

**TEAM-EFFORT: A MODEL FOR DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH TO ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOLS IN RWANDA**

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**Abstract:**

*This study aimed to design a team-effort administration model of high schools in Rwanda towards a developmental approach to organizational performance. The study used the field/descriptive survey approach. Data were obtained from 182 administrators, teachers and staff from 12 Adventist high schools. The development of the proposed model for team-effort administration for Adventist high schools in Rwanda had seven stages. The data were statistically treated using the following statistical tools: percentage, frequencies, and weighted mean averages. All statistical tests made in this study used a confidence level alpha .05.*

*Based on the results, the conclusion of the study is as follows: A team-effort in high schools in Rwanda requires sex, age, position in the school, and education attainment for demographic profiles; grouping, team building, and team performance for team management to attain organizational performance in terms of vision, participative safety, climate of excellence and support for innovation.*

*The adoption of the evolved model of team-effort for Adventist high schools and institutionalization of team-effort model development process were recommended.*

**Key words:** Team-effort administration, organizational performance, participative safety, climate for excellence.

**INTRODUCTION**

In many organizations today, team-effort is a critical avenue for getting things done. To

an ever-increasing extent, modern management has become focused on the idea of the team. Management consultants

propose organizational restructuring to facilitate teamwork; directors make policy statements about the importance of the team to the organization, and senior managers exhort their junior staff to encourage team working in their departments

In order to be successful, managers, supervisors, and employees are working together to increase productivity, improve quality, and achieve high levels of customer satisfaction. According to Hayes (1998), a growing number of organizations have found that changing to team-based work has had far more far-reaching effects than anyone could have predicted. In industry, directors report that both production levels and profits increased and their company improved its sales and marketing strategies when it went over to teamwork. In the public sector, tasks are reported to be performed more thoroughly and efficiently, jobs become enriched as more direct contact with clients or patients becomes possible and team members offer one another support in coping with difficult situations. Furthermore, Hayes (1998) states that in all types of organization whether public or private, reports indicate that teamworking improves staff morale and decreases staff turnover.

However, a successful team requires people who are coached and trained to work in teams, who understand the essential steps to achieving results as a team, and who are willing to work at building and maintaining the team.

Many organizations traditionally placed the major sources of power in making decisions at the top of the organizational hierarchy. Early organization and management theorists believed that workers were motivated primarily by economic incentives and job security, that efficient organizations developed rational rules and procedures to keep subordinates under control and protect the organization from human caprice. Involvement of subordinates in administrative decision making process was believed to be incompatible with organizational effectiveness.

School governance, the process of decision making in academic institutions (Bahrawy, 1992), has been considered to be the prerogative of the school administrators. The belief is that decisions made in such a manner has better quality and are more likely to be implemented at various levels within the educational system.

However, in the 1990s there emerged support among educational scholars for cooperative, shared decision making. Horejs (1996) and Kittell (1994) suggested that the conditions of transfer of decision making authority from central government to institutional members tend toward greater productivity, greater teacher satisfaction, and enhanced student learning.

The Rwandan Adventist High Schools are administered by administrators who genuinely desire and frequently plan for continuous development, high performance, and creation of effective educational services. However, as with all management today, there is a need for administrators of High schools to develop into a position of leadership that requires teamwork and coordinated efforts who are able to make things happen through the expertise of their people. Education is so complex today even in the smallest of school systems, that it is impossible for a school administrators to operate in isolation and continually use the top-down style of leadership.

A school principal cannot carry the total responsibility for all decisions without consultation, advice, and assistance from members of his staff.

Tannenbaum, Weschler, and Massarick (1991) asserted that it is seldom, if ever possible, for managers to have all information, knowledge of all alternatives and all consequences related to the decisions which they must make. Sharman (1984) declared, "Successful leaders spend more time seeing that others (employees) are appropriately involved in decision –making process than in making decision unilaterally". Bell (1992) reminds that while principals are ultimately responsible to their governing bodies for the conduct and success of their schools, they can no longer achieve high standards by exhortation or charismatic leadership. Schools, like many other public and private institutions, now depend for their success on the active participation of the staff as a whole. Schools must be a co-partnership of staff at all levels where every high school teacher is not only a member of a team but an active contributor to team decision making within that team.

