

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES: A CASE STUDY TO UNDERSTAND TEACHER-SELF-REPORTED EXPERIENCES WITH EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP APPROACHES USED IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ZIMBABWE

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Abstract

The *purpose* of this mixed methods study was to understand and describe self-reported experiences with effective School Improvement strategies used by school heads in primary and secondary schools. Focus group interviews and surveys with parents, school heads and teachers helped to inform the research questions identified for this study. The overall *findings* reveal that schools' organizational efficacy is collectively achieved when school headmasters practice and implement instructional leadership strategies and behaviors gleaned through the following five broad professional growth-oriented themes emerging from this study: (a) using inclusive leadership strategies; (b) encouraging team-work among teachers; (c) teacher participating in collective information gathering to create a shared school vision; (d) and leadership helping to fulfill contractual agreements among teachers, students and parents; and (e) ensuring availability of instructional resources and technology. From the findings of the current study, we reached the general *conclusion* that information availability and processing at school level will always allow for increased collective participation by teachers in the school improvement (SI) agenda through the enhancement of holistic organizational learning power. Schools that learn as organizations improve fast.

Keywords: Collaborative efforts; School Improvement (SI); School Improvement Strategies (SIS); Organizational learning; Organizational effectiveness; Teacher professional growth

Background to the Study

This study was conducted in the Zimbabwean context where policies of education widely influence school leadership, the way teachers perform their work; and how students are taught and evaluated. The Zimbabwean Ministry of Education and Culture is a highly centralized system both in its organization and procedures although a few functions are continuously being decentralized to the Regional Education Offices. The centralized education system in Zimbabwe influences most aspects of education including school enrollment policies, curriculum evaluation standards, and the distribution of available key curriculum materials, evaluation and measurement of learning—including testing, and staffing of most schools (Nzirasanga Commission, 1999; Ministry of Education, 2012;). Some of these centralized tendencies influence ways in which leadership at school level is fostered and ultimately how it influences teaching and learning outcomes and eventually school improvement pace. After independence, Zimbabwe slowly phased out control of the British Cambridge education system and its curriculum, adopting the new Zimbabwean curriculum that is headed by the Zimbabwe Secondary Examination Council (ZIMSEC).

Currently all Zimbabwean schools follow a basic national curriculum, although they have open latitude to include aspects of the British curriculum which offers the Cambridge School Certificate subjects in addition to the current changes in technology (Ministry of Education, 2012). Most private schools offer a hybrid curriculum which allows students to fulfill both local and the Cambridge Examination systems with permission from the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education. However, private schools which operate on open enrollment platform zones perform better than public schools in many ways, because of availability of materials resources, reduced teacher pupil ratios, student selection and enrollment procedures; and the inclusion of technology in their curriculum. In general, employment and university enrolment tendencies show that private institutions graduates are better empowered by the broadened curriculum when compared to graduates from public and rural schools (Stevenson, 2001; Stronge, 2002; Ministry of Education, 2012). However, even those public schools that are known to perform outstandingly use selective methods for enrolling new students. This allows them only to enroll high performers and to use methods that help students to graduate with improved grades (Sergiovanni, 1997; Sutton, 2000; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006).

Conceptualizing School Improvement from a Global Perspective

School Improvement (SI) has been conceptualized as a critical tenet indicator and strategy for the development of education and school improvement processes (Hallinger, & Hart, 2000; Silins & Mulford, 2002).

Accumulating evidence from research indicates that effective schools continue to develop first their instructional staff as a distinct means for achieving school improvement by encouraging use of newly learned instructional skills (Kruse, 2003; Madhlangobe, Johnson, & Gordon, 2008). Therefore, professional development and continuous review of teacher training curriculum are both critical to SI (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1998; Bodrova, & Leong, 2004; Madhlangobe, et al., 2008; Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon, 2010). Literature shows that, in most cases, when educationists focus on the concept of school improvement in general, their common emphasis and strategies for improving schools is placed on what students achieve in standardized tests and examinations only (Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). Borrowing from literature, we hold the belief that SI should be viewed as a wider concept when compared to the current general emphasis given to student achievement as the only conception of developing education and achieving school improvement in Zimbabwe (Beck & Murphy, 1994; Sergiovanni, 1997; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Madhlangobe, 2009).

The concept of school improvement in Zimbabwe as viewed through the Better Schools program is still veiled with just the writing the school progress report card based on class progress lists, a top 10 student-scoreboard of achieved high points in standardized tests—making the whole concept of SI too narrow and unresponsive to industry and commerce expectations and needs (Ellis, & Shpilberg, 2003; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Schechter, 2008). If the concept of school improvement is qualified by such words as *better schools*, *outstanding schools*, *top ten students*, *top 100 schools*, *zero pass-rate*; and *best student*, to what extent do these qualifiers help to mould effective school innovation and to develop education in general? In my view, and those of abundant research findings, SI should be understood in ways that allow educators and interested communities to appropriately implement leadership foci, parenting, education policy and teaching behaviors that ensure school settings move the education achievement system and processes toward a strategic understanding of the students and teachers from a broader perspective (Calhoun, 1994; Brookfield, 1995; Stronge, 2002; Brookfield, 2005; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Madhlangobe, 2009). Clearly, when doing research, educationists and theorists need to refocus their attention on how to concretize the general understanding of *what to look at when writing a school report*, *student report* and *the overall school contribution to educational development* report card. Informed understanding of SI will lead to significant change of teaching-learning processes at school and classroom levels (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1998; Dembo, & Seli, 2008). Therefore, there is need for research that aims to produce supervision models that may help schools to understand SI as a

process and context where school leadership creates committees that use data to measure effectiveness of teaching behaviors (Ellis, & Shpilberg, 2003; Silins & Mulford, 2002; Glickman et al., 2010). Available literature (Sergiovanni, 1997; Stronge, 2002; Danielian, 2009) reveals that any collected data on standards of education should be used to evaluate school effectiveness by providing continuous feedback loops that in-turn help schools to be responsive. In their broad understanding of SI through supervision, Glickman et al., (2010) see educational feedback-loop-actions as help lines that define procedures used by teachers to systematically collect, share and process information that may be used to restructure instructional approaches for school improvement purposes.

Purpose and Significance of Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how educational practitioners in schools view and comprehend effective SI strategies in a Zimbabwean context and to create a framework that may lead to a broadened focus for helping policy makers, school leaders and teachers to systematically collect relevant data for creating school profiles that will define the improvement levels of their schools.

Research Questions

The following two research questions guided this study,

- How do educationists and parents as stake holders view and define school improvement from their diverse perspectives?
- In their own perspectives, how do teachers describe their experiences with successful school improvement strategies or lack of it through the diverse aspects of the schools system?

To achieve the purpose that WE set out to investigate both schools and any other external interested institutions were invited to help describe their experiences with SI *looks, sounds and feels like* in the contexts of their schools.

Literature Review

According to literature, organizations that show interest in educational improvement may be viewed in terms of their relationships with the school, from their internal or external contexts of the school (Mezirow, 1981; Goddard, & Goddard, 2001). Therefore, internal institutions that participated in this study included secondary schools or communities that have vested interests in the students that graduate from the primary schools under study. In this context, secondary schools that enroll graduates of primary schools are considered external organizations in that they are involved in the evaluation of graduates from the primary school. In this

study, external sources included organizational groups outside the education system that have invested interests in Ministry of Education products for employment purposes. However, within the same Ministry of education, there are other groups that are external to their sister organization and hence they may be qualified to evaluate the quality of education provided by their sister groups below them.

