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## Chapter 2 – Types of Meetings, Procedures and Minutes

Preprint · August 2021

DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.30844.87688

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# Chapter 2



## 2. Types of Meetings, Procedures and Minutes

### Outline

School leadership is usually under pressure to ensure they manage schools effectively. This pressure may come from various directions such as staff, learners, parents, and stakeholders. In line with the assertion that school management involves the routine maintenance of present operations of the school (Dimmock, 1999; Bushilya, 2021), it would be fitting to state that managing a school lies in the judicious use of means and conducting or supervising of school activities in order to accomplish an end. This calls for what is expressed in the following quotation:

*“In order to enforce educational reform initiatives, there is need to come up with suitable management strategies for routine tasks in stable environment applied to educational innovations. (Bushilya, 2021).*

One way to arrive at the goals of the school is the bettering of the organisation of school meetings at various stages. Such a strategy has potential to contribute towards the improvement of school management. This chapter,

therefore, discusses the types of meetings, meeting procedures and meeting minutes.

From the general perspectives, the following are listed as the type of meetings: general meetings, briefings, negotiation meetings, council meetings, advisory meetings, and executive or committee meetings. From the School perspective, the type of meetings involve: management board and school management, departmental meetings, staff meetings, parents and teachers' associations meetings, finance meetings, and learner meetings. The chapter also covers the procedures for meetings (preparation for the meeting, the role of the chairperson in a meeting, ground rules and adoption of the agenda, welcoming remarks from the chairperson, reading of previous minutes, corrections, adoption of the minutes and signing, matters arising from the previous minutes). It goes further to table the new business made up of the latest reports. What follows are matters arising from the new reports and any other relevant business (AORI). The chapter discusses the taking of minutes, the agenda, the main body of minutes, how to report what was said in a meeting and the sentence structure.

## **2. 1 Types of Meetings**

### ***2.1.1 In the General Sense***

When meetings are looked at from the general point of view, they include: general meetings, briefings, negotiations, council meetings, advisory meetings, and executive or committee meetings. These are now discussed here below and are drawn from the Proposition 34 (2017):

#### **2.1.1.1 General Meetings**

As the term suggests, these are meetings that may be held at any time of the year. Their frequency is determined by needs of the organisation or group of people who make up the membership. A fitting example is the Annual General

Meeting (AGM). General Meetings may be called for varied number of reasons. It is the duty of the Secretariat to call for such meetings.

#### **2.1.1.2 Briefings**

These are called for in order to direct or instruct members. They are brief in nature. The leader informs and instructs subordinates, clears up misunderstandings, and sums up ideas and views where there is need. They deal less with reviewing of performance, allocating tasks to members, coming up with organizational objectives. As opposed to having a formal set of minutes, briefings usually have brief notes that indicate what needs to be done and who will execute them.

#### **2.1.1.3 Negotiation Meetings**

This is that form of a meeting that utilizes bargaining and involves interest groups. The main aim of such a meeting is to arrive at mutual decisions.

#### **2.1.1.4 Council Meetings**

Generally speaking, council meetings involve persons of equal status in terms of their contributions to matters under discussion. The entire group must be accountable to itself through the use of discussions that are arrived at using consensus.

#### **2.1.1.5 Advisory Meetings**

These are meetings that aim at sharing information on issues of concern. Through such meetings, advice on how to deal with an issue at hand is sought. While participants are informed about important matters, their views are also of paramount importance.

#### **2.1.1.6 Executive or Committee Meetings**

The Executive Committee is made up of only elected or appointed members whose tasks include making important decisions for the group's affairs.

Decisions reached by this body are then presented to the general membership for approval or invalidation. It is each committee member's duty to ensure that the members comply with the rules of the group in line with calling for and holding meetings. Meetings deal with planning, budgeting, and review of progress.

From the general perspective, other forms of meetings would include: formal meetings, informal meetings, celebrations, rituals/services, information days, and workshops or training.