Hatcher (1995) reported significant differences found between groups' desired level of participation in administrative tasks based on principals' and teachers' years spent in the school. The longer the time spent in a school, the higher the desire to be involved in school administration. As for

Grosso (1995), significant differences were found between groups desired level of participation in decision making based on status level. On the contrary, several researchers found no significant relationship between educational attainment and participation in decision making (Hatcher, 1995; 1991; Woodruff, 1992). However, J. Rantung (1995) found that teachers with graduate degrees had a significantly higher score for the decision making subscale on the Agreement Scale. That is the higher the degree completed, the higher was the level of teacher involvement in institutional decision making.

On teamwork management, it consists of analyzing the areas of groupings, team building, and team performance along with the team composition and development.

**Team cohesion:** Team cohesion is the invisible bond which links members of a group together, so that they see themselves as “belonging” to it and as different from “the others”. Group norms are an important part of what makes a group cohesive. Organizational research into group cohesion has turned up several different factors which can be important in promoting group cohesiveness. McKenna (1994) listed seven of these: similarity of attitudes and goals,

time spent together, isolation, threats, size, stringent entry requirements, and rewards.

**Team skills:** Katzenbach and Smith (1993) emphasize the importance of ensuring that a team has the appropriate balance of skills needed to undertake that particular job. These skills fall into three groups: skills involving technical or functional expertise, skills in problem-solving and decision making, and skills in the way interpersonal interaction takes place in the group.

**Team building:** Building a team means ensuring that the members of the team really do have common goals and that they can work together to achieve them. The main priority in building a team involves developing a strong and positive sense of ‘belonging’. Unless the team members can identify with one another, can see their team as ‘us’ rather than just a collection of individuals, a team can’t possibly work.

One of the most important aspects of team building, and one of which is often badly overlooked, is the wider context in which the team can operate. Managers who are implementing teamworking for the first time often fail to appreciate how obstructive traditional organizational structures can be.

Effective team working requires support at high levels within the organization: it isn't something which can be implemented independently at the lower levels. A team needs to know who it can turn to for advice and support; who in the organization will be prepared to make it easier for the team to function and how it can make it deal with the traditional patterns of authority yet still respond to the challenges and demands of its own task.

**Team leaders:** Katzenbach and Smith (1993) identified six principles of good team leadership. In this model, the first principle of team leadership is that good team leaders will always keep the purpose, goals and approach of their team relevant and meaningful.

The second principle is that good team leaders work to build up the commitment and confidence of each individual team member, as well as the team as a whole. The third principle is that good leader is to be continually vigilant about the team's skills. Team leaders constantly aim to strengthen the mix and level of the skills in the team, because no team can be successful if it has a serious 'skill gap' between the skills which it needs and the skills it actually has. The fourth thing which good team leaders do is

to manage relationships with outsiders including removing obstacles from the team's path. The fifth principle is that effective team leaders also create opportunities for others by stepping back and allowing other team members to take on responsibilities, or to learn how to perform new tasks, the leader creates opportunities for each team member to develop. And by doing so, they also build up each individual's commitment to the team. The sixth of Katzenbach and Smith's principles of team leadership is that team leaders do real work. They make sure that everyone on the team, including themselves, contributes roughly the same amount.

Katzenbach and Smith also identified two things that good team leader never do. The first of these is that they don't blame. They recognize that mistakes do happen sometimes. When errors do occur, good team leaders deal with it without increasing the pressure on the individual concerned; instead, they focus on encouraging the team and the individuals concerned to learn from the mistakes, so that they won't happen again. After all, in a committed team both success and failure are team events, not individual ones.

The other thing which good leaders never do is to excuse away shortfalls in the team's performance. Instead, they acknowledge that the team has not managed to achieve what is set out to do and, again, look constructively for ways to sort out the problem. By taking responsibility for the team's failures as well as its successes, the leader consolidates the sense of teamwork and commitment of the team members and encourages each team member to work freely, and to the best of their ability.

