

Performativity in School Management and Leadership in Botswana

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Abstract

The thesis of this article is that the uncritical adoption of Western models of education management and leadership policies results in poor performance in schools in disadvantaged communities in developing countries. The argument shows that this has led to the institutionalization of generic education policies that are not contingent to the circumstances of the small, dispersed, rural and remote schools. In my analysis, I agree with the growing concern in educational development debates over the uncritical transportation or the uncritical international transfer of school effectiveness assumptions and models to African contexts. I use Botswana as a case study to show the continuing mismatch between educational management models adopted from Western countries and the application in the Botswana context, and the related failure of school improvement initiatives proposed by aid agencies. When a school fails the head is charged with the underperformance.

Keywords

administration, leadership, management, performativity, schools

Introduction

The thesis of this discussion is that developing countries have uncritically adopted some Western models and theories of school management and leadership policies that are not context friendly. To develop this argument, I will first make an overview of the background to management theories that have influenced organizational management and leadership thought. I will then show how such theories are transferred to the education systems, particularly to school organization. Botswana is used as a case study to demonstrate performativity problems arising from the uncritical international transfer of school management and leadership models through aid agencies. The case study will present the school head in disadvantaged communities as a victim subjected to hostile school leadership practices. In my conclusion, I will recommend a shift from the uncritically

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borrowed management and leadership policy agendas to context specific and culture responsive educational management and leadership policies.

Management Theories

Management and leadership concepts have origins in the development of organizations that dealt with industry and commerce (Bolman and Deal, 1991; Bush, 1995; Bryman, 1986, 1992). The history of 'management' as a subject started with F.W. Taylor in 1911, who introduced the concept of scientific management (Hoyle and Wallace, 2005; Quinn et al., 1996). Taylor developed the idea of defining specific tasks to control the output and remuneration of workers in line with the quality and quantity of their output. Taylor's techniques have since been used to rationalize 'work and making it as efficient as possible' (Quinn et al., 1996: 4). His techniques were transformed into the Rational Goal Model. Key features of this theory in organizational management and leadership are 'productivity and profit' and competition in organizations. Quinn et al. (1996) also demonstrate how Henri Fayol and Max Weber's subsequent writings expanded the scientific management concept by introducing planning, commanding, coordinating, organizing and controlling as management functions. Industrial growth was also associated with the attention to human resource management promoted by Elton Mayo in 1933 (Quinn et al., 1996). Mayo emphasized the importance of improved conditions of employment in enhancing productivity. Fayol and Weber's perspectives led to the development of the Human Relations Model of organizational management and leadership. This model emphasizes the importance of commitment, cohesion and morale. It influences management and leadership to improve performativity¹ in the work force by paying attention to the importance of fostering effective decision making.

The theories of Gulick and Urwick, in 1937, initiated the culture of pyramidal and hierarchical structure in organizations as a way of improving efficiency (Mullins, 1993). The principles of the division of labour, span of control, and departmental or sectional units of specializations were developed. In response to the fast growth and expansion of industrialization, Herbert Simon later fused the ideas of Mayo and those of Gulick and Urwick. Chester Barnard pursued Simon's argument further, in 1958, and emphasized the importance of a 'manager' as a 'decision maker' in an organization (Sofer, 1972). Subsequently a lot of writing and debate from various perspectives and from a variety of scholastic and managerial contexts has arisen to explain the trends in organizational management and leadership in our changing world.

Management and leadership have therefore become critical for organizational success (Bones, 1994). Blake and Mouton (1985: 1) argued, 'The character of leadership is a significant factor in organization success or failure.' It has since become important for systems to improve the quality of management and leadership, hoping to improve organizations. For example, Hoyle and Wallace (2005: 68) share the same view when they argue that improvement of school leadership and management is 'a means of enhancing the quality of education'. On such a basis, focus on school management and leadership improvement activities has inevitably gained momentum.

