

# Should school heads be leaders, managers or both? A case study of Bulawayo government secondary schools in Zimbabwe

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## ABSTRACT

The study sought to explore the type of skills needed by government secondary school heads in order for them to be effective. Hence, the study examined whether school heads could be effective if they employed either leadership skills, management skills or if they employed both skills. The main purpose of the study was to establish how any of the skills aforementioned could boost productivity in government secondary schools. The study was carried out in government secondary schools in Bulawayo. Only schools' performance at O' level was used as a measure of academic performance of the schools. The sample was made up of 60 respondents drawn from the secondary schools, heads of schools, District officers and other key informants in the education system like BSPZ coordinators and the newly appointed secondary school inspectors. Document analysis, observation, interviews and focus group discussions were used to collect data under the following themes: leadership skills and tasks, management skills and tasks and the concepts of change, motivation, school mission and vision, community involvement and teachers' needs to finally come out with the head's recommended attributes. The assessment of school administration revealed transformation in the task with institutions gradually moving away from concentrating on day to day neat management tasks towards focusing on a unique, situational designed and visionary approach to school management which requires more leadership qualities. Interviews of education officers revealed that, whilst all government schools were guided by government policy, policy was not meant to kill the individual flair of heads. The focus group discussions revealed that leadership was needed in education as an answer to the dynamic and turbulent environment. The discussions revealed that with the ever changing times, it was the flexible leader who would be able to identify strategies that would take advantage of the changing environment; the strategies that would go in line with the globalization trends, who was needed by today's school. Thus, most respondents believed that heads of schools could use leadership skills to create competitive advantage and uniqueness of schools, yet the issue of how policy could be successfully woven into heads' plans remained debatable. The study therefore recommended that schools as business organizations needed leaders who clearly understood their role in the school production process.

**Keywords:** Leadership, management, school leadership and leadership tasks.

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## INTRODUCTION

On April 1980, Zimbabwe gained its political independence from the British rule. Under the colonial British rule, education system was for all intents and purposes, capitalist oriented. This was a deliberate move put in place so as to promote and sustain white supremacy at the expense of black advancement, development and empowerment. The type of education

was evident in the 1966 Rhodesia Front bottleneck education policy which stated that, out of the total population of African students who completed Grade 7 only 12½ percent were eligible to proceed to Academic secondary schools (F1), 37½ percent would proceed into vocational education (F2) and the remaining 50 percent were left with no provision of any form of planned formal

education (Zvobgo in Mandaza, 1987). At independence, in 1980, the new government's first task was to break the several educational constraints placed by the capitalist government against the African child, democratizing the educational system. The achievement of the task of democratizing education was first manifested through the implementation of mass education policies which included amongst other policies, free primary education and automatic promotion from primary school level to secondary school. As a result of the mass education policies, the then Minister of Education Fay Chung reporting in *The Herald* of May 1995 stated that:

Primary education had risen from 1700 to 4500 and the number of primary school children leapt from 800,000 to 2.3 million. Secondary schools saw a similar expansion from 6000 students in 173 schools to 700,000 in 15,000 schools by 1995.

This was a successful quantitative expansion in education. However, although the issue of quantity and access had been successfully addressed issues of relevance, quality and effectiveness needed to be addressed too. Hence, in 1998, the President of Zimbabwe (as Head of State and Government) commissioned Dr. C. T. Nziramasanga as chairman of other educationists to conduct an inquiry into the Zimbabwe education and training. Quite a number of findings were brought out by the commission but of interest to the research are the findings concerning government secondary schools, of which some are stated as follows:

1. Internal efficiency is an important dimension of the concept of the success and quality of education (Nziramasanga, 1999:53).
2. There was overwhelming evidence to the effect that our secondary education was a waste of time for the majority of our students. That widely held view was prompted by the fact that our education system handles secondary students as if all of them would end up doing A' Level' and university studies (Nziramasanga, 1999:307).
3. The commission was informed that the country was still giving to all secondary students, an old British type of education. The respondents pointed out that for most students the current education system resulted in frustration and sense of failure (Nziramasanga, 1999:307)
4. Most parents bemoaned a situation where after four years of secondary education their children left school without practical skills (Nziramasanga, 1999).

From the findings listed above, it becomes evident that the key stakeholders were not happy with the type of education given to their children hence there was a need to change the secondary school leadership approach if

the schools were to remain effective in the turbulent society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

However, it should be noted that the study by the commission was carried at a time when the teachers, who are the backbone of any educational system, were working under trying conditions. The Zimbabwean teachers were faced with low salaries coupled with work overload in terms of professional demands and high teacher pupil ratios. The same teachers felt that they were deprived of their professional freedom too, as they were not involved in the school decision making processes (Nziramasanga, 1999). As a result, this caused them to have an indifferent attitude about their work. Low morale was, generally, observed in the schools. School leadership, experienced the same difficult conditions too but remained with the task of controlling the de-motivated teacher towards achievement of objectives. *The Chronicle* of 10 June 2009 revealed that one school reported a drop from 83 to 68% pass rate at A 'Level' November 2008 results. One school described the pupil performance as 'dismal'. However, it is interesting to note that some schools recorded success even under such difficult conditions. It thus becomes interesting to study the transformational leadership approach under the described conditions as a means of understanding how leadership influence can produce varying results under similar conditions.

The poor economic conditions in the country also led to a limited supply of material resources in the schools creating a challenging environment for both teachers and administrators. In *The Chronicle* of 25 September 2009, Senator David Coltart, the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Sports and Culture made the following observations:

The Education Sector like many other sectors in Zimbabwe was severely affected by the sanctions imposed on the country by the west. As a result of the embargo the Government failed to pay teachers good salaries and for the greater part of last year no lessons took place.