**Team performance:** To be able to recognize that a group of people is really functioning as a team, Katzenbach and Smith identified a set of five distinctive signs. These are: themes and identity, enthusiasm and energy, event-driven histories, personal commitment and, of course, performance results. By themes and identity, Katzenbach and Smith are describing the way that a fully-developed team will have a number of recurrent ideas or patterns which, to the team members, express their basic purpose and the nature of the team itself.

A positively functioning team is therefore able to tap into deep levels of motivation, which manifest themselves in the energy that people put into their work, and in other

signs like staying late to finish a task, voluntarily offering to help other team members and being enthusiastic about their tasks.

Another sign of positive team functioning is the way that a team evolves a history of its own. Events happen; setbacks, obstacles and difficulties, and as the team overcomes them it also gains in strength and techniques. Each event contributes to a shared understanding within the team and to a greater awareness of the team's possibilities and potential.

Positive team also develops a high degree of personal commitment between the team's members. The amount of shared experience which team members go through would probably be enough to establish this in itself, since working together so closely helps people to get to know one another very well.

The fifth and vital sign of positively functioning team is achieving results. According to Katzenbach and Smith, the most distinctive feature of an effective team, always, is that it is producing specific, tangible results.

**Participation of Team Members in school governance**

Team member's participation brings the experience and expertise of many individuals to bear on a particular area of concern or need (Peterson-del Mar, 1994). This approach can be especially useful for schools, being a complex institution, where no single school leader is likely to have adequate knowledge or skills to make the most appropriate decisions nor the time and effort to execute the decisions effectively. Barth (1991) stated, "It is impossible to serve employees by excluding them". Involving them in decisions on matters important to them and their school are advantageous in many ways. According to Lashway (1996), teachers' involvement in decision making facilitates implementing decisions and encourages them to be pleased when their views influence school decision, leading them to feel respected and empowered. Teachers' participation in team decision making also builds trust, helps acquire new skills, increases school effectiveness, and strengthens staff moral, commitment, and teamwork.

Studies such as by Reitzug and Capper (1996), however, found mixed reactions among school leaders and teachers toward accepting decision making approach in school administration.

Many leaders from central offices are reluctant to relinquish decision power they have held for many years. Other leaders ignore or only half-heartedly accept shared decision making, fearing loss of power or bound by the policies and rules of parent organizations. Some leaders simply prefer status quo, dreading change. Many school faculties also share the same sentiment, reticent to challenge norms already deep rooted in the structure and culture of schools. They feel involvement of employees in decision-making intrudes into the area of responsibilities pertaining to leadership of schools and a strain on their free time. Some teachers prefer limited participation in decision making activities while others are comfortable to participate only in tasks directly related to their work and not other tasks perceived to be outside their roles.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used the field/descriptive survey approach. The descriptive method was used to measure the perceptions of respondents in terms of groupings, team building, team performance, indicators of organizational performance and team effort practiced in Adventists High Schools in Rwanda.



The respondents included in this study were selected from high school employees, including administrators, teachers, and support staff selected through stratified random sampling to obtain a significant and proportionate allocation of samples from different high schools.

Therefore, the sample size of 198 respondents from the population of 392 was based on a 95 percent level of confidence.

In order to elicit information from the respondents, data collection instrument was developed by the researcher for this study, namely survey questionnaire and unstructured interview.

The pilot study has been conducted in two public high schools. The respondents were asked to fill out the tool and to comment on the clarity of the items and the clarity of the directions for responding to questionnaire. The pilot study enabled improvement in clarity of the items and directions.

Reliability for the instrument was tested using SPSS for Windows. The coefficient alpha was obtained for each scale and subscale compared to the pilot study and actual study coefficient.

Out of the total of 198 questionnaires distributed, the number of questionnaire returned was 182 at the retrieval rate of 91.8 percent.

Finally, the data were statistically treated using the SPSS Software to determine whether or not the perceptions of respondents are significantly different. The comparisons of means using one-way ANOVA has been also utilized. All statistical tests made in this study used a confidence level alpha .05.

#### **Development process of Team-effort model:**

The development of the proposed model process for team-effort for Adventist high schools in Rwanda is as follows:

The process has seven stages: definition of vision/mission of Team-effort, review of existing models, define test model for high schools, test for fit at high schools, define final model, present the model for approval, and revise or implement.