Some developing countries have had school improvement and school effectiveness programmes that focus on improving management and leadership through, other initiated by foreign aid from the West.² For example, Botswana received the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to engage in the Primary Education Improvement Project (PEIP) of 1981 (Evans and Yoder, 1991). This project's main purpose was to improve, among others, the headteacher leadership skills in primary education. PEIP institutionalized the programme by establishing a Department of Primary Education in the University of Botswana to raise primary school

teachers' qualifications to degree level in primary education and in school leadership (Evans and Yoder, 1991). In Kenya, the Department for International Development (DfID) ran the Primary School Management Project (PRISM) in 1996 (Crossley et al., 2005). According to the Republic of Kenya (1996: ix) 'The project's central purpose [was] to train Primary School Headteachers in management skills.' Borrowing from the experiences of Kenya, and experiencing an insignificant success of PEIP, Botswana once more time ran a DfID driven Primary School Management Development Project (PSMDP) in 2000 (Republic of Botswana, 2002). Through USAID and DfID, the projects assumed that school heads needed skills and support materials. In view of this assumption the projects focused on training school heads for effective school management and instructional leadership. These projects involved the development of school leadership training modules. PRISM focused on fieldwork-based training. It developed four training modules: (1) school development planning; (2) management of the curriculum; (3) management of resources; and (4) a guide for training of trainers (Republic of Kenya, 1996). PSMDP developed three training units: (1) leading the learning school; (2) leading the ethical school; and (3) leading the person-centred school (Republic of Botswana, 2002). The ultimate goals of these projects were to raise the level of performance and achievement of learners.

In these three projects, no effort was made to study the problems of school calendar, language or curriculum. Instead, baseline surveys concentrated on learner achievement as reflected in the national examinations. The following will show how the goals remain unachieved, thus, leaving so much performativity pressure on the heads. It is, however, necessary to first explore how the scientific management models have affected education systems.

Management Theories in Education

Education has borrowed school management and leadership models from Taylor, Fayol and Weber (Bush, 1995). Efforts are continuing to adapt scientific management theories of organizational management models, which emphasize productivity, competition and performativity, to use in schools today. The contemporary writings of scholars such as Tony Bush, Eric Hoyle, Joseph Blasé, Mike Wallace and many others are clear manifestation of the significance of the subject of 'management and leadership' models. The emergence and growth of educational research journals such as *Educational Management, Administration & Leadership*, *International Journal of Educational Management*, *School Organisation* and *Education Administration Quarterly* with their focus on issues of school improvement and school effectiveness are further justification of the degree of attention to improving and strengthening school management and leadership.

Scholars in organizational and educational studies have attempted to ascribe meaning to the concepts 'management' and 'leadership'. One tends to agree with Hoyle (1981) that definitions of management and leadership abound and are abstract, but depend on and reflect a the particular approach that one is oriented to. The meaning of the concept is relative to a context of usage. Hoyle, however, conceptualizes management as a process in which people in an organization coordinate activities and resources. He presented 'leadership' as one of the components of management. Some scholars singled out leadership as '[the processes of transforming] the needs, values, preferences and aspirations of followers from self interests to collective interests' (House and Shamir, 1993: 82). As propounded by Fayol and Weber, the concept of leadership is relative to human relations. However, scholars in policy and practice of organizational management use 'management' and 'leadership' interchangeably. The work by Bush (1995), Harris (2004), Hoyle and Wallace (2005) and Webb (2005) are a good example of such interchangeable usage. This

Table 1. Primary School Leaving Examinations: percentage of candidates awarded pass grades A and B by district/town, 2004–2009

District	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Central*	40.8	36.4	40.2	31.7	31.5	30.8
North West ****	31.8	29.6	30.9	21.4	25.1	24.5
Francistown	60.7	55.8	60.1	47.5	25.2	50.3
Gaborone	59.5	55.2	58.6	51.5	52.5	49.8
Gantsi ****	26.2	25.9	23.0	19.6	16.3	17.8
Jwaneng	65.6	66.4	78.5	63.8	62.1	63.7
Kgalagadi ****	25.1	28.4	27.8	22.2	19.4	17.3
Kgatlang*	44.9	40.5	44.2	35.4	34.4	31.1
Kweneng **	37.8	34.6	37.3	29.6	27.8	26.9
Lobatse	50.7	51.4	52.8	43.8	42.6	46.5
North East ***	47.4	40.7	48.4	32.7	37.8	33.6
SelebiPhikwe	77.2	69.5	71.0	59	63.1	58.3
South East	45.4	45.8	41.5	41.3	40.1	40.0
Southern *	37.3	34.2	34.8	26.6	25.9	23.9

Source: Adopted from Botswana Examination Council records, 2004–2009 PSLE Results Analysis (BEC, 2009a).

