Transformational Leadership in Schools: Threats and Opportunities in Enhancing School Effectiveness

by

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Abstract
This qualitative case study sought to investigate threats to and opportunities for transformational leadership in 10 purposively sampled primary schools in Harare. Eighty-seven out of 100 research participants responded to an in-depth questionnaire. Non-completion of 13 questionnaires was a limitation. The study found out that changing teachers’ behaviour in a positive way made them feel important to the organisation. It found out that motivating workers to voluntarily and willingly work, made them ready to achieve set goals. Transformational leaders were admired by their teachers for their ability to make teachers do the right things. It can be concluded that motivated workers, especially the intrinsically motivated ones give their best shot in order to produce maximum output to enhance school effectiveness. The researchers went on to conclude that transformational leadership is not a standalone leadership style. Heads need to value teachers in order to promote school effectiveness. Heads need to serve as role models and servant leaders for teachers. Further studies need to be carried out in the same area using other levels of education and quantitative research paradigm.

Introduction
Transformational leadership is an in thing in modern day progressive organisations. This paper explores the degree to which transformational leadership obtains in selected Harare primary schools. Its first section comprises key terms, background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions, and limitations of the study, delimitations of the study and significance of the study. The second section dealt with literature review. The third section focuses on research methodology. The last part is confined to the discussion of findings.

Key Terms
Leadership in this study refers to the leader’s ability to mobilise resources so as to bring about positive change in the workers’ behaviour and attained highly commendable results. It disregards a person’s rank, position, title or status-but it is a responsibility (Northouse, 2004).

This study views transformational leadership in simple terms as a leadership process that changes and transforms individuals. This is echoed by Burns (1978) in Northhouse (2004) who contends that transformational leadership focuses on the exchanges between leaders and their followers.

School effectiveness in the context of this study is all about a school’s ability to achieve its intended aims, goals, targets and objectives. These aims, goals, targets and objectives could be instructional, administrative, curricular or co-curricular based.

The present study views threats as challenges, drawbacks or letdowns that tend to undermine school effectiveness.

The current study regards opportunities as fertile situations presented to school leaders by the threats so that they can capitalise on them in their pursuit of school effectiveness by turning threats into positives.

Background to the Study
Many types of leadership in organisations have been the focus of research since the late 19th century (Yukl, 1994). Chief among them are the scientific, human relations, human resources, autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire, contingency, telling and selling leadership styles (Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert, 2006; Gabriel, 2003; Robbins and Coulter, 2002). One of the current drives towards leadership in organisations since the early 1980s has been the transformational approach. Its focus has been largely on organisations in general. There appears to be a dearth in research on transformational leadership focusing on school situations and its impact on school effectiveness.

Transformational leadership and school effectiveness give organisations a measure of character. Transformational leadership is concerned about leaders who tap motives of followers to reach the goals of leaders and followers (Burns, 1978:18). Again for Burns, leadership is quite different from wielding power because it is inseparable from followers’ needs. It is assumed that if followers’ needs are catered for in organisations, organisational goals are largely achievable, thus, in pursuit of organisational effectiveness. The question worth exploring is the degree to which transformational leadership caters
for teachers’ needs in schools and how well such a focus drives the school towards effectiveness.

Many studies (Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert, 2006; Gilbert, 2003; Robbins and Coulter, 2002; Mullins, 1999; Moorehead and Griffin, 1998; Drucker, 1998; Tracey and Hinkin, 1998; Owens, 1995; Armstrong, 1990; Narasmhau, 2002; Lowe and Gardner, 2001) have focused on transformational leadership in organisations. They did not relate transformational leaders to schools in terms of school effectiveness. They also missed out threats and opportunities associated with transformational leadership in enhancing school effectiveness. It was against this background that this paper qualitatively explored threats and opportunities in connection with transformational leadership’s role in pursuing school effectiveness in 10 selected primary schools in Harare.

Statement of the Problem
Transformational leadership is bound to be circumstantially misunderstood as it covers wide range leadership parameters. These could include creating a vision, motivating, being a change agent, building trust and building confidence to name a few. Also relating transformational leadership to school effectiveness could create further problems in putting its theoretical thrust into practice. The study sought to provide answers to the following question:

How do threats to and opportunities of transformational leadership impact on school effectiveness?

Research Questions
The present study sought to interrogate the following research questions:
- How is transformational leadership in the context of school effectiveness perceived by teachers?
- What do teachers admire in a leader and in a person they are willing to follow?
- What effects do transformational leaders have on teachers in terms of school effectiveness?
- How well does the existence of transformational leadership in schools promote school effectiveness?
- How do threats to transformational leadership in schools let down school effectiveness?
- How well do opportunities to transformational leadership promote school effectiveness?

