



An Analysis of Distributive Factors Related to Affective Organisational Commitment of Secondary School Teachers In Mashonaland Central Province of Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

In Zimbabwe, Performance of secondary school pupils accelerated in a declining manner since 1984 to date. Although much has been done to improve conditions of the teacher since the teachers are at the helm of students learning, students' performance has continued to decline. Despite training obtained from teachers colleges, what is contributing to their effectiveness has not been well researched. Affective organisational commitment of secondary school teachers in Zimbabwe still remain an inadequately researched area. Whereas teachers could be motivated by employers, the gendered outcomes of their commitment to the organisation especially on their affective commitment has not been adequately investigated. This study makes a contribution to filling this gap or lacuna. The primary purpose of the study was to make a critical analysis of distributive leadership factors contributing to affective organisational commitment of secondary school teachers in Mashonaland Central of Zimbabwe using Context Input Process and Product decision facilitation model of evaluation approach. The approach specified the imbalances in each phase of evaluation focusing on, distributive leadership factors and how they contributed to affective organisational commitment of secondary school teachers. The study used statistical tests of multiple regression analysis and step wise regression analysis on quantitative survey data obtained from Affective organisational commitment. The quantitative data were gathered using two seven point Likert scales ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. A statistical program SPSS was used to investigate the relationships among variables in the research model. Regardless of the types of dependent or independent variables, linear multiple step wise regression analyses were performed in order to find out the significance of the variables. This was supplemented by qualitative data gathered. The qualitative data were collected using semi structured face to face interviews and focus group discussions in order to triangulate the evidence obtained from quantitative data. The qualitative data were analysed using NVivo to come up with themes. Thus this study used a mixed methodology approach. The study established that distributive leadership factors such as prefect system, departmental management, the immediate boss, internal supervisors, community and guardians, and external supervisors, were strong determinants of affective organisational commitment related to secondary teachers 'affective organisational commitment and impacting negatively on pupils' and schools' performance. The study recommended that Educational planners must stay abreast of the formal and informal impulse of teacher commitment by providing support, constant supervision, staff development workshops, and chat platforms. Future researchers might wish to expand on studies that indicate a connection between factors established and the degree of pupils' performance.

Keywords:

INTRODUCTION

The educational organisation is one of the most important social institutions in a society. The effectiveness and positions of an educational organisation in a society firmly depends on its sound coordination in the direction of social expectations. However a human being is the most important input of any organisation hence needs to be affectively committed to the organization. Considering this, researchers have made considerable effort in uncovering factors that affect commitment of teachers.

In Zimbabwe, apart from factors like economic harsh conditions enrolments, Chivore (1989) highlights that teachers are being blamed for absenting from work. On the other hand, Inspection reports, Director's Circular Number 36 of 2006 and Circular No 5 of 2009 page 3 Section 4:2 notes that pass rates at Ordinary level, are always not forthcoming. This has raised concern amongst parents and stakeholders, who shelve the blame to teachers for their lack of affective commitment to their profession. Some stakeholders, blamed education authorities and the community for being corrupt, by not assessing progress and problems of teachers in schools .Prior research indicates that, The National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa (2002), identifies distributive leaderships as one of the factors affecting organisational commitment of teachers.

Distributed leadership is an idea that is growing in popularity in organisations (Harris, 2007). Distributive leadership is the sharing of leadership between two or more individuals. This type of leadership has many names, such as shared, dispersed, relational, roving, collective, group-centred, broad-based, participatory, fluid, inclusive, and supportive leadership (Spillane et al., 2004). In schools today, as the workload of administrators is constantly increasing, shared leadership is becoming widespread. A distributed leadership perspective recognises that there are multiple leaders (Spillane et al., 2004) and that leadership activities are widely shared within and between employees. A distributed perspective on leadership acknowledges the work of all individuals who contribute to leadership practice, whether or not they are formally designated or defined as leaders (Spillane et al., 2004). Distributed leadership is derived from a psychological theory that knowledge lies not only within the individual but also in the individual's social and physical environment (Hutchins, 1995). Distributed leadership is also central to system reconfiguration and organisational redesign which necessitates lateral and flatter decision-making processes (Hargreaves, 2007).

