Development communication Case Study

1. Case study on Corporate Social Investment

The case study is about the sponsorship that Armscor gave to a high school in Mamelodi called Vlakfontein Technical. Armscor decided to use the model adopted by the Department of Education called Dinaledi. The whole point was to turn the school into a centre of excellence for science and mathematics. Armscor adopted the school in 2002.

2. Introduction

The main aim of the project was to improve the matric results of maths and science of Vlakfontein and also improve the overall matric results of the school. We targeted matriculants as such. It dawned to us that there were very major problems in the school like lack of culture of learning; drug abuse; absenteeism of learners, late coming of learners and teachers, a dirty school and general rebelliousness from the learners. We classified the project as a Corporate Social Investment programme. We needed to empower both teachers and learners.

3. Introduction about development communication approach

One of the employees of Armscor who was a former student at the school got involved with a group of other former students at the school to raise funds to uplift the building of the school which was in a terrible state. When the Corporate Social Investment Committee of Armscor decided on using the Dinaledi approach, they had to decide on which school would be targeted. Vlakfontein Technical High was an obvious choice in that one of our employees was already involved with the school and he motivated that we target this particular school.

We were weary of imposing our help on the school. What we then did was to meet with the principal, her vice and one senior teacher from the management team. We indicated to them that Armscor has decided to adopt them as a school. We had a certain amount on money that we wanted to invest in the school. Before we met the representatives of the management team of the school we got the school's performance from the Department of Education. The following was the pass rate of matriculants before and after we adopted the school:

Year	Percentage pass rate
1999	41.13%
2000	43.61%
2001	51.5%
2002	71%
2003	58.33%
2004	? 52%
2005	? 48%

For maths results in 1999 the school had only one candidate who passed HG with a D symbol and only one with SG passed with a B symbol. For physical science only two learners passed with symbol E on HG.

For maths results in 2000, only two learners passed with a C symbol on HG and one passed with a D symbol on HG. For physical science two learners got a D symbol in HG and three learners got an E symbol.

For maths results in 2001 the best student got a symbol GG in Mathematics HG. For physical science on one learner got an E symbol on HG.

For maths results in 2002 one learner passed in HG with a B symbol, one in HG with a C symbol and one in HG with a D symbol. For physical science one learner got a C symbol in HG, one got a D symbol in HG and one got an E in HG.

In 2003, Maths HG two learners got a C symbol and 2 got a D symbol in HG. And one learner got a C symbol in Physical science, two learners got a D symbol HG.

By June 2005 we had not received the results of 2004. We battled to get them from the principal. We could have asked them from the Department but we decided to wait on the school principal to furnish us with the results. She told us that she is so embarrassed to give us the results because she realizes they have not done their part as the school. As I write, we do not have those results from the school.

From these statistics, one can deduce that at any given year there were less than five (5) candidates from the school who qualify for either university or a technikon entrance to pursue a technically oriented career.

Be that as it may, the question that we asked the management team was: What help do you need from Armscor to improve the matric results from 51.5% to at least 60% for 2002? Besides other ad hoc requests, the following is the assistance that the school asked Armscor to assist with and all was done on the side of Armscor:

- Teacher education on how to model good behaviour so that they can yield good results from learners – Armscor's cost was R64 000 for a two week training programme for the 32 teachers including the school clerk.
- Winter and spring maths and science classes given by service providers of their choice – cost to Armscor was R100 000.
- Donation of 20 computers for teaching computer skills and compu-typing. These were second hand computers on which Armscor installed programmes needed by the school and they were also connected to function on a server to that they could have access to email and internet – approximate cost is an amount of R50 000.
- An orientation programme on computers for teachers to impart the skills to learners – cost to Armscor R10 000.
- Motivational speakers for both learners and teachers (Dr David Molapo was one of them) – R20 000.
- Career programmes for learners – one was from the South African National Defence Force recruitment programme and the other one was offered by one of the engineers from Armscor.
- Provision of cleaning paraphernalia to keep the school premises tidy – they participated in the `Bontle ke Bothakga` competition conducted by the Department of Environmental Affairs for the most clean school – Cost to Armscor was R3700. They did not win but at least the school's cleanliness improved.
- Provision of gear for both netball and soccer teams for the school. This was Armscor branded uniform. Cost to Armscor was R8000.
- Provision of chess equipment for the school – cost to Armscor was R4500.
- Training in study methods for both teachers and learners – cost to Armscor was R30 000.
- A leadership development camp for 30 matriculants chosen by the school – cost to Armscor was R30 000
- Participation in the regional young science expo competition – cost to Armscor was R2000.