If research fails to collect data from these diverse sources, that may lead to a vacuum of information that is needed to help understand appropriate approaches that have the potential to increase learning and bring about change (Noddings, 1986; Goddard, Hoy & Woolfolk, 2000; Ellis & Shpilberg, 2003). The big question is *how should education processes be designed first and then implemented to be aligned to the ever changing external environment to the schools?* Clear answers to this question will help understand what education development and school improvement should look like and how the wider world should feel the impact of education (Hallinger, & Hart, 2000; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006). All teaching-learning activities that follow the definition provided by answers to the question above may help educational leaders to ensure that students acquire knowledge, values and skills that positively impact nationally shared aspirations, belief and technical skills that define progress and indeed education quality (Dewey, 1933). Since the purpose of this study was to help develop a hypothetical model that connects school authorizes and their practices to the ideal collective sense of school effectiveness at primary and secondary schools, SI is still a new phenomenon in Zimbabwe and for this reason, in this study we place it at the centre of understanding how it may influence economic growth and viewing it as a pathway for helping Zimbabwe to emerge from the current *national economic development depression* which all institutions with a vested interest in national development need to address. For this study therefore, we wanted to understand how participants viewed and created a model of educational development through the school improvement strategies that work—all of which define quality and development of education (Heritage, & Yeagley, 2005). To ensure that the purpose is fully achieved, we had to look at the model from the context of relationships among three (3) variables that influence school improvement: leadership, parenting and instructional practice all of which promote effective teaching-learning. From this model, we hope schools in Zimbabwe will not take their eyes off the ball each time they open the doors to new student at the beginning of each school year. Next, we turn to the theoretical framework that guides our inquiry.

Theories Guiding School Improvement

Literature from decades of research shows that scholars view SI as a way for continuously matching needs of institutions that employ graduates from the education system (Mead, 1934; SchoEn, 1987; Joyce, & Showers, 1995; Sergiovanni, & Starrat 1998; Popper, & Lipshitz, 1998; Hallinger, & Hart, 2000; Fillon, 2007). However, in this study we extend that view by embracing the understanding that SI should be viewed from the perspective of those interested in the learning outcomes of students graduating from schools as tools for national development. Therefore, when considered from this lens, SI becomes a key component for ensuring that instructional strategies achieved through effective leadership and supervision approaches meet the standards required for school and educational efficacy in general (Dewey, 1933; Silins et al., 2002; Glickman et al., 2010). In order for schools to improve, and ultimately for education to develop, schools should design strategic instructional processes that respond to the ever changing external environments—hence a need for leadership approaches and teaching styles that build their internal capacity to be able to answer to the external needs and questions (Sheppard, 1996; Fullan, 2000; Kruse, 2003). When schools move with times and provide students with skills that are parallel, but advanced in their capacity for consistently for introducing *innovations and reforms* that have inbuilt power for producing in the students, the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that respond to external demands, then we are able to define those schools with absolute certainty as *improving institutions*. Creative educational innovations speak volumes about teaching-learning processes in addition to educational leadership and supervision. Critiques of the Better Schools Programme emphasize that most schools that join the BSP do that only as a measure for the schools to be classified *first* as better schools, and that once they are registered in the BSP, such schools view any other development issues as besides labels (SchoEn, 1987; Silins et al., 2002). Therefore, regardless of how they perform, leaders may continue to hide behind the banner of BSP although nothing is available to show the better status of growth related to the better schools class they joined. In this study, the question that seeks answers is; *what change aspects do BSPs bring to the table of continuous school improvement? When and with what evidence do those schools become best?*

Accumulating evidence shows that schools that succeed normally use strategies that involve continuous information sharing, data collection for effective decision making based on accountability and observable school reforms that distinguish them from struggling schools (Richardson, 2002; Joyce, & Showers, 1995; Goddard, et al., 2000). Recently in 2014, some Zimbabwean schools that appeared in the press with zero-pass rates were also registered under the BSP. Modern schools need leadership and

instructors who collectively continue to find strategies that help to restructure teaching approaches for purposes of achieving improved learning outcomes. The schools should use clear committees that collect, analyze and share data with all faculty members for purposes of improving the entire school. Sharing data will lead to the introduction of systematic changes that benefit faculty members and students (Bandura, 1993; Stein, Smith, & Silver, 1999; Smith, Hofer, Gillespie, Solomon, & Rowe, 2003; Danielian, 2009). The importance of collective use of information to improve schools is that any data collected by the schools may be in the form of numbers, stories and figures or graphs all of which will be relevant to reflect the performance of the school and at times specific performance by each member (Popper & Lipshitz, 2000). Therefore, the five (5) phases of institutional information processing may include that: (a) teachers should acquire information first, (b) teachers share collected data with the specific purposes to increase collective institutional understanding; (c) Once the data has been shared it will impact effective collective data interpretation by all members of the school; (d) when teachers have collected, shared, and interpreted information, that will lead to increased collective learning power at school level; and (e) the teachers and leadership will all have a common institutional data base that will help maintain a collective teacher focus on school goals. Below we discuss in detail the impact of each of the phases that define information processing at institutional level,

- Teachers Acquire Information. In effective schools, teachers are exposed to students' stories regarding teacher impact on their learning, they should be encouraged to experiment with diverse teaching-learning approaches, listen to sources of school self-evaluation comments, information from external organizations' success strategies, learn about new technologies and how they impact schools and observe approaches that work from experienced teachers and other experts (Ballou, & Podgursky, 1995; Fullan, 2001 & 2002; Madhlangobe, 2009; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). Acquiring all these forms of information has the following forms of impact outcomes on school improvement, information

- promotes student achievement—teachers with greater information bases learn more than those by teachers with less levels of information bases
- supports and develops a talented and committed staff—through sharing ideas
- builds a solid organizational structure on which continuous school improvement will rest and continue to improve
- helps the school leader to continuously guide schools—to improvement teaching and learning

- creates and shapes the school's vision—based on tenets of all students success regardless cultural origin and race
 - develops an inclusive school climate—that is characterized by care and collaboration for purposes of the development of education
 - promotes teacher and student leadership—through a common ownership of the school vision
 - develops inclusive instructional approaches—this is based on the philosophies of school improvement through applying multicultural education, and
 - leads from behind—and allowing others to lead and to be creative while collecting data and processes to foster school improvement.
- Data sharing to increase understanding and institutional cohesiveness. In effective school organizations particularly, literature is awash with information that shows that teachers, through action research and collaboration collect and share information related to—improvement of teaching strategies, how children learn in the classrooms, and the strategies for using the power of parental involvement to school improvement ideas (Fullan, 2001; Argote, et al., 2003; Stronge, 2006). Conversely, in those schools that struggle only a few teachers are entitled to have access to the very limited selected approaches to information sharing, and that information is not used at school wide levels. Only those with access to information are allowed to shine above the other faculty members. Today, there is a wide variety of choices for methods such as internet systems, electronic text messages, face-to-face approaches, action research and hard copy circulars just to mention a few examples for information sharing media. According to Argote, et al., (2003) for those leaders who use increased levels of information sharing, they observe a positive relationship between increased information distribution in the school on one hand and improved school performance and growth of education on the other. Therefore, education leaders who foster sharing of information approaches with their faculties are considered as reform advocates, transformational educational leaders, effective communicators and they exhibit excellent public relations' skills whose focus is on school-wide effectiveness (Stronge, 2006; Madhlangobe, 2009). Effective leadership practices are shown through high levels of integrity, fairness and follow acceptable ethics (Guerra & Nelson, 2007; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012)
- Impact of effective school-wide data interpretation and usage. The levels and rates at which data is distributed among staff depend on the types of data and how individual teachers make sense of that data. Sometimes, data

in form of statistics require expert understanding to help others use the data. However, for the most part, the most important element is the ability to ensure that all members operate on the same page regarding any piece of data. Information related to policy issues is critical to teacher performance and meeting deadlines (Ballou, & Podgursky, 1995). Regardless of their size, in most cases, self-reported stories have proved to be helpful to educational institutions and even nations to succeed (Madhlangobe, 2009). In education, when teachers and students share stories related to their experiences with aspects related to learning improvement and school improvement, other individuals will use those experiences to navigate their own strategies to achieve improved levels of understanding of the unusual strategies that may be used to navigate teaching or learning assignment hence improved performance of their key result areas.