Limitations of the Study
The study had three limitations. First, it was a case study. It naturally suffers from lack of generalisability (Punch, 2004; Cresswell, 2003). To overcome this limitation we carried out a multiple case study comprising 10 selected primary schools in Harare. We were able to gather data that could be generalised to schools in similar settings. Silverman (2006) supports us by indicating that generalisability in qualitative research is not a big issue, but it is the quality and depth of the data that are gathered that matter most.

Second, the study used an in-depth qualitative questionnaire. According to Leedy (1997), such a research instrument runs the risk of non-completion. To go round this challenge we clearly explained the purpose and significance of the study to the research participants. By doing so, we gained their support but at a cost in terms of patiently waiting for them to fully complete the questionnaire.

Delimitations of the Study
The study was confined to 10 Harare primary schools in the high density residential areas. In terms of theory, the study was confined to threats and opportunities for transformational leadership in the primary schools only.

Significance of the Study
The study was meant to contribute to the existing body of knowledge with regards threats to and opportunities of transformational leadership in the pursuit of school effectiveness. It was also designed to come up with new knowledge that might improve existing trends and practices regarding transformational leadership in schools. Furthermore, the conduct of this study was meant to apply tried and tested ideas of transformational leadership in organisations in the studied schools. Also exposing teachers and school heads to this study’s findings would, in a big way, help them value the role of transformational leadership in achieving school effectiveness. In addition, they would also be capacitated with skills, attitudes and values to deal with threats to transformational leadership in schools in relation to school effectiveness. Last but not least, interested beneficiaries of this study, such as school heads, deputy heads and Teachers-In-Charge (TICs) would be enriched with literature on transformational leadership that would enable them to run their schools not only effectively, but efficiently as well. Above all, teachers, school heads and other interested stakeholders in the other sectors of education might be challenged to carry out similar studies in their work situations.

Literature Review
Perceptions of Transformational Leadership
The term transformational leadership was first coined by Downtown (1973). However, its emergence as an important approach to leadership began with a classic work by the political sociologist James MacGregor Burns titled Leadership (1978). Transformational leadership, according to Bass (1985), in Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (2006:488) is characterised by transformational leaders, ‘motivate us to do more than we originally expected to do - by raising our sense of importance and value our tasks, by getting us to transcend our own self-interests for the sake of the team organisation, or larger policy, and raising our need level to the higher-order needs, as self-actualisation’. In brief, it is about leaders who, through their personal vision and energy to take the organisation to dizzy heights by making them
view problems differently and assume some sense of responsibility. Transformational leadership is sometimes referred to as charismatic leadership. In transformational (charismatic) leadership, a leader occasionally emerges with high visibility and personal charisma that catches the public consciousness (Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert, 2006; Northouse, 2004). Transformational leadership exhibits a leader’s high degree of confidence and direction in order to get things done. It has one weakness that the leader does not solely determine what subordinates do (Gabriel, 2003). It was in the interests of this study to explore the consistency of these perceptions in the studied schools.

Research Methodology

The conduct of this study was rooted in qualitative research paradigm. The qualitative research was chosen for a number of reasons. First, qualitative research enabled researchers to obtain view points and personal feelings from the participants (Green, 2002; Silverman, 2006; Seale, 2006). It also enabled researchers to gain an insight into challenges to and opportunities of transformational leadership in the studied primary schools rather than make an analysis of statistics. The present study employed a qualitative multiple case study design. This design enables researchers to study phenomena in its natural settings in very great depth (Green, 2002). The use of multiple case studies would enable researchers to generalise studies to other similar settings.

Methods and Procedures

The study made use of 100 purposively sampled teachers from 10 selected primary schools in Harare. A purposive sample is a form of non-probability sampling procedures in which research participants appear to meet the study’s needs (Baker, 1999; Nelson, 2001). The study gathered data using an in-depth questionnaire. This data gathering instrument enables researchers to gather data in narrative and descriptive form (Green, 2002; Silverman, 2006). Eighty-seven research participants filled in the in-depth questionnaire. The data would be coded, sorted and categorised according to themes that emerge from the generated data (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Discussion of findings

The present study’s questionnaire return rate was 87 percent. The analysis and discussion of data generated in this study is presented using the following themes:

- Challenges to transformational leadership in school effectiveness
- Opportunities for transformational leadership in the context of school effectiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Research participants by gender (N=87)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 1 shows research participants by gender. Seventy percent of the research participants were females, while 30 percent were males. These results indicate an uneven gender composition of the research participants which might albeit a small sample give a feminine flavour regarding the research participants’ views about transformational leadership in schools in the context of school effectiveness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Distribution of research participants by age (N=87)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age in Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
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<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</table>

Results in Table 2 depict 37 percent of the research participants being aged between 30 and 39, followed by 33 percent aged between 40 and 49, 17 percent aged between 20 and 29 and lastly, 17 percent aged at least 50 years. These age groups give the current researchers an assumption that the research participants under study are mature enough to tell types of leadership obtaining in their schools. They could also be aware of school effectiveness.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 3: Distribution of research participants by professional status (N=87)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-In-Charge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Head</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The professional status of teachers is portrayed in Table 3. Forty-one percent of the research participants were teachers, while 26 percent were senior teachers, 12 percent were school heads, another 12 percent
were deputy heads and 9 percent were Teachers-In-Charge (TICs). These research participants were assumed to be aware of the types of leadership that take place in schools, as well as some of the basics of school effectiveness.

