as implementation is concerned. Lack of training could lead to unjust suffering on the part of the learners. It is essential therefore that in all policy formulation, all participants from those at the top, that is, managers to implementers at the bottom of the pyramid, are taken on board and be involved in the processes so that they are all conversant with the policy programme and own it as they will have the desire to see it succeed and not fail.

A trained employer becomes more efficient and productive if he is trained because he is familiar with the demands and expectations of the work (Leadership Training, 2010). The district in which the research study took place is a vast one. This could in turn have negative effects on the implementation of the program and the coordinators could face problems of monitoring the program closely. Because of this, another level of operation will have to be devised at district level where each coordinator will be responsible for his/her circuit to ensure smooth operation of the program in that area.

4.3 Challenges of non-participation in decision making

Van der Mescht (2008) point out that the manuals issued by the Department of Education are of little use for schools in South Africa. Schools cannot function without clear procedures, firm guidelines, and clear lines of accountability. There is nothing that can replace human interaction. Relying on guidelines written on policy document will never match the reliance on human resource where there are interactions, questions can be asked, some issues can be clarified and concerns can also be raised.

The study found that when stakeholders are not involved in decision making, their non-participation negatively affects the school. Stakeholders become demotivated, there is high absenteeism rate and their morale becomes low and this result in lack of ownership in decisions they did not take part in. The challenges of non-participation as the study reveals include conflict as to who should do what and poor morale and this was evident in the data presented by some respondents. This was also observed in some schools (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Resistance to change is another challenge that can be faced as a result of non-participation in decision making. In the study, data revealed that when stakeholders were left out of decision-making, they were disgruntled. All this these lead to a situation where the institution fails to run smoothly and effectively. Chikoko (2007) argues that people desire involvement in the making of decisions on matters that affect them, even when they sometimes have no capacity to effectively make such decisions. Therefore, decentralization should be accompanied by sustainable capacity building among stakeholders. Bush & Heystek (2003) report that significant levels of dissatisfaction among teachers pertaining to factors related to their workplace occur when staff are not included in decision making. If the teachers lack motivation in NSNP implementation, nothing good will come out from that organization because SGB will be more demotivated and may frequently absent or excuse themselves in important NSNP meetings. Thurlow (2003) further highlights that when stakeholders' expertise and suggestions are acknowledged and rewarded by co-opting them into decision making, an associated high level of job satisfaction and morale is noted.

Participation in decision-making depicts recognition of intellectual power, and when stakeholder's intellectual power or ability is acknowledged, they become more participative, creative and satisfactory Bush & Heystek (2003). Stakeholders do not wish to be viewed as mere recipients of policies who are to implement the changes but they expect to be included in the initial processes of meaningful decision-making where their voices will be heard. Van der Mescht (2008) supports this view that if managers claim to want participation from their people but never let them become intellectually and emotionally involved and never use their suggestions, the result may be negative. Still in line with this view, Tyala (2004) buttressed the fact that when people are part of decision making process, there is greater opportunity of the expression of mind, ideas, existing disputes and more occasions for disagreements and agreements. On the other hand, some stakeholders who feel over-burdened with work might not be very willing to participate.

5. Conclusions

The case study revealed that the role of the district coordinators is not denied but is enhanced. From the data, the researcher found that the stakeholders lack commitment in the NSNP functioning since they feel undermined, un-involved and incapacitated in decision making in the programme. This might cause chaos and blaming of each other or shifting of responsibility and accountability leading to delays in the programme at school. The successes of the programme like decreased dropout rate and truancy, increased attendance, health status and learning abilities will be hindered. The study has helped to deduce that stakeholder participation and involvement in all decision making processes of NSNP is of great value and importance to the effective, sustainable and smooth running of the programme. These may include processes like policy formulation, allocation of funds and selection of NSNP managers and its management.

6. Recommendations

The study recommended that:

- Clear National, Provincial and District guidelines be established to define the specific roles of each member of S.G.B in the NSNP.
- Proper preparation of stakeholders by the DoE in preparing them to implement NSNP.
- DoE should develop a manual for SMTs to ensure that the policies of school are implemented accordingly and clarity is given to SGBs and to improve working relations.

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