In a theoretical sense, distributed leadership can be located in the general area of situated and distributed cognition which is a moral obligation arising out of consideration of right and wrong (Spillane et al., 2001). Distributive leadership is a duty one owes, and ought to perform but which he/she is not legally bound to fulfil. Here distributed leadership is best understood as 'practice distributed over leaders, followers and their situations (Spillane et al., 2001).

There is increasing research evidence that distributed leadership makes a positive difference to organisational outcomes and student learning (Leithwood et. al, 2007). Most recently research has shown that the patterns of leadership distribution matters within an organisation and that distributed leadership practice is more likely to equate with improved affective organisational commitment, performance and outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2004, 2007). A distributed view of leadership "incorporates the activities of multiple groups of individuals in a school who work at guiding and mobilizing staff in the instructional change process" (Spillane et al., 2001: 20). It implies a social distribution of leadership where the leadership function is stretched over the work of a number of individuals and the leadership tasks are accomplished through the interaction of multiple leaders (Spillane et al., 2001). Moreover the concept is best understood as practice distributed over leaders, followers and their situations. Spillane et al., (2001) view distributed leadership as incorporation of the activities of multiple groups of individuals in a school who work at guiding and mobilizing staff in the instructional change process and results in employees' affective commitment. Distributive leadership is concerned with how the organisation maximise the potential of distributed leadership for organisational commitment, improvement and transformation (Harris, 2007). A distributed leadership perspective recognises that there are multiple leaders (Spillane et al., 2004) and that leadership activities are widely shared within and between organisations (Harris, 2007). A distributed model of leadership focuses upon the interactions, rather than

the actions, of those in formal and informal leadership roles (Spillane et al., 2004). It is primarily concerned with *leadership practice* and how leadership influences organisational and instructional improvement (Spillane, 2006). At a theoretical level, distributed leadership is an *analytical* frame for understanding leadership practice (Harris, 2007). Spillane et al., (2004) argue that the distributed perspective can serve as a *tool* for school leaders by offering a set of constructs that can be harnessed to frame diagnosis, inform and motivates employees thereby leading to affective commitment of employees.

Bennett et al., (2003) talk about ‘distributed or devolved leadership’ while Kets de Vries (1990) defines distributed leadership in terms of effective team working linked to social activity theory. Recently, Leithwood et al., (2004: 59) note that “the concept of distributed leadership overlaps substantially with shared collaborative and participative leadership concepts”. This accumulation of allied concepts not only serve to obscure meaning, but also presents real danger that distributed leadership simply be used as a ‘catch all’ term to describe any form of devolved, shared or dispersed leadership practice (Kets de Vries, 1990). In practical sense, it could be contended that it is nothing more than shared leadership practice. The evidence base suggests that there is something powerful and important about distributed leadership (Woods, 2004). Distributive leadership entails that school redesign is unlikely, unless patterns of leadership practice are dramatically altered and flattened (Harris, 2007). The presence of the different groups who have a role to play in the management of the school also known as multi-agency are highlighted in distributive leadership. There is increased collaboration among key groups namely; stakeholders, administrators, teachers, and prefects who contribute to the development of leadership capacity in the school (Woods, 2004). These key groups enhance development of excellence and capacity building across the school system. In the school, leadership development priorities are identified, innovation generated, expertise and new approaches developed also known as Multi-school capacity building (Scottish Executive, 2005). Multi-school capacity building is done in order to contribute to a general strengthening of leadership capacity in the school. If multi-school configuration is practiced it entails, working in phases is simply not possible without the reconfiguration of leadership as practice rather than role (Woods, 2004). (Harris et al., 2007) identify an increasing number of studies that highlight a powerful relationship between distributed forms of leadership and positive organisational change. This would lead to the development of affective commitment of teachers, and schools would be in a position to change and come up with new innovations to develop the school. Leithwood et al. (2004) note that the concept of distributed leadership overlaps substantially with shared collaborative and participative leadership concepts. Links have also been identified between distributed leadership and democratic leadership (Woods, 2004) and connections have been made to teacher leadership (Harris and Muijs, 2004). This accumulation of allied concepts not only serves to obscure meaning but also presents a real danger that distributed leadership be simply used as a ‘catch all’ term to describe any form of devolved, shared or dispersed leadership practice. Distributed leadership has been proven to be related to affective commitment of teachers, based on knowledge gained by means of direct and indirect observation or experience and empirical power (McLeod, 2007). In this respect, distributed leadership can serve as both a diagnostic and design tool that offers a lens on leadership practices within schools and between schools. It offers schools the opportunity to stand back and think about exactly how leadership is distributed and the difference made, or not made, by that distribution. The analytical frame galvanises attention towards leadership *as practice* rather than leadership *as role*; focusing attention on the complex interactions and nuances of leadership in action (Harris and Muijs, 2004). It offers an alternative and potentially illuminating way of tracking, analysing and describing complex patterns of interaction, influence and agency. Distributed leadership also poses some critical questions for schools: How is leadership distributed in the school, is the pattern of distribution optimum and practice developed and enhanced? Distributive leadership depends on the context within which leadership is distributed and the prime aim of the distribution. Flattening the hierarchy or delegation of leadership does not necessarily equate with distributed leadership, nor does it automatically improve performance (McLeod, 2007). It is the nature and quality leaders of *leadership practice* that matters. For some, it takes distributed leadership into the realm of the abstract and away from the practical realities of schooling. For others, it offers the