**Vision/mission of team-effort:** The development of a shared vision / mission of team-effort administration in high Schools was based on the following dimensions of team vision: clarity, motivating value,



attainability, share ability, and future potential.

**Review of existing models:** The review of existing models has inspired the researcher on pertinent dimensions of teamwork that was used to define the test model that will lead to the final model to implement in high schools for organizational performance.

**Define test model for high schools:** From the review of the existing model supported by the research output, the researcher has developed a test model for team-effort administration process for high schools. This was tested among all Adventist high schools to determine acceptability and fitness.

**Test for fit.** The test for fit should coincide with the result of the study. The study has brought out commonalities and divergences among team-effort administration practices. This result was used to test against the fitness of the model.

**Define the final model.** After testing the fitness of the model, the researcher has defined the final model keeping in mind the inputs of the study and the responses of respondents.

**Present the model for approval.** The final model will be presented to the Department in charge of high schools for approval.

If there are no changes, then the model will be implemented. If there are changes to make, the model will be revised and presented again to Education board for approval.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Respondents' demographic profile.

The table below describes the perceptions of respondents in terms of gender status, age, number of years spent working for the institution, position in the institution and education qualification.

As shown in table 1, all administrators-respondents were males. The typical high school employee in Rwanda was between 30 and 39 years old (59.9%). This implies that the respondents are in the peak of their professional careers. In terms of years spent in the school, majority of the respondents (65.9%) were in the school for the years ranged from 1 – 5 years. Concerning educational attainment, the majority of respondents (47.8%) were holders of advanced diploma.

Table 1: Description of respondents by selected demographic variables

Demographic profile	Administrators		Teachers		Support staff		Total	
Sex	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Male	24	100	101	79.5	18	58.1	143	78.6
Female	0	0	26	20.5	13	41.9	39	21.4
Age								
Less than 30	3	12.5	30	23.6	8	25.8	41	22.5
30 – 39	18	75.0	70	55.1	21	7.7	109	59.9
40 – 49	2	8.3	21	16.5	1	3.2	24	13.2
50 and above	1	4.2	6	4.7	1	3.2	8	4.4
Years in school								
1 – 5	16	66.7	78	61.4	26	83.9	120	65.9
6 – 10	8	33.3	31	25.2	4	12.9	44	24.2
11 – 15			6	4.7	0	0.0	6	3.3
16 – 20			7	6.3	1	3.2	9	4.9
21 and above			3	2.4	0	0.0	3	1.6
Position	24	13.2	127	69.8	31	17.0	182	100
Education attainment								
High School	0	0.0	23	18.1	21	71.0	45	24.7
Advanced Diploma	14	58.3	64	50.4	9	29.0	87	47.8
Bachelors and above	10	41.7	40	31.5			50	27.5

### Perceptions of respondents in terms of groupings, team building, and team performance

In terms of grouping, the respondents agreed that the grouping was practiced in their schools. For team building subscale, administrators-respondents agreed that the team building was practiced in team management while

faculty and staff were “unsure” on the team building issue. In terms of team leaders, respondents were unanimously “unsure” on the issue of team leadership.

**Table 2: Overall mean per cluster of Respondents perception on Groupings, team building, team leaders and team performance**

Scales	Administrators (N=24)	Teachers (N=127)	Support staff (N=31)	Grand mean	Equivalence
1. Groupings	3.93	3.68	3.66	3.71	Agree
2. Team Building	3.56	3.36	3.38	3.39	Unsure
3. Team leadership	3.49	3.46	3.31	3.44	Unsure
4. Team Performance	3.56	3.47	3.44	3.48	Unsure

Findings on team performance showed that administrators-respondents agreed (3.56) on the issue of team performance while teachers and support staff respondents were “unsure”. Overall, grouping was rated the highest (3.71) and team building the lowest (3.39).

**B. Perceived indicators of organizational performance**

Table 3: Overall mean of Respondents perception on indicators of organizational performance.