### ***2.1.2 From the School Perspective***

School meetings involve management board members, managers, staff, parents, and learners. Top leaders usually hold them at management levels; Staff at school and departmental or section levels; parents at Annual General Meetings (AGMs) as well as at Parents – Teachers' Association Executive levels, and learners at school, class, and club levels. School meetings are generally used as a means of communication and interaction between and among the managers and the teachers, other school staff and all members of the school. Referring to the application of planning meetings, Bushilya (2021) has the following to say:

*“Planning is very essential to the school situation. The Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Mid Management teams, and Heads of various Departments must plan the school's activities in order to enhance effective running of their schools. Plans would include holding of staff meetings at opening and closing times of the school, dates for holding staff briefings and school assemblies, schedules for submission of records of work, times for administering end of topic, mid-term, and end of term tests. Other plans would comprise enlisting of major projects the school would undertake in a specific period time indicating the costs”.* (ibid).

The author (ibid) further mentions that each school must endeavor to come up with a good plan, because without such, the school takes a great risk of running the institution under impulsive and panic attendance to matters.

Before we shift to discussing the types of school meetings, it is good to bear in mind that such meetings must be managed objectively using the Drucker (2001) acronym as referenced by Bushilya (2021): SMART - *Specific* (simple, sensible, and significant), *Measurable* (meaningful, and motivating), *Attainable* (achievable, and agreed), *Realistic* (relevant, reasonable, resourceful, and results-based), and *Time bound* (time-based, time limited, time/cost limited, timely, and time sensitive).

### 2.1.2.1 Management Board and School Management

1. **School Board Meetings:** The importance of School Boards working with the headteachers is comparable to them being gatekeepers of schools as portrayed in their investment and relationships with school stakeholders (Safe Routes to School, n. d.). With the headteachers being the secretariat for most school boards, the Management Boards must meet at least twice in a year to look at the welfare of the school and its members. This is cardinal for monitoring the success of the school in line with academic achievements of learners, dealing with budgets, and maintenance of school facilities.

*“...school boards and principals can have a strong influence on [sic] the way in which students travel to and from school. (Safe Routes to School, n. d.).*

Through their meetings, School Management Boards give an aerial view of the school’s operations and make important decisions and ratification of proposal made to it by other organs of the school. Such meetings must keep record of

decisions taken (as evidence) and give enough background in clarity to those decisions.

**2. *Management Meetings:*** School management meetings can take many forms depending on the structure of the school. These meetings involve managerial decision making at various levels. For example, some meetings will involve the senior management team, while others will involve middle management or will cover both groups (Bushilya, 2021).

In order to effectively carry out its duties, school management comes up with Management Committees. These are formed as means to achieve the various tasks of the School Management. They come in form of school committees which are bodies of persons delegated to consider, investigate, take action on, or report on some issues in the school to promote a common goal.

Management Committees can also have Sub-committees which meet as may be required but subject to the directions of the Management committee. In this sense, a sub-committee is tasked to handle part of the Management committee work.

#### **2.1.2.2 Departmental Meetings**

Departments are sections of the school that run along the line of subject specialization. The school could have for instance Natural Sciences, Mathematics, Languages, Practical Subjects, Social Sciences, and Business Studies as individual departments.

Each department is headed by the Head of Department (HOD). Depending on the numbers in membership in a department and the number of related subjects it deals with, a department may have a Section headed by the Head of Section (HoS). A section is a sub unit of the department. Take the case of Mathematics Department having the Computer Studies Section under it.

Departmental meetings can either be a one-off or periodic occurrence attended by all staff members of the department to discuss and address issues such as reviewing teacher and learner performance, setting departmental objectives, reporting on the outcome of actions taken and discussing any other matters in connection with departmental priorities and operations. It is usual to take minutes at such meetings and records kept for future reference.

### **2.1.2.3 Staff Meetings**

Schools have two forms of staff. These are teaching and support staff. Meetings are usually arranged in line with these categories. Some staff meetings may be conducted at Departmental or Section levels. Special general meetings which are sometimes referred to as Community Meetings can be organized when matters to be discussed affect both. When it comes to opening and evaluation staff meetings, school managers are incorporated into these as they boarder on the livelihood of the entire school. Management could also meet the support staff on their own in order to deal with the concerns of the ancillary staff. As is the case for most meetings, minutes must be recorded and kept for future reference.

