

Leadership for a new age: The role of the Zimbabwe Open University in producing a generation of new school leaders

Chiome Chrispen

Abstract— Head teachers' expectations are the benchmark against which teacher education goals are measured. This study sought to determine heads' expectations on the type of school leaders to be produced by the Zimbabwe Open University. A case study of one regional campus was employed to gather data through interviews from a convenient sample of 50 heads of schools. Findings revealed that school leaders' perception of a new generation of school leaders comprise a school head who is a source of wisdom and competence, has pedagogical and technological influence, know how to learn and has capacity to manage new challenges as they come. They also hold the views that linkages are key to leadership in the new era and expect the new type of school leaders to promote collaborative productivity, develop teamworking skills, establish strong partnerships and networks and instill the spirit of innovation and creativity. School leaders must work as change agents, display a forward looking mentality in self managing schools that have an empowering culture. The study recommend that educational products, processes and outcomes in school leaders preparation programmes in an open and distance education context must meet changing circumstances and address customer preferences as was the case in this study.

Index Terms— Head teacher, distance education, school leadership and school head.

I. INTRODUCTION

Distance education has been viewed internationally as a viable option for improving access to, and the equity and quality of, basic education in various settings (McQuaide 2009). Distance education programmes are growing. The growth is expected to continue over the next five years with estimates placing the number of students taking online classes in 2014 at over 18.5 million students (Nagel, 2008). Further, distance education is used as a tool to support and supplement

conventional educational programmes (Perraton 2000). As Zimbabwe is trying to reform its devastated education system, distance education is sufficiently well placed to play a pivotal role in this regard.

Zimbabwe is now at cross-roads of its development endeavors where education is sufficiently well placed to play a very important role to help facilitate the country's strategic development plans for integrating itself into the regional and international economies and for reducing the poverty of its people. The Zimbabwean government and many education partners that provide it with development assistance regard education as the key to developing the human resources and skills that will allow Zimbabwe to take its rightful place in the global arena.

Zimbabwe's education sector-the envy of Africa for years- faced a myriad of challenges during the period 2000-2009 as a variety of challenges ranging from economic collapse to a chaotic land reform constrained government's capacity to adequately fund the sector, a development that resulted in a massive decline in support for education and other social services. However, the solid base built since independence in 1980 was sufficient to ensure that the country managed to rise to poll position in terms of literacy in Africa according to latest United Nations report (UNDP 2009). The Education Transition Fund (ETF), a government and donor partnership was initiated with the aim of revamping the education sector (MoE 2010).

Based on the principles of Child Friendly Schools (CFS), the Zimbabwe education landscape is undergoing a silent revolution. The starting point for reforms of the magnitude being taken in Zimbabwe is school leadership which is key priority in education policy agendas internationally (Bush 2008; Fitzgerald 2009). School leadership enhances the teaching environment for schools so that this can cascade into fruitful learning experiences for teachers and learners. Leadership is a high priority issue for many people concerned with education these days (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins 2006). In fact, Brayman (2006), for example, went as far as to demonstrate the

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Chiome Chrispen, Research Fellow; Office of the Vice Chancellor; Zimbabwe Open University, Zimbabwe

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devastating effects of principal succession, especially on initiatives intended to increase pupil achievement. What this means is that as Zimbabwe grapples with an education system that had collapsed, it needs a new generation of school leaders with capacity to navigate their way in the mucky waters of transition. The port of call is the school heads who are the frontline personnel in this transformation exercise. They confront the day to day challenges. Their constructions of a new generation of school heads will be useful as it will inform, practice and used as a basis for planning school leadership preparation programmes in an open and distance teaching university.