On the other side, communities, particularly urban, have developed notable interest in the education system in Zimbabwe and they have come to realize their role as key stakeholders. Similarly, the very pupil who is a client and the processed input has been enlightened about educational expectations through global village influence. Therefore, choice of a school is in most cases influenced by what the school administration has to offer more than just mere vicinity of that school. School administration in this case becomes the key towards fulfilment of key stakeholder expectations in as far as instructional, administrative and curricular tasks about any school are concerned.

School administration has become complex over the years due to a number of factors. The society around the

school has grown to be hyper turbulent and on the other hand numbers of school children have greatly risen in the schools. In the past, school children at secondary schools would be made up of the bright and the motivated pupils who had passed grade 7 (Nelson et al., 1996) and in Zimbabwe, making a total of only 12.5% of the total population of pupils in Zimbabwe who would have sat for the Grade 7 tests. Over the years, school administration has thus been studied under such concepts as administration, management and leadership. It is in this view that leadership and management will be explored in the schools; tracing the historical background and the rationale for paradigm shift observed.

### Statement of the problem

Despite the numerous challenges encountered in the school administration, the school has to produce outputs and outcomes that satisfy its stakeholders. The head remains the immediate driver towards any school achievement, thus a success formula has to be established on how best the head can accomplish the task. Hence, the study sought to establish whether heads need to be leaders, managers or both in order to achieve the envisaged success.

### Research questions

1. What does school administration entail?
2. What are the indicators of success, efficiency and effectiveness in a school situation?
3. How is management linked with the success of a school?
4. How is leadership linked with achievement in a school situation?

### DEFINING LEADERSHIP

The understanding of the concept of leadership has evolved over time. Yet, it becomes even much more important to understand its definition in this century of globalization and turbulence. Organizations today exist in turbulent times and leadership for competitive advantage is the expected norm. Thus, the understanding of what leadership entails becomes even more critical especially if all organisations have to be effective and efficient in achieving their stated function. Through lack of leadership, organisations have been observed to underperform. But the meaning of the leadership concept has to be understood first because unless we get this fundamental understanding right, leadership training might be built on faulty foundations with an emphasis on skills that have very little to do with the function. Thus, the substance not the style gets to be core issue to be

addressed in the study of leadership so that an authentic foundation for any organisation that seeks to attain its results is successfully built.

Finding one specific definition of leadership could be a complex task as the leadership concept has evolved over years. Studies by Van Seters and Field (1990) in Sadler (2003) trace the stages of the leadership theory from the nineteenth century. The first phase was perhaps the personality era which could be subdivided into the Great man period and the Trait period focusing on great men and women in leadership according to their personalities. Studying their lives would result in one understanding what leadership meant. The second phase was the influence era where leadership is not understood only by studying the individual but by analysing the relationship process involved. Van Seters and Field (1990) in Sadler (2003) further identify the third phase as the 'Behaviour period' era where focus was on what the leaders actually did. There was a change of focus after this to realise the context under which leadership was performed. Yet, the rise of the 'situation era' took note of the 'environment', 'social status period' and the 'socio-technical period'. After this era came the contingency era led by Vroom and Fiedler to show that there was no universal form of leadership but leadership was dependent on factors like personality, situation and influence. The sixth phase was the 'Transaction phase' which emphasized on role differentiation and social interaction. Then, came the 'Role Development Period', followed by the 'Culture era' also followed by the 'Transformational' era. The transformational era is all about the building of positive expectations. This could be the latest perception of leadership but the development on the concept of leadership continues, making leadership an elusive concept, controversial and very difficult to define. Reading any of the definitions given should thus be understood into the context of time. A researcher who believes in the attribute era of leadership will define leadership with an emphasis on exemplary behaviour whereas a researcher whose view point is on the contingency approach will show that emphasis in his or her definition. It is in this light that a few definitions of leadership will be analysed.

John Gardner in Sadler (2003:5) defines leadership as 'the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or a leadership team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers'. The emphasis in this definition is on the leader who has to direct his/her followers towards attainment of goals. The performance of the organisation will in this case be linked to the quality of its leadership. The success and downfall of a particular organisation will thus be linked to that one great man or woman who should create followership through influence. A leader is also a leader in this case because of the existence of followers whom he/she would have persuaded or influenced through his or her example to

pursue certain goals. Hence the application of the old Chinese proverb that, 'if anyone thinks they are leading, but has no one following them, they are merely taking a walk'. Gary Yuke in Sadler (2003) states that;

'leadership involves influencing task objectives and strategies, influencing commitment and compliance in task behaviour to achieve these objectives, influencing group maintenance and identification and influencing the culture of an organisation'.

Yuke brings another dimension of leadership as influence. To him leadership is complete when there is influence of task objectives, influence of commitment, influence of the group and influence of the culture of the organisation. Those are the four dimensions that have to be influenced if the organisation has to achieve its objectives. It is, however, not clear in this definition how one has to successfully influence his or her followers. Evans (1996:207) defines leadership as 'influence or the art, skill or process of influencing people to work towards the achievement of group or larger organisational goals'. Evans brings in 'art and skill' as a control of influence which is also a process. According to him followers have to be motivated to follow the leader. The leader should thus influence, persuade and inspire his followers. The element of art, shows that leadership is a highly creative activity (Landsberg, 2000). Successful leaders encourage the creativity and initiative of their followers through effective, supportive or coordinative behaviour. Domination is not a necessary skill of leadership, hence Coleman (1996) in Stone and Parker (2003:102) say: "Leadership is not domination but the art of persuading people to work towards a common goal". According to Coleman leaders need to employ a combination of professional, personal and political skills in order to persuade and influence others and should exhibit the ability to create and share the meaningful vision, each time motivating their followers and constantly improving the existing systems so that satisfaction with a prescribed status is non-existent. In other words in the leadership process the organisation is constantly changing with no established state of equilibration.