### **2.1.2.4 Parents and Teachers Associations Meetings**

The role that parents play in the upbringing of their own children both at home and at school cannot be over stressed. While children work hard in order to obtain marks required for a particular school, parents take up their responsibility to engage the school in the initiation of their children into a school as shown by the following statement:

*“They [parents] start to get in touch with the school’s values and beliefs as their child is accepted into a particular school. They sign the enrolment forms and go through the school rules to be able to assist and support their child. They are also expected to open up to*



*the parents' association and take part in the Parents – Teachers' Association (PTA) activities and meetings each year as long as their child remains in that school. (Bushilya, 2021).*

Parents on their own cannot manage this without coordinating with teachers. Schools come up with PTA executives that work hand in hand with the school administration and teachers to jointly deal with the welfare of learners first and foremost, and the entire school wellbeing at large. PTA meetings can be monthly for the executive and annually – the Annual General Meetings (AGM)s at which resolutions are made to be presented to the school's Management Board for ratification.

#### 2.1.2.5 Finance Meetings

These meetings focus on the financial matters of the school. They come up with the school budgets that are approved by the board of management. It is the task of these meetings to evaluate the income, expenditure, and surplus/deficit in line with the budgetary allocations.

#### 2.1.2.6 Learner Meetings

Learners in a school have an important role to play in their own education and upbringing. They must be actively involved in their own growth. This is reaffirmed in the following reference:

*Pupils also have their role in school management and administration. They must follow stipulated laws including those regarding attendance, freedom of expression, academic performance, non-discrimination, and child protection and safeguarding (Varsha, 2011; Bushilya, 2021).*

Learner involvement in shaping school affairs can even be extended to establishment of School Councils (Hughes, 1974; Bushilya, 2012; Bushilya, 2021). In referring to School Councils in schools of England, Taylor and Johnson (2002) indicate that school councils contribute to the life of the school, young people's experience of democratic processes and practices, and the school's provision for personal and social and citizenship education.

School councils must be seen as a strategy for learning and their advantages outweigh their disadvantages. Among feasible benefits are: enhancing of community participation in school programs through the school council and its membership, an opportunity for the school to receive appropriate proposals and suggestions towards school development and improvement, and assisting in dealing with various forms of school problems faced by learners (Haroona and Khawaja, 2010).

Besides the school councils, learners have other opportunities through which they meet such as class meetings, clubs and associations. All these forms of meetings referred to require that people come into the presence of or come together with a specific intention at a particular time and place. At the time of this write up, the world was experiencing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, face-to-face meetings were discouraged as opposed to virtual meetings. When using virtual methods, video conferencing is ideal if it is possible (Knox, Powell, and Suchman, 2015).

All these forms of meetings must be held from two important angles: planning and evaluation. The former work out a plan to attend to issues obtaining on the ground while the later assess the progress made in sorting out the issues. It must be born in mind that recurring meetings that take place at a scheduled time and place include staff briefings and or management meetings.

## 2.2 Procedures

### 2.2.1 Preparation for the Meeting

In the following discussions, it is understood that adequate preparations for any meeting will involve the actual preparations that will require setting the purpose of the meeting, people to attend it, and deciding on the venue.

**Actual preparations:** School meetings must be adequately planned and prepared for. To begin with, a decision must be reached on the purpose of the meeting. People don't just meet! There must be a definite and measurable purpose underpinning what the group expects to achieve during the meeting. In arriving at the purpose, consider alternatives other than meeting like *fulfilling the fixture* must be considered. Knox, Powel, and Suchman (2015) have the following to say over this matter:

*“Effective meetings don't just happen. They require a considerable amount of preparation and thought. This includes clearly defining the purpose and goals of the meeting, inviting the appropriate people, and selecting a location that is suitable [own addition], comfortable, accessible, and conducive to meaningful exchanges among participants”.* (ibid).