Table 4: Distribution of research participants by academic qualification (N=87)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Qualification</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'O' Level</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'A' Level</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Majority (87%) of the research participants were holders of an 'O' Level as an academic qualification, while 13 percent were holders of an 'A' Level as an academic qualification. These results seem to signify that research participants were academically sound enough to be conscious of types of leadership occurring in their schools and aspects of school effectiveness.

Table 5: Distribution of research participants by professional qualification (N=12)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Qualification</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certificate in Education</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma in Education</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Education Degree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master of Education Degree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The scenario in Table 5 reveals that 32 percent of the research participants were holders of a Diploma in Education, with 31 percent being holders of a Certificate in Education, 23 percent being holders of a Bachelor of Education Degree and 14 percent holding a Master of Education Degree. These results appear to indicate that most of the research participants were trained enough to be aware of some of the aspects of transformational leadership and school effectiveness.

Table 6: Distribution of research participants by experience (N=87)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Experience in Years</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16+</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research participants’ teaching experience is presented in Table 6. Thirty-seven percent of the research participants had a teaching experience ranging from 11 to 15 years, 26 percent having a teaching experience ranging between 6 and 10 years, with 21 percent having a teaching experience ranging from 0 to 5 years and 16 percent whose teaching experience was at least 16 years. These results seem to indicate that cumulatively, the majority (79%) of the research participants had enough experience to enable them to understand transformational leadership in the context of school effectiveness.

Discussion of the actual research findings
Perceptions of Transformational Leadership

The conduct of the study came up with the following four perceptions of transformational leadership:

First, 56 percent of the research participants indicated that transformational leadership is leadership in which leaders strive for changing teachers’ attitudes towards work for the good of the school. This perception is compatible with Northouse’s (2004:169) observation that, ‘As the name implies, transformational leadership is a process that transforms and implies; transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms individuals.” It is also about change, innovation and entrepreneurship (Haldar, 2010). The present researchers contend that transformational leadership is one that positively changes teachers’ behaviour, attitudes, skills values and norms in such a way that school effectiveness is pursued.

Second, 53 percent of the research participants viewed transformational leadership as leadership that motivates teachers to achieve maximum results. Transformational leadership ensures that workers are motivated in doing their work quite well (Gabriel, 2003). Northouse’s (2004:169) takes it a step further by indicating that, ‘Transformational leadership involves an exceptional form of influence that moves followers to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them.’ In the same vein, transformational leadership assumes that followers will follow a person who inspires them (Haldar, 2010). We believe that it values the input of teachers such that they are inspired to work very hard and feel satisfied with their effort. In that regard, school effectiveness largely hardly becomes a dream, but a reality.

Third, 67 percent of the research participants perceive it as leadership associated with leaders who work together with their teachers, pupils and parents in order to achieve set goals. It is about leadership that does not empower the head alone with decision-making skills. Transformational leadership is characterised by active involvement of all stakeholders in the pursuit of organisational effectiveness (Gabriel, 2003; Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert, 2006). We perceive that transformational leadership seeks to empower
everyone at the school with opportunities and authority to be effectively engaged in activities that are deliberately designed to achieve school effectiveness.

Last, 54 percent of the research participants regard it as teacher-centred leadership in that it addresses the concerns of teachers in search for their hard work. Transformational leadership has a big heart for their workers (Gabriel, 2003; Northouse, 2004). Leaders of this nature are assumed to have a tendency to attend to the needs and motives of the teachers. These needs have varying degrees instructionally, curricular-wise, co-curricular wise, administratively and staff development wise. If teachers feel that their needs and motives are given the right attention they are bound to give their best in performing their work. By so doing, we feel that where transformational leadership largely obtains, school effectiveness is achievable to a large extent.

It is participative leadership. To a large measure, transformational leadership is rooted in shared ownership of the organisation (Mullins, 1999). We are of the view that transformational leadership implies four things. First, it is about collective planning of all school activities ranging from resource mobilisation to the evaluation of school goals. Second, it is about shared decisionmaking in which all school decisions are communally owned rather than being the preserve of the school head alone. Third, it is about collaborative commitment to the achievement of school goals which could be instructional, administrative or curricular. Fourth, it is about shared evaluation of school results. Everyone has to identify with the school’s achievements. The school head and the teachers believe the school business is their baby which they need to nurse together. Under such a scenario, the talk of school effectiveness is bound to be a reality.