real possibility of looking at leadership through a new and alternative lens that challenges the tacit understanding of the relationship between ‘leaders and followers’. It suggests that ‘followers’ may actually be a key element in defining leadership through their interactions with leaders. Moreover it raises the possibility that leadership has a greater influence on organisational change and employee commitment when leadership practice is purposefully distributed or orchestrated (McLeod, 2007). Thus basing on what is discussed about Distributive leadership, contextually in secondary schools of Zimbabwe, it entails mobilizing leadership at all levels in the organisation not just relying on leadership from the top but engaging the many rather than the few in leadership as shown diagrammatically below.

Figure 2.2 Distributive leadership and affective commitment

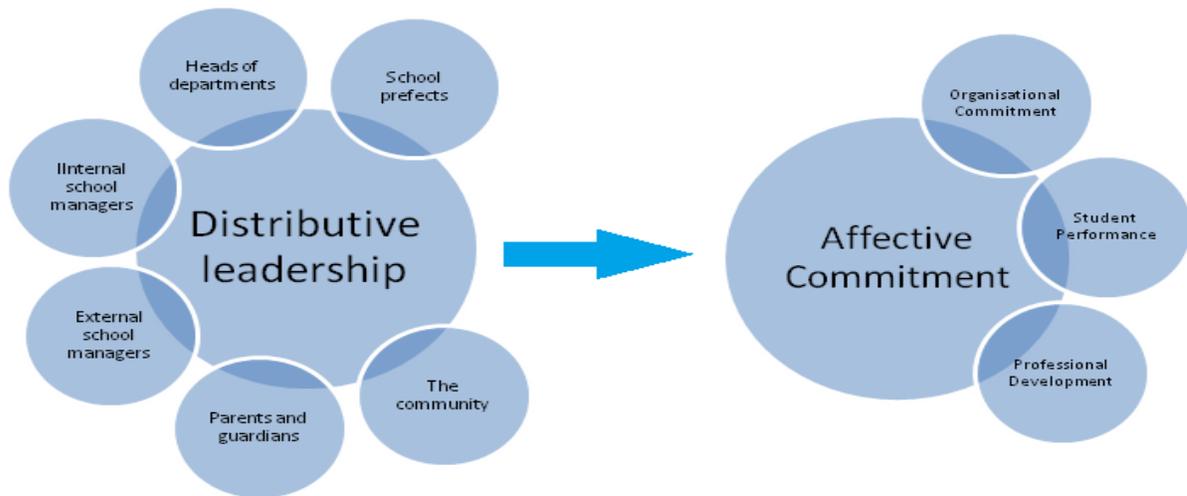


Figure 1 Distributive leadership and affective commitment

Source Author 2016

As shown in Figure 2, Distributive leadership has six components namely internal School managers, external school managers, parents and guardians, the community, Heads of departments (HOD) and the school prefects. Affective organizational commitment has three components namely, Organizational commitment, Professional development and student performance. Hence affective commitment is influenced by distributive leadership. Affective commitment has three components which are the end product namely organisational commitment of teachers, professional development and finally student performance.