Zimbabwe Open University is an open and distance-teaching university established by an act of parliament-the Zimbabwe Open University Act (1999). It started in 1993 as a College of the University of Zimbabwe initially to train teachers and heads of schools in educational management. Now with an enrolment of about 21 000 students (Strategic Plan 2010-2015), it is arguably the second biggest university in Southern Africa after UNISA in terms of enrolment. The university offers various programmes of learning in four faculties. This research will look at the educational management programme in the faculty of Arts and Education to see if the university can contribute in a small way towards Zimbabwe's educational reforms. The research seeks to interrogate heads of schools to find out whether the university's graduates measure up to the present day dictates in a country whose economy suffered under the programme of a chaotic land reform.

Open Universities the world over are in the business of promoting a paradigm shift in the provision of education (Allen and Seaman 2008; Knowles and Kalata 2007 & Nagel 2009). A good example is the Open University of Indonesia (Universitas Terbuka). In the university's Strategic Plan for 2005-2020, the university set out to expand opportunities for quality higher education throughout the distance education system and produce competent academics and professionals who are able to compete globally (Setijorini and Adnan (2008). Zimbabwe Open University, whose vision is to become a 'world class university', can take lessons from the Universitas Terbuka.

The Zimbabwe Open University shares some of the concerns of the Indonesia Open University. For instance, its school leadership programmes intent to produce high quality professionals who can take a leading role through innovative and creative methods that will bring about effective changes in the ailing education system. The university also intends to produce graduates with capacity to manage change and

compete on the global arena (ZOU 2010). However, the role of the Zimbabwe Open University appears to be blurred in this area as the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed by these critical professionals has not been interrogated. These need to be known first so that the university can strive to meet them in its education programmes.

Bush (2008) says the leader is the glue that holds the organisation together. However, Robson (2008) point out that the goal of teacher quality for all is proving difficult to achieve in many countries, especially in rural and remote areas. Eighty percent of the respondents in this study are rural based. What this means is that the school leaders in this study are also affected by the factors mentioned by Robinson (2008) such as the shortcomings of using advanced ITC. Their professional development becomes key to school quality, which is also key to students' achievement. Thus the Zimbabwe Open University must produce professionals who will be productive and leave a mark in the schools they lead in the time of transformation.

In this age of networking, the use of ICT is central to school leadership practices that produce results in a time of change. However, the shortcomings of ICT in this regard must also be put into consideration. The views by Gulati (2008) that in developing countries, traditional technologies such as print media, radio, and television, remains more effective because the high cost of Internet service prevents poor people from accessing it. Thus the aspect of school leaders in a new environment must be pursued as an equalizer of opportunities and not at the expense of the need to extend educational opportunities to disadvantaged and poor populations.

The aspect of local content is also an important issue. Chinese scholars argue that the key for developing appropriate course materials lies in changes to the way courses are produced. Li (2007) argues that course content should be drawn from the experience and setting of the countryside, and experts and teachers from rural regions should be involved in designing courses. Yu and Wang (2006) appear to concur with these views when they insisted that the top down approach must give way to a grassroots approach in which people in the lower ranks like heads of schools are active participants rather than passive receivers of materials that were conceived for school leaders in other populations and contexts. This research is one way in which grassroots opinion is being sought so that the school leader produced by the Zimbabwe Open University meets the quality constructions of the heads that are at the point of service delivery.

Zambia has also made strides in changing the education landscape by reaching disadvantaged communities through distance education. However, a study by Siaciwena and Lubinda (2008) unearthed constraints and impediments in the way. It then recommended that there is an urgent need to, among other things provide training in all aspects of open and distance learning through short courses and degree programmes and periodically evaluate open and distance learning programmes to improve their quality and ensure that they are responsive to emerging needs. This research is also in other words interrogating the practices of the Zimbabwe Open University in order to develop human resource and institutional capacity to develop and produce quality open and distance learning products that are competitive on the world stage and can lead transformation in schools (Siaciwena and Lubinda 2008).

These important points raised by Siaciwena and Lubinda (2008) in the context of the Zambian experience must be used as a guiding torch by the Zimbabwe Open University in its quest to produce quality school leaders who are prepared for the new era.