SCALES	Administrators (N=24)	Faculty (N=127)	Staff (N=31)	Grand mean	Equivalence
1. Vision	3.78	3.61	3.45	3.61	Agree
2. Participative safety	3.50	3.16	3.02	3.21	Unsure
3. Climate of excellence	3.84	3.66	3.56	3.66	Agree
4. Support for innovation	3.61	3.35	3.49	3.44	Unsure

As revealed by the table 3, administrators, teachers and support staff were in agreement on their rating of indicators of organizational performance in terms of vision. For participative safety, respondents’ perceptions were in “unsure” range. In terms of climate of excellence, respondents were in agreement on their rating. For support for innovation subscale, respondents’ perceptions were evident to “unsure”.

Overall, climate of excellence was rated the highest (3.66) while participative safety was rated the lowest (3.21).

**C. Perceptions of respondents on Team-effort administration.**

The following table presents the views of respondents on the pertinence of team-effort in organizational governance.

**Table 4: Perceptions of respondents on Team-effort administration**

	Administ-rators (N=24)	Teachers (N=127)	Support staff (N=31)	Grand mean	Equivalence
1. School administrators, faculty and staff participate in making decisions	3.71	2.93	2.87	3.02	Unsure
2. Top management respect the people who make up the teams	3.75	2.46	3.26	3.46	Unsure
3. Top management listen to what team members are saying and take it seriously.	3.67	3.06	3.03	3.13	Unsure
4. School principal provide autonomy to teams in decision making	3.63	2.46	2.32	2.59	Unsure
5. The principal set clear boundaries to team decisions	3.71	3.46	3.16	3.44	Unsure
6. Effective communication of needed information for better decisions is enhanced.	3.75	3.43	2.87	3.38	Unsure
7. Employees feel proud of their contributions in school administration	3.75	3.50	3.52	3.54	Agree
8. Organization has a definite, positive direction with clear delineated values which are understood and shared by all of its members	3.79	3.26	3.39	3.35	Unsure
9. The communication mechanisms which promote effective team cohesion are in place	3.58	3.16	2.74	3.13	Unsure
10. Team members foster a sense of pride in belonging to the team and in working for the organization	3.75	3.72	3.42	3.67	Agree
11. Teams are accountable to its organization	3.88	3.94	3.61	3.87	Agree
12. Team-effort increases the amount of knowledge and information available for making good decisions	3.96	3.83	3.87	3.85	Agree
13. Employees share the values and goals of the team	3.67	3.71	3.19	3.62	Agree
14. Employees are willing to put effort into the team decisions and their implementation	3.58	3.79	3.77	3.76	Agree
15. Teams sort out conflicts by discussing them openly and reaching a consensus	3.79	3.45	3.00	3.42	Unsure
16. The school administration provides support for their teams in the following areas:					
16.1 Clearly define the tasks to be accomplished by teams	3.83	3.60	3.58	3.63	Agree
16.2 Adequate resources are available to the team					
16.3 Accurate information for reaching a realistic team decisions are provided	3.67 3.71	2.43 3.25	2.19 3.03	2.55 3.27	Unsure Unsure
16.4 Ability to offer any training or education needed by teams to carry out its tasks properly	3.42	2.80	2.68	2.86	Unsure
16.5 Regular and reliable feedback from school administrators as teams carry out their tasks.	3.67	3.21	2.97	3.23	Unsure
17. When decisions are made, they are based on right and fair information	4.17	3.28	3.35	3.41	Unsure
18. The principal works with people below him to make decisions	4.08	2.61	3.32	2.92	Unsure
19. Decisions are made by those who know most about the problem	3.00	3.32	2.53	3.15	Unsure
20. The principal allows the group to identify and diagnose problems as well as generate solutions under certain constraints.	3.13	2.39	1.77	2.38	Disagree
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>3.69</b>	<b>3.24</b>	<b>3.06</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>Unsure</b>