The external school managers are education administrators in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary education who include the Deputy Provincial director, District Education Officers and Secondary schools’ Education inspectors representing all subjects taught in secondary schools. Internal School managers include, heads of schools, and their deputies, senior men, women and heads of departments(HOD,’s). The employer is the Public Service Commission and their inspectors constituted those involved in leadership. Within students, the school prefects are a level. Parents and guardians of students, School Development Associations or School Development committees is another level. Within the community, responsible authorities of the schools, the Political hierarchy, beneficiaries who are employers constitute another level. Considering that in Zimbabwe all these levels contribute to what happens in schools, the study wanted to establish which factors of distributive leadership are related to secondary school teachers’ affective organisational commitment and pupils’ performance?

In order to address the problem, the study used mixed methodology approach as the main research strategy. The population under study were 2340 secondary school teachers from Mission boarding schools, government boarding and day schools, and council day schools. For quantitative method, proportionate, stratified random sampling was employed from each category of schools to come up with a sample of 230 participants. The researcher firstly used stratified structured sampling according to categories of schools to come up with Mission Boarding Schools, Government Boarding and day schools and Council Day Schools. After stratification, probability proportionate representation was employed to ensure that every member of the sampling frame had an equal probability of being selected, the sample was deliberately designed to select proportionately to the size of the strata or cluster area using the sampling ratio of 1:2:6. The ratio was based sequentially on one (1) representing Mission schools two (2) representing government schools and six (6) representing Council Rural Day schools. Each stratum comprised two(2) Mission Boarding schools with population of 26 participants systematically randomly sampled to participate in the study ; one(1) day and one(1) Boarding Government schools making a total of two (2) Government schools with total population of 52 participants systematically randomly sampled to participate in the study and finally six (6) Council day schools with population of 156 qualified teachers systematically randomly sampled to participate in the study. For qualitative method 26 participants were purposively sampled. From the 26 participants 14 were key informants including Heads of departments, School heads, Deputy heads, Education Inspectors, and 1 Deputy Provincial Education, and 12 teachers. An affective commitment questionnaire and an independent variables questionnaire collected quantitative data from 230 participants. Semi structured interviews generated data from key informants and teachers. Ten teachers participated in the Focus group interview discussion. Quantitative data was analysed using Multiple and stepwise regression analysis and qualitative data was analysed using NVivo to come up with themes.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This study’s thrust sought to gain in-depth knowledge and understanding of distributive leadership factors in relation to effectiveness, coverage, efficiency, sustainability and outcomes for affective organizational commitment. These issues were explored in relation to their strategic fit and relevance in learning environments and mostly on the delivery of services by teachers and the support rendered by administrative structures.

Quantitative findings

Below is a graph showing the relationship between distributive factors and secondary school teacher’s level of affective commitment.

N=13



Figure:2 Leadership factors and their relationship with secondary teachers’ affective organisational commitment.

Figure 2 above shows six leadership factors which are related to secondary school teachers’ affective commitment. In order, the prefect system(29.5%),emerged as the strongest predictor of secondary teachers’ affective commitment followed by departmental management(22.5%),community and guardians of students (22.5%)internal supervision(8.5%),external supervision(8.5%) and immediate boss (8.5%) This is an indication that all are statistically significant predictors of affective commitment. This shows a clear pattern that leadership factors influence teachers’ affective commitment thus.

Qualitative data findings

Table 1. Leadership and teachers affective commitment.

Emerging Issues	Key informants		Total
	Female (n=4)	Male (n=11)	
Leadership to closely monitor and manage performance	2	5	7
Leadership should know its duties, roles and responsibilities	2	3	5
Good leadership focuses on results and future planning	-	2	2
Leadership inspires confidence and stirs motivation	2	4	6
Leadership should champion strategic issues such as staff development as well as mobilizing resources	2	-	2
Good leaders are good stewards of resources	-	3	3

From respondents (Table 1) above it also emerged that;

Of the leadership factors, the prefect system was considered very important by most of the teachers. In part the prefect system suggests the importance of teachers’ affective organisational commitment to student performance in secondary schools. The link between these two features is plausible as well as consistent with the observations of Woods (2004) identified and discussed in chapter two that key groups like teachers and the school prefects contribute to the development of leadership capacity and enhances commitment of teachers. Similarly literature from Harris et al. (2007) identify an increasing number of studies that highlight a powerful relationship between this form of school leadership that paves way for positive organisational change which leads to affective commitment of teachers.

