

The Role of Leadership in Management of Educational Institutions

Francis Ndlovu¹, Thembinkosi Tshabalala²

¹Lecturer, Faculty of Arts and Education, Zimbabwe Open University, Zimbabwe

²Faculty of Arts and Education, Zimbabwe Open University, Zimbabwe

*Corresponding Author's Email: tshabalalathembinkosi@yahoo.com

Abstract: This present paper discusses the importance of leadership in educational management with specific reference to schools. Educational leadership has a critical role in the transformation of society, and for change to happen, effective leaders are key. Along with the widespread belief that the quality of leadership makes a significant difference to school and student outcomes. There is also increasing recognition that if effective school leaders and managers are developed they are most likely going to provide the best possible education for their learners. Effective leadership and management are essential if schools and colleges are to achieve the wide-ranging objectives set for them by their many stakeholders, notably the government which provide most of the funding for public educational institutions. Teachers and their leaders and managers are the people who are required to deliver higher educational standards. Management and leadership are important for the delivery of good educational services. Although the two are similar in some respects, they may involve different types of outlook, skills and behaviours. Good managers should strive to be good leaders and good leaders need management skills to be effective. Leaders will have a vision of what can be achieved and then communicate this to others and evolve strategies for realising the vision. They motivate people and are able to negotiate for resources and other support to achieve their goals. Managers ensure that the available resources are well organised and applied to produce the best results. In the resource constrained and difficult environments of many developing countries, a manager must also be a leader to achieve optimum results.

Keywords: Role, management, leadership, institution, schools

INTRODUCTION

Leadership in management is a crucial factor in the success that schools experience. For this reason it is imperative that educational managers take cognisance of recent changes in the approach to modern day school leadership. That there is innovative thinking on the subject is clear from the following [1]:

There has been much written about the demand for new managerial abilities and there is a widely shared perception that the vertical skills of command and control need to be supplemented, or in some cases replaced, by a set of skills that include negotiation, bargaining and mediation.

Drucker [1] attributes the success achieved by Japanese companies to a new management strategy which alters underlying attitudes amongst staff through the "cultivation of relationships to establish common interest, trust, loyalty and pride in the accomplishment of the entire organisation". It is standard procedure in Japanese labour practice to allow potential managers to gain practical and firsthand experience in all facets and sections of the organisation before being appointed to managerial positions [1].

A factor which contributes to the support that this view point enjoys is the recognition afforded to every employee in modern enterprises. The fact that employees have diverse personalities is recognised and exploited to the advantage of the enterprise more than ever before. Loden [2] claims that attributes such as caring for other people's wellbeing, interpersonal skills,

intuitive management and creative problem solving are of critical importance to future success in management.

As far as specific leadership styles are concerned, no single style of leadership is necessarily better than the other. The modern tendency is to personalise interpersonal relationships between management and employees and this may make leadership style less important in the future. This will certainly lend a new dimension to the well-known words: a leader is a person who succeeds in getting somebody to work with him, not for him. To be able to do this educational managers will certainly have to pay more attention to the unique attributes of individual staff members.

The challenge to organisations of the future is to accept a variety of leadership styles. The recognition of a diversity of leadership styles will allow potential leaders to lead in ways that will draw upon their individual styles. The restructured workplace will provide a setting for a variety of leadership styles to flourish, and, as a result, it will gain in strength and flexibility [1].

The difference between management and leadership

In management terms a clear distinction is made between managers and leaders. Literature on the subject shows that this distinction has been approached from various viewpoints in an attempt to demonstrate the advantages of one over the other. Without going into complex definitions, we shall briefly review the aim and essence of each concept.

Most researchers regard managers as the people in power who exercise their authority over others in the organisation. They have the right to organise and guide the activities of others through coercion. A leader, on the other hand, gets results without using coercion because he has certain qualities, consults and motivates his followers, and can get the willing cooperation of followers and colleagues [3, 4].

The difference between managers and leaders is even clearer in Syrett and Hogg's [5] exposition: leadership skills have become important because the more fragmented and diversified an organisation becomes, the more leaders it requires; and the faster moving an organisation's markets or commercial environment, the more it needs "changing" rather than "running". Therein lays the fundamental difference between the tasks of leaders and managers. Managers do things right, leaders do the right thing. Managers accept the status quo, leaders challenge it. Leaders create and articulate vision; managers ensure it is put into practice.

The leader's role

The achievements of any school or enterprise are directly related to the quality of its leadership. Put differently; the better the quality of leadership, the better the chances that the school will be successful in achieving its goals. Syrett and Hogg [5] see the leader's role as follows:

The ability to lead and inspire others is far more instinctual than premeditated and it is acquired somehow through the experiences of everyday life, and the ultimate nature and quality of that leadership comes out of the innate character and personality of the leader himself.