Highly effective principals have a vision for their school, which they deliver through people and their passion for teaching and learning permeates everything they do. Bush (2008) identifies three main characteristics of leadership which are interrelated. These are leadership as influence, leadership values and leadership vision. It remains to be seen what the heads in this study think are the pillars needed by the new crop of school leaders with ammunition to manage diversity.

The School Leadership Capabilities (2003) research also came out with the characteristics of highly effective leading teachers among others as:

- Passion for teaching and learning.
- Taking Initiative.
- Achievement focus.
- Influencing others.
- Analytical thinking.

Management of self (School Leadership Capabilities 2003:11)

Leading teachers in Australia have a passion for teaching and learning, influence others and their achievement focus is done through managing of self. This being a developed country, the characteristics of quality teachers in the context of a developing country are the focus of this research.

In the Zimbabwe Context, the characteristics of effective female heads of schools were also studied.

Among the characteristics found were passion for children, promoting children's rights, pride in accomplishment, information sharing, acknowledging and rewarding excellence and molding a culture of quality (Chiome, et.al. 2009). These characteristics were seen as being displayed by effective women heads. This research need to go further. First, it will be unisex. Second it intends to ensure effectiveness in the rocky road.

Against this background, this research sought to take this debate further and rope in the heads of schools to see what they think the Zimbabwe Open University can do through distance teaching methods to produce a new generation of school leaders who can see the transformation of schools reaching fruition.

II. PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study was to find perceptions of school leaders on the role of the Zimbabwe Open University in producing a new generation of school leaders that can foster effective reforms in schools.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Leadership is a high priority issue for many people concerned with education in Zimbabwe and other countries. However, in today's world it has become very important to consider stakeholder sentiments. As the knowledge and interest in leadership development have grown, a variety of approaches to selecting, training and retaining school leaders have proliferated. However, those dealing with what open and distance learning can do produce school leadership for a new age are still thin in the literature if any. This research is trying to fill this void by examining the role of the Zimbabwe Open University in producing a generation of new school leaders. To this effect, the statement of the problem is, 'what are the head's perceptions on the role of the Zimbabwe Open University in producing a new generation of school leaders in Zimbabwe using distance teaching methods.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was directed by the following research questions:

- 1) What do heads see as the features of good school leadership practices that must be taught in open and distance education leadership development programmes?
- 2) What are the practices that are needed by school heads in the new era?
- 3) What skills, knowledge and attitudes do heads want to be promoted in distance education school leadership programmes?

V. METHODOLOGY

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Research Design

The study was qualitative as it concentrated on one educational region. It was a case study (White, 2005; O'Leary, 2004) of Masvingo educational region. Thus the researchers chose this method as it allowed heads to write accounts of what they thought was the role of the Zimbabwe Open University in producing a new generation of school leaders.

Population

The target population for this study was all the 700 heads of schools in Masvingo education region. The heads of schools were interviewed during workshops their monthly workshops. Others were asked to write personal accounts and hand them to the researchers.

Sample and Sampling Method

A sample of one hundred and fifty heads of schools from seven education districts in Masvingo education region was extracted using the convenience sampling technique (Merken 2004). The 150 selected heads of schools were believed to be knowledgeable about the role of the Zimbabwe Open University because their experiences as heads of schools ranged from two years to twenty years. Thirty two percent (48) of the respondents in this study had a degree qualification in education management through open and distance learning and were sufficiently well placed to scrutinize and advise on the role of a distance teaching university in fostering the creation of a new generation of school leaders. Of the 150 respondents, 94 were primary school heads and 56 were secondary school heads. No head in this sample was below 30. Women were 40 slightly less than a third of the total sampled.

