

Management and Administration in Education: What do school heads do? A focus on primary school heads in one district in Zimbabwe.

By

Wellington Samkange

Zimbabwe Open University, P.O. Box MP 1119, Mount Pleasant, Harare, Zimbabwe

Abstract

A study was conducted in twenty primary schools in Chegutu Education District of Zimbabwe. The purpose of the study was to establish the perceptions of primary school heads on administration and management of schools in Zimbabwe. It further sought to establish the extent to which primary school heads were conversant with their duties and responsibilities and whether they viewed themselves as either school administrators or school managers or both. The study used the qualitative research methodology. Data was collected through the use of open-ended questionnaires, interviews and document analysis. The study used purposive sampling and came up with twenty schools whose school heads became respondents. Among other things the study indicated that there was no clear distinction between administration and management among the school heads. At the same time, it was noted that administrative responsibilities tended to consume school heads' time to the extent of ignoring management functions and instructional leadership roles. It was also noted that allocating a school head a class compromised pupils' learning as the school heads were often away from the station on school business. It was also noted that some school heads tended to over-burden themselves with responsibilities as they were reluctant to delegate duties. In instances they delegated, they tended to delegate peripheral responsibilities. The study recommends that the roles of administrator and manager be performed by two different people in schools. It further recommends that school heads should not be allocated classes or required to teach specific number of periods as such classes tended to suffer in the absence of the school head on school administrative and management business.

Keywords: *Administration; management; school head; instructional leader; function; periods.*

1. Introduction and Background to the study

Educational management and educational administration have become terms that are at times used synonymously. In most of the cases they are used to refer to what school heads and principals of schools do in their daily routine at schools. However, in other instances the terms have been used to denote two different functions that are most likely to be performed by two different offices, thus an administrator and a manager. The question we have to answer with regards to the two concepts is: Do these two play the same roles and perform the same functions within an organization? Westhuizen (1991) noted that total confusion surrounds the use of the two concepts.

Schools in Zimbabwe, regardless of whether they are government or non-government, have the school head as the chief executive officer. They are employed by the government, except in cases of private schools. They have to ensure that government regulations are adhered to at the same time managing both human and material resources at the school. As such, the role of the school head involves performing administrative and management functions. Among other duties and responsibilities the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture; Vacancy Announcement No. 8 of 2005 states the duties and responsibilities of a school head as follows:

- To be a link between the school, the district office, the community and the general public;
- To ensure that school buildings, furniture, equipment and other facilities are maintained in good state of repair;
- To ensure correct interpretation and implementation of curriculum and syllabi;
- To assess teachers' performance regularly and writing reports as may be required;
- To evaluate the curricular objectives as well as school projects;
- To ensure that official records are kept up-to-date;

Management and Administration in Education: What do school heads do? A focus on primary school heads in one district in Zimbabwe.

- To implement performance management in the school;
- To ensure adherence to regulations, procedures and rules by all staff members.

The duties and responsibilities noted above appear to be a cocktail of administrative functions and management functions. These were expected to be performed by all school heads, regardless of whether they were at primary school or secondary school. In addition to the administrative and management functions noted above, the school head was supposed to be an instructional leader. In some instances, the school head was assisted by School Development Committees and School Development Associations (Chikoko, 2007). These had been formed with the view of not only assisting the school heads with school governance matters, but as a democratization gesture within the education system, as well.

In addition to performing the functions already alluded to, the responsibilities of the school head correspondingly increased with the decentralization of education functions in Zimbabwe. Faced with such additional tasks, the decentralization of education functions if not well handled would end up with the negative effect of overburdening school heads in addition to their job descriptions. The possibility of them neglecting their administrative functions and management functions remained very high.