Walter F. Ulmer Jr brings in an interesting issue of leadership and formal positions and authority. According to Ulmer in Sadler (2003:5) leadership is,

"An activity and influence process in which an individual gains that trust and commitment of others and without reliance on formal position or authority moves the group to the accomplishment of one or more tasks".

One can thus conclude that leadership can be found in any levels of the organisation and one does not need to be in authority to lead but all the same, power of one kind or another is needed for one to successfully influence his

or her followers to perform their duties productively. Hence, Smith and Cronje (1997) conclude that,

"Power or the ability to influence the behaviour of others has nothing to do with a manager's position in the hierarchy and is not acquired through a title, or an entry in an organisational diagram. A leader has to earn it".

Once earned, this leader gets to be more influential than a manager who has all the authority vested upon him or her. Perhaps of great importance is also the fact that leadership should be understood as a process. According to Smith and Cronje (1997:278), "Leadership is the process of directing the behaviour of others towards the accomplishment of certain objectives". Defining leadership as a process facilitates the understanding of all group dynamics linked to achievement of objectives. It also facilitates the understanding of all the activities linked with information of plans and objectives and the necessary steps taken to achieve those objectives. The leadership process thus among other things would include activities like motivating people, giving orders, managing conflict, communication and managing resistance from followers. As a result, the leadership concept is widely encompassing thus remains an elusive concept for one to define specifically and precisely.

As a conclusion, one might choose to consider Smith and Cronje's definition of leadership as "influencing and directing the behaviour of individuals and groups in such a way that they work willingly to pursue objectives and goals of the organisation".

## DEFINING MANAGEMENT

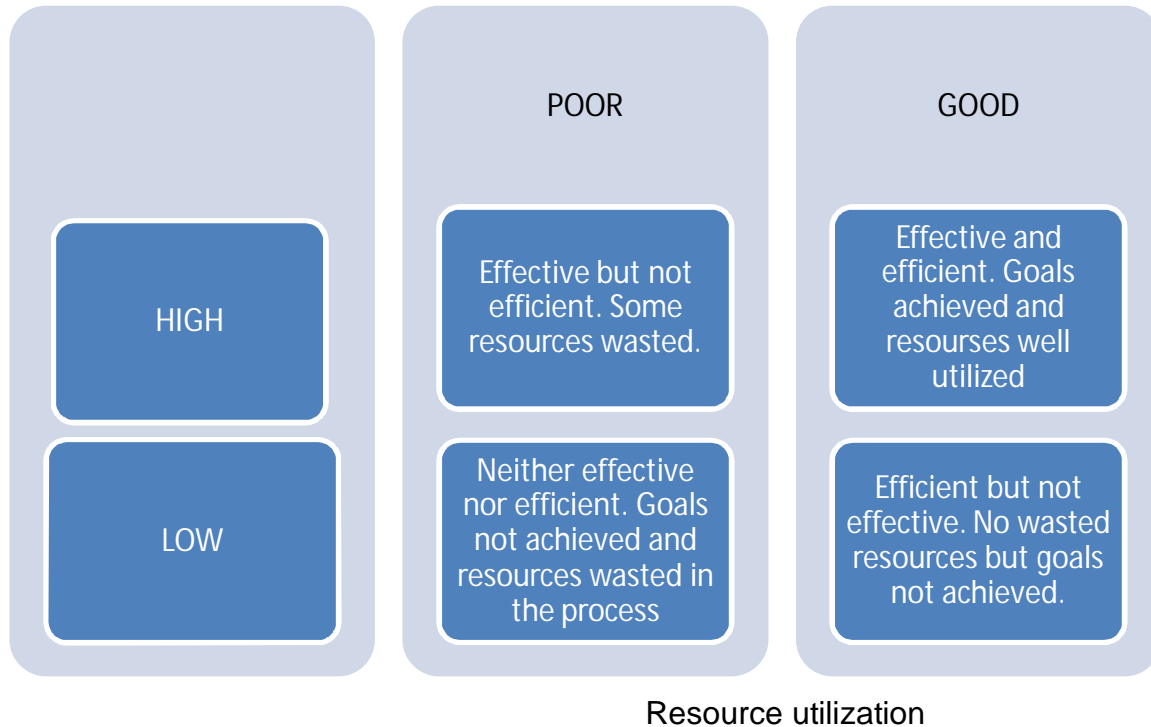
Bennis (1997) in his studies of management was quoted to have said, 'Managers do things right. Leaders do the right things'. This is because the definition of management anchors on control and maintenance of the status quo. Definitions of management have also evolved over the years with variations brought out by the context of the individual defining the term. Perhaps what is important to note is that, from which ever context, management remains a process involving a systematic series of activities to achieve set organisational goals.

Schermerhorn (1996:2) defines management as: planning, organizing, leading and controlling the use of resources to accomplish performance goals.'

Shed (2011:2) also defines management as: 'the organisational process that includes strategic planning, setting of objectives, managing resources, deploying the human and financial assets needed to achieve objectives and measuring results.'

The major activities identified in the above definitions include the following: establishing a plan, allocating both human and material resources, implementing the plan





**Figure 1.** Performance effectiveness, performance efficiency and managerial success. Source: Schermerhorn (1996:2).

and measuring the results. In the second definition, setting of objectives is explicitly identified. The measuring of results is thus done so as to ensure that the objectives initially set have been achieved and to ensure that the end product compares with the initial plan. Management thus emphasises on performance effectiveness and performance efficiency. Rukanda (1997:7) observes that 'efficiency is taken to mean using minimum resources to get maximum results on time and effectiveness to mean achieving set objectives on time.'

The measure of task output and goal accomplishment is essential as it shows that performance effectiveness meets the production targets in terms of quantity and quality. In schools, this could be daily, weekly, monthly, termly or yearly targets. Operating at minimum cost to achieve goals is an essential measure of performance efficiency. This can include equipment utilization and facilities maintenance, hence Schermerhorn (1996:2) says that 'true managerial success involves both performance effectiveness in goal attainment and performance.'