- Participation in Youth Day activities organized by the I CAN FOUNDATION of Dr David Molapo – cost to Armscor was R60 000.
- Participation in the Siyandiza programme arranged by the SA Air Force to expose learners from disadvantaged communities to the world of aviation – cost to Armscor was R3000.
- Established an eating park for learners during break, felled the trees (teachers complained that the dirt was because of the leave falling from so many trees. Yet when we visited the school the glaring dirt was that of papers that were thrown on the ground after eating, and got them fire extinguishers – cost to Armscor was R31 000.
- Bought a printer, a scanner, television and maths and science video cassettes for the school – cost to Armscor R30 000.

The total amount of money spent on the school is R416 200 and that excludes the time involved in setting up these programmes and meetings and phone calls with the school and service providers.

4. Publicity material

I take this to mean information made public about the availability of Armscor to help. As this was for a specific school, we did not distribute any literature regarding our programme. We avoided doing this because we did not want to raise expectations as we had a limited budget. However, the Sowetan and Young Magazine covered our programme with the school. We were not aware of the development communication programme offered by GCIS.

5. Key achievements

From the results above, one could see that the year we sponsored the results shot up to 71% pass rate. This was not to be. The results deteriorated as the years went by. We think that we have a least made a mark that there are people out there willing to help when help is needed and people are willing to exert themselves. One cannot really talk about key achievements because from the above results, one can see that there is nothing spectacular in terms of achievements. However, our presence at the school must have left some impression with some learners. Unfortunately, one is unable to quantify this.

6. Key challenges

We could not understand why we did not get the results promised by teachers even after giving them all that they said they needed to produce good results. We had regular meetings with both the principal and different teachers especially those teaching maths and science. In all the meetings the questions were the same and the answers were the same. We asked one question: why are you not producing results? We got the same old excuses: children are not obedient; they come late; they are involved in drug trafficking; they do not do their homework; we are not allowed to punish them; etc.

We came to once conclusion: there was no commitment from the teachers and the management was weak.

Unfortunately, we had to terminate our assistance to the school. We realized that there is not much one can achieve when there is no commitment from the teachers. One social worker pleaded with us not to terminate our assistance because she indicated that dealing with developmental issues is a challenge on its own. My response was that there were many schools in rural communities which did not have the same facilities and materials as the school and they still performed better.

7. Lessons learned

I do not think that there is nothing we could have done that we do not do, not unless a person not involved with this project could do an independent assessment and point to us what we could have done better.

We were very much involved at every step of the way but this did not help. The service providers who helped the school have helped many different schools and those schools yielded good results even when intervention was started in the middle of the year. I seem to think that we were dealing with an exception rather than the rule.

We did not want to go for a school which is already performing well. We wanted to actually see a school transforming from a bad product to a good product. May be that was our mistake. It is for the reader to give us suggestions/opinions.

What perhaps we could do if we embark on this project the next time is to enter into a formal Service Level Agreement with the school.

8. Evaluation tools

We depended on seeing change when we intervened. For example, we expected the matric results for maths and science to improve after intervention. The teachers also promised, with their own mouths, improvement. The service providers went back to do evaluations and they gave us reports. They finally came to a conclusion that there was no commitment from the teachers.

9. Conclusions/plans for the future

We are looking at projects we can embark on to help improve maths and science in disadvantaged communities. We would appreciate any suggestions of projects that Armscor can embark on and yield results.

10. Support for the work

The Department of Defence and the Department of Education supported this project. This project was shared with the then DDG of the Department of Education and he gave us a go ahead. In as far as The Department of Defence is concerned; Armscor receives a transfer payment from the Department.

11. Contact details of the organizations and government departments who supported the project

People can contact the writer of this report, Minah Sindane-Bloem and the principal of the school Mrs San Britz/ vice principals Mr Mahlangu / Mr Maseko on +27 12 805 2761.

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