In order to build capacity within schools, the government of Zimbabwe embarked on a number of programmes aimed at developing both the administrative skills and management skills of school heads. First were the modules on management and administration for school heads. Another attempt to improve the management and administrative skills of school heads was the mandatory requirement that by 1984 school heads in Zimbabwe had to have 5 Ordinary level subjects in addition to a teaching qualification. It was envisaged that an improvement in educational qualifications would enhance their understanding of administration and management of schools. Furthermore, senior teachers and school heads had to go for in-service training to up-grade their qualifications. Such work-shops and in-service training included modules ran by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with UNESCO (Chivore, 1995). In 1993, the Better Schools Programme was launched. The aim of the programme was to assist with the development of administrative and management skills among teachers and school heads. Within the same context, the government of Zimbabwe launched the Bachelor of Education in Educational Administration, Planning and Policy Studies in 1993 with the University of Zimbabwe. This was a degree programme specifically for school heads, which aimed at equipping them with educational administrative and management skills. Despite all these efforts reports indicate that there is an increase in cases of financial mismanagement. Recent press reports in Zimbabwe show that more than 200 school heads were facing charges involving misappropriation of school funds and charging fees without approval (The Sunday Mail, 6 January, 2013). In one case four school heads in Gutu District of Zimbabwe were charged of fraud and jailed for 18 months and one head in Bikita District was reported to be on the run after embezzling US\$14 000 from his school. On a related case, some school heads were accused of not following normal procedures when buying school items.

Statement of the problem

The problem affecting the administration and management of schools has raised concerns in different circles. Among other concerns is whether school heads are not over-burdened by duties and responsibilities that require the expertise of two different people. The problem is therefore expressed in question form:

- Are school heads aware of their administrative responsibilities and management functions?
- Are school heads more of managers than administrators?

Rationale of the study

There are suggestions that school heads appear to lack clarity in terms of which functions constitute administration and which constitute management. This has contributed to some school heads stressing and over-emphasizing the importance of one at the expense of the other. The study therefore sought to

examine school heads' perceptions and views about their roles in educational administration and management at their respective schools. Furthermore, it sought to establish school heads' understanding of their responsibilities in school administration and management.

Theoretical Framework

In examining the two concepts administration and management the study sought to identify the duties and responsibilities of school heads and the extent to which they relate to the running of educational institutions. Circulars from the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture show a mix between administration and management. For example, Vacancy Announcement: Provincial Education Director's Vacancy Circular Minute No. 1 of 2006: Mashonaland West Province states the duties and responsibilities of a school head. In addition to that, it notes that the school head is accountable or reports to the District Education Officer. The duties and responsibilities stated in the vacancy circular included the following:

- Design and provision of relevant/suitable curriculum;
- Management of financial and material resources;
- Management of enrolment, transfers, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions of students;
- Control of Teacher establishment;
- Determination of School mission, goals and objectives;
- Examination administration;
- Supervision and staff development of personnel;
- Public relations and communication with stakeholders;
- Submitting returns as and when required;
- Interpretation and implementation of Policy Circulars.

The above duties and responsibilities are just a sample of some of the duties and responsibilities that school heads were expected to perform in the capacities as school administrators and managers. If we were to use the classification of administration as given by Westhuizen (1991) then administration could be explained using the functional perspective, the structural perspective and administrative work. In this regard, in the above example four aspects appear to fit into these different forms of administration. These are administration of examinations, design and provision of relevant and suitable curriculum, interpretation and implementation of Policy Circulars and submitting of returns when required.

The other duties and responsibilities appear to fit well into Everard, Morris and Wilson (2004)'s description of management. They view management as involving setting direction, planning for goal achievement, efficient and effective organization of resources and controlling the process so as to improve standards. In this regard, the rest of the duties and responsibilities would fall into Everard et al (2004)'s description of the management function of school heads. The management functions of the school head would therefore involve management of material and human resources, public relations and communication, supervision and staff development of personnel and determination of school mission, goals and objectives. From the duties and responsibilities of a school head presented above and the arguments by Everard et al (2004) it can be noted that a school head in Zimbabwe has to play both the administrative functions and management functions at school level.