However, information obtained from qualitative findings reveals that the prefect system is not in any way influencing teacher performance because participants interviewed highlighted that these prefects are chosen by the school in terms of their credibility.

Secondly departmental management and community and guardians of students are associated with affective organisational commitment of teachers. Departmental management builds trust between school managers and teachers in the school. Considering that heads of departments have expertise of content being taught in the departments they do exert influence directly on the teachers hence this has a relationship with how teachers are committed to the organisation. Moreover departmental management flattens the hierarchy of leadership and consequently can improve teachers’ performance leading to or not to their affective organisational commitment depending on the context to which leadership is distributed and the prime aim of distribution. Similarly data collected from key informants who are Education inspectors, and the Deputy Provincial Education Director emphasized the importance of leadership to closely monitor and manage performance. Two (2) female and five (5) male informants strongly emphasized the need for good leadership qualities to enhance professionalism amongst teachers thereby contributing to teachers’ affective commitment to the organisation, resulting in improved performance.

Sentiments expressed from qualitative data and quantitative data obtained is in agreement with literature which highlights the importance of departmental management to take the teachers from the realm of abstract and moves them to practical realities of the school (McLeod,2007).

A comparison of quantitative and qualitative results shows that the community and guardians of students as stakeholders have duties, roles and responsibilities to perform in the school system. Two(2)female and three (3) male participants from key informants agreed that transformational leadership leads to expected results and that the stakeholders immensely contributed to teacher performance through provision of resources and support to school operations. This is so because stakeholders are empowered according to Statutory Instrument87 of 1992 and Statutory Instrument70of 1993 extracted from policies enacted in the 1987 Education ACT as amended in (1991) , and can influence development of affective organisational commitment of secondary schoolteachers and development of secondary schools. Schools have to mobilize leadership that is, through School Development committees/ associations, responsible authorities of the schools, the political hierarchy and guardians at all levels that is why secondary school teachers' affective organisational commitment is associated with the community and guardians of students.

Quantitative data revealed that there was an association between the immediate boss, supervision within schools and outside the schools and teachers affective organisational commitment. Similarly data from key informants revealed that leadership inspires confidence and stirs motivation, and good leaders are good stewards of resources. Two (2)female and seven(7)male expressed that teachers need encouragement, involvement, empowerment, recognition to become more initiative in their daily deliberations and this motivates them to exert maximum effort at the same time improving their affective commitment to the organisation. This is enhanced through good supervision.

An explanation of agreement of both forms of data is that internal and external supervision creates much more of subordinate's work environment, at the same time representing the organisation to the subordinates. This is consistent with research findings from Chughtai and Zafar(2004) that supervision is an important predictor of affective organisational commitment. This mirrors with Sergiovanni and Starrat (2002); Charles, Kimutai and Zachariah(2012) findings which established a strong theoretical and conceptual base about instructional supervision and organisational commitment advocating that Instructional supervision improves teachers' performance which leads to the satisfaction of the teachers. Similarly Madriaga (2014) establishes that teachers' commitment to their current school is determined by the level of instructional supervision afforded by school leadership and community leadership. The level of and forms of supervision as perceived by secondary school teachers in terms of namely Inspection, assistance and support, oversight responsibilities, leadership skills, professional development and collaboration is influenced by the immediate boss, supervision within schools and outside the schools that is from Education officers, inspectors, District Education officers and provincial education officers. It means that all these categories have an influence on teachers' affective organisational commitment. From both quantitative and qualitative findings, it is evident that of all the distributive factors internal supervisors did not determine teachers' affective organisational commitment; this could be attributed to time, overloaded curriculum because some of the internal supervisors are teaching. Another reason could be that internal supervisors do not understand problems being faced by their core workers and in addition they play a nurturing role to teachers.

The study therefore recommends that

- The employer and the education officials who work with teachers need to know how they can provide support and meet teachers' needs by provision of constant supervision and staff development workshops to enhance teacher competencies
- Educational managers and schools to have an induction policy for school prefects more often
- Chat platforms be provided between teachers and communities/guardians of pupils

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