

7.4 Work Environment

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Further Reading: The Importance of a Good Work Environment

The Importance of a Good Work Environment

The work environment for teachers relates to the conduciveness of the physical and psychological environment at the schools where teachers work and develop professionally. The work environment has a direct impact on the quality of teaching and the capacity to retain teachers.

School environments, especially in larger schools in urban areas, can be noisy and cramped, which can impact on a teacher's wellbeing and performance. Like in any other organisation, schools may also face various forms of leadership and interpersonal tensions. Some teachers, especially new teachers, may not be comfortable in front of a class or may be intimidated by bullies amongst the pupils. It may also be stressful for teachers to teach subjects they are not comfortable with. Finally, instances of peer bullying or harassment in the work environment may cause fear or anxiety.

It is important for the performance and wellbeing of teachers and pupils that the school environment is orderly, clean, and conveniently planned and arranged, and that it is healthy and safe. There should be WASH and hygiene facilities and green outdoor spaces, and sufficient space should be allocated for teachers to meet one another, relax between classes and prepare lessons or correct pupil's assignments. For pupils, there must be playgrounds and spaces for socialising between classes.

In the age of climate change with numerous threats to the natural environment, including severe pollution from production, waste and plastic, it is essential schools educating the country's future citizens are at the forefront of environmental protection. School leaders must adopt measures to protect the environment in and around schools and involve teachers and pupils actively in the process. By starting in and around schools, practices can become the norm in all spheres of

human activity.

The responsibility of ensuring a conducive work environment rests largely with those who design, construct and furnish the school, and, once in use, school leaders, SMC / BoGs and the authorities who quality assure, inspect and supervise the conditions and running of the school.

Who is responsible

MBSSE/School proprietors:

Overall responsibility for design, construction and lay out of schools, and for quality assurance, supervision and inspection once operational.

TSC:

Responsible for providing guidelines for the physical and psychological work environment in schools and for checking standards.

School Leader:

Responsible for organising and maintaining a conducive work climate at the school

SMC/BoG:

Oversees the work climate and environment at the school.

Work Environment Rules

Physical

- The school environment including classrooms, teacher rooms, and indoor and outdoor spaces must be adequate for the number of teachers and pupils according to the best standards.
- The school environment must be well planned and laid out, attractive to work and learn in, properly maintained, clean and hygienic.

Psychological

- School leaders must ensure a good work climate and the wellbeing of teachers through best-practice school management.
- Teachers must be offered guidance and supervision in their practice of teaching to ensure they feel confident.
- Teachers must be offered support when they face serious difficulties in their personal life.

Environmental

- Every school must follow the highest standards in environmental protection and avoid polluting the environment (such as burning of toxic plastic waste).
- Teachers and pupils alike must be taught how to protect the environment and avoid pollution.

Best Practice: How to promote a good physical work environment

- Keep the work environment healthy and safe by following the rules and guidance provided in [Occupational Health and Safety](#).
- Overall make the school an attractive place that stimulates work and wellbeing.
- Ensure classrooms are spacious and match the number of students, are clean and orderly, and have good light and ventilation.
- Maintain buildings, facilities, appliances, etc. in a good state and carry out repairs and improvements immediately when necessary.
- Maintain outdoor areas in the school including play and sports grounds. Plant trees and other plants and arrange for green outdoor spaces at the school premises.
- Remove waste of any kind that you come across immediately. Ensure waste disposal facilities.
- Provide teachers with a common room to spend their time between classes and space for individual work like correcting pupils' homework.
- Provide pupils with separate spaces to work and socialise.
- Clean the school premises daily and organise regular major clean ups. Engage pupils in this activity.
- Make the school a non-smoking environment. If necessary, provide an outdoor area for smokers.

Best Practice: How to promote a good psychological work climate

- Promote a work climate of professionalism, objectivity, sincerity, trust, mutual respect, and mutual support. This may start with the school leader as a model of good behaviour.
- Encourage more experienced teachers to guide the less experienced without the latter fearing reproach or ridicule, for instance, if they need to ask questions.
- Be fair and impartial in all matters. Favouritism, prejudices and unfairness act as poison to a good work climate.
- Make the teachers work as a team or more teams in the case of large schools. For example, organise pupil projects across classes, common projects among teachers to improve teaching or school upkeep, common meetings and social events, etc.
- Maintain a high order of integrity and ethics in the school. Adhere strictly to the Code of Conduct.
- Allow no form of bullying or harassment in the school environment.
- Facilitate opportunities for learning, training and development.

Best Practice: How to protect the natural environment in schools

- Teach pupils how to protect the natural environment and avoid pollution. They in turn will teach their parents. Involve them in creating a greener and cleaner school environment.
- Clean and tidy the school and classrooms every day.
- Organise at least one monthly day for thorough cleaning of the school premises, offices, classrooms, sportsgrounds, etc.
- Plant trees and other plants around the school and create green spaces.
- Ensure rubbish bins are available at the school in places where they are needed, and dispose of rubbish in an environmentally friendly manner. DO NOT burn it. Burning waste releases toxic fumes into the environment which can cause health problems.
- Do not burn toxic plastic or other materials. Dispose of it as guided by district authorities.
- Do not leave motor vehicles running when they are not moving. Ensure school vehicles are appropriately serviced and maintained.
- Engage school leaders, teachers and pupils in community projects to improve the environment.
- Reduce water wastage.
- Save electricity and use energy-efficient light bulbs.