Instruments

The instrument for data collection was the personal accounts (Armstrong 1987). Personal accounts are useful instruments for collecting data because they assign significance and value to a person's own story and the interpretations s/he places on his/ her experiences. Twenty respondents were also interviewed. The researchers decided to adopt the multiple method approach of data collection to triangulate data in line with Flick's (2004) assertion. By using different data collection instruments, the researchers felt that they would establish the heads' perceptions on the role of the Zimbabwe Open University that were as close as possible to the needs of heads of schools in general and the future needs of school leadership in Zimbabwe and abroad.

Procedure for collecting data

The 150 heads of schools were addressed during workshops and asked to write their personal accounts of what they perceived as the role of the Zimbabwe Open University in the issues mentioned in the research

questions. Twenty of these heads were interviewed to verify and clarify the issues they raised in the personal accounts. The researcher personally attended the workshops to conduct the researches and interview informants. The interviews lasted for about twenty minutes. Each individual who took part in this research was consulted and agreement was reached on what data to be collected and included in the research. The privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of respondents was upheld and guaranteed in this research. It was also emphasized that the exercise was wholly voluntary and participants were free to discontinue the interview at any time. The Ministry of Education sanctioned the research.

Data Analysis

Data was analysed thematically. Themes began to emerge as data analysis proceeded. However, the researchers had some tentative themes acquired through the reading of literature around school leader development through distance (Saba 2008, Gulati 2008, McQuaide 2009; Moore 2007 and UNESCO 2002). The themes presented in the findings are what the researcher surfered from the content analysis of the personal accounts of school leaders.

VI. DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

The following section presents the data in terms of the sub problems raised earlier on and themes generated by the researcher from the personal accounts and the interviews.

Heads of schools were asked in this research to give perceptions of the role of the Zimbabwe Open University in producing a generation of new leader. The findings have been put into three broad categories. Namely: the knowledge gap, the links, networks and collaborations and the changing roles of school leadership.

The knowledge gap

Making school leaders sources of wisdom

It appears some heads in this study were traditionally minded. Their perception of a new generation of school leaders comprises those leaders who are knowledgeable. To them knowledge is indispensable in school leadership. They preferred a school leader who has the capacity and the knowledge to deliver to the children, the community, the teachers and to other heads. Some substantiating statements are:

The school leader must be the source of wisdom in the school and beyond if one is to be respected in this profession. Wrote one head while the other one went on to say:

There is no substitute for knowing. And still another declared: *Distance education must come in with packaged knowledge that will be disseminated to school heads on how to face today and tomorrow's challenges.*

Gumuseli (2009) argues that professional knowledge is needed to achieve effective management in schools. In line with this thinking, the respondents in this study argued that it is extremely difficult for them to operate without basic knowledge and skills in management and school leadership. One type of knowledge is about the content of the curriculum or subject matter "knowledge of academic subjects that is needed by school leaders when they act as instructional leaders (Stein and Nelson 2003). The same views are also echoed by Stein and Spillane (2005) who argue that school heads need to be knowledgeable if they are to set the right stage for academic excellence in the schools. Prestine and Nelson (2005) are also of the same view, adding that successful leadership content knowledge should also encompass knowledge of 'first principles' or 'theory based understandings' of whatever might be the instruction.

Knowing how to learn

An important role for the Zimbabwe Open University was that the school leader for the new era must learn how to learn. This was evident in the following excerpts:

I expect distance education to produce school leaders who can learn from students, teachers, peers, superiors and others.

The school leader must know how to know as it is good to learn to learn and to learn to know.

The most important thing for a new generation of school leaders is not what they know. The university must give them capacity to learn, to retrieve and to know how to know.

Knowledge was seen as important. However, the role of the university in this regard has been seen as that of capacitating the school leaders so that they can generate and retrieve knowledge.

Pedagogical influence

The heads in the study felt pedagogies are a critical component that must be instilled in tomorrow's leaders. They were of the opinion that a school leader must wield influence in this respect as shown in these interview transcripts:

The school leader must exert powerful influence on knowledge and pedagogy, influence curriculum through material production and work to revise and revisit curriculum prescriptions as and when the need arises.