Notes. PSLE = Primary School Leaving Examination. Primary education is a 7-year course that all primary school children in Botswana undergo and at the end write PSLE before they enrol for junior secondary school

* District/region in which a small but significant number of the inhabitants' mother tongue is neither national nor official language; **district/region in which about one-quarter of the inhabitants' mother tongue is neither national nor official language; ***district/region in which about three-quarter of the inhabitants' mother tongue is neither national nor official language; ****district/region in which the entire inhabitants' mother tongue is neither national nor official language.

These mother-tongue distributions are not adopted from BEC. In the absence of any official statistics (Republic of Botswana, 2003; Youngman, 2003) on mother tongue distribution, the author uses his personal knowledge of the country's lingual composition to estimate the distribution.

article therefore adopts the same trend and uses management and leadership to refer to the work and function of school heads.

The economic reform models that have been introduced in the USA (Jacobson, 1992) and the UK (Reeves et al., 2002) since the administrations of Regan and Thatcher have been transferred to developing countries. Hoyle and Wallace (2005) trace their routes to the 1860s. Managerialism emerged from Thatcher and Reagan economic reforms as a 'belief that all organisations have more similarities than differences, and thus the performance of all organisations can be optimised by the application of generic management skills and theory' (Tomlinson, 1992: 1). Like any other organization, schools have since operated like businesses focusing in issues of efficiency, productivity, competition and performativity (Beckmann and Cooper, 2004). This approach is qualified by the annual publication of league tables to compare school performance in national examinations (see Tables 1–4). Hoyle and Wallace (2005: 69) indicated that it is a policymaker believes 'that private sector practices are applicable to public services, including education'. Critics of managerialism in education view reform policies on school improvement and school effectiveness movements to be problematic (Adnett and Davies, 2000; Morley and Rassool, 2000; Simkins, 2000). Morley and Rassool (2000: 174) charge that policy restructuring defined 'common values and common representations of reality such as taxonomies, checklist, performance indicators, league tables, and target setting exercises'. They argue that policies are borrowed from corporate world governance methods and configured to control school systems. They question the setting of performance standards for schools. Adnett and Davies (2000) argue that such standardization 'strengthened

Table 2. Primary School Leaving Examinations: percentage of candidates awarded failure grades D and E by district/town, 2004–2009

District	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Central*	22.7	23.6	22.1	29.1	31.7	31.6
North West****	24.3	26.2	26.0	38.7	36.8	40.0
Francistown	9.6	11.0	11.5	15.8	16.4	17.1
Gaborone	9.5	12.5	11.3	13.3	16	17.5
Gantsi****	32.0	31.8	31.7	38.1	43.2	48.1
Jwaneng	8.1	9.8	6.5	9.1	13.7	10.7
Kgalagadi****	32.9	34.8	31.1	38.1	44.0	49.3
Kgatleng*	15.9	17.5	15.9	22.3	28.2	31.4
Kweneng**	19.7	22.3	23.0	29.4	34.8	36.8
Lobatse	13.9	13.0	15.6	19.2	26.7	23.1
North East***	18.1	20.3	17.8	27.3	27.0	30.9
SelebiPhikwe	4.3	3.0	4.7	9.7	10.6	12.9
South East	15.9	16.6	18.9	20.3	23.9	25.9
Southern*	22.4	23.4	23.5	31.9	36.4	39.8

Source: Adopted from Botswana Examination Council records, 2004–2009 PSLE Results Analysis (BEC, 2009a).