**Personal Characteristics and Behaviours that Teachers Admire in Transformational Leaders in the Pursuit of School Effectiveness**

The study revealed a number of personal characteristics and behaviours that teachers admire in transformational leadership that may have some influence on school effectiveness. With regards to personal characteristics of transformational leaders admired by teachers, the study revealed that:

Sixty-five percent of the research participants were content that transformational leaders possessed the desire to influence their followers in order to get things done. This finding is consistent with (Gabriel, 2003; Northouse, 2004; Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert, 2006) observations that transformational leaders possess referent and reward power. Through referent power, school leaders are able to lead by example in setting high and realistic standards of work performance. If this is properly done, teachers may develop the desire to be like or identify with the head, and more importantly with the school. In regard to the possession of reward power, a transformational leader would have the ability to reward teachers for carrying out orders, duties or tasks according to plan and expectations. Proper use of reward power coupled with referent power makes teachers admire their heads and this may help make school effectiveness a real focus.

Sixty-three percent of the research participants indicated that transformational leaders are admired by their subordinates if they possess dominance, confidence and strong values. They possess dominance in terms in crafting a vision which they eventually share and agree upon with their followers. They are also characterised by a high degree of confidence in working with the teachers in the pursuit of school effectiveness. Above all, they possess strong values which help them focus on goal attainment.

In connection with behaviours that workers admire in transformational leaders, the study revealed 73% of the research participants pointing out that transformational leadership exhibits leadership behaviour that sets strong role model. According to Northouse (2004), transformational leaders possess charisma which gives them a special gift that gives them the capacity to do extraordinary things. We feel that when a school head has the ability to do extraordinary things in managing and leading the school, he/she is likely to serve as a role model. They are more likely to assist teachers to meet high expectations in their overall work performance, thus, pursuing school effectiveness.

It also exhibited that 71% of the research participants indicating that transformational leaders show competence as one of the leadership behaviours. We are of the opinion that when school heads work together with their teachers and demonstrate a high degree of direction, skills and expertise, they are bound to be competent leaders. As transformational leaders; they can empower their teachers by imparting their competence to their teachers in their bid to achieve school effectiveness.

Sixty-four percent of the research participants perceived that transformational leaders are characterised by a behaviour in which they exhibit ability to articulate goals. To them goal articulation is not an individualised process. Transformational leadership is about collective identity with the organisation (Northouse, 2004). It is best achieved through team work which can be best achieved through various committees and task forces at the school.

One other transformational leadership behaviour that 58 percent of the research participants highly regard is leaders’ ability to express confidence in dealing with school work. If heads cannot show
confidence in the goals they set or activities they will be implementing, they will be moving parallel with school effectiveness. Such confidence is achieved through collective goalsetting, shared decision-making and planning and collaborative evaluation.

Another transformational leadership behaviour that 54 percent of the research participants came up with is the transformational leader’s ability to arouse strong motives in the workers. Transformational leaders, as charismatic leaders, help achieve this cause by emphasising intrinsic rewards and de-emphasising extrinsic rewards (Conger, 1999; Conger and Kanungo, 1998). In practice, real transformational leaders reap more rewards in staff developing by furthering their professional qualifications for teachers than giving them a pay rise. A pay rise as an extrinsic reward is not as long lasting as giving teachers opportunities to further their studies.

Effects that Transformational Leaders have on Teachers and School Effectiveness
The study went on to find out some of the effects that transformational leaders have on teachers and school effectiveness.

Fifty-one percent of the research participants indicated the view that a transformational leader has one’s effects on one’s followers as trust in the leader’s ideology. This view is in tandem with Northouse (2004) who observed that one of the effects of transformational leaders on followers include trust in the leader’s ideology. They influence and persuade teachers to be like them or think like them through charisma that is subsumed in referent power.

Fifty-eight percent of the research participants were of the opinion that another effect that transformational leaders have on teachers is the belief in collegiality between the head and the teachers. In agreement with the preceding view, Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (2006) and Gabriel (2003) argue that transformational leaders believe in similarity between the leaders and followers. In a school situation, such leaders derole themselves and operate on the same wavelength with their teachers during lesson planning, lesson presentation, lesson evaluation and participation in co-curricular activities. Such assumed equality presents heads and teachers with equal opportunities to direct their committed efforts towards school effectiveness.

Sixty percent of the research participants also identified a high degree of acceptance of transformational leaders by teachers. In concurrence with this position, Mullins (1999) talks about unquestioned acceptance of the leader by one’s followers. We feel that teachers do not question leaders’ acceptance because of fear, instead they do not question their leaders’ acceptance because of team spirit and same school identity and ownership. This effect goes along with related effects of school heads on teachers such as obedience, affection toward the leader and identification with the leader. All things being equal, the manner in which the school head is accepted by teachers largely determines the degree to which school effectiveness is attainable.

Seventy percent of the research participants held the view that another transformational leaders’ effect on teachers manifests itself through high set standards. According to Conger (1999) one of the greatest effects of leaders on their followers is best seen through heightened goals. We feel that very high and realistic goals in all school activities within the teachers’ capabilities often go in a long way in helping the school to deliberately drive towards effectiveness.