School heads with pedagogical influence is also one area that school heads want a distance teaching university to look into. Research findings produced by Chikuya (2007) revealed that while the educational management programme's emphasis is on leadership and supervision, it must not be completely devoid of instructional expertise that is relevant to classroom practitioners.

Strategic overview of tasks and working practices

An interesting finding in this study was that the reality of change means that leaders have to adapt to the changing roles demanded of themselves and their staff through a strategic overview of tasks and working practices. These statements were gleaned from the responses:

School leaders are the backbone of a school and the guiding and managing of change places very real demands on them. They need to think strategically, act strategically and with a bird's eye view of school tasks and practices.

The demands on leaders are considerable but these are less onerous when they are shared through strategic planning. It is an exciting task to be a leader of an establishment or service that has a vision that is owned by other members, is shared and implemented through strategic co-operation.

To ensure strategic overview of practices means the university needs to provide school leaders participants with strategies and tools for managing and leading more effectively in today's complex and ever-changing global educational arena.

VII. Creating synergies, partnerships and collaboration

The respondents in this study believe that school leadership cannot be a stand-alone initiative as it requires synergies, collaborations, partnerships and networks. These are presented and discussed in this section.

Developing teamworking skills

Some respondents in this study mentioned teamworking as an important quality expected of a new generation of school heads.

'I prefer a school leader who nurtures team spirit because teams rely on the effective combination of skills, knowledge and talents of many individuals. If you are part of a great team, you are part of something larger than yourself. Your ideas are expanded,' claimed one head.

Another had this to say:

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A broad range and balance of skills, knowledge and experience can lead to a highly effective management team. In fact, today's challenges need a senior management team that demonstrates collective responsibility in ways that ensure a high level of consistency in learning experiences.

Promoting collaborative productivity

It was interesting to note that apart from teamworking, the respondents in this study were interested in the area of collaboration which was cited as indispensable. In this respect, teamwork was seen as a catalyst. These statements bear testimony to this:

'Collaborative productivity is the next most important way of running schools in the new era. The university must train school leaders who work with others to solve challenges and make schools productive places.'

'These days, individualistic orientations no longer have a place but fuller recognition of collective and collaborative action.'

Developing leadership is not just about honing the skills of those in the most senior positions, important though that undoubtedly is (Donnelly 2007). It is also about releasing the energies of every member of staff and every learner and about giving each of them a sense that their contributions are valued. The development of such a culture is important in its own right and as a response to the pressing requirement to build leadership capacity and to develop the leaders of tomorrow. A desire to take responsibility and to accept accountability is part of good leadership. Ultimate accountability rests with the person at the head of the formal structure but all members of staff must be committed to and feel accountable for their own development and performance. Such commitment lies at the heart of professionalism. It is essential that Zimbabwe Open university help to build a leadership culture in Zimbabwean schools which encourages initiative tackles difficult problems directly and is genuinely inspirational.

Strong partnerships and networks

One interesting finding was that the Zimbabwe Open University need to build strong partnerships that will enable school leaders to share expertise, resources and good practice. One respondent wrote:

'Partnerships can help to meet the diverse needs of learners, including the most vulnerable. Partner establishments can share expertise and resources to enable each to meet the demands placed in schools by the new order that they might not be able to meet working independently.' Another added:

Networks facilitate learners' transitions between education sectors or from education into employment as they help to widen learners' opportunities for

progression; and prepare them appropriately for further study and, more generally enrich their experiences.

The need for networks is not confined to Zimbabwe's ailing education system as Bouchard et. al. (2002) report that in New York and New England, principals established the Principals' Leadership Network (PLN). This is a network of principals, for principals and by principals (Bouchard et. al. 2002:8). PLN guarantees that the voices of the region's principals will be brought directly into the most current dialogue on issues that face school principals, formulate solutions that are practical and workable and works towards helping principals become the most effective and efficient school leaders. PLN among other goals, creates a regional forum "for principals, of principals, and by principals," which enhances the values of collegiality, productivity and learning.