- *Sharing information that leads to increased school learning power.* Strategic sharing of information at faculty level has the power to enhance school social values, and helping to better the health levels of the school climate in general (Wheatley, 2002; Goddard et al., 2004; Abilock, 2006). Team power is a human relations variable used as a strategy for initiating school success through collaborative work which helps to empower all members of the organizations through acquiring new knowledge from stories “that represent organizational cultural patterns and values” (Kruse, 2003). The school records such as staff meeting notes, workshop handouts, students exercise books, log books and students school reports/records all act as a data base that may help increase the required data base—also known as *organizational memory* but in this study we refer to it as school memory (Fauske & Raybould, 2005; Ware, 2010)—including electronic databases, transaction records, and historical archives. When data is stored in a commonly shared school-wide level data base (school memory), easy data sharing will lead to increased school-wide responses to challenges which helps to improve shared knowledge and experience levels. The even distribution of knowledge—school memory leads to improved levels of communication around specific goals also known as organizational culture. Organizational culture when widely understood ensures that all member behaviors will be uniformly wired to help members have access to acceptable school expectations or standards for school improvement. When a bigger number of people access the same information they will have the potential to continuously update their individual memories with acceptable organizational culture leading to greater *school improvement* potential (Sutton, 2000; Wheatley, 2002). Similarly, the development of education will easily be achieved and viewed through reduced (a) rates of student suspension, (b) referred cases to special education, (c) achievement gaps, (d) discipline, and (e) school dropouts while at the same time increasing—(i)

school orderliness, (ii) levels of health of the school climate; (iii) teacher beliefs in efficacy, (iv) increased enrolment; (v) students test scores, (vi) discipline, (vii) participation in education (attendance) and (viii) student retention.

- *Use of Information to keep faculty and staff focused on school goals.* Past experiences are a great source for developing informed decisions and changing strategies to acquire those that work. When information is available, decisions are arrived at in a uniform approach, and the school will always move forward as a compact unit and all members will be ready to collaborate in ways that ensure movement of the whole organization to new levels (Wheatley, 2002; Kruse, 2003; Abilock, 2006). Such data is used to answer the questions—*where were we yesterday in relation o the school vision? And where are we today? Where do we go next and how do we get there?* Therefore, under such contexts, data collection and decision making is a critical tenet for school improvement purposes, especially when used as an approach for closing achievement gaps among groups and improving the school culture (Sutton, 2000; Gordon, 2004). According to Gordon, (2004) data sharing reduces conflicts and helps to understand and reduce political, social and economic gap-contexts that may impact schools in a variety of ways.

The Power of Team Work and School Improvement

For any organization or nation, team power is viewed as a “group’s shared belief in its conjoint capabilities for organizing and executing the courses of action required to produce given levels of [teaching and leadership] attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p. 477). This concept of team-power may, at quick view be seem to conjecture that in successful schools all leadership decisions are made in the headmaster’s office. This is not really true, but in its veracity, the opposite is true—in all effective schools, educational leadership power is developed, computed and supported at all levels of the school including among students and parents (Ballou, & Podgursky, 1995; Madhlangobe, et al., 2008; Wallace Foundation., 2013). This is why schools in Zimbabwe use the *school prefects’ council* as a student leadership body from elementary schools levels to high schools. For example, in a study to understand effective leadership in schools, the Wallace Foundation used a musical metaphor to describe three different forms of school leadership approaches—and in the process, emphasizing team power said:

In short, we believe leaders perform number key practices. School leaders determined to do it all themselves were “one-man bands;” those inclined to delegate responsibilities to others operated like the leader of a “jazz combo;” and those

who believe broadly in sharing leadership throughout the school could be thought of as “orchestral leaders,” skilled in helping large teams produce a coherent sound, while encouraging soloists to shine. The [crucial] point is that although in any school a range of leadership patterns exists – among principals, assistant principals, formal and informal teacher leaders, and parents – the principal remains the central source of leadership influence. (Wallace Foundation, 2013, p. 8)

This citation reveals a number of characteristics related to team power in schools: (a) some leaders fear delegation of duties to others, and such leaders are considered one-man-bands who rarely succeed; (b) the *jazz-combo leaders* refers to leaders who see value in subordinates' leadership qualities and they allow some of them to lead—hence allowing their leadership principles to permeate the school-wide context through teacher leadership; and (c) the *orchestral leaders* are those whose leadership is considered highly skilled in helping large teams or school-wide teams to produce coherent outputs, and they motivate highly talented individuals to shine and influence school improvement. While school success may be viewed as a single achievement coming from inputs of various actors, the *leader is will continue to be the center piece of all outcomes and or failures.*

Therefore, team-power may be viewed as “a belief system that includes the mutual recognition of the various agents including home, school, and community, [and that]... each unit has a valuable and distinctive role in promoting success and together—and only together—do they have the capabilities to create environments conducive for the optimal development of the student. (Henderson, et al., 1998, p. 4)

From Henderson et al., (1998)'s views, in this study we embrace the view that teamwork is inclusive and has the power to impact collective teacher effectiveness. Therefore, through teamwork, teachers have the power to implement work actions needed to positively impact student learning outcomes through powerful instructional methods, motivation of students and other external forces; and that school management in general is the key to improved school outcomes (Goddard & Goddard, 2001).

Methods Used

Research Design

In this section, we describe the selection of participants, data collection instruments, data gathering and presentation procedures. Following the model recommended by Punch, (2009), throughout this study we ensured trustworthiness of qualitative data and reliability of quantitative

data through triangulation of data forms, sources, analysis procedures and presentation strategies that we triangulated throughout each stage of data collection and presentation as shown through each of the following sections.

Selection of Participants and Data Collection Procedures

Teachers and Headmasters. This mixed methods study included a survey instrument with questions to measure teacher self-reported experiences with school improvement concepts through interviews and questionnaires. A total (43) purposely selected teachers from 7 primary schools (2 private and 5 public) participated in the whole study. Another sample of 3 purposely selected secondary schools (1 private and 2 public) schools participated in this study. The headmasters and their deputies from each of the selected schools also volunteered to participate in the study. However, at each school, all teachers including the purposely selected sample were invited to complete surveys related to their experiences with strategies used to ensure school improvement at their work stations. For the surveys, 127 fully completed surveys out of 131 surveys sent out were returned. Of the remaining only 4 included in the returned surveys were not fully completed. We discarded the incomplete surveys for participating in the study. The level of response is evidence that in general, participants were keen to provide data to inform question for this study.

Parents and communities served by the schools. A total of 53 parents including 24 members of the PTA communities served by the schools also completed the parallel surveys for the secondary schools and 151 volunteering parents from the primary schools completed questionnaires and the 24 PTA members from both sections responded to focus group interviews designed to provide follow-up questions related to the observed teachers and school headmasters behaviors. In addition, through completing the survey and questionnaire 42 other parents also added their views as parents, regarding how effective SI strategies helped their children to succeed.