Notes: PSLE = Primary School Leaving Examination. Primary education is a 7-year course that all primary school children in Botswana undergo and at the end write PSLE before they enrol for junior secondary school

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Table 3. Performance of a sample of four selected rural/remote junior secondary schools in underperforming Western Region

School	District	A	B	C	D	Total
Marakenelo	Gantsi ****	0	7 (9.7%)	38 (50%)	31 (40.8%)	776
Etsha 6	North West ****	0	8 (3.8%)	118 (45.4%)	134 (51.5%)	260
Lehutshelo	Kgalagadi****	0	11 (5.9%)	92 (49.2)	84 (44.9%)	187
Mputhe	Kweneng West ***	1 (0.5%)	15 (8.2%)	78 (42.9%)	88 (48.9%)	282

Source: Adapted from 2009 BEC JCE Report (BEC, 2009b).

Notes: BEC = Botswana Examination Council, the a body that runs primary and secondary school national examinations in Botswana; JCE = Junior Certificate Examination, all junior secondary schools in Botswana offer a 3-year JCE course. Children have to at least pass JCE with a C grade or higher in order to qualify for admission in senior secondary schools.

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Table 4. BCE JCE result analysis, 2008 and 2009

Year	South Central* Region	North Region*	Central Region*	South Region**	West Region****	National
2008	78.7	74.3	78	73.5	62.1	75
2009	78.3	75.2	77.6	71.3	62	75

Source: Adapted from 2009 BEC JCE Report (BEC, 2009b).

Notes: *District/region in which a small but significant number of the inhabitants' mother tongue is neither national nor official language; **district/region in which about one-quarter of the inhabitants' mother tongue is neither national nor official language; ***district/region in which about three-quarter of the inhabitants' mother tongue is neither national nor official language; ****district/region in which the entire inhabitants' mother tongue is neither national nor official language. These mother-tongue distributions are not adopted from BEC. In the absence of any official statistics (Republic of Botswana, 2003; Youngman, 2003) on mother tongue distribution, the author uses his personal knowledge of the country's lingual composition to estimate the distribution.

curriculum conformity rather than diversity'. This trend seems to have gained momentum during times of the world economic recessions.

Thatcher and Reagan leadership coincided with the 1981–1982 economic recession. As the leading economies of the world with more influence on financial institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, Britain and America responded to the recession by adopting neo-liberal policies in order to create stimulus packages and management reforms for the economies of their countries and that of the global community (Samoff, 1994; Samoff and Carrol, 2003). Thatcher's economic reforms focused on reducing state intervention, opening free markets increasing entrepreneurship. Similarly, Reagan's reform policies were to reduce government spending, reduce government regulation of the economy and to control the money supply to reduce inflation. These reform policies bolstered a neo-liberal market economic philosophy the emphasis of which is privatization and globalization. These neo-liberal economic reforms were also transferred to the education sectors of developing countries and Sub-Saharan Africa in particular, through structural adjustment programmes (SAP) (Owusu and Samatar, 1997). Suffice to mention though, that Botswana was not so much tied to SAPs, because during this 1981–1982 recession, she was in 'a period of internal political stability and strong economic growth rate' (Evans and Yoder, 1991: 51). As with many other Sub-Saharan African nation-states, Botswana had already become a victim of uncritical policy borrowing/transfer as reflected in its nation 1977 Education Policy and the subsequent 1994 Revised Education Policy. These policies will be highlighted in the next section to demonstrate their insufficiencies.

The British and American oriented education reform systems, like any other colonial approach, have been transferred to developing countries. The receiving countries have adopted national curriculum programmes within their associated national examination systems. Uniform school calendars have been imposed. The cultures of national and official languages were also imposed. All these are not contingent to the multiculturalistic and heterogeneous nature of Sub-Saharan African societies. This problem of policy imposition further hinders school management by concentrating on school efficiency, productivity, competition and performativity. There was little effort to make policies that recognize diversity and that positively affect management and leadership of remote and rural schools. For example, among its public service reforms, and borrowing from American Taylorized and lately, the neo-liberal economic policy of privatization and globalization, characterized by efficiency, competition and productivity,