What makes a meeting unnecessary is the inability of the converter to express a valid purpose for the meeting objectives, goals and desired outcome (Lee 2008). It fits at this point in the discussion to ride on Bens (2012)'s four primary purposes for meetings: (1). *Information sharing*, (2). *Planning*, (3). *Problem-solving*, and (4). *Relationship building*. These will assist greatly in setting meeting goals, content and selection of methods:

(1). **Information sharing:** In such meetings, members get together to get and be given updates, share research, and brainstorm for new ideas. Notable at such meetings is the absence of decision making.

(2). **Planning:** These meetings move ideas into collaborated goals, visions, priorities, and needs. Consequently, the next steps are defined.

(3). **Problem-solving:** During these meetings, participants work together to develop solutions to problems within the practice. There is gathering of data, identification of problems, analyzing of the situation, and eventual planning for action to be taken.

(4). **Relationship building:** These forms of meetings serve as a time for people to get to know each other a little bit more and build relationships with one another.

**After the purpose:** Once the purpose has been set, the agenda must be put in place and disseminated to would be participants in good time. For routine meetings, the agenda items may have formed a definite pattern, but this does not remove possibilities to amend them. It is encouraged to round-robin from members suggestions for agenda items and ask those concerned if they will be in a position to report on the action points and items.

Most of the details on the agenda have been discussed earlier under section 1.1.3 of this book. Nevertheless, what requires emphasis is the importance of circulating the agenda well in advance so that members have time to prepare and be equipped to participate in the meeting. Furthermore, the convener of the meeting must bring along hardcopies of the agenda just in case a member forgets his or her copy at home when coming for the actual meeting.

**Who will attend the meeting?** The next important procedure is to determine who has to attend the meeting that has been called for. It is better to have few but much needed members to attend than to call too many people

that have to sit through the meeting listening to agenda items in which they have little or no interest at all. The advice from McNamara (n. d.) is very well put:

*“The decision about who is to attend depends on what you want to accomplish in the meeting. This may seem too obvious to state, but it's surprising how many meetings occur without the right people there. Don't depend on your own judgment about who should come”.* (ibid).

This is affirmed by Knox, Powel, and Suchman (2015) who insist that participants must be determined by the purpose of the meeting. This will help in ensuring that you do not forget the most needed members and that in doing so, you do not overstep your limits.

**The venue:** The venue of the meeting must be identified in advance. For frequently held meetings, you will do well to stick to regular starting times and venues that members are already familiar with. The location must be easily accessible, the actual room must be spacious enough for the comfort of the attendees. Avoid the sitting arrangement that looks like a classroom pattern in which the chairperson is in front while the other members are all bunched up on one side of the room. Rather, let the arrangement be semi-circular or in a full circle. This way, each participant will be able see the others clearly. Each participant must be provided with a table or any other form for use to write points during the proceedings of the meeting. You will also do well to have places of convenience close by.

### ***2.2.2 The Role of the Chairperson in a Meeting***

The chairperson has an unreplaceable role to play at a meeting. It is the work of the chairperson to take note of who wishes to speak and grant them that chance to do so at an appropriate time. The chairperson must ensure members do not deviate from the subject under discussion and makes a decision at what point the discussion must be brought to a halt. So as not to block other people from making contributions towards the debate, the chairperson must desist from getting involved in the discussion unless his or her opinion is sought. It is the chairperson's duty to summarize the matter under discussion as a way of helping members in reaching a well-informed understanding before making the decision. Depending on the weight of the matter, difficulties in reaching a conclusion could prompt the chairperson to propose that the issue be referred to a working group which would give a report at the next meeting.

### ***2. 2.3 Ground Rules and Adoption of the Agenda***

People usually meet to look at areas of common interest with the view to come up with important decisions. Despite the commonality, there are chances of the members straying from the meeting ideas due to possible disagreements as they discuss. Setting the ground rules assists to limit the members to the stipulated guide in the manner in which group members will conduct and carry out themselves in the meeting (Joan Lloyd, 2004). This does not imply that each time there is a meeting, new ground rules have to be set. For regular meetings, certain ground rules stand the test of time and eventually become like basic and standard.

### 2. 2.3.1 Examples of Ground Rules

Below are some of the examples of Ground Rules that could be set by a group:

1. All members will stay within the duration of the meeting.
2. All opinions of the members will be respected – *all adult answers have substance!*
3. No member shall embark on personal attacks on another at any time of the meeting.
4. All matters discussed in the meeting will remain confidential and will only be communicated to others outside the meeting by the chairperson or through the established channels.