The manager's task

Although it is clear from the above quotations that a manager does not display classical leadership qualities, no school can get along without certain important management functions. In a previous section we pointed out that the manager's main goal is to make the leader or initiator's vision come true (if the leader and manager is not one and the same person). This implies that the manager has a specific task which is linked to his/her position. Should the manager fail in the execution of his/her task, internal competence and the school's external image may suffer quite severe damage.

Leader – managers: the ideal

It would be an ideal situation if all managers could also be leaders in the real sense of the word, and vice versa. The school principal is after all the head of the institution and he/she must have leadership potential to successfully meet expectations. According to Marx [6] managers in actual practice have a dual role: on the one hand the leader has to manage certain activities

himself; on the other he has to lead his subordinates by establishing a framework within which they must operate to achieve set goals as successful as possible.

Kotter [7] is also of the opinion that these two tasks could be combined: "The real challenge is to combine strong leadership and strong management and use each to balance the other".

Other researchers are of the opinion that a leader's hands should not only be strengthened by good managers, but also by contributions from the rest of the employees [5]:

- What counts is the balance between the talents, character and powers of conviction of the born leader on the one hand, and on the other the methods, processes and delegation of tasks that enable a vast number of people to play their part in a collective effort.
- The "excellent" leader, therefore, ensures that his or her skills are balanced by a strong senior team.

Thus, there clearly should be a balance between leadership, management and staff in achieving the school's goals. It is after all not the difference between them which is important, but the constructive utilisation of each to achieve goals more effectively. The one is not more important than the other, but rather a precondition for the other:

...companies should remember that strong leadership with weak management is no better, and is sometimes actually worse than the reverse. The real challenge is to combine strong leadership and strong management and use each to balance the other [7].

Types of leadership in an organisation

The particular style or form of leadership adopted by an educational manager is usually determined by the size and nature of the organisational structure. The particular style adopted also depends on the specific situation. A leader can therefore adapt his or her style to circumstances – provided that this has positive results.

The following are examples of the three most basic forms of leadership [5]:

- Eye to eye leadership involves leadership among people at the same level of seniority (for example heads of departments). Leaders who are in charge of staff in positions directly below their own also exercise eye to eye leadership. This is the easiest form of leadership since it is based on direct communication and control.
- Organisational leadership occurs at middle management level and higher up. Leadership is exercised over staffs that are two or more post levels lower down. Since members of staff have very little contact with these leaders at eye level,

line authority is mainly used. This form of leadership is much more impersonal than the previous one by nature.

- Institutional leadership occurs in very large schools where the whole school is led by an autocratic headmaster/headmistress. Since management never make personal contact with about 95% of the staff, staffs often refers to them as “the people up there”.

Another factor which may influence choice of leadership style is the availability of staff that has the necessary personal and professional skills to be appointed to leadership positions. A seemingly autocratic leader might have been compelled by the lack of dependable subordinates to exercise control and leadership on his or her own. Choice of management style is also influenced by the staff’s level of experience. Their level of professional experience and skills often determines the specific style of leadership adopted by the manger, for example [8].

| | |
|---------|---|
| PHASE 1 | Staff wishes to know exactly what is expected of them and how they should go about an assignment. The principal’s (or head of department, subject head or head of the committee) leadership style is thus more task oriented, while instructing and guiding are prominent. |
| PHASE 2 | The principal’s role is more motivational: a member of staff is assigned a task but can decide for him or herself how to do it. Feedback on results is given to the principal after completion of the task. The principal plays a guiding role. |
| PHASE3 | The staff member has more responsibilities and the principal receives feedback on results achieved / not achieved only. Guidance and control are provided. |
| PHASE 4 | Dependence staff members are completely trusted to go ahead on their own. The principal exercises control by checking or evaluating the quality of their achievement only. Subordinates have more say in the formulation of policy, procedures and productivity and this implies a participative management style. The principal’s role is mainly one of supervision. |

It is clear from the above examples that the status and professional experience of individual staff members justify a particular leadership style. It must be remembered that the end result or achievement remains the crux of the matter and not which leadership style is preferred:

Different individuals need to be handled in different ways. While some people may be slow to take action if not “chased”, for example, others will be sufficiently self-motivated to produce the best results when left alone [8].

In conclusion it should be noted that the acquisition of certain life skills and leadership skills has a specific influence on a leader’s behaviour. Not all educational managers have the skills required of a successful leader. It will therefore be appropriate to look more closely at what is particularly required of a good leader.