It is therefore the duty of the head as a manager to ensure that set objectives are met with minimal use of resources. This does not mean that reduction of material to produce less qualitative product but it means 'precise and appropriate' use of resources during the implementation process so as to provide quality goods at less cost. Management thus relies on set rules and regulations that are in some cases based on empirical

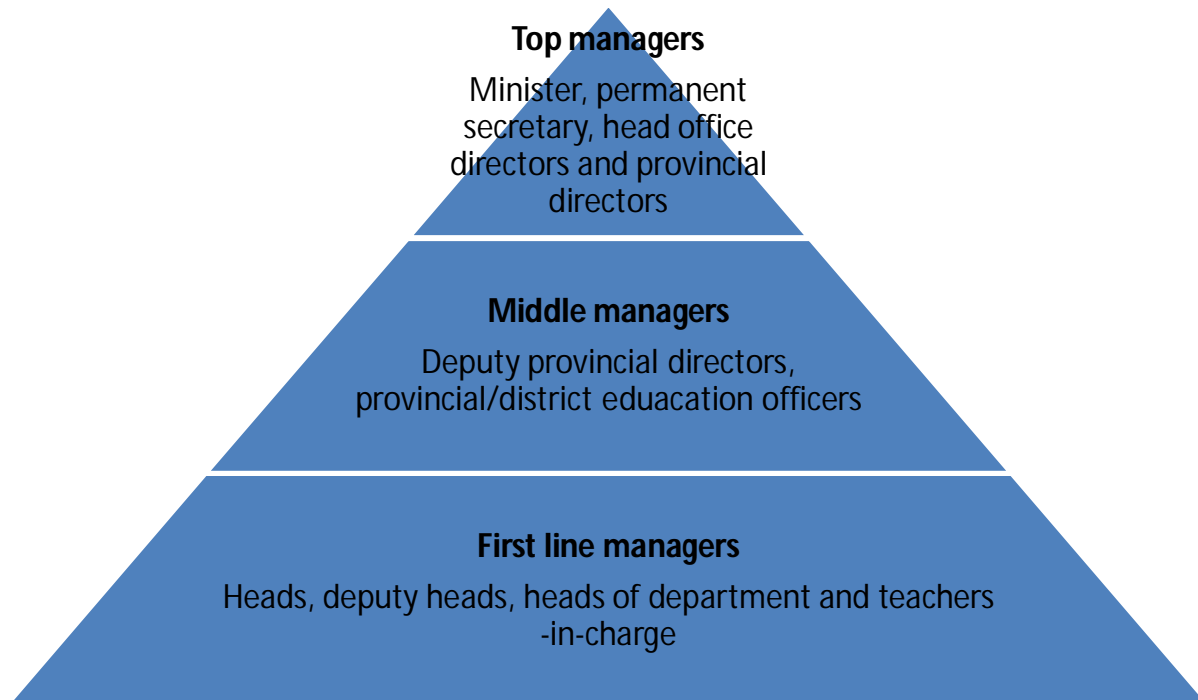
evidence to accomplish the assigned tasks. This can be explained from Figure 1.

The ideal situation in management would be high goal attainment and good resource management because only through such a situation is high productivity achieved. Hence, Shead (2011:3) defines management as 'effective utilization and co-ordination of resources such as capital, plant materials and labour to achieve defined objectives with maximum efficiency.' Management cannot be defined without emphasizing on effectiveness and efficiency. The whole process has to be adhered to by the manager so that the organisational objectives are met.

The managerial process includes four functions of management namely: planning, controlling, leading, and organising. Planning is about setting performance objectives and organizing is about arranging both tasks and people and other resources in order to accomplish set goals.

#### **THE PLACE OF THE HEAD IN THE EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT HIERARCHY**

The management hierarchy usually has three levels. These are: top managers, middle managers and first line managers. Top managers are the ones who set high level organisational objectives. These comprise chief executives, the company president and vice president. In



**Figure 2.** Management pyramid. Source: Mapolisa et al. (2006:6).

the ministry of education, these could therefore be taken to include the minister and head office personnel. Middle managers report to the top managers and in the ministry of education. These are members of staff at regional offices headed by the provincial director. First line managers are at the operations level pursuing short term organisational objectives. This could be understood through studying Figure 2.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

It gets to be essential, in the study of leadership, for one to understand the relationship between leadership and management. Perhaps for one to understand that relationship much clearer is for one to start by realising the four management functions of planning, organising, controlling and leading. If leading is one of the management functions, it therefore means that management is broader than leadership. John Kotter in Robbins (1993) argues that leadership is different from management but for different reasons. According to Kotter, management is about coping with complexity, dealing with all functions of management including leading, whereas leadership is about coping with change. Leadership focuses on developing a vision about the future. The leaders focus on the long term, the horizon, take risks, want to do the right things and thus appeal to both emotion and reason, rely on trust, inspire, innovate, urging people to a new vision and uses personal influence (Landsberg, 2009). Management on the other

hand focuses on the present, seeking to maintain order and to do the right things, contains risks through appealing to reason and targeting efficiency. John Kotter thus argues that both strong leadership and strong management are needed in organisations if the organisations have to reach their optimal effectiveness. Smith and Cronje (1997:287) observe that:

“Leadership involves bringing about change envisioning a new future for the organisation and impassioning people to commit and dedicate themselves to the new directions. Management on the other hand is more directed to maintaining status quo, albeit very effectively and availing the sustained effort needed to maintain new directions. It has flavour bureaucracy, system and procedure”.