Ground rules must be posted at all times. Should there be a new attendee at the meeting, there must be room for reviewing these rules and even updating the ground rules. The importance of ground rules is unimaginable and could be summed up in the following statement:

*“...These ground rules cultivate the basic ingredients needed for a successful meeting. · Four powerful ground rules are: participate, get focus, maintain momentum, and reach closure”.* (McNamara n. d.).

The process of Adopting the agenda is next in the procedure. In it, members critically look at the agenda items in order to check if there are any items that require to be removed, modified, or even added to the agenda. Once all is set in line with the agenda content, the agenda is proposed for adoption, seconded and then officially adopted as the guide for the meeting.

### ***2.2.4 Welcoming Remarks from the Chairperson***

The chairperson must welcome all present to the meeting. Quick and brief introductions are acceptable when there is a new member of the group who is not familiar with the others and the ways things are done. The chairperson must ensure to stimulate and inspire members to contribute positively towards having an effective meeting.

### ***2.2.5 Reading of Previous Minutes***

Meeting participants should come to the meeting having read the minutes of the previous meeting. It is taken like this because the minutes would have been distributed in advance together with the notice of the meeting and the agenda. However, when this criterion is not met, either the secretary or the recorder reads the minutes loudly at the meeting.

### ***2.2.6 Corrections***

This is the stage at which minutes of the previous meeting are reviewed. This process must go beyond making grammatical corrections. Reasonable attention must be focused on the meaning and interpretation of the content of the minutes. Particularly, any mistakes identified are then corrected and minutes updated. This enables the group to have accurately recorded minutes that are ready for discussions at the stage of matters arising.

#### ***2.2.6.1 Adoption of the minute and Signing***

This is the acceptance of the previous minutes; an indication that the minutes in their current state after the corrections are a true reflection of what was discussed. A member of the house is supposed to propose the adoption of the minutes and another one second them as a true record. This is followed by signing of the minutes in most cases by the Chairperson and the Secretary.



### ***2.2.7 Matters arising from the previous minutes***

This stage is a detailed review of the minutes in line with action holders giving the members updates on how they implemented their follow-up action. These updates can either be oral or in writing. Dealing with matters arising must always start from the first page onwards. The chairperson invites members to give feedback page by page. When there are no more matters arising from the previous meeting minutes, the meeting must proceed to new business.

### ***2.2.8 New Business – Latest Reports***

At this stage, matters that were contained in the previous meeting minutes are put aside in order to concentrate on the new items on the agenda. This covers latest reports on state of the school and its financial position, for instance. These reports must give details of what has been planned, how the goals will be reached and the financial implications to achieve them. Where need be, consensual resolutions must be reached.

### ***2.2.9 Matters Arising from Latest Reports***

This deals with matters arising from the new reports. This is done in the form of further clarifications to issues raised in the reports. Reports can be about the state of the school and the financial status of the institution as earlier alluded to.

### ***2.2.10 Any Other Relevant Business (AORI)***

Others prefer to refer to this as Any Other Business (AOB). In this book, Any Other Related Issues (AORI) is used in the sense that the former format could easily allow for members to stray from the main issues under discussion. AORI emphasizes that the issues to be raised must be related to the main points raised in the meeting that might require cementing at this stage.

### ***2.2.11 Closing Remarks***

It pays to end meetings on time and on a good note. It is also good practice to end the meeting with the review of actions and assignments that members must work on until the next meeting. It does well to set the date of the next meeting too. Members must be assured that the minutes of the meeting will be circulated to them in good time as soon as they are organized.

## **2.3 Minutes of the Meetings**

### ***2.3.1 Taking Minutes***

Minutes are a brief summary of what would have been discussed in a meeting. They are usually taken by a person referred to as the Recorder. He or she must list those present along with apologies given by those not present. Writing of minutes must follow the order of the agenda even though room for variation must be allowed as obtainable on the ground. Minutes must contain the main issues discussed including full texts of motions, points of view forwarded and the decisions arrived at. Minutes must also bear records of reports received and main points generated as well as what requires corresponding on after the meeting.