Requirements for effective leadership

It is clear from literature on the subject that leadership can be an acquired skill. The guidelines contained in the paragraphs below may be followed to promote individual leadership success.

The leader as individual

Just as there are many different perspectives on leadership, requirements for effective leadership also vary. Most management consultants, academics in schools for business management and practising educational managers agree that the following are prerequisite for effective leadership: trust your

subordinates, develop a vision, remain calm and in control, encourage employees to take risks, be informed, encourage different opinions, and teach employees to think innovatively and critically.

A good leader must also be able to [5, 9].

- Visualise a prosperous and expanding future for the school.
- Instil in all staff members a common goal to strive at.
- Persevere purposefully for long periods even without guidance or direction from superiors or the peer group.
- Handle the loneliness and isolation that comes with a leadership position.
- Exercise authority with the necessary compassion, integrity and fair-mindedness
- Bear the burden of responsibility that a leader in a position with a high profile carries in such a manner that it does not seem to others to be a burden.

Managers also agree that one of the most important requirements for successful leadership is that the leader should possess adequate listening skills. This is emphasised in the following quotation from Drucker [5].

Lastly, it is also important that leaders should think and act with an eye to the future. It must be obvious to the reader by now that leadership is a dynamic process, since tomorrow’s demands made of the individual in leadership practice will be different from yesterday’s.

The leader as a group member

It is clear that managers will in the future no longer be able to hide behind their desks and behind closed doors in their offices: In short, leaders of the past often erected walls. Now they must destroy those walls and replace them with bridges [10]. The distance between leaders and their followers has shrunk, to the extent that a leader's efficiency is no longer individually judged but in the context of the group. This causes distinctive demands to be made of leaders. If they wish to succeed in leading projects or chairing committees they will need to be familiar with the most important principles of group dynamics. Some of these are respect for otherness, building and sustaining mutual trust, and encouraging interaction and the participation of all members.

Reasons for leadership success

The two most important reasons cited by researchers are technical leadership skills and general life skills –including specific personal skills such as good human relations and the ability to motivate and encourage others [11]. Leadership competence does not necessarily refer to the leader's technical abilities in the core technology of the business. The abilities to challenge, inspire, enable and encourage must also be demonstrated if leaders are to be viewed as capable [12].

In addition, successful leaders exhibit good judgement and perfect timing. Meetings, disciplinary interviews or team building activities very often would have been twice as successful if their timing had been better judged [13].

This ties in with Kotter's view [7] of the reason for leadership success when he says: but for leadership, achieving a vision requires motivating and inspiring – keeping people moving in the right direction, despite major obstacles to change, by appealing to basic but often untapped human needs, values and emotions. It was pointed out earlier how important the leader's character is. Wright [14] believes that more than 80% of leadership success can be attributed to the lack of variance in the leader's behaviour because of his or her stable character. Sims and Mans [11] add to this when they assert that effective leaders believe in themselves, have a passion for their work and a spontaneous love of others. There are indeed many other reasons behind leadership success which cannot be mentioned here for lack of space. It might also be appropriate to examine on the other hand the reasons that some individuals fail at leadership. This might help us learn from other people's mistakes.

Reasons for leadership failure

Just as there are various reasons for leadership success, some reasons for leadership failure have also been cited. In the opinion of McCall Jr and Lombardo

[15] the most important reasons for failure are arrogance and a total lack of sensitivity:

The most frequent cause for derailment was insensitivity to others....Leaders were so brilliant they became arrogant, intimidating others with their knowledge. A typical remark was, "He made others feel stupid...wouldn't listen, had all the answers, wouldn't give you the time of day unless you were brilliant too".

Unhealthy personal ambition is also cited as a reason, since such leaders "...always seemed to be thinking of their next job, bruised people in their haste, and spent too much time trying to please upper management" [15].

Researchers agree that human weaknesses in the leader's personal disposition are the most important reason for an individual's failure at leadership [15]:

The events that reveal flaws are seldom cataclysmic. They are more like the broken twigs and crushed leaves in frontier novels that subtly indicate a direction taken, and mark that someone has passed that way. As one executive put it, "Careers last such a long time. Leave a trail of mistakes behind you, and you eventually find yourself a captive of your past".

Educational management Tasks

Depending on the education manager's post level, he or she has several professional tasks. Most of these might be handled by one person although this practice has become less viable because of specialisation in technology and management. In performing the tasks below it is strongly recommended that a participative management style and delegation be utilised. To prevent confusion these tasks have been classified as follows:

Primary tasks

Although different tasks are performed in different organisations, it is Kroon's contention that most organisations require their managers to perform four basic tasks:

- Planning.
- Organisation.
- Activation (giving guidance).
- Control.