Education Officers. Three education officers also volunteered to participate in this study. The education officers responded to the interview questions and the survey but like teachers and school headmasters they also provided artifacts that represented statistical evidence of how they evaluate schools for success. For all participants, the interviews were recorded and later typed into word documents for easy analysis and storage.

Data Analysis Procedures Qualitative and Quantitative Data

For purposes of grounding my findings in the experiences of the participants, we used the interpretive theory to data interpretations by asking

the participants for the meaning that they attached to the observed and stated ideas from the data (Strauss, & Corbin, 1998) we read and combed through all the typed documents with the data from the interviews and the open ended questionnaires and coded the data for themes and categories according to the questions used in the survey question for the quantitative data (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Punch, 2010). For the quantitative data collected through the surveys and other artifacts collected, we used figures and tables to represent the findings and then presented and analyzed the data according to the emerging themes from the qualitative data and the trends from the quantitative data using each graph or table. We also cross examined the both qualitative and quantitative data outputs for similarities and relationships as a way of triangulating data analysis procedures.

Research Findings

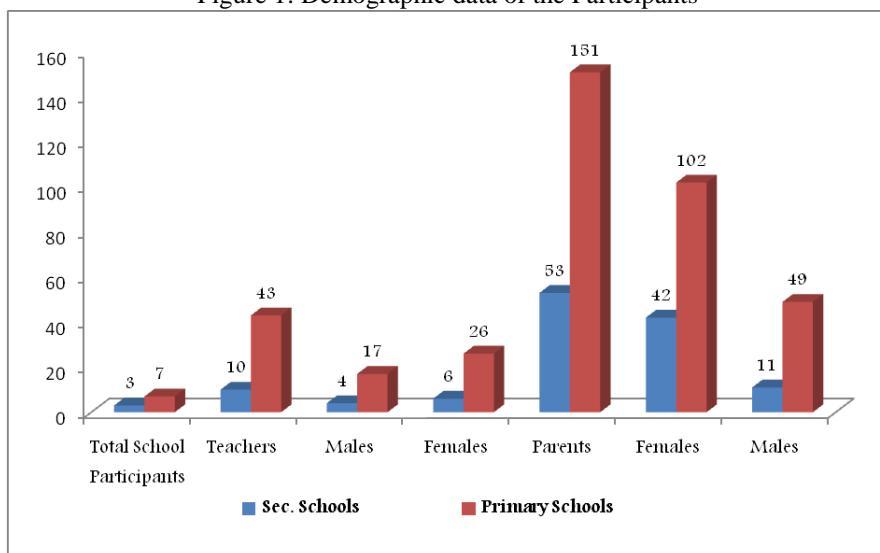
Defining School Improvement (SI)

Participants defined SI in diverse ways. In focus groups with smaller samples of parents, (15), Teachers 7, and 4 headmasters they commonly defined SI as student achievement and improved appearance of the school buildings, student discipline; reduced dropout rates among students, use of multicultural teaching approaches and less bullying among students.

Parent: For me, genuine school improvement has many facets that involve the school head and his teachers paying special attention to and collecting information on how our children learn. Context is important here. That information should be used to guide teacher behaviors that help raise standards in the school organization. These days if you as a parent don't visit the school, your child becomes a victim of what happens there—humiliation, exclusion and bullying.

Teacher: In school improvement, it is important to look at it from the whole school perspective and see this whole range of factors about school that need evaluation and constant attention like creating new strategies all depending on what the school population is like, how do we perform versus other schools in sport, debates, academic work, discipline and even enrolment levels you know? As a teacher my teaching affects learning that is going on in the school, infra-structural arrangement, and to define teacher, headmaster's and parental roles for that change and innovation. Compare your position on the log of outstanding schools so that you ask questions about what needs to be done, when, how, and with which resources? It all comes down to what teachers, headmasters and parents do for their children's school...

Figure 1: Demographic data of the Participants



In this study, both male and female genders participated with my definition delimitation of the gender as males and females generally accepted by the participants. It was not easy due to cultural and political contexts to try to establish any other forms of gender outside these two “universally acceptable” forms. Of all participants, 75.5% identified themselves as females, while the rest (24.5%) classified themselves as males. Of the 7 participating schools, all of which were identified as consistently successful schools in implementing school improvement plans by their Education Regional Officials came from the urban set up but the distribution spread across socioeconomic status ranges including public schools in high, low and medium density areas included. All secondary schools participants emerged from the areas considered high socio economic status. All private schools were from the low density or higher socio-economic status zones. This finding agrees with the general view that socio economic statuses of parents and schools in general impacts school performance (Weaver, 2009; Ware, 2010). We followed-up this data with specific focus group interviews with a reduced number of participants from reduced school samples. One question that asked during the follow-up interviews was, *describe the factors that help your school succeed in meeting standards related to school improvement when compared to other schools?* Emerging themes included (a) inclusive leadership; (b) team-work among teachers; (c) collective understanding of the school vision; (d) Fulfilling contractual agreements between teachers and parents; and (e) availability of instructional resources.

Inclusive Leadership in the School

The first theme that emerged was that such schools are guided by the philosophy of inclusive leadership and teaching for success. According to the participants, parents, teachers and the school headmasters all have leadership roles each group from their own perspectives for improving schools. Specific responses that revealed this theme included ideas from parents and teachers in additions to how headmasters viewed this perspective to the question.

Parent: This is a private school, and our headmaster always says, *it's a school of choice*—meaning if you send your child here you have to take the lead in shaping how your child should be educated including those of other parents. We share ideas with teachers and help provide teaching resources and information that teachers ask for. And the headmistress Mrs. Hove [*not her real name*] pays attention to detail... she also shares improvement ideas with us. So, change at this school is not only about teaching students but also how the school and parents make our children want to come to school. Yah... we focus most of our energies on building new ideas about our school...

Primary School Headmistress: In this school everyone has something to contribute and we listen to those ideas so that we don't lose out on constructive ideas that help us on how to provide solutions to problems that we come across when performing our teaching tasks. Our teachers know it, that effective teaching is about using a variety of methods as opposed one method for teaching everything and everyone. So what we achieve as a team will change our reality. It's about working together as a family, listening and helping each other to do well. The future and success of our children can only be assured if we place it in our own hands as a school—parents, leadership and teachers... I think this is what drives our school improvement success

Deputy School Head--Secondary: This is a high school setup and I believe our students are mature enough to help us to achieve better results. My philosophy as a deputy-head is, *listen to them, and you will pick ideas about which areas of the school need attention or improvement.* Through their behaviors and language pupils tell me how teachers are performing, what they hear from complaining parents and how they feel in the school. My job is to compile monthly reports that explain the state of the school as perceived from the minds of the students, teachers, and parents or from a

stranger's views. *Chikoro chedu vanochiona sei?*¹So I'm tasked to survey the local community and request for their own opinions about how they want their school to look like and what they expect for their children. We use those ideas and suggestions, standards if you will, to make strategic changes for improvement by including those ideas in our school improvement plan...

Similar to literature reviewed for this study, the perceptions that emerged from this study show that school improvement plans are revisited in an ongoing process which encourages understanding of how school are improving and allowing direct inputs from all interested groups of people whose purposes are vested in school success (Weick, 2000). In the 7 participating schools, some of the samples used to collect data from parents, teachers and students included questions that required them to provide answers on 5-point Likert scales covering themes like satisfaction with school achievement, effectiveness of teaching approaches, frequency, quality of education offered, and value.