There have been attempts to show the differences between administration and management in education. The major areas of differences appear to be more in the functions than the personnel executing the functions. Administration is viewed as a determinative function, whereas management is an executive function (<http://differencebetween.net/business/difference-management> and administration). Retrieved 14 November 2012. The decisions that management has to make are defined by the administration. The site further notes that key factors in administration are planning and organization and for management, the key factors are the motivation and controlling functions. They also differ in terms of skills and qualities required in the personnel. Whilst an administrator relies on administrative qualities, a manager requires technical abilities and human relations management skills (ibid).

The differences in the use of the terms are at times organization related. In that regard administrators are normally found in government and educational organizations, whereas managers are found in business enterprises. Whilst this might be true in some instances, it does not explain modern developments in some educational institutions such as universities where we can clearly define and distinguish between managers and administrators. For instance, it is common in universities in developing countries to have the posts of administrators and managers, a case in point being universities in Zimbabwe and South Africa. However, what is important to note is that these views on management and administration appear to concur with the distinctions noted by Everard et. al (2004).

Musaazi (1982: 24) notes that administration “is crucial for maintaining and expanding the relevance, effectiveness and productivity of complex institutions such as government departments, prisons, school systems, colleges, universities and so on” This view appears to support the notion that administration is mainly found in government institutions. Within this view, administration is seen as providing direction and prioritizing the means of achieving set goals. Musaazi attempts to explain administration in terms of the science of administration. The science of administration according to him has evolved over decades and is in three stages. These are the classical organizational thought (1900-30); human relations approach (1930-50) and behavioural approach (1950- present) (ibid). These approaches have been based on the different management approaches developed over the years. In that regard, Musaazi’s perception of administration does not distinguish it from management. He uses the two terms synonymously in some respect. This view appears to have contributed to the dilemma that we find ourselves in modern day educational administration and management. This has contributed to the perception that these concepts mean the same and can be performed by one individual within an organization.

Despite this lack of clarification on the two concepts by Musaazi, we note some of the contributions that administration is expected to make in organizations. It has been noted that administration contributes to the operations of institutions in a number of ways. These include the following:

- Implementation of the decisions of the institution;
- Has a bearing on the results to be achieved and the means to achieve them;
- Contributes to organization climate and culture;
- Contributes to effectiveness in resource allocation and utilization;
- Provides a link between the human resource and material resource.

Despite the discourse around the two concepts, administration and management, there are key functions that both have to perform. For management, these functions include Planning, Organising, Staffing, Directing, Co-ordination, Reporting and Budgeting, code named POSDCORB. These are functions derived from Gulick and Urwick. Gulick and Urwick made an improvement to Henri Fayol’s five elements of management. These elements or functions of management have now been accepted as constituting the process of educational management in schools in Zimbabwe, if we were to consider the duties and responsibilities of the school head as noted in the vacancy circulars already alluded to. These functions of management include planning which involves setting objectives and defining courses of action; organizing which focuses on securing and arranging resources to meet objectives; leading which focuses on motivating staff for goal attainment and controlling which focuses on the continual analysis and measurement of actual performance in comparison with set standards (Boone & Kurtz, 1992).

On the other hand, the administrative functions are viewed as involving policy formulation, decision making, record keeping, implementation of rules and regulations that govern the organization. In addition to these Acero et. al (2000) identify the following functions of educational administration:

- Providing school supplies including textbooks and other teaching and learning materials;
- Assisting in curriculum instruction and the organization of an instructional programme;
- Keeping school records, accounts and reminding stakeholders of the aims and needs of the school;

- Budgeting for school requirements;
- Planning for new buildings.