Botswana introduced, in public schools, the performance-based reward system (PBRs) and later changed it to performance management system (PMS). In the PMS, schools have adopted everyday language of the business world (Beckmann and Cooper, 2004). PMS is meant to reward outstanding performers in public service. With little attention paid to the value-added approach, placing heads in contexts that are far too different and diverse to allow them to compete in raising learner achievement, by judgments of norm-referenced nationalized examinations results, is to sentence those heads who are working in poor, remote and marginalized communities to early an exit from public service. The current implementation of PMS in Botswana schools is viewed as more of a threat to heads and teachers of remote and rural schools, for as long as policies do not recognize the uniqueness of school localities and contexts. To contextualize the argument, the following case study section explores some problems of borrowed generic policies in Botswana.

Problematic Generic Policies: Botswana as a Case Study

Some governments promulgate generic legislation, regulations, policies and priorities (Bolman and Deal, 1991; Caldwell and Spinks, 1988) to reform and improve organizational management and leadership. Schools have been victims of this approach. According to Bolman and Deal, generic rules and policies ensure predictability and uniformity in organizational functioning. They argue that policies ensure conformity and standardization for action regardless of 'the people, place, or time of year involved' and context (Bolman and Deal, 1991: 59). This trend manifests itself in developing countries in which more often all public primary and secondary schools follow the same school curriculum, calendar, lesson planning, classroom teaching timetable, admission guideline and language as medium of instruction. Generic school management policies limit discretion and innovativeness in organizational leadership. They do not take into consideration the fact that some countries' climatic, cultural and socio-economic conditions and differences affect school systems differently (Molefe et al., 2005). Generic policies lack principles of positive discrimination. They marginalize some sections of the society from equal opportunities in socio-economic development. For purposes of focus, only three policy areas are discussed in this article, namely language, curriculum and school calendar.

Language

Language policy in developing countries is one of the thorny issues that tended to discriminate against most ethnic minority children, not allowing them fair participation in school curriculum activities. Education systems promote and accommodate cultures and languages of the majority, called 'national languages', and foreign languages, such as English, French and Portuguese, called 'official languages' under the philosophy of nation building and globalization respectively (Youngman, 2003). Language policy put school leadership at the centre of controversy in terms of performativity in a highly competitive norm-referenced external and/or national examination controlled leagues. Norm-referenced examinations results show that most rural and remote schools in developing countries are failing to rise to the expectations of both their communities and that of the national goals. More rural children than those in urban centres fail to qualify for further education (see Tables 1 and 2). Language policy has been found to be a major issue in this problem (Nyathi-Ramahobo, 1996), but unfortunately ignored by policy makers, yet quite often school leadership is blamed for schools' poor performance.

In Botswana, English is the official language and Setswana is the national language. These two are the only media of instruction allowed in schools (Republic of Botswana, 1977; 1994) in a country that has about 30 languages (Molosiwa, 2005; Watson, 1999). Youngman (2003) indicates that 20 per cent of the Botswana population is non-Setswana speaking. Some schools in rural and remote areas, such as Parakarungu, Struizendam and Metsimantsho (see Tables 1 and 2) serve communities in which both Setswana and English are foreign languages. Heads merely 'manage' according to policy instead of 'running' according to uniqueness and context. They work in highly confrontational environments, where communities openly resist the language policy that marginalizes and assimilates them and their children. The language policy is a managerialistic position influenced by economic philosophy of English for 'internationalization' or 'globalization' and Setswana for 'nation building'. The policy puts huge stress on both learners and teachers who struggle with learning and teaching two second languages at the same time. Teachers are not adequately trained to teach two second languages and they also lack skills on multicultural teaching (Pansiri and Dambe, 2005). School leadership performativity is at risk because learners do not do well in examinations, as is revealed in Tables 1–4.

To make the thesis of this argument clearer, a brief reflection is made on Tables 1 and 2. The data can be interpreted in a variety of ways. It could mean that the language policy excludes children from remote areas from opportunities for further education because it is likely that they will fail them the national examination. In terms of management and leadership roles, the data is used here to show that heads in rural and remote areas are underperforming. The Gantsi, Kgalagadi and North West districts show a consistent growth of failure rates of C, D and E grades (see Tables 1 and 2 on PSLE and Table 3 on JCE results). In the final analysis a lot of effort has to be spent on school improvement and school effectiveness activities as seen through the effort of PEIP of 1996, and PSMDP of 2000 in Botswana and PRISM in Kenya of 1996. The fact that the Botswana school examination results in these rural and remote schools are not improving demonstrates the failure of these projects and the complexity of performativity in school management.