Figure 2: Samples of Likert Scale themes used to assess the impact of SI strategies (SIS)

Samples of measurement instruments used to assess the impact of SI strategies used						
		1	2	3	4	5
Example of Measurement						
•	Satisfaction	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
•	Effectiveness	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
•	Frequency	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
•	Impact	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
•	Quality	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
•	Value	Completely Not Important	Less Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Essential

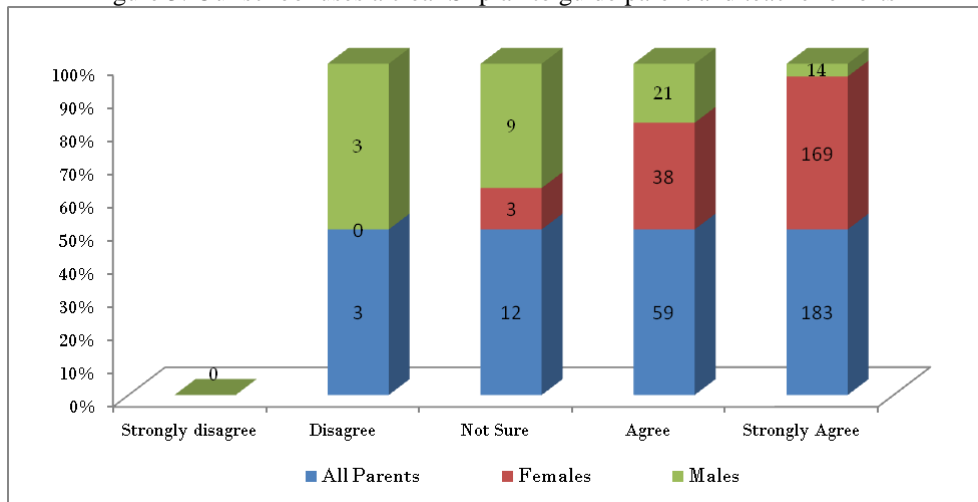
From the findings of this section, we concluded that surveys helped schools to focus on responsive strategies for achieving SI plans because school headmasters collected information that provided them with ideas that helped them to make informed decisions about improving standards. This finding is also supported by earlier theories of professional teacher development and motivation findings that support the belief that collecting

¹How will they view our school?

information through action research, organizational reflections, supervision and continuous communication has influence on group development, staff needs and organizational needs (Maslow, 1954; Herzberg, 1966; Glickman, 1985; Smyth, 1997; Glickman et al., 2010). Similar to this finding, Silins, and Mulford, (2002) also discovered a relationship between increased learning power of schools as organizations; and consistent classroom supervision leading to the conclusion that teacher empowerment has the capacity for school improvement.

According to figure 3 below, in response to the follow-up questions parents confirmed that schools leadership and the teachers' daily operations are guided by clear specific school improvement plans in which they also made some input to ensure outstanding achievements in all facets of the school vision. An interesting representation by gender shows that while males are generally interested in the school improvement plans, most appear not to have handled or read with close attention some of the school improvement plans although the feminine gender shows high interest.

Figure 3: Our school uses a clear SI plan to guide parent and teacher efforts



However, we still concluded that the existence of the clear school improvement plans in successful schools may be one element that separates outstanding schools from those that struggle. In addition, it is important to ensure that both parents and school authorities operate from the same page in terms of the school vision and mission. One parent revealed,

Female Parent in a Private School: It's one thing to have a beautifully written school improvement plan but it's another to have a team that executes that plan in good ways. Here we work together and we know what we need to do to achieve

that plan because we share strategic information. Ungazviita sei usina information yacho?² As a team, our biggest strength here is on making choices that work for these children. I am in the committee that makes sure we evaluate each stride in order to develop confidence in the school leadership and parents together. I know the economy is bad and teachers are demoralized but we do motivate them through incentives because these are *our children and we care...*

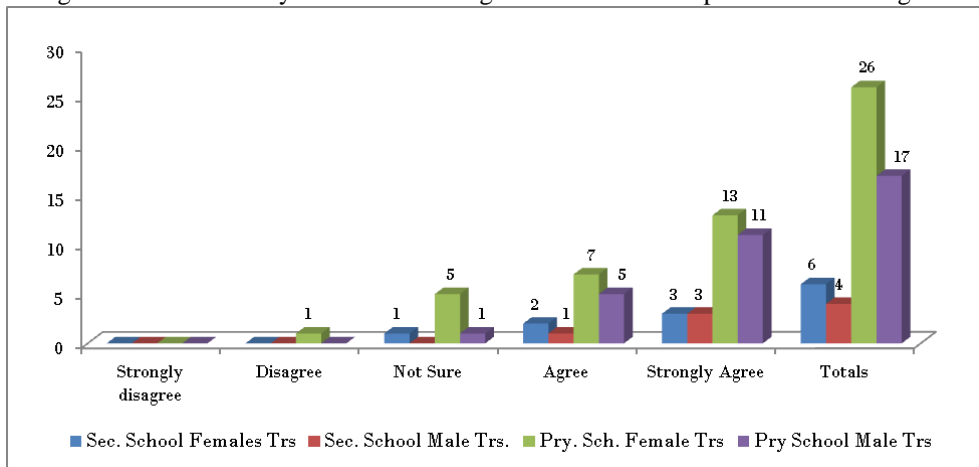
Similar to findings from earlier studies (Hiatt-Michael, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, & Barr, 2004), parents in this study valued the use of modern technology and looking outside their own school and classrooms for lessons that can help to improve their own schools and student achievement. In the reflections it became evident that the participants also place important attention to the quality of teachers and levels of teacher motivation among those that they recruited to teach their children. In all reflections information availability shows that it helps to empower teachers:

Male Parent: It's highly important to make sure that we share ideas on how to use any technology—including how we use lessons from problems that arose within the school. For example, were involved in the recruitment of teachers, and we monitor how they teach by listening to our children, monitoring homework and how teachers mark. You know a big tick does not teach my child anything. My child needs need details like, what did I do wrong and how do I improve on that? You know, such questions should be answered through the way the teacher marks written work so that my child is empowered...

Results shown in figure 4 below reveal that teachers generally agreed that school heads conduct staff meetings whose key focuses are meant to ensure that teachers continuously modify their teaching approaches to improve how students learn or grasp materials. Throughout their responses, teachers revealed that they find working together as a common theme that is emphasized through nonthreatening leadership approaches by headmasters in both secondary and primary schools. This finding emphasizes that staff meetings as effective strategies for SI should integrate a number of aspects that include (a) *continuous action research*; (b) *cooperative efficacy*, (c) *professional growth through peer-coaching and group study*; and (d) *critical reflections by each teacher* and all of these are strategically combined into a school-wide approaches that promote growth oriented professional conversations among teachers.

²How can you achieve that without the necessary information?

Figure 4: We constantly hold staff meetings to discuss and keep focus on school goals



One female primary school teacher whose response summed up most participants' responses on this theme pointed challenges related to curriculum implementation but placed importance on the power of teams, information sharing and collaboration,

Female Teacher from one Primary School: Our school curriculum is too wide for one head to coordinate it. In our school, [primary school] we have constant meetings in which we share ideas about how we solve learning problems for our pupils. But the most important thing is how we continue to update our teaching strategies through staff development [SD] and staff meetings. Our headmaster is good at hunting for good SDs and helping us to attend external SDs and development information which brings ideas for teacher growth...