The functions listed above are not exhaustive, but appear to succeed in emphasizing the point that the two concepts are indeed different and they do not necessarily mean the same. There may be a few functions that appear to criss-cross, for example budgeting, but that alone does not prove that the two concepts are synonymous. Acero et. al (2000) bring another aspect of educational administration, thus involvement and assisting curriculum instruction and organization of the instructional programme. This function appeared to support some of the roles and functions of the school head as expected by the Ministry of Education, Arts, Sport and Culture. For example, Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, Chegutu District Office: DEO's Circular No.of 2011 states that the core business of the school head is instructional leadership and that the teaching of learners remained central to the duties of a school head. The periods that the school heads had to teach were determined by the enrolment at the school. According to this circular, at a school with an enrolment of 960 pupils and above, the school head at a primary school had to teach five periods per week. At a school with 600-959 pupils the school head had to teach eight periods per week and at a school with 599 pupils and below the school head had to be in charge of a full class. Secondary school heads also had their teaching given according to the enrolment at the school as well. Like the allocation at primary school, the teaching load of the secondary school head was determined by the enrolment at the school. This tended to suggest that apart from the administrative and management duties, a school head had to teach and provide instructional leadership. This therefore meant that a school head in Zimbabwe had to be an administrator, manager and instructional leader. In cases where the responsible authorities and communities could not afford to employ a bursar, the school head ended up performing the duties of a school bursar.

Questions have been raised before on what school heads do all day. Studies by Lyons (1974) came up with a number of observations about how school heads spent their time. Lyons focused on the study of secondary school heads, and established the following about the activities of the secondary school heads:

- That secondary school heads spent most of their time doing routine office administration duties.
- That secondary school heads as per requirement; they spent most of their time teaching.
- That they spent time doing lesson preparations and marking exercise books.
- That the school head's day is punctuated by interruptions and unplanned events that are people-driven.

In addition to the above observations, Lyons (1974) noted that the school heads did not spend much time on educational policy and curricular matters. The observation was that such issues did not take centre stage in meetings. It should be noted that such activities form the major functions of school management. The study appears to demonstrate a focus mainly on the administrative functions at the detriment of of the management functions of the school head.

In a similar study by Clerkin (1985) in Hill (1989), it was observed that primary school heads' day was characterized by a number of things which included the following:

- Routine communication with teachers, pupils and parents;
- General school administration;
- Over-involvement with minor issues;
- Primary school heads' work was characterized by high intensity of tasks which were very often interrupted;

Furthermore, the school heads' focus on minor tasks demonstrated their unwillingness to delegate duties. Whilst two studies focused on different categories of school heads, thus secondary school heads and primary school heads there was a convergence when it came to the observations and findings. What stands out in both cases is that administrative functions appeared to dominate at the detriment of the

management functions. In addition to that, some school heads had problems with managing time and delegation of duties.

2. Research Methodology

The study used the qualitative research methodology. It was guided by the interpretivist paradigm. In order for us to understand social reality there is need to study the meanings and contexts that are created in social interaction (Flick, Von Kardorff and Steinke, 2004). The study was concerned with how school heads interpreted their roles in school administration and management. It used the case study design. Data was collected through open-ended questionnaires (questerviews), interviews and analysis of documents such as Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture circulars. The study purposively sampled twenty primary schools in Chegutu Education district of Zimbabwe. There are over one hundred primary schools in the district. These different types of schools can be classified into three categories. These are government schools, council schools, and church-related schools. The school heads in these twenty selected schools automatically became respondents in the study.

3. Discussion of findings

The twenty selected primary school heads responded to seven 'questerview' questions. The 'questerview' questions were supplemented by interviews to clarify some questions. The data was therefore collected through a combination of the open-ended questionnaire and follow up questions to the questionnaires as they were completed in the presence of the researcher. This provided the respondents the opportunity to expand and develop their responses. The sample comprised of twelve male school heads and eight female school heads, demonstrating gender imbalance in favour of males. The first question required the respondents to indicate the number of years they had been involved in education as either teachers or school heads. Most of the school heads had teaching experience that ranged from twenty years to thirty years. Only one school head had less than ten years teaching experience. Understandably, the school head was in acting capacity. This appeared to suggest that the respondents were well experienced in education matters, which came in handy when it came to discussing educational administration and management matters. Years in headship position ranged from two years to twenty years. These are years of experience that were found quite relevant in terms of understanding their job description and the distinctions between administration and management.