The point being emphasized here is that managers will lead their organisations to greater heights if they are good leaders. However, studies have observed that not all managers are good leaders and as a result Kotter observes that most organisations underperform because they are over-managed and under-led; hence, leadership is thus studied so that managers are assisted and turned into leaders, thereby becoming better managers in the process. Hence, Boulding in Georgiades and MacDonell (1998:75) states:

“The greatest need for leadership is in the dark... it is when the system is changing so rapidly ... the old prescriptions and old wisdoms can only lead to

**Table 1.** John Kotter's summary of the two concepts of leadership and management.

Leadership	Management
Establishes direction through creation of a vision	Involves planning and budgeting to meet medium and short targets
Aligns people into the vision-making them accept and line up in the new direction	Establishes steps to reach the medium targets and allocates the resources
Motivates people by appealing to the very basic but often untapped human needs, values and emotions	Organising- staffing the jobs and delegating responsibility and establishing systems to monitor implementation
Inspires people	Controlling and problem solving, monitoring results

Source: Kennedy (2007:167).

catastrophe and leadership is necessary to call people to the strangeness of the new world that is being born."

The entire points rose in the discussion of leadership and management, can be summarised in Table 1.

## SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Schools can be said to be pure service providers on one hand and producers of products on the other hand. Services are intangible acts whilst products are tangible things that one can handle and drop (Davis et al., 2003). Considering that the school services, the community educating the community's children, the school can be said to be a service provider; yet if one considers the fact that pupils come out as an output from the school then schools can be said to be product producers. The pupil can be a client or customer accessing a service from the school while at the same time the same pupil gets to be the end product. This makes the school a special type of organisation whose success is measured by both the interaction during the service and the end product. Leadership thus needs to ensure both immediate customer satisfaction and long term reception of the goods/products both as an outcome and as an output. Hence, Nelson et al. (1996:337) reiterate the fact that "schools are complex institutions that seek to maximize student achievement and well being".

Whilst the achievement in terms of examination results can be immediate, the well being and school outcome could be measured in the long run. Parents in the long run look back and view the long term benefits from the school through making an analysis of either positive or negative future roles exhibited by the former school's students. It is on this line that parents then demand accountability from the head expecting him to manage and lead the whole school community into measurable success. The parents demand to see the head's control over both the teachers and the pupils. This is because the community sees the quality of both the teaching and

learning being based on the effect the teacher has on the pupils learning experiences. As a result of this, each school gets to be a unique entity whose demands vary according to the community values and the type of the head leading the school. How the head influences both the culture and the structure of the school is seen to affect the schools' efficiency and effectiveness.

A school, therefore, is a special type of organisation. Like all organisations, it is made up of individuals set to achieve specific objectives. Activities are grouped into departments and sub-departments and arranged in a specific order. It is this arrangement that establishes the authority in the school set up. The departments and sub-departments are all linked together through the existence of the school leadership. The school leadership comes in form of the head of school, the deputy head, teacher in charge, head of department or the teacher in the classroom. Despite the number of persons in the school leadership team, the head of each school remains accountable to the authorities and the community on the day to day running of the school.

Like any organisation, the purpose of the school is to make sure that its main objectives are met. The school head is responsible for making sure that the set objectives are met. How the school objectives are met has led to the main thrust of the head's function to evolve from administration, management into leadership hence the reference of the head as an instructional leader. The term 'school leadership' has been widely used in the 20<sup>th</sup> century where higher levels of pupil achievement has come to be the main emphasis in the existence of schools. Hence, Rukanda et al. (1997:3) states:

"Let it be noted that schools exist primarily to give instruction to its pupils and if it fails in this regard then it fails to justify its existence. The role of the head as an instructional leader should therefore take precedence over others".

Schools are thus expected to move with the changing times to adapt to the demands of the current context. Growth and improvement has to be observed within the

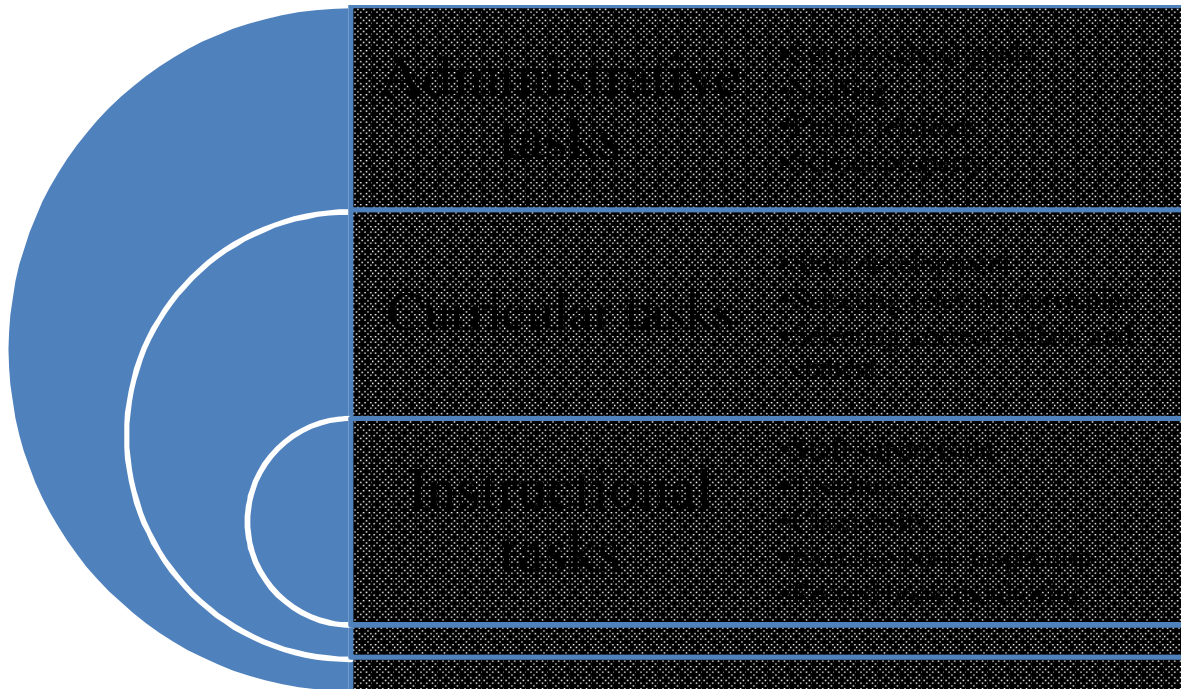


Figure 3. School leadership tasks.