Similar to the views help by teachers on SI, the headmaster in the same school defined PD as an SI model/strategy based on encouraging constant interactions among teachers exchanging ideas, allowing others to grow professionally through an apprenticeship model that he called LPI—learn, perfect and improve. The LPI model helps SI through creating a culture of professional knowing, making small increments of SI; repetitions to increase perfection; and team work:

Primary School Headmaster: Here, our main strategy is for each member to *learn, perfect* and *improve* [LPI]. These small incremental changes will one day add to *experience*. Thus the whole strategy of the SI game... when success happens throughout the whole school, each of us in her own way, it becomes a *culture of success*. This way, in the majority of all

our work assignments, the success rate will continue to increase and that is how we do it.... I'm big fun of *repetitions to increase perfection*. It needs time... to help teachers securely lock their knowledge on professional abilities that bring success to our school. Always, when experience is [evenly] spread among all members of the school, it overcomes any size of a problem and we begin to see fast and big changes. Also these new teachers you were talking about earlier, we also repeatedly send the same message to them, '*if you come across a problem, look around for answers—the next teacher will always have part of the answer..., keep collecting your answers and soon you will have the solution.*' That's our strategy for school improvement...

The importance of staff developing teachers is to empower and enhance team power with ideas for meeting new and recurring challenges they meet—a clear strategy that works for increasing options or methods that work. In addition, LPI helps teachers to grow professional confidence to rise above the challenges they meet in Zimbabwean education contexts. When school headmasters use supervision strategies that motivate teachers and create a nonthreatening school climate, teachers will voluntarily seek for more information (Dantow, Park, & Wohlstetter, 2007) to ensure that they always stay above the demands of the teaching assignments that they perform.

Sec. School Male Teacher: One good thing about our school head is that she is not vindictive. Mrs. Zuva is a *caring leader* who knows that a happy teacher achieves bigger milestones when compared to a stressed teacher. So our supervision reports are mainly focused on motivating us to bring improvement to how we should execute our teaching assignments. Circulars are motivatory in the way they are structured, if I can use that word... and our parents are ever ready to provide materials each time we ask. If funds do not permit we improvise. Of course we try not to overload them with excessive requests...

Other responses added to these broad ideas and a closer analysis of the responses revealed that participants viewed school improvement as a result of a number of institutional strategic behaviors that help to improve teacher performance indicators, including—(a) *teacher professional growth through collaboration*; (b) *group development enhanced by effective communication channels*; (c) *fulfillment of human trust needs, human support, and continuous professional interaction satisfying human needs for*

continuous career development as espoused in Maslow, (1954)'s theory of motivation. For example,

- Teachers who feel challenged were encouraged to seek help from others through entering anonymous questions on the circulars regarding PDs that may be lined up for their schools, and also volunteering to attend external professional developments and copying strategies from other schools; and collecting ideas from colleagues teaching parallel groups at their schools. Generally all participating schools use the common strategy referred to as *demonstration lessons* where at local level, struggling teachers are invited by the instructional leaders to observe other teachers' lessons that may be considered by their school heads as outstanding lesson presentations for purposes of improving their own teaching approaches. This agrees with other recent findings by Madhlangobe (2009) and another by Madhlangobe and Gordon, (2012) in a study where they discovered what they described as the *collaborative walk-through* (CWT) supervision model. In CWT the head and teachers assign each other areas of observations in a particular lesson and they write strengths and weaknesses on anonymous and non-vindictive cards. Normally such CWT last about 5 minutes but the head and the teachers collect huge amounts of information that they use to help update the observed teacher's skills.

Growing Professional Teams and Increasing Team Power among Teachers

Teachers as adults also exhibit personal learning needs that are linked to their career development and search for meaning and lifelong learning (Brooks, 2001). Findings revealed one self-reported strategy used to meet the career development needs among teachers and how it was achieved through team work, which showed that school improvement is achieved through success levels based on collective outputs for each school development key result area. One teacher summarized the success of her school as a result of using the team power strategy. The new information that this finding adds to the available research literature in Zimbabwe is the concept of *support roles and teachers leaders*.

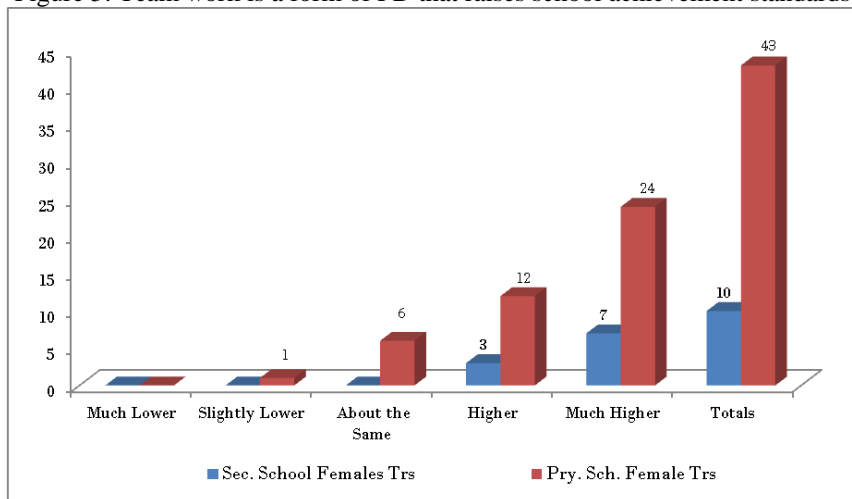
Private School Teacher: The benefit of team work is that we see collective growth or collective success in all key result areas on a school-wide level. This happens in quicker but efficient ways and it is not painful how we get there—it through collaborative effectiveness. But from my own view, one lesson I've learnt is that you have to be flexible in order to be able to respond to big changes that come with working

as a school unit. I've noticed is that team-work means we have to continuously recreate school standards for effectiveness; and specialization rules that work for our school to be better. Once we pass the work allocation roles that describe each class assignment, we all start to prepare for what our headmaster calls *roles for supporting other teacher-leaders*, where each teacher will specialize in doing something so we help or support that team leaders to increase goal achievement.... The Support Roles (SR) will involve us helping *specialist team leaders* to achieve their goals as we also learn about the standards she will suggest. It may not work for older teachers if they keep insisting on old standards in this new world of technology...

Collective Understanding of the School Vision

Team-work Fosters Professional Development. On a five point scale (1-Much Lower, 2-Slightly Lower, 3-About the Same, 4-Higher, and 5-Much Higher) participants commonly agreed that their exposure by leaders to the spirit of working in teams helps them to grow professionally as individuals and for them, when professional growth spreads to school-wide levels, it leads to a learning culture of the school. In her earlier findings, Kruse, (2003) described the learning culture of the school as *organizational memory* which empowers teachers for SI. Figure 5 below also shares the collective responses of the participants in relation to how teacher collaborative work raises students' learning outcomes in addition to increasing their professional learning power especially for beginning teachers.

Figure 5: Team work is a form of PD that raises school achievement standards



According to the response representation shown in figure 5, collaborative teams created by leadership helps teachers to shape significant levels of student learning and for teachers to grow professionally. Of the 53 teachers who participated in the study, 46 about (86.8%) agree that team work is another form of PD that raises school achievement standards. Only 6 believed that teamwork had not provided them with professional growth and neither does it change achievement levels of students in their classrooms. For example, one teacher who agreed with most responses from teacher pointed out that

Secondary School Teacher Reflection: As a beginning teacher, I learn from those who have more experience in the field. But I believe the new information that I bring from college also helps them [Senior teachers] to add to their current knowledge and it promotes deeper learning both in the children we teach and in our professional development. That's one way we use to develop the school... we complement each other I think... I also see that development among our grade 6 and 7 children working together under the trees during break, for example grade 6B students working with Grade 6A students. To me, that shows they see how I work with my colleague in 6A... but it takes a lot of time to develop that culture of learning.