In terms of enrolment the smallest school had 435 pupils and the largest had 850 pupils. The enrolment was necessary to establish as this determined the number of periods the school head had to teach in a week. According to DEO's circular no. 3 of 2011, the enrolments indicated by the school heads warranted that some school heads teach full classes as they were a number of schools that had enrolments below 599 pupils. In schools that had between 600-959 pupils, as noted earlier the school heads had to teach 8 periods per week.

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they considered themselves as school administrators or school managers. Twelve of the school heads described themselves as school administrators, constituting sixty percent of the respondents. Six (30 percent) respondents indicated that they viewed their positions as more of school managers than school administrators and only two (10 percent) noted that they considered themselves as both school administrators and school managers. In most of the cases the respondents referred to themselves as the "administration" and not the "management". The responses demonstrated the mixed views that the school heads held about their positions. The way they viewed their positions appeared to influence their areas of emphasis as they executed their duties in their respective schools.

To find out if school heads focused more on administrative functions than management functions or vice-versa the respondents were asked to rank the eleven functions according to what they did most at their

schools. Out of these eleven functions five were management functions and the other six were administrative functions. The listed management functions were planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling. The administrative functions were attending meetings, keeping records, providing supplies and textbooks, assisting in curriculum instruction and teaching, communicating with stakeholders and implementing regulations.

In response to the above question eighteen (90 percent) school heads ranked planning as their number one function and only one (10 percent) school head chose directing as his number one function. Considering that most school heads perceived their roles as administrators there appeared to be a disconnection between what they considered themselves as and their major functions. It should be noted that the planning function is classified as a management function.

On the other functions, the second most ranked was the function of organizing. It was selected by at least 80 percent of the respondents. The other functions that were among the top in ranking by the respondents were directing, controlling, providing supplies and textbooks, assisting in curriculum instruction and teaching and staffing. The least ranked were attending meetings, keeping school records, communicating with stakeholders, and implementing regulations. It could be observed that all the least ranked functions in terms of the major activities performed by the school heads were under administrative functions. Whilst most school heads perceived their duties and responsibilities as those of an administrator, in essence they spent most of their time doing school management according to their responses.

Another question required the respondents to identify any two functions that they delegated the most. The functions that the school heads delegated the most were providing supplies and textbooks as indicated by 35 percent of the respondents, followed by keeping records with 30 percent, attending meetings (20 percent), organizing (10 percent), and lastly planning as indicated by 5 percent of the respondents. There appeared to be a link between the ranking of the functions and the choice of functions to delegate to lower levels of the school. The top three functions that the school heads delegated the most were providing supplies and textbooks, keeping records and attending meetings. This would appear to suggest that the school heads in most of the schools delegated those functions that they considered least important. In this regard this appeared to support research findings by Clerkin (1985) in Hill (1989) that school heads were generally reluctant to delegate tasks. In cases where they did delegate it was only minor tasks that they delegated. In some cases they over-involved themselves even in minor tasks.

As a way of examining the school heads' role as instructional leaders and the extent to which they spent time on curricular matters and teaching, they were asked to indicate the number of periods or lessons they taught in a week. This was done in relation to the stipulated regulations and requirements as noted in the circulars already referred to. In relation to this 40 percent of the respondents indicated that they did not teach an lessons or classes, 10 percent noted that they only taught once a week, 30 percent taught twelve times, 10 percent taught lessons seven times a week and another 10 percent taught lessons twenty times a week. From these responses it could be noted that the circular stipulating the number of periods a school head should teach in a week was not being implemented. The highest number of periods taught was only twenty per week and only ten percent of the school heads were taking this number of lessons in their schools. Even within the same context; these were schools with enrolments of less than 599 pupils and therefore had to take full classes. Full classes meant that they had to take at least forty periods in a week. As a follow up to the above question school heads were asked to comment on the number of periods they were required to teach. The school heads were in agreement that school administration and management functions did not leave them with time to take the lessons as stipulated in the circulars. For instance one school head had this to say, "The lessons required are too many as they leave me little time to supervise and monitor learning activities in the school". This was supported by all the school heads who noted that it was hard to attend to the required periods because of the busy schedule at the office. They also noted that there was no time to teach the lessons because the school head's schedule is always busy. They also