Some managers prefer including a fifth task, namely evaluation. There are two reasons for this:

- To evaluate the quality of end results to ensure that the same achievements will be repeated in the future; and
- To ensure that inadequate future performance may be improved by means of corrective action.

Secondary tasks

In addition six added or secondary management tasks are carried out, namely:

- Decision making
- Communication
- Motivation
- Coordination
- Delegation and
- Disciplinary action. These tasks or any of the primary management tasks mentioned above can in any management phase play a decisive role in the eventual success or failure of the manager's actions

Other general tasks

Kraut [14] involved 1 412 managers in an investigation which showed that the following five general management tasks were the most important of 57 originally identified:

- Managing individual performance
- Training of subordinates
- Planning and allocating available resources
- Coordinating independent groups
- Managing group performance

Still other management tasks include passing information on to subordinates, explaining and sustaining the organisation's mission, setting goals and making plans. Also very much part of the manager's leadership role are assigning tasks, negotiating with subordinates, supervising and taking steps to improve performance.

Please note that these functions are not independent of each other. In practice they interact and support each other and make more effective goal attainment possible.

The relationship between management tasks and management areas

As a result of the large number of management areas involved in running a school, the management tasks mentioned above are performed in more than one area of management. Each area involves specialised management tasks which may be assigned to a specific person, committee or department, and it is important to remember that parents can make a valuable contribution to many areas [4, 6]:

Marketing

The aim here is to market the school within a specific community. The needs of parents and pupils are determined and eventually a strategy is developed to meet those needs effectively. Since schools can now enrol pupils from outside their borders there is much greater competition among schools to recruit new pupils (especially at entry levels such as Grades 1 and Form one).

Finances

This involves obtaining, utilising and controlling the school's financial resources in such a manner that the school's goals are attained and services rendered within the constraints of the budget. Here too, parents with appropriate qualifications or experience can assist the schools in obtaining maximum financial benefit.

External relations

This task is closely linked to marketing in that the goal here is to reflect a favourable and successful image of the school in the community. In addition, sound relationships and goodwill have to be generated between the school and outside groups which are directly or indirectly involved in the school's activities, such as the media, the general public and other educational enterprises.

The above-mentioned tasks are at the core of the functional areas of any dynamic enterprise. These functions may be combined or expanded as required. Examples of additional tasks are computer assistance, parent guidance and research to name but a few.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that exceptional demands are made of any manager. Obviously the successful manager needs a good measure of leadership potential or he or she will not be able to meet half these demands. This implies that the role of leader and the role of manager might in the future be more interwoven.

REFERENCES

1. Moran, W. (1992). *School leadership*. New York: Longman.
2. Loden, M. (1985). *Feminine leadership or, how to succeed in business without being one of the boys*. Crown Pub.
3. Bennis, W. G. (1993). *Managing the Dream: Leadership in the 21st Century*. [book auth.]. Rosenbach WE and RL Taylor. *Contemporary Issues in Leadership*. Boulder, CO: Westview, 213-218.
4. Cronje, H. (1994). *Contemporary African leadership*. Pretoria: CSIR.
5. Syrett, M., & Hogg, C. (Eds.). (1992). *Frontiers of leadership: An essential reader*. Blackwell.
6. Marx, L. (1992). *Supervision in education*. New York: MacMillan.
7. Kottler, B. (1990). *Educational management*. London: Falmer Press.
8. Everard, S. and Morris, B. (1990). *Supervisory behaviour in education*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
9. Charlton, B. (1996). *Community leadership*. London: Longman.
10. Hesselbein, F., Goldsmith, M., & Beckhard, R. (1996). *The leader of the future*. Jossey Bass.

11. Sims, T. and Mans. R. (1996). *New public management and leadership*. New Ark: University of Delaware.
12. Rosenbach, W. E., Taylor, R. L., & Youndt, M. A. (2012). *Contemporary issues in leadership*. Westview Press.
13. Adler, P. S., Mandelbaum, A., Nguyen, V., & Schwerer, E. (1995). From project to process management: An empirically-based framework for analyzing product development time. *Management Science*, 41(3), 458-484.
14. Wright, K. (1996). *Leadership*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
15. McCall, M. W., & Lombardo, M. M. (1983). *Off the track: Why and how successful executives get derailed* (No. 21). Center for Creative Leadership.
16. Tushman, M., & Nadler, D. (1986). Organizing for innovation. *California management review*, 28(3), 74-92.