Eighty-two percent of the research participants believed that one other critical effect of transformational leaders on teachers is confidence that both heads and teachers show in carrying out their day-to-day work. This finding compares favourably with Northouse (2004) who found out that transformational leaders impart increased confidence on their subordinates. By implication, when teachers show confidence in their leaders, it follows that they execute their instructional and co-curricular duties in confidence, thereby, moving towards school effectiveness.

Strengths of Transformational Leaders in the Context of School Effectiveness
The study managed to highlight some of the possible strengths associated with transformational leaders in the context of school effectiveness. Most (71%) of the research participants viewed a positive self-concept of the leader as one of the strengths associated with transformational leadership in schools. A good leader believes in oneself (Gabriel, 2003). Emphasising this finding, three research participants concurred that: school leaders with a positive self-concept are usually confident and self-motivated whenever they are undertaking their day-to-day work. Confident heads help their teachers become confident with their work as well. A school head with self-belief is usually committed, dedicated and devoted to the achievement of heightened realistic instructional, administrative and co-curricular goals. Such a head is focused and ever goal-directed in pursuit of school effectiveness.

Another strength of transformational leadership that the majority (68%) of the research participants identified was the leader’s enthusiasm for the job. Northouse (2004) refers to this practice as a passion for the job. We view it as a strong love for the job. Where a school head shows he/she has a passion for the job, one is bound to be very committed and keen to achieve set school goals—and the converse is true. One other strength of transformational leadership which most (65%) of the research participants pinpointed was the head’s attachment to the teachers. Gabriel (2003) and Northouse (2004) describe this scenario as the leader’s love for followers. In this case a school head is proud to be identified with one’s staff.
He/she involves them in key decision-making activities such as ordering resources. He/she supports them professionally, academically and socially. To underscore this finding one research participant indicated that: It is pleasurable to work with school heads who share school identity or ownership with their teachers because they really work together in order to achieve set school goals. Heads are like army generals who manage from the trenches. Such heads will be prepared to own school results with their teachers-regardless of the goodness or badness of the results. In that regard, at the back of foregoing heads’ minds would be the intention to achieve school effectiveness.

Along with the strength of transformational leadership, that is, leader’s love for the followers is the leader’s possession of ethics. Sixty-four percent of the research participants felt that the leader’s possession of ethics was another benefit of transformational leaders. Avolio (1999) supports this strength of transformational leadership as the one that is fundamentally uplifting. Such an emphasis suggests that transformational leadership has a moral dimension which could situationally disregard aspects of the coercive uses of power by leaders. To underline this finding, one research participant pointed out that: Real transformational school heads do not love their teachers in order to gain favours or favour them in the hope of getting support in future. Instead, they love their teachers because of their work results, work effort and work commitment. School leaders who display such love are deemed morally upright. They know what is good or right when dealing with their teachers. School effectiveness becomes a reality where a school head upholds moral values that one’s teachers cherish.

Besides the possession of ethics by transformational leadership, transformational leaders could be highly motivational to their followers. Seventy percent of the research participants indicated that transformational leaders motivate their followers quite a great deal. Bass (1985:20) in support of this finding argues that transformational leadership motivates followers to do more than the expected by doing the following three things:

- Raising the followers’ levels of consciousness about the importance and value of specified and idealised goals.
- Getting followers transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the team or organisation.
- Moving the followers to address higher levels of needs.

It can be argued that where teachers are highly motivated, the level of goal achievement will be high, thus, promoting school effectiveness. However, it should be noted that goal attainment largely depends on the level of intrinsic motivation of the teachers who will be self-motivated and self-starters to perform their work willingly and voluntarily, unlike extrinsically motivated teachers who will only wait for rewards such as a pay rise to perform in the short-term.

A key strength of transformational leadership, as perceived by 59 percent of the research participants, is the aspect of inclusivity in managing and leading teachers with diverse views. In this regard, they will be trying to act as change agents who initiate and implement new directions within organisations (Northouse, 2004). One research participant rightly indicated that:

Acceptance of many views regarding school development is healthy as they help bringing about positive changes in the school’s teaching, discipline, administration and sports. Teachers and their heads work as a team in coming up with the best alternative strategies of discharging their duties effectively. In schools, such leaders are prepared to listen to opposing view-points within the schools as well as threats to the schools that may arise from outside the schools. Under such circumstances, the school heads are able to cater for individual differences among their teachers such that they may derive maximum effort and participation by teachers. By so doing, school effectiveness will be largely promoted.

**Threats to Transformational Leadership in Relation to School Effectiveness**

In spite of having a plethora of strengths associated with transformational leadership, the present study also managed to come up with some likely threats to transformational leadership particular to the schools under study.