Similarly, another teacher viewed team work as a source for bringing together individual efforts and adding value to how people show discipline, how they create solid relationships among all teachers to work together for outstanding achievement in co-curricular activities

Senior Secondary School Teacher. Maybe you have seen how all teachers stand together to support teams that are trained individually by soccer coaches, athletics and netball. We naturally band together and support the teams as they play and own the winning results, mourn together when we fail, not *when they fail*. There is no blame game at all in our school here. At assembly the headmaster speaks of collective effectiveness—*we lost like sports man, we almost got there, we will do it again in 2015 or we thank all our teachers for outstanding results*. Such comments mean something to me even for those who do not coach that team... it's a lesson for all that says please let's work together...

These two quotes reveal some interesting patterns related to how teacher participants' analyze levels that confirm achievement focus on the *school achievement levels* in contrast to individual achievement. Individual high scores regardless of where they are recorded are viewed as shared

organizational achievements levels rather than individual teacher achievements. According to participants, individuals are celebrated within a context of the school-wide developments. From both reflections, participants use words and phrases that tie school development to successful team building strategies, including: *band together; support the teams; winning results; mourn together; no blame game; collective effectiveness—we; it's a lesson for all; let's work together* and *relationships*. Consistent with literature this finding also revealed that positive relationships and higher levels of collaboration between teachers' and students' learning will always result in improved school-wide outcomes (Schechter, 2008; Madhlangobe, 2009; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). The second reflection shows that school achievement indicator levels should not be limited only to classroom academic achievement, but in terms of the aggregate of the common definition of school curriculum as experienced by parents and community including—*school discipline, academic achievement, physical development, school relationships, relationships with other schools, parental, community satisfaction, school capacity for sharing and analyzing information with members of the school community, and appealing for help and ideas and information that helps both teachers and students to do better* (Madhlangobe, 2009).

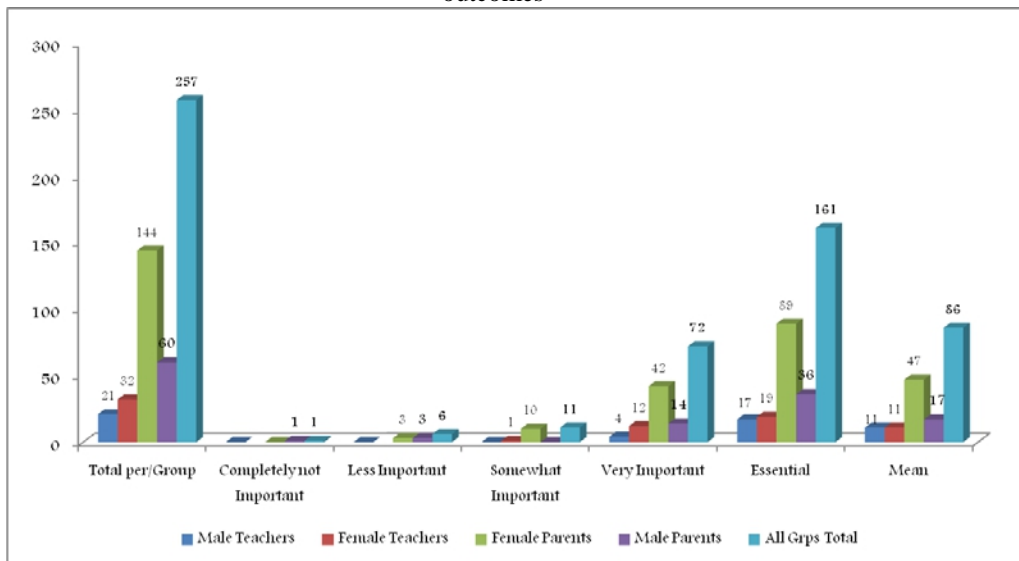
Fulfilling Contractual Agreements between Teachers And Parents

Standards of school improvement depend on a number of teacher and headmaster behaviors that will ultimately influence students learning behaviors. According to the responses shown in figure 6 below, from all the participants, clearly, the feminine gender values the concept of sharing information, and fulfilling parent-teacher contractual obligations while most participants when viewed together aligned their education philosophies to effective information sharing. First, the reflection below shows that teachers who increase the learning capacity of other teachers purposefully seek other forms of information that can help increase knowledge, skills, methods and motivation of other teachers. They are aware of the positive value of continuous spreading of information on the professional culture of the school as a whole.

Secondary School Male Teacher Participant: If you share information that you come across from any source and its related to strategies for helping students learning outcomes to improve, that information to the next teacher is a form of PD, and to the school children it is a form of *school efficacy*... *if all teachers begin to use the information which in turn will continue to spread throughout the school and it will become a culture doing things in the school... so first we need to*

appreciate that it starts with sharing information, and yes—it is *completely essential* to share that information and it increases your chances of influencing school improvement by sharing your own ideas information. But we need good relations as an underlying rule for working like that...

Figure 6: Sharing information with parents helps improve student academic learning outcomes



On the average, the bell curve of this graph is skewed towards the options “*Essential*” and “*Very Important*” revealing the strength that parental involvement through sharing information helps improve student academic learning outcomes and improvement of other aspects of the school in general. In a follow-up focus group interview with the selected outliers whose responses fell on the left tail of the normal distribution curve, we realized that while they disagreed with the focus of the general group, they believed they had personal information that would affect their children’s lives within the school context if they share that information. According to them, some information will lead to victimization of their children.

Parent at a Primary School: Panezvisingaiti kungoudza wese munhu... kana mune poboto mumba, vamwe venyu ava havachengeti mashoko muchifuva. Mwana anoswera ava nezita idzva zvikuru mamistress enyu iwaya amunotutumadza... they talk too much mumashops and hair salons. Saka kuviga tumwe kurinani. Unoti regai ndiwane anondipawo zano, mangwana wonzwa wobvunwawo nevepapo hunzi, imwi dzimwe nyaya muchichenegetawo

mega kwete kupakurira wese-wese. Ndiwo mafungiro andinawo pandakapindura mubvunzo wenyu uyu...³

However, for this study we did not probe participants further to understand how gender influences are dovetailed into the school improvement plans since there were more females both among teachers, parents and among student populations. There is need for another study to compare male-to-female outstanding leadership and teacher behaviors. The data in this study fully matched the data which would have allowed me to understand directly from the participants how they viewed the power of women as a variable for influencing school improvement.

Availability of Instructional Resources for Improving learning Capacity Developing the Capacity of the School to Learn and Develop

Throughout this study, another theme that stood out from the participants' self reported experiences with effective school improvement leadership practices was their view of the school faculty's ways for developing the *ability for their schools as organizations to learn and develop* through provision of instructional resources. But how do "schools learn?" Post observation and survey interview results revealed that participants experienced in their schools, professional development (PD) is used to build school-wide learning capacity because the PDs in the schools are strategically organized to empower teachers with the potential to advance school-wide learning outcomes of all students. Therefore, learning in the schools is directed at the teachers and so that they may positively impact the students' learning processes. According to the findings of this study, PDs in the schools address the following teacher development areas:

- The *professional learning of the individual teachers* in their schools—meaning that school headmasters and departmental leaders continuously collaborate to identify effective teacher-centered PDs; identify clear goals for achieving effective student learning outcomes; discover relevant ways for evaluating teaching-and-learning; collaborate in developing plans and strategies to continuously

³Some information you do not just share with every individual... for example if you have family squabbles, some of these teachers do not know how to keep personal information private. My child will end up with a nickname derived from my problems and he becomes labeled. Especially with these female teachers whom you guys appear to uphold in good esteem. It's sometimes better to keep certain information to myself. Sometimes you share information then a few days later you hear from other people telling you, hey some information you should learn to keep to yourself. This is how I understood your question...

increase student learning outcomes; and continuously develop teacher capacity for solving *teaching* and *learning* problems