While in a meeting, the recorder must take extra notes that might be useful for the chairperson. As soon as the meeting is over, the recorder must write up the minutes in readiness for circulation to members at an opportune time.

Minutes of meeting usually include: Notice of Meeting, fresh Agenda, Attendance, Minutes of the last meeting, Matters arising from the last minutes, The agenda of the meeting itself, and Any Other Related Issues (AORI).

### 2.3.2 Agenda

Even though this was earlier treated under section 1.1.3, a bit more of some details on the matter won't hurt. The agenda must be adequately detailed so that those attending the meeting come fully informed and prepared. Where need be, the agenda must be accompanied by supporting papers and notes for members to read in advance. The agenda must be sent together with the invitation notice.

### 2.3.3 Main Body of Minutes

The minutes of a meeting are a meeting report that is circulated after the meeting and details what was said and decided upon during the meeting. The minutes contain the date of the meeting as well as the initials and names of the people who attended. As for members who are absent, the term 'apologies' is used to denote people who were not available for the meeting.

Meeting minutes also show action holders responsible for carrying out listed action points. In a Column on the right-hand side, you can put the person's initials in *bold* to show that he or she will perform the action (Table 2.1).

Details	Comments
2.1 It was agreed upon that the school purchases chemicals required to fumigate the hostels in order to prevent further spread of small pox...	Mr. M. NG'UNI Mr. I. E. MHONE

**Table 2.1:** Sample of right column in minutes

The following discussions pay attention to: *How to report report what was said in a meeting, and the format of the sentence structure.*

#### 2.3.1.1 How to Report What Was Said

In an effort to report what was said, the temptation might be the wish to report word for word. Rather, minutes must be made up of ideas using a variety of speech verbs. The following are examples of speech verbs. They

have been arranged in alphabetic order: *accepted, acknowledged, advised, agreed, argued, believed, commented, considered, explained, expressed (the view that), felt, informed, noted, objected, observed, outlined, pointed out, put forward (the view that), queried, questioned, reiterated, rejected, reminded, reported, stated, suggested, summarized, told, took the view that, and voiced*. As can be seen from these speech verbs, minutes must be written in the past tense as well as in the third person.

The first two and last two speech verbs are used as examples here. If the committee accepts to embark on a fundraising project, this would be reported in minutes form as: *the committee accepted it would embark on the fundraising project*. When the committee acknowledges receipt of the financial report, this would be reported in minutes form as: *the committee acknowledged receipt of the financial report*. If the committee voices out the need to change its initial plan, this would be written as: *the committee voiced out the need to change its initial plan*. When the committee takes the view that summoning parents of the erring pupils to the disciplinary committee was the best option, this would read in minutes form as: *the committee took the view that summoning parents of the erring pupils to the disciplinary committee was the best option*.

### **2.3.1.2 The Sentence Structure in minutes**

Minutes must not be boring to read. The recorder must utilize a variety of sentence structures to make them enjoyable. Use some of the examples listed below to brighten your minutes:

1. The chairperson welcomed everyone present to the meeting...
2. Despite being aware of... a member insisted that...
3. Given that the report fell short of the expected standards, the committee rejected it...

4. After listening to the feedback from the standing committee, the committee had enough information on which to base a sound decision...
5. In summary, the chairperson outlined the following action points...
6. In response to a query... a member of the house stated that...
7. Although the points made sense, the committee decided...
8. Asked to give details over the matter, the vice chairperson...
9. In reply, the treasurer assured members that...

## **Conclusion**

This chapter considered the types of meetings, meeting procedures and the composition of meeting minutes. From the general point of view, the chapter listed general meetings, briefings, negotiation meetings, council meetings, advisory meetings, and executive or committee meetings while from the school perspective, management board and school management, departmental meetings, staff meetings, parents and teachers' associations meetings, finance meetings, and learner meetings were enlisted as types of meetings. Procedures for meetings, taking of minutes, how to report what was said in a meeting and the sentence structure found in minutes were also looked at.