Produce leaders with capacity to instil empowering culture

The respondents in this study thought that a new generation of school leaders must be able to cultivate an empowering culture in the schools they lead. One school head wrote:

An important resource in a school is its teachers and children. With an empowering culture, both teachers and students feel free to contribute meaningfully to the development of the school. Empowered people can argue reason, challenge and even prescribe meaningful contributions in times of change like we are in.

The need to provide options and support for career development for school leaders is widely documented in literature (Moos 2008; Pegg 2008; OECD 2008 Woods 2004 and Davies, at. al. 2005). The argument is that there is need to provide school children and teachers with competencies so that they are prepared for the rigors of school change.

VIII. Changing roles of school leaders

A change agent

The heads in this study were of the opinion that the new generation of school leaders must move with the times and be able to be change agents in the schools they lead. Some supporting statements were:

'One has to work as a change agent especially when operating in an environment characterized by uncertainties. The distance education university must teach school leader candidates to embrace change and act as a change agent as well.'

Technological literacy

One area that was of high interest to the heads in this study is the area of technology. Almost all the respondents in this study appear concerned that the Zimbabwe Open University must as of necessity address the issue of technological literacy in its school leadership graduates. These statements were extracted from the accounts:

Technological literacy enables tomorrow's school leaders to maintain their leadership of the ever changing technological environment.

A technologically literate school leader can communicate with anyone anywhere so that the school will be part of the global village and not to operate in isolation.'

The finding on technological literacy come hard on the heels of an innovation in the Zimbabwe Open university in which the university introduced online learning in 2010. Ansuka (2008) point out that online learning is still being touted as the only and best possible solution to the problem of access to quality higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa because it is seen as convenient, flexible, offering greater access to learning resources and enhancing learner participation.

Forward-thinking mentality

The respondents in this study were in agreement that the school leaders needed to see through current reforms should have the school child at heart with a forward thinking mentality.

Tomorrow's heads must put children in the fore front by providing royal service to the students so that their future is assured.

A forward looking school leader develops a wide and challenging range of educational experiences for pupils to support their academic and personal development. He led and supported innovative practice very effectively.

Forward Thinking school leaders clearly demonstrate commitment to continuous improvement, inspire and support pupils and staff to meet the high standards collectively set.

Change, complexity and multicultural environments dominate today's global educational landscape and school leaders in Zimbabwe expect to have capacity to deliver through forward looking leadership mentality.

Leaders who mentor potential leaders

Information gleaned from personal accounts and questionnaires indicated that school leaders in this study expect the Zimbabwe Open University to produce graduates who will in turn institute programmes of mentorship for potential leaders in their schools.

School leadership is more likely to be successful with individuals who are able to identify, mentor and inspire teachers who are high self-monitors. Such individuals are flexible enough to change their behaviour so that it fits the situation.

Robbins and Coulter (2005:530) define a mentor as someone in the organisation, usually older, more experienced, and in a higher-level position, who sponsors or supports another employee (a protégé) who is in a lower level position in the organisation. Davies, et. al. (2005) say mentors are practicing administrators within the school in which the candidate works. To the respondents in this study, the new generation of school leaders must act as mentors in their schools so that they coach, assess and recommend other leaders for school headships.

Mentors provide a climate of trust that allows the mentee to feel safe enough to risk new perspectives and behaviours that the Zimbabwean schools are facing in the bleak future ahead of us.

School self-governance

It was interesting to find out that school heads thought school self-governance is what leaders of tomorrow want in order to find their way in the rocky road of leading schools in a time of change. Some supporting statements include:

On top of autonomy, we want our powers to be increased so that we can have more power over school decisions that matter. One way to do this is through decentralisation coupled with school self-governance. Granting power to school authorities empowers them to make decisions that matter in school operations.