- PDs in the schools studied are designed to use the concept of *developing a school that learns as an organization philosophy*—meaning that the school staff, students, and faculty all learn something new every day and they build bases for improving teaching-and-learning outcomes. In the participating schools, teachers learn about how students learn and students learn from the curriculum their teachers impart and the knowledge created will be used in future to scaffold how teachers teach new groups of students and how new students learn
- *Building skills and dispositions* for all staff members to be in-tune with their students' learning needs
- *Building school-wide capacity for curriculum fluency*—this refers to how the school teachers and the leaders collaborate to ensure that the programs for students and faculty learning are related to each other. One school headmaster summarized this participant embraced concept,

School Headmaster Secondary: It's like we always want to see to it that what teachers learn in our staff development activities will also enhance their capacity to be effective teachers. On the same note, I personally believe that in future, soon after the staff development, what students learn from these empowered teachers will then impact on the set learning goals in consistent and persistent ways over a long time. So for us here at this school, those program relationships cannot be ignored by my administration we pay attention... That is how I think school headmasters should do... look at the whole scenario do to improve learning [schools]. I mean everyone should learn at the same time... you know

The Use of Modern Technology and Media

Teaching-learning resources when used timely, will always impact student learning capacity in greater ways and the teachers should measure those learning outcomes using effective instruments that are reliable and valid. One teacher who agreed with most responses under this sub-theme summarized by one teacher;

Primary School Teacher: While my teaching is under the spotlight from my headmaster and deputy head, I expect the supervision instruments used to be informative to me so that I will use that information to learn and improve. In this school lesson observations are not done for fault-finding reasons. I

feel my head[master] always- and I mean-always... wants me to learn from what he writes down in the supervision report... this is what promotes high quality learning for me and I believe all teachers here feel the same in our school. There are issues that I struggle with but I work hard to get things right *especially with the help of other teachers*

Discussion

From the self-reported experiences from teachers, parents and communities led by headmasters who were defined *as effective school improvement* leaders by education experts, teachers, and parents, when the effective school headmasters employ wide range of SI strategies, they focus first on teacher skills improvement and then school-wide improvement of all aspects of the school. Once the initial phase for implementing the SI strategies have been completed, higher level strategies are introduced regularly in small incremental tides. Each new incremental version is used to enhance the older versions and as a springboard for the newer strategies, leading to a school-wide SI effect. In short, exposing teachers to extensive information through PDs, collaborative information collection, information sharing and exemplary demonstration lessons promotes continuous reflection, professional growth among teachers and collective teacher efficacy as the three critical dimensions of effective strategic experiences gained from *collective instructional leadership* that leads to outstanding school improvement. These school improvement strategies used by school headmasters whose schools were defined as successful at implementing SI plans demonstrate higher levels of impact on teacher skills development. The specific areas enhanced by the school improvement strategies used by the SI leaders who took part in this study include: *workable instructional strategies, teacher and student learning outcomes, teacher-students relationships, student-students-relationships, relationships among teachers; and teacher-community relations*. Through nonthreatening supervision approaches, teachers were encouraged to be creative and to engage in professional growth oriented PDs in which the same school heads took part as participants and colleagues of the teachers.

Findings of this study therefore, add to existing research literature since they have demonstrated that the definition of school improvement should not only be limited to student academic learning achievements during national standardized tests but broadened to embrace many other aspects of the schools, all of which support and enhance the general outlook of the school. This agrees with suggestions from recent research literature that supports the theory that teacher centered supervision directly enhances

improvement of all school facets in addition to student learning outcomes (Fillon, 2007; Madhlangobe, 2009; Glickman et al., 2010).

Implications for Practice

Findings of this study imply that school headmasters who use strategies that are teacher and parent supported have the potential to create school environments that help to develop effective instructional approaches that will achieve intra-teacher professional growth that will impact the professional school culture in positive ways. For example, when teachers continuously seek ways to share information about improving their teaching methods, the information that they collect will lead to their career development and school-wide innovation. Research has repeatedly confirmed that there is a positive correlation between teacher career development through supervision and student learning achievement (Ware, 2010; Glickman et al., 2010). Therefore, school headmasters who frequently create open conversations with parents, communities served by their schools, and their teachers on topics related to meeting the learning needs of the children will always receive SI feedback notes on how to improve classroom instructional strategies; and to develop caring and cooperative teaching-learning strategies (Rumberger, 2004; Noddings, 2011; Wallace Foundation. U.S. Dpt. of Education, 2013). Development of such a school climates may lead to school climates that are nonthreatening, but those that will be characterized by peer-support and professional development of teacher instructional skills.

Conclusions

The evidence presented is strong enough to permit the conclusions that we outline in this section of the study. The conclusions are all based on the general observation that strategic supervision causes continuous development of teaching methods that in turn show positive effects on students' learning outcomes and teacher effectiveness in all facets of the school. Throughout the study evidence from the self-reported accounts with SI strategies (SIS) reveal that there are good grounds to believe the strategies work; and that the danger of not understanding these strategies may create a full-blown retrogression of school education standards. Even without cast-iron evidence, is it appropriate that education professionals fully dedicated to the effective education of school children, should encourage use of SI methods that work and to even encourage their continuous development regardless of *how mild their impact* as a form of school improvement and education development. Evidence from the current study allowed me to arrive at the following specific conclusions that respond to the two research questions guiding this study;

- That *context plays a key role* in fashioning out workable SI strategies that should be accessed through the following aspects of the school report card—*academic achievement; improved teaching-learning processes, improved relationships among, teachers, students and teachers; and co-curricular activities*
- Collaboration based on *sound school-wide relationships* continuously help faculty members and school administration to identify and institute effective PD programs that help to create information bases and strategies for improving the schools in all their facets. Therefore, IS depends on collaboration among the *human relationships as influential variables that mediate* in the way teachers, leaders and parents come together to impact the development models designed to improve the school using an agreed model
- PDs tied to *effective communication* are critical to the creation of information buffers that may be used to solve problems and to move schools to higher 21st Century levels of achievement than the complexities of perceived future educational problems.

Recommendations for Further Research

Therefore, in relation to some unanswered aspects of the research question for this current study, future research may help to extend knowledge on this area if it focuses on *comparing how schools led by female headmistresses and those that are led by male headmasters compare in their use information to provide solutions to new problems and how the processes of the information fit the definition of SI*. Maybe more studies, using purely quantitative research designs showing a comparative Inter-Group Agreements, Means, Standard Deviations and Effect Sizes between private and public schools' SI strategies will help to refocus future studies and help extend how school authorities in those two set-ups achieve their school goals.

The findings of the current study suggest a need for more studies in which school heads and their teacher carry out action research on how students respond to certain of the teacher and leader behaviors in addition to what their perspectives would be on how to improve each of them. Further studies related to the application of the theory of caring in ECD context will also help to extend findings of this study.

Suggested Model for School Improvement

When headmasters expose their teachers to school level PDs, they should use lead questions to guide their selection of the type of PD that ensures teachers benefit from participating in that PD activity: (a) *in what ways will each teacher emerge from the PD as innovative, creative and*

improved teachers? (b) What will be the specific observable impact signs on the student and teacher learning outcomes and SI on the overall? (c) How will the teacher's, knowledge, skills and individual dispositions impact their teaching methods, student learning, and their use of ministry mandated teaching-learning standards to guide teacher professional roles? (d) What institutional and community-to-school relationships should be developed to help to support effective teaching-learning processes? And (e) Which recent technologies will teachers need to learn and use in order to impact learners so that they will be able to apply new PD learned concepts to increase teacher creativity in the classrooms?

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