The first threat to transformational leadership that 61 percent of the research participants identified as critical was that it is rather difficult to define in simple terms. One criticism is that it lacks conceptual clarity (Northouse, 2004; Tracey and Hinkin, 1998; Yukl, 1999). We feel that because of its wide coverage, transformational leadership includes aspects of creating a vision, motivating, being a change agent, building trust, giving nurturance and acting as a social architect make it hard to define. One research participant emphasised this scenario by indicating that: When a school is good, the head is quick to claim its ownership, but when it is bad, it is bad vision, practices and results belong to teachers rather than the school head. A failure to explicitly define transformational leadership is tantamount to failure in school effectiveness. Collective ownership of school vision coupled with trust, positive motivation and readiness to accept change are central to efforts to clarify transformational leadership.

Most (65%) of the research participants noted that transformational leadership’s directed focus was more on the leader as a person than one’s behaviour as one of its other challenges. According to Bryman (1992:100), a third criticism some have made is that, ‘transformational leadership treats leadership as a personal trait or a personal disposition rather than a
Opportunities for Transformational Leadership and School Effectiveness

Despite having some challenges to transformational leadership, some opportunities for this type of school leadership emerged from the conduct of the current study. Achievement of transformational leadership is not a single shot event. It is an on-going process in which school heads have to learn on the job all the time. One research participant noted that: Training aspiring and serving heads using modules on school management, leadership and administration is critical in assisting them to attain national standards and real colleagueship with their teachers. The preceding research participant’s sentiments are largely true because transformational leaders really need functional theoretical and practical knowledge of management and leadership styles if ever their schools are to be run effectively. In the studied schools, most of the research participants (79%) highly regarded the availability of open and distance learning opportunities as a starting point for promoting transformational leadership in schools.

Also school heads need to share experiences with school heads of well run schools in the cluster/district/province. Ten research participants indicated that cluster school heads need to resuscitate cluster supervision of the 990s. This practice used to ensure quality in the running of schools, together with their teaching business. Such a practice, as perceived by 74 percent of the research participants is bound to bring back heads’ abilities to:
1. Manage teaching and learning situations;
2. Manage teachers;
3. Manage school policies and plans;
4. Manage school resources.

Based on the above findings, school heads could best learn how to change their teachers’ attitudes, skills and behaviours in the manner that promotion of school effectiveness would be a possibility.

Search for professionalism in school management and leadership is one of the hallmarks of transformational leadership and school effectiveness. Sixty-four percent of the research participants pointed out that professionalism, as an opportunity in transformational leadership, is earned through leader’s possession of professional values such as:
1. Commitment to self-evaluation.
2. Commitment to continued learning and researching so as to extend boundaries of knowledge and understanding.
3. Commitment to the achievement of school’s core and educational values.

It is common knowledge that school heads that possess or are given opportunities to attain the above professional values are highly likely to promote school effectiveness. Their teachers will be focused and goal-directed. Both the head and the teachers will aim to achieve school excellence -a passport to school effectiveness.

These research findings appear to agree with what was found out in the Annual Report by the HM Chief Inspector of Schools in England who pointed out that: Most schools are well led, but leadership is poor in one in seven primary and in one in ten secondary schools. The weakest schools are inevitably the victims of poor management and leadership. The converse is true for successful leadership (OFSTED, 1997:8 in the International Studies in Educational Administration, 2001). It is common knowledge that schools that are poorly managed, run and led are devoid of effectiveness. It is also clear from the preceding quotation that possession of certain characteristics makes leaders either effective or ineffective.

Transformational leadership, according to the perceptions of 53 percent of the research participants, may be misused or abused. Northouse (2004) argues that a big challenge to transformational leadership is its potential to be abused because of its concern to change people’s values and moving them to a new vision. Problems arise in terms of deciding new directions and perceived better decisions. In practice, it is not always the case that teachers will fully understand their heads’ visions, thus, conflict becomes inevitable- much to the detriment of school effectiveness. To underscore this scenario, one research participant had this to say: School heads with a poor self-concept are fond of imposing their half-baked visions on the teachers without putting any thoughts on the likely consequences of such actions. Under such circumstances, teachers lack organisational identity. They do not support the head’s exclusive practices in decision-making.

Sixty two percent of the research participants indicated that not all leaders have competencies as one other threat to transformational leadership that militates against the promotion of school effectiveness. Some of the headship in schools, as four research participants observe:

1. School heads sometimes lack organisational power.
2. Some school heads do not have the ability to carry out action research in order to assist them to solve localised organisational challenges and problems.
3. School heads sometimes emphasise achievement of school goals at the expense of their individual teachers’ goals.
4. Some school heads do not live up to the standards of actual teaching, yet they are supposed to supervise and teach teachers to know how to efficiently and effectively teach.

behaviour in which people can be instructed.’ Under such circumstances, if leadership is a trait, in-service training, inducting and staff developing teachers become more problematic because it is hard to teach and influence people how to change their traits. In that scenario, school effectiveness is kept at bay to a large extent.