Curriculum

The other problem of policy borrowing/transfer is found in the nationalization of the school curriculum (Adnett and Davies, 2000). Botswana has adopted an idealist and realist curriculum philosophical models. Such curriculum 'consists of organised, separate subject matter, content and knowledge that classifies objects' (Omstein and Hunkins, 1998: 35). According to the Botswana education system, the prescribed syllabuses are national and outline common details that all teachers should teach and what all children should learn. It has no room or relativity to context. Ironically, schools are spread over varied socio-economic, climatic and cultural localities. Despite these diverse contexts, and compounded by uneven distribution of resources, schools are made to rigidly follow a common or standard national curriculum. Urban and peri-urban schools tend to have better facilities, materials, teachers and community support than rural and remote ones. The national curriculum comes with national examinations such as the PSE and JCE. Learners in urban and peri-urban schools tend to perform better than those in rural and remote (see Tables 1–5).

National curriculum policies define specific instructional objectives for teachers and learners, typical of Taylorite, Fayolite and Weberite models of management that aim to control efficiency, competition and performance and implement organizations' aims and objectives. The standard curriculum controls the work of head, teachers and learning. It limits creativity in schools and disadvantages the rural and remote schools because they do not have access to a lot of sources of

information. In most cases, curricular materials address issues of the external world and ignore the pluralistic, ruralistic and multiculturalistic nature of the Third World environments. For example, while it may be necessary to teach the history of the French Revolution to Botswana children, it is absolutely critical to teach them their own societal history. Unfortunately the reverse is the case. School syllabus prescribes concepts that are too abstract for rural children in places such as Metsimantsho, Parakarungu and Struizendam, where there is no radio or television reception, or newspapers, to grasp (see Table 5 for these schools' poor performance in 2004 and 2005). Parents are equally helpless because they have no knowledge of European history. In another example, while fishing is such an important activity for children in Parakarungu, the school curriculum does not cover 'fishing' as a topic. Learning does not relate to children's immediate economic life. The work of Atkin (2003), Jimerson (2005) and Suzuki (2002) argue for sensitivity to issues of cultural plurality and those that marginalized the minority groups. Thrupp (2003: 167) argued that 'school based policies and practices and school leader professional development must address equity, diversity and fairness ...'. Like any Sub-Saharan, African nation-state, Botswana is yet to rise to this challenge by moving out of the cocoon of uncritical policy borrowing and focus on climatic and cultural diversity, and relativity. The problem is worsened by rigidity of school calendar.

Calendar

School calendar policy is another critical factor that has blindfolded education systems from the realities that exist in developing countries. The Sub-Saharan African countries such as Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and many others have vast and varied socio-economic, ethno-cultural, ethno-linguistic, geophysical and climatic conditions. Communities and schools are widely dispersed. Unfortunately the borrowed policies of nationalized school calendars in many of these countries do not accommodate these diversities and variations. The nature of generic school calendars reduces the head's power of autonomy. Heads have limited opportunities to tailor the school calendar to the contexts and uniqueness of their localities. This limitation negatively impacts on Heads' levels of creativity, the view held by Hoyle and Wallace (2005) that school heads are empowered to manage but not to run schools.