In a study conducted in Turkey it was found out that the authority of the average primary school principal was limited and their responsibilities were imbalanced (Gumuseli 2009). Gumuseli then argues that there should be a clear and effective balance of authority and responsibility for school principals just like in other professions. Other authorities concurred claiming that this will lead to sustainable leadership (Hargreaves and Fink 2006).

Promote innovation and creativity

School leaders in this study were of the opinion that creativity and innovation are critical in a turbulent education environment.

Creativity and innovation have to be recognised, acknowledged and then promoted in the new era that our education system is heading for. In this way, school authorities will promote creativity in schools and at the same time make school leadership attractive.

I think we want innovation and creativity to be promoted in schools so that teachers and pupils will not do the minimum necessary to get the job done.

Capacity to manage new challenges

It was the contention of respondents in this study that the challenges facing school leaders are changing on a day to day basis. The role of school leaders is evolving every day. Each day one is faced with a plethora of responsibilities concerning school leadership, community development, instructional leadership, managing diverse populations and accountability mandates. Some authenticating statements are:

In schools, calls for positive learning environment; innovation, collaborative climate, shared and monitored mission and quality outcomes continue to intensify.

I face the daunting task of marketing dilapidated schools without textbooks at a time when public confidence in schools is at its lowest ebb.

I think I need skills and ability to manage more student diverse populations particularly students with disabilities considering that the new policy calls for inclusive education

Eminovic, et. al. (2009) and Bouchard, et. al. (2002) confirm that the normal demands faced by principals in recent years have become more and more complex as the populations they serve grow diverse. Effective principals of the past were problem solvers, good communicators risk takers and good managers. Nowadays they face the dilemma created by the emerging and expanding role of school head, the dilemma that significantly challenges the future of school leadership. Today's leaders must therefore, build learning communities in schools, establish visions and philosophies for excellence, create a conducive climate for change, shape the environment in which teachers and students excel and integrate curricular, instruction and assessment in a continuous improvement process (Pryor 2008; Fitzgerald, 2009 and Bouchard, et. al. 2002).

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the heads of schools in this study prefer a three-fold school leader who will take schools in Zimbabwe to the Promised Land. A school head who is a source of wisdom, who is competent, has pedagogical influence, is technologically literate, know how to learn and has capacity to manage new challenges as they come, is what they expect from distance education school leadership graduates. They also hold the views that linkages are key to leadership in the new era. In this case, they expect the new type of school leaders to promote collaborative productivity, develop teamworking skills, establish strong partnerships and networks and instill the spirit of innovation and creativity. It was also the contention of heads in this research that leadership roles are changing

and school leaders must move with the times. In this case the school leaders must work as change agents, be technologically literate, mentoring potential leaders, display a forward looking mentality, in self managing schools that have an empowering culture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The research put forth the following recommendations:

- There is need to re-visit the leadership development programme of the Zimbabwe Open University. Strategies should be taken to transform the traditional learning attitude and system to a new-learning future oriented school leadership curriculum.
- Pedagogical process should be transformed so that school leader education curriculum being pursued by the Zimbabwe Open University has a clear instructional vision of what constitute a new generation of leadership practices, what conditions foster it, and how can it be implemented.
- Adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms must be put in place to supplement supervision to ensure the end product meet the quality criteria mentioned by heads in this study.
- Establish a national consortium for joint course development and sharing of the national open and distance learning networks and facilitating organization of open and distance learning programmes countrywide (Commonwealth of Learning 2005).
- Develop human and infrastructure resource capacity to plan, design, develop, manage, and evaluate open and distance learning systems so that they meet stakeholder expectations.
- The school leadership instructional system in the Zimbabwe Open University must be designed in accordance with the students' situations in order to optimize the system's flexibility, accessibility and affordability for all school leadership aspirants.

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