felt that assigning school heads classes compromised quality and standards in education as such classes were left unattended when school heads attended meetings or other administrative and management tasks.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study which sought to establish school heads perceptions on their role on school administration and management came up with a number of conclusions and recommendations. The study came up with the following conclusions:

- The concepts administration and management appeared to mean the same thing to most school heads as they described themselves as administrators and yet when asked to describe the major functions they performed at their schools they proceeded to identify management functions.
- The circulars stipulating the number of periods school heads were required to teach were not being implemented in all the twenty primary schools as noted from the responses of the school heads.
- There is still some confusion on the terms administration and management among most school heads in the study.
- School heads in the twenty primary schools perform both management functions and administrative functions in their schools.
- The role of the school head as an instructional leader has been compromised by administrative and management tasks that the school head has to perform.

School heads did not find time to teach their classes because of administrative and management tasks.

In view of the above conclusions the study makes the following recommendations:

- That the duties of school heads as administrators and managers at schools be distinctly defined.
- That there might be need to separate the two functions, administration and management, so that they are performed by two different people in schools.
- That school heads should not be allocated classes to teach as this compromised quality and standards. In most cases they left their classes unattended or they asked other class teachers to baby seat their classes.
- There is need for staff development of school heads so that there do not spend too much time on minor tasks and appreciate the importance of delegating tasks to subordinates.

References

- Acero .et. al (2000) Principles and Strategies of Teaching. Rex Bookstore, pp13-14.
- Bennet, N., Glatter, R., and Levacic, R. (Ed) (1994) Improving Educational Management Through Research and Consultancy. London, SAGE Publications.
- Boone, L.E., and Kurtz, D. (1992) Management (4th Ed). New York, McGraw-Hill, Inc.
- Bush, T. and Bell, L. (Ed) (2002) The Principle and Practice of Educational Management. London, SAGE Publications.
- Chikoko,V. (2007) Negotiating Roles and Responsibilities in the Context of Decentralized School Governance, ISEA. Volume 35 No. I 2007, CCEAM.
- Everard, K. B., Morris, G. and Wilson, I. (2004) Effective School Management (4th Ed). London, SAGE Publications.
- Flick,U., Kardoff, V.E and Steinke, I. (2004) A Companion to Qualitative Research. London, SAGE Publications.
- Hill, T. (1989) Managing the Primary School. London, David Fulton.
- Hoy, W. K and Miskel, C. G. (2005) Educational Administration: Theory, Research, and Practice. Boston, McGraw-Hill.

- Lyons, G. (1974) *The Administrative Tasks of Heads and senior Teachers in Large Secondary Schools*. Bristol, Union of Bristol.
- Musaazi, J.C.S. (1982). *The Theory and Practice of Educational Administration*. Oxford, Macmillan.
- Van der Westhuizen, P.C. (Ed) (1991) *Effective Educational Management*, Cape Town, Kagiso Tertiary.
- Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture: Mashonaland West, 22 August 2006: Vacancy Announcement-Provincial Education Director's Vacancy Circular Minute No. 1 OF 2006: Zimbabwe.
- Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture: Vacancy Announcement-Internal; Vacancy Announcement No. 8 of 2005.
- Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture: Chegutu District Office: DEO's Circular No. 3 of 2011: Zimbabwe.
- The Sunday Mail, 6-12 January 2013. Zimpapers, Harare.