institution if the school has to meet its main objectives. Both material and human growth anchors on the attentive leadership. The ever alert leadership adapts quickly to change as a way of facing new challenges. Previously, the emphasis of school leadership was on management and administration. In those years, the main focus was therefore on the maintenance of the status quo in order to achieve objectives. The head was expected to control, monitor and supervise operations within the organisation in order to achieve set objectives. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the monitoring and supervision became supporting roles and dynamism and pro-activity became the key roles. The new functions are therefore opposed to stability and conformity to the status quo but based on the head's convictions about the education of the particular school in the near future. The head thus has to be adaptable to the demands of the environment in a way that brings forth tangible results both in terms of the output and the outcomes.

The leadership function of the head is infused in the three main tasks done by the head. The three major tasks are the administrative tasks, the curricular tasks and the instructional tasks and these tasks are shown in Figure 3. A successful leader will be able to perform these tasks in a way that exhibits future meaning in them. Administrative tasks to a school leader would not be only about securing resources, setting standards and organising for instruction but would go beyond to include how leadership does that function. Who is involved? What targets are set? What resources are to be used? In the same way, curricular tasks would not be about

providing information on curricular but mainly about how and for what purpose. All schools compile instructional plans and schemes but effective leadership goes further into ensuring that the purpose for which the plans are set is achieved. It is in this light that Whitaker (1997:151) identifies four areas of strategic interaction that would lead a school to greater heights. The four identified areas are being a 'resource provider', 'instructional resource', a communicator and being a visible presence. Resource provision is attained through acknowledging the fact that the teachers are the greatest resource in the school. This is done through creating a community that works together sharing ideas and acknowledging each other's worth. Communication thus becomes the key factor. Feedback has to be provided and positive attitudes and beliefs entrenched through open channels of communication.

Added to the areas identified above, an effective school leader also involves members of staff in decision making. The decision making of the school forms the core and foundation on which the school is anchored. Decision making brings forth the mission and the vision of the school through sound strategic planning. The whole school reasons together on how the school objectives are to be met against the available resources. Once the whole school is used in the strategic planning it gets to be easy to sell the school ideas to the outside community. Conflicts are also resolved early amongst staff members because one major reason why there are conflicts in the organisation is because of disagreements over super-ordinate objectives and unfair distribution of resources. On the overall, working together creates positive



environment and climate that is conducive towards the achievement of set objectives. The climate will be positive to both working and learning and as a result organisational objectives will be achieved.

The participative approach practised by the school leadership creates a sense of ownership to ideas created. Because everyone was involved in the creation of ideas, positive relationships are therefore created. The positive relationships show support and consideration of divergent views from the members of staff. But for all these to succeed, it starts with the leadership that has a dedication towards the objectives of the school. This dedication is supported by the head's insight into the future. How does the head see the school the next five years? Hence, the emphasis on the heads' ability to adopt new policies into the school's existing programme so that a new product, unique to a particular school emerges. When a new policy arises, successful schools will be those with well calculating leaders that will infuse new policies with skill and creativity into the school's existing plan instead of being inflexible secure and satisfied about the original norm. In other words the new order should not come as a threat but as an opportunity to face future challenges, and as a result the head displays high expectations on the results. The school head is challenged to transform a common government school into a unique and special school. The question is discovering what works for the school in given times, how best the change can be interpreted, sold and assimilated into the school norms without disturbing the school harmony of business.

### Professional tasks of a school head

A successful school leader does all the leadership tasks above and these leadership tasks have been summarized in Figure 3.

### INDICATORS OF AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL

There are quite a number of items that can determine the effectiveness of a school. These indicators could be immediate or long term. Some of the immediate indicators could include the following:

- (a) Good management practices
- (b) High academic achievement
- (c) Effective monitoring of student progress
- (d) Instructional improvement
- (e) Clear goals and objectives
- (f) Safe and tidy environment

Above these summarized indicators, studies, in England, commissioned by the Specialist School Trust and conducted by James Tooley and Andy Towes and the other by Peter Rudd revealed the following common

qualities of excellence in high performing schools (Taylor and Ryan, 2005:3):

- (a) A good leadership team of a head teacher, heads of department and governing body.
- (b) Ability to attract and retain teachers.
- (c) Focus on basics such as literacy and numeracy.
- (d) The setting of targets and use of data to monitor progress.
- (e) Discipline and order.
- (f) Curriculum innovation.
- (g) Extensive use of information communication technology (ICT).
- (h) Consideration of longer day and non traditional term dates
- (i) Focus on individual learning to create an ethos of achievement for all.
- (j) The support of parents and the use of older students as mentors.

It thus gets to be interesting to find out a head who would meet the points raised above. Would it be a head with leadership qualities or the one with a management orientation? Hence, the study was carried out.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research study used qualitative research methodology. In order to analyse and study themes in detail, phenomenological research paradigm of qualitative research methodology was used. The paradigm was suitable for this research as it studies human experience in its own natural existence. The occurrences in the school leadership were described from their own setting and context. As a result, direct experiences were described and the existing reality socially constructed (Leedy, 1997; Thomas and Nelson, 2001; Mouton, 2004).

A case study method was used in this research. The sample was a total of 60 teachers drawn from a total of 762 teachers in government secondary schools of Bulawayo. Because the study involved multiple variables, multiple sources of information were therefore used. A variety of data collection procedures were used thereby giving the 'greater validity' (Burns and Grove, 2001:545). Use of a variety of data collection techniques facilitated data triangulation. Data was collected in this study through the use of document analysis, observation, interviews and focus group discussions (Tuckman, 1994; Haralambos and Holborn, 1990).