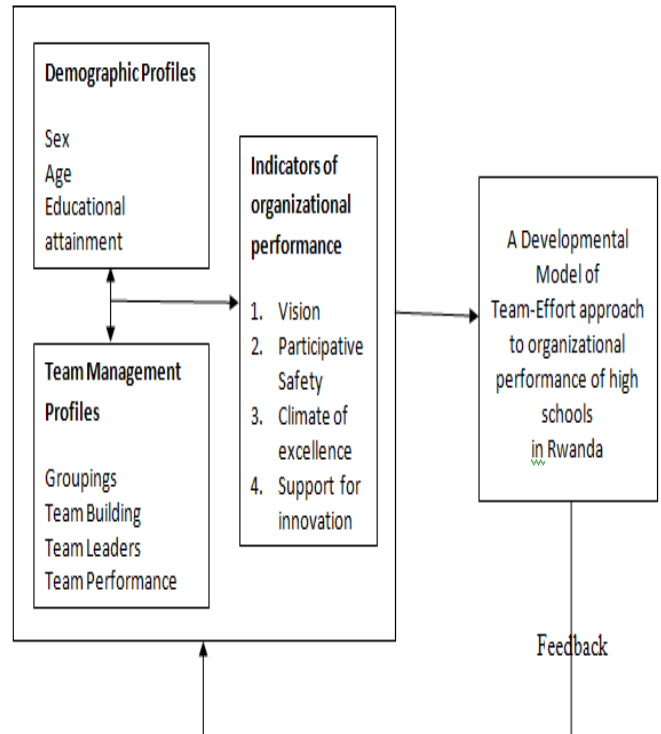
As revealed by the overall mean in the table above, administrators-respondents agreed that team effort administration was practiced in their schools while teachers and support staff respondents' perceptions were in "unsure" range. The general perception of "unsure" (3,28) implies doubt about team effort administration practiced in their schools.

**D. Evolved Model of Adventist High School in Rwanda for Team Effort**

Based on the findings of the study, this section contains a discussion of the Model of Team –Effort of Adventist High Schools in Rwanda as depicted in the Figure 1.

The model comprises of demographic variables, team management, and indicators of organizational performance. The combined effects of these elements lead to team-effort in high schools in Rwanda.

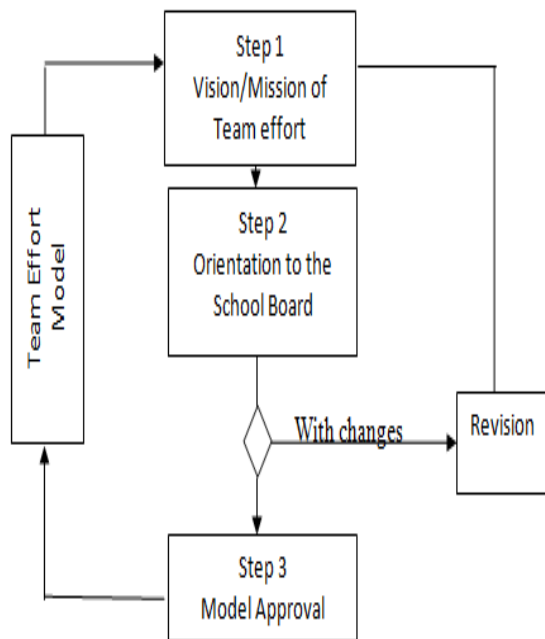
In fact, the conceptual framework used the following variables as demographic profile of respondents: sex, age, years in the school, position, and educational attainment.



**Figure 1: Evolved Model of Adventist High School for Team Effort**

In the evolved model, years in the school has been taken out since the analysis of respondents' perceptions revealed that the number of years spent in the school has no significant impact on team effort administration.

To institutionalize the model development process, the following figure 2 is suggested.



**Figure 2: Model Development Process**

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A Team-Effort Administration in Adventist high schools in Rwanda must consider sex, age, position in the school, and education attainment for demographic profiles; grouping, team building, team leader, and team performance for team management to attain organizational performance in terms of vision, participative safety, climate of excellence and support for innovation.

The major findings and conclusion drawn from this study led to recommendations directed toward two areas. First, general recommendations that might improve team

effort practices by implementing the evolved model which is the contribution of this study. Second, suggestions of area of further research given.

Adoption of the evolved model of team effort administration for Adventist high schools in Rwanda and institutionalization of team effort administration model development process.

It is also recommended that other denominations may replicate the model in their schools.

For successful implementation of the model, training and development program is needed for teachers and support staff in terms of participative safety, support for innovation, team building, and team performance, for support staff in terms of vision, administrators, teachers, and support staff need also to be trained, directed and oriented towards team leadership.

Area for future research: Team effort administration could be expanded to include also the primary, colleges and graduate schools.

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