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One other area where opportunities in transformational leadership can be practised is through heads’ practical abilities. Fifty-seven percent of the research participants indicated that heads need to lead by example all the time. True leaders are highly visible and they set examples (Hesslebein, Goldsmith, and Beckhard, 1996). One research participant indicated that she/he does not like to work under a school head who sounds like a foreigner to the school. Another one pointed out that he/she is unhappy to work with a school head that delegates duties rather than delegating them. According to 48 percent of the research participants’ responses, school heads need to exhibit interpersonal abilities and intellectual abilities. These are best learnt through school-based staff development, clinical lesson supervision and further education sessions.

Transformational leadership can derive benefits from opportunities of mentoring. Two research participants agreed that good school heads have mentors who they look up to for inspiration and guidance. In practice, where school heads have model leaders in the form of Education/District Education Officers (EOs/DEOs), they are to learn effective and efficient school leadership and management from their seniors. In a bid to perfect their art of running schools, subject to the availability of resources, EOs sometimes hold workshops and seminars on effective and efficient school leadership and management. The onus is on the school heads to decide whether to learn or not to. The head’s choice to be mentored largely determines how that head will run his/her school.

Opportunities for transformational leaders to survive in the competitive working environment are seen through vibrant and regular research. One research participant indicated that opportunities for successful schools are a result of the nature and frequency of action research that goes on in a particular school. We subscribe to this research participant’s sentiment on the grounds that action research helps heads and teachers to solve localised administrative and instructional problems and challenges. It empowers school personnel with informed decision-making skills and abilities which ultimately help them achieve school effectiveness.

Transformational leadership is somehow measured through corporate responsibility of the school heads and their teachers. According to the opinions of two research participants, school heads can exercise corporate governance through exposing learners to civic education so that they will be able to know their responsibilities, duties and rights. This observation is valid, but not enough on its own because transformational leaders need to be people of unquestionable integrity. We view them as ethical beacons and morally upright stalwarts. It may be argued that schools with just leaders, teachers are treated fairly and with respect in the hope of obtaining maximum productivity from them, thereby, promoting school effectiveness.

**Summary and conclusions**

In the light of the foregoing discussion of findings the following summary and conclusions suffice.

**The concept of transformational leadership**

Transformational leadership, as a concept, is perceived as leadership which is about:

- Changing the behaviour of followers in order to make them realise that they are an important component of the school as an organisation. It can be concluded that teachers who are highly regarded by their school head tend to work to the best of their ability in search for school effectiveness.
- Motivating workers to work voluntarily and willingly in order to achieve set school goals. When that happens it may be concluded that motivated workers, especially the intrinsically motivated ones give their best shot in order to produce maximum output. They are inspired and stimulated to work for the good of their schools. In that regard, school effectiveness does not become elusive.
- Focusing on the workers’ needs in order to balance school goals and individual teacher’s goals. By way of conclusion teachers who feel that their goals are catered for by their school head usually put maximum effort in their work so as to promote school effectiveness.
- Practising participative leadership in schools. School heads who involve their teachers in planning, goal-setting, and evaluation are likely to promote school effectiveness since every member of staff would regard school goal achievement as a high stake job.

**Personal characteristics and behaviours that teachers admire in transformational leaders**

The following are some of the personal characteristics and behaviours that teachers admire in transformational leaders:

- Teachers might admire their heads as transformational leaders if heads have an ability to influence workers in order to get things done the right way. It appears that some of them employ reward and referent power bases in order to influence their teachers to do well in their work. Reward power, especially the use of extrinsic motivation might have to be employed with caution because teachers work hard for a very short time just after the award of an extrinsic reward such as a pay rise. Such rewards are externally induced and not long lasting.
- Heads are admired or loved by their teachers very much for their ability to make teachers do the right things. They do not seek popularity or fame. Results make them earn respect and promote school effectiveness.
- Heads who truly serve as role models are admired by their teachers. They assist teachers to know the best way to teach, thereby, pursing school effectiveness. Such model behaviour for teachers with high expectations and confidence.
- Admirable heads show competence and confidence as parts of their behaviours. They demonstrate a high degree of commitment and servant leadership in a bid to make sure that school effectiveness is
made a reality. They do not hide behind higher offices in order to get things done threatening teachers using official language. They are servant leaders because they do not think about themselves only, but they attempt to balance school and teachers interests with theirs.

- Admired heads employ collective goal articulation so that everyone will develop a sense of belonging to one’s school. In essence, shared school identity and ownership will not give room for teachers to let their system, thus, school effectiveness will not be elusive.

**Effects of transformational leadership on school effectiveness**

In regard to effects of transformational leadership on school effectiveness:

- Teachers are persuaded to think like the head through the heads’ charisma and referent power. That way they share the head’s vision, focus and direction. The shared thinking and ideology might be helpful in meeting school effectiveness if the school head and teachers are fully agreed on and committed to it. School effectiveness is bound to become a common phenomenon if the heads and teachers adopt a communal decision-making approach.