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### Selection of school heads

The interviews of District Education officers, Deputy Provincial Directors and the Provincial director and an analysis of selection documents revealed that all heads of schools in the Bulawayo district were first degree holders and in some cases holders of a Masters Degree. An administrative degree was enough for O' level secondary schools but a first degree in any of the subjects offered in the secondary school curriculum was

a prerequisite for A' level secondary schools. All had to have a teacher qualification from a recognized university either as a Diploma/Certificate in Education or as a Post Graduate diploma/certificate in education. Graduate holders without a teacher qualification were not considered during any selection process for headship. The selection was done on free competition basis with three applicants short listed per post. A first degree was thus a pre-requisite and the applicants were to have no misconduct charge. Performance approval forms were used in the selection process and all applicants were to have a score that was above a 3.

During the selection interviews, the interviewers revealed that it was the applicant who displayed full knowledge of the job that got the post. The applicant would display professional knowledge as he/she would have been a deputy head before, giving the applicant the needed professional experience and the knowledge of school administration. The interviews revealed that the key qualities that the applicants were expected to display during their interviews were: initiative, intelligence, maturity, creativity, innovativeness, communicator, articulacy, assertiveness and firmness amongst many others. Whilst some key informants felt that rural experience was an essential experience, others were of the view that the applicant could actually be a head in the urban situation after only graduating from being a deputy head in the urban schools; without necessarily having the rural experience. These were the key informants who felt that a leader needed to grow and mature in a certain environment over time if he/she had to perform well. One can thus conclude that heads of the Bulawayo Government secondary schools had higher academic qualifications and in most cases, higher than the average people in their society. They were therefore expected to be intelligent (Lulee, 2011), especially considering that they were also leading a group of educators.

Placed in any of the schools in the city, the head was, therefore, expected to excel, especially after going through the competitive selection process. The provincial office revealed that the appointed head was expected to produce good results, to have good public relations with the community, and ever remain bold and focused. Whilst all schools were governed by national government policy, the implementation of the policy was to reveal the innovativeness of the head. The Provincial Director reiterated the fact that policy merely gave guidelines but the "how" depended on the head. According to the Provincial Director, "policy was not meant to kill individual flair." Policy merely provided framework within which the school would operate, under the leadership of the head as the driver. As revealed earlier on this study, the secondary school curriculum in Zimbabwe offered about 38 subjects at O' level. The selection of the subjects, of course guided by the Policy circular No P77 of 2006 for two pathway education structure in Zimbabwe, would show the head's initiative as he/she explored both the

local and national environment in terms of relevance and future use. All the policy provided was a framework of operation but the selection would depend on the head's understanding of the expectations of the surrounding tertiary institutions and the industry at large. From the interviews carried out, therefore, it was revealed that after the meticulous selection, the head was not placed in the school just to maintain and nurse policy but to create a unique school under the framework of the given policies.

### Response to change

The focus group discussions revealed that the head was needed in education as an answer to the dynamic and turbulent environment. The discussions revealed that with the ever changing times it was the flexible head that would be able to identify strategies that would take advantage of the changing environment; the strategies that would go in line with the globalization trends. These are the trends which get to be reflected in curriculum choice of particular schools. The interview of the Provincial Education Director, Bulawayo, did reveal that whilst they were above thirty eight subjects on offer in Zimbabwean secondary schools, the skill of the head was exhibited in the way he or she selected the subjects for the school curriculum. The subjects would be those that would, whilst meeting the global trends, also satisfy the needs of the community. In support of this, Rasing (2011:1) observes that the head needs "to work toward making schools responsive to the problems and challenges of the contemporary world". This is particularly so as "technology and change become the buzzword of this new decade".

Education is about relevance and quality so that the customer needs are met. It was interesting to note that some heads believe that their schools were so governed by national policies that they could not be tailor made to suit their customers. This contradicts views by provincial officers who believed that how the head ran the school was unique to the school and its immediate customers. Policies were merely guidelines and not blinkers.

The focus group revealed that such leaders were needed to set the pace in schools through grabbing opportunities as soon as they emerged thereby creating competitive advantage within their schools. This could come by through informed plans and through working as a solid team. The head was also observed not to always delegate and monitor but to work with the teachers so that all workers achieved full ownership of programmes and objectives. Hence, the head was also needed to be able to successfully align members of staff with their expertise. As a result of this the head was able to influence staff towards achieving objectives, not by commanding but through practical action sessions with all stakeholders. This was supported by literature review which revealed that "an administrator cannot lead anyone

anywhere if he or she cannot enrol others in the school's shared vision and purpose" (Capozzoli 2009:1). Once stakeholders are allowed to enrol, they willingly commit to all steps that would move the school towards success. Thus, head that would facilitate such enrolments were needed if schools are to excel.

### Motivation

Given the strategic importance of working as a team, focus group discussions also revealed that it was of great importance that schools enhance motivation and morale amongst members of staff. Schools, therefore, needed a head that would motivate his or her staff towards achievement of goals. When the issue of motivation was teased out with the members so as to establish how the motivation would be achieved, the teachers and officers identified the following strategies:

- (a) Aligning staff members with their expertise.
- (b) Positive competition amongst members.
- (c) Seeking to satisfy the needs of all staff members.

Literature revealed that motivation would be accomplished if teachers were given a role to solve "non-routine school improvement problems... avoiding commitment to preconceived solutions and narrowly based perspectives" Leithwood (1992) in Cashin et al. (2000).

Followers can learn through allocated tasks especially if the tasks encourage creativity. Focus groups revealed that most teachers were eager to be assigned tasks so that they grow and mature as fruitful members of the organization. The job assignments should be meaningful and challenging so that the followers are motivated towards action. Once motivated, followers will achieve more with minimal effort (Simic 1998).