Cavanagh et al. (2002: 60) argue that 'high percentage of people on earth still survive through local, community-based activities: small-scale farming, local markets, local production for local consumption'. This describes the situation in Sub-Saharan Africa quite well. Larger populations and most schools are found in rural and remote countryside. Countryside schools are more reflective of the economic and cultural activities of their communities than urban schools. For example, Dachi and Garrett (2003) found out that rural school children in Tanzania were involved in child labour even during school terms. School calendar policies therefore need to be aligned to economic and cultural realities. Unfortunately, borrowed/transferred school calendars policies do not provide for cultural diversity and the economic needs of rural communities. Consequently, caught between going to school and working, some children opt to absent themselves from school. Cases of children dropping out in certain seasons when their contribution to economic activities is most needed are a common features in remote schools in Botswana (Molefe et al., 2009) and rural schools in Tanzania (Dachi and Garrett, 2003). This is so because rural children help parents with household economic chores and subsistence activities, such as cattle rearing, crop planting, harvesting and other family activities (Dachi and Garrett, 2003; Molefe et al., 2009). Consequently this makes achieving access to basic education and raising numbers of learner achievement problematic for the heads in remote and rural schools.

Table 5. Consistency of PSLE poor performance of selected six areas and their characteristics, 2004–2005

Primary school ^a	Year	Percentage pass per grade in 2004 and 2005					Locality	Family local language	Culture of the economy
		A	B	C	D	E			
		2004	–	8	17	67			
Kgalagadi District	2005	–	–	50	50	–	Remote, in south along Botswana–South Africa border		
Tshekedi I Central	2004	12	53	31	4	–	Rural, in centre of the country	Setswana	Mixed farming and working for subsistence
	2005	25	44	29	2	–			
Lesedi in Gaborone	2004	27	47	34	2	–	Urban, in capital city	Setswana	Working class
	2005	25	45	27	3	1			
Thornhill in Gaborone	2004	36	56	8	–	–	Urban, in capital city	English	Working class
	2005	42	50	8	–	–			
Parakarungu in North West District	2004	1	29	44	24	–	Rural, -in north along Botswana–Zambia border	Sesubiya (non-Setswana)	Traditional farming and fishing
	2005	5	15	30	43	–			
Metsimantsho In Gantsi District	2004	–	24	43	33	–	Remote, in west along Botswana–Namibia border	Sesarwa (non-Setswana)	Traditional farming and hunting and gathering
	2005	–	5	43	52	–			

Source: PSLE adapted from 2004 and 2005 BEC Examination Report.

Note: ^aSee notes to Table 1.

Table 5 reflects the performance of five primary schools between 2004 and 2005 (Republic of Botswana, 2004, 2005). The schools were selected randomly from different socio-economic and climatic conditions to illustrate how policies can contradict context and impact negatively on school performances.

Conditions in Botswana are such that when hunting seasons (usually lasting for 3 months) start, some children in remote areas such as Metsimantsho drop from school to join their parents' hunting expeditions (Molefe et al., 2005). Along the delta of the Okavango River and Chobe River in places such as Parakarungu, children absent themselves from school to go fishing, as part of their roles in family economic life. Tlou and Campbell (1997: 133) argue that 'the Okavango Delta provides a different type of country from the eastern Botswana'. This shows that the western part of the Botswana is totally different from the eastern part in terms of climate, temperatures, vegetation, culture, language, economic activities, political formations, sociological set up and in many other forms that influence the school and education system. Not recognizing this diversity is tantamount to a denial of reality, a case of contempt and moral indifference on the part of educational policy planning and the government of the day.

Dachi and Garrett (2003) observed that the modern economy attracted child labour in waged activities where children's earnings help families to purchase some basic requirements. In HIV and AIDs stricken countries, such as is the case in Sub-Saharan Africa where 'deaths in the households are further decreasing the pool of the adult labour force and individual household incomes' (Dachi and Garrett, 2003: 67), some children have assumed parenthood. They look after themselves, siblings and grandparents. The cultural and economic conditionality of rural and remote Sub-Saharan Africa is child-labour driven. Unfortunately, the school policy systems have no recognition of this realism. Policies ignore the fact that school children may have little time for home work, are occasionally absent from school, come to school late or too tired to concentrate due to pressure from home. The socio-economic factors affect learners' performances and contribute to low achievement in national examinations. In the final analysis, the heads of schools such as Metsimantsho, Parakarungu and Struizendam suffer the consequences of both negative public opinion and government attention.

The seasonal changes and variations in Botswana contribute to school drop out or absenteeism. For example, in winter the southern part of the country, such as Struizendam, has