- Collegiality reigns supreme in well-led schools. In practice, where teachers and heads treat each other as colleagues, work becomes normal as play as opposed to a situation where boss-servant relationship prevails. Collegiality, to a large extent, is a gateway to school effectiveness.

- High acceptance of school heads by teachers is, to a large measure, evident in schools that exercise transformational leadership. Accepted heads also accept their teachers as well. Under such circumstances nobody pulls anybody down. In that regard, school effectiveness is largely promoted.

- Confidence is common practice among school heads and teachers that cherish transformational leadership. School personnel that work with confidence coupled with direction, focus and motivation hardly fails to achieve set goals, thus, promoting school effectiveness.

**Strengths of transformational leadership in the context of school effectiveness**

The following were found to be some of the strengths of transformational leadership:

- A positive self-concept of the school head sets the tone for the achievement of school effectiveness. It gives them confidence, hope and direction in order to get things done the right way.

- A leader’s love for one’s job is an indicator of school effectiveness. Leaders with a job at their heart drive teachers in a moving way that makes them feel comfortable to carry out their work. They, however, need not be obsessed with work as this might work against their goal achievement.

- A passion of work ethics enables workers and their leaders to be viewed as professionals of high integrity. They are bound to know what is and what is wrong in their work performance. A knowledge of work ethics by all school personnel is one of the vehicles to the achievement of school effectiveness.

- Inclusivity is exercised ahead of exclusivity. School heads are tolerant of divergent views from their teachers. They accept teachers as individuals. They employ different leadership styles to suit different needs of individual teachers. In practice, where everyone is given value, goal achievement largely becomes a success.

**Threats to transformational leadership in relation to school effectiveness**

As far as threats to transformational leadership in relation to school effectiveness are concerned:

- Transformational leadership is hardly definable in simple terms because it borrows aspects of transactional, autocratic, contingency and democratic leadership styles. By implication, it seems not a standalone leadership style.

- Transformational leadership is subject to abuse or misuse. Where both teachers and heads do not understand its implications for school leadership, it is highly likely to be abused. Sometimes heads might capitalise on the teachers’ ignorance to abuse them by providing them with inadequate resources that are not consistent with set goals.

- Not all leaders have the right competencies to help them efficiently and effectively run schools. Leadership is a virtue. It is not a right; otherwise, it might be abused or misused if it is taken as a right. Absence of the right competencies in the leaders negatively impacts on the school effectiveness.

- Absence of school resources and training opportunities for serving and aspiring leaders work against school effectiveness.

**Opportunities for transformational leadership in enhancing school effectiveness**

Opportunities for transformational leadership in the context of school effectiveness demonstrate that:

- Transformational leadership is dynamic. It is situation specific. It is not rigid. It is leadership for good present and better future.

- True leadership is learnt by observing others leading and through mentorship. True headship is seen through a head’s practical abilities. An effective leader is highly visible. He/she sets examples.

- Real leadership is about assuming a responsibility. It is not like a toy present that one gets excited about. It is about promoting school effectiveness.

- It is like beef of best quality or hot cakes which easily sell themselves. The outsiders can quickly notice the degree of school effectiveness that is obtaining in the studied primary schools without asking anybody.
• Transformational leaders strive for excellence every time. They view operational excellence together with their teachers as one of the most drivers of high performance.
• Transformational leadership is all about achievement of 4 Es: Energy, Energise, Execute and Edge.
• True leaders are not divorced from research. Just like in the world of academics, transformational leaders either decide to research or perish. Research is a cornerstone to the achievement of school effectiveness.

Recommendations
In view of the foregoing summary and conclusions, the study recommends:
• The need for heads to treat their teachers with respect and value all the time.
• The need for heads to employ participative leadership practices with sincerity through delegation of tasks that seeks to empower teachers rather than relating them into the oblivion.
• The need for heads to balance school and individual teachers’ school goals in the wake of unfavourable macro-economic environment in order to achieve school effectiveness.
• The need for keeping teachers motivated both intrinsically and extrinsically so as to derive maximum productivity from them in the interests of school effectiveness.
• Achievement of excellent results which put schools to the best light among competing schools so that schools and their personnel earn themselves a reputation of effectiveness.
• That heads serve as role models, colleagues and servant leaders who lead with teachers at heart in order to achieve set goals.
• The need for building culture of work ethics and inclusivity in discharging all school duties such that nobody would be left worse-off.
• The need for provision of adequate resources, regular staff development and training opportunities for both in-post and aspiring heads so that they will be conversant with the best possible situations to apply transformational leadership to their work situations.
• The need for carrying out regular action research which helps heads to explore best practices that would enable them to solve localised administrative, instructional and co-curricular problems.
• Mentoring school heads on effective leadership by mounting refresher and inducting leadership courses both at cluster and district levels.
• Imparting effective leadership competencies to school heads and their teachers through open and distance learning opportunities provided by institutions like the Zimbabwe Open University.
• Further research be carried in the same area at national level using other levels of education and other research paradigms.

References