### The school vision and mission

One interviewee revealed that a head should have hands that were 'prepared to get dirty'. This was to express the view that organizational development would not come by through theory and ideas but through action as well. It was observed that all schools displayed their vision, mission and core values at their reception areas. Whilst these were innovative and well crafted, the head would go beyond this and turn all the ideas into action.

Excelling heads are not satisfied with just the average or just enough but are willing to go an extra mile in whatever activities are done. They go beyond the call of duty as revealed in the interviews. These are the schools that articulate their visions and missions clearly, calling for action when others talk and always having a smarter ways of doing things. Such schools get to be candidates for the Secretary Event award, "the highest award that

the Ministry gives in recognition of the sterling work that some schools are doing" (Principal Director's circular minute 23 of 2010).

The interviews revealed that the displayed school missions and visions together with objectives had to be reviewed every time for these to remain relevant and not mere decorative papers. Heads were thus expected to do very well on the reviewing of operations. What could vary could be the interval but the revision principle needed to be strongly implemented by all schools.

This could be supported by the number of teachers who felt that their opinions mattered in the organization. It is when the head is a good listener that he/she gets different opinions and ideas from the members of staff towards building meaningful strategies and solutions to problems. Hence the Provincial Director emphasized the fact that an ideal head should have "big ears" to listen well.

### Community involvement

Focus groups revealed that community support and involvement was the key to school success. Schools that have worked well with School Development Committees have achieved great heights yet those that have failed are always in the paper for the wrong reasons like failing to distribute incentives or buying a school truck without consultations. These would be the symptoms of a heads failure to convince stakeholders so that they buy his/her idea.

### Self assessment and head's support

Honesty could also be an observed behaviour through one accepting responsibility for mistakes. The head is, therefore, not always pointing fingers but gives an honest assessment of self.

It was interesting to note that one key informant revealed that heads with degrees in technical subjects performed better on the general understanding of the greater picture of operation and needs of different subjects. Some teachers in the open ended questions revealed that they would seek to change the leadership's perception about their subjects. This was an indication that some heads did not understand how different areas operated.

Heads were also viewed to be having a skills gap in creating a climate where work was enjoyable. This could be the reason why some teachers described their relationship with leaders to be "non-existent", "master servant", "purely authoritative", "distant", "strained" and "poor".

It is these teachers who indicated that what they would change in the organizations would be the leadership. Interviews revealed that a successful school leadership is one who had a quick smile and always ready to give

direction and motivation.

### Communication

Interviews revealed that schools failed to achieve their objectives because of poor communication and an excelling head was described as one who had clear lines of communication with the teachers, pupils, parents and the regional office. Most teachers when asked what they would like to change in their organization, identified communication thereby endorsing the need for effective communication in organizations. The communication would perhaps mean the change in the organisational structure since it is the structure that promotes communication.

### Teachers' needs

The heads on the other hand revealed that they could not influence people to address their needs because the needs were money related. However, it was surprising that when teachers were asked about what they would change in organizations, a very insignificant number of teachers cited remuneration. This shows that there are much greater needs to be addressed than remuneration if teachers have to perform well. These could also be analysed through the things that teachers said they liked about their jobs.

Teachers revealed that they enjoyed interacting with the pupils and seeing them improve, graduate and become worthwhile citizens. Some of the issues identified included freedom of creativity and innovation, continual sharpening of one's mind, free and fair environment, making decisions, the unstressful nature of the job, the working hours and the long holidays. Beyond remuneration, the teacher's needs could be derived from these activities and infringing with these items above would produce a de-motivated teacher.

With the high staff turnover in the schools, as observed earlier on in the description of the case, the interviewees felt that it was important to induct new employees with speed. The interviewees revealed that it was those schools that practiced a smooth relay system in teaching and other related duties which remained successful over the years. It is the duty of the head to facilitate the smooth transition of roles through induction and spelling out clearly what was expected from the members.

### Attributes of a head

The respondents in both focus group discussions and interviews were therefore clear on the attributes they needed to see in a school head. The following is a list of the attributes as endorsed by all groups: Intelligence, Humility, Co-operative, Self empowered, Approachable,

Focused, Updated, Learning individual, Developer of co-workers, Initiative, Expertise, Innovative, Disciplined, Involvement of stakeholders, Transparent.

It was interesting to note that the attributes identified were amongst the attributes identified by researchers Bass and Avolio in Simic (1998) and Bennis and Nurus in Georgiades and McDonnell (1998).

If these are the attributes, who are they aligned with? A leader, a manager, or both?

### CONCLUSIONS

The study revealed that management skills were needed in a head to facilitate effective control of resources and duties amongst staff members. This came with monitoring and supervision of personnel.

The leadership skills on the other hand created the uniqueness of a school and these skills were identified in the head's willingness to go an extra mile in issues of curriculum perception, customer satisfaction and relationship creation.

From the study, it was therefore evident that a head of school had to go beyond being a manager into being a leader who would take the school into greater heights through:

- (i) Community involvement;
- (ii) Teacher motivation; and
- (iii) a relevant and dynamic vision and mission to embrace change.

Management skills were needed in a head to facilitate effective control of resources and school duties amongst members of staff.

Teachers were willing to go beyond their call of duty but that opportunity was not always availed to them.

Community involvement was essential in school management. A head thus needed to be able to work amicably with the community.

A school vision needed to be shared from its initial stages so as to facilitate productive implementation.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All government schools are anchored on national policy and government regulations. All heads of school should be well versed with these operational rules hence heads to be clearly inducted into the management skills so that they clearly master their everyday operations.
2. Heads of schools need to be educated on the extent to which they can operate within the confines of the rules so that they gain confidence to go beyond the call of duty and thereby create unique schools which whilst guided by policy excel in a unique way.
3. It is the head who is a manager with leadership skills and leadership attributes who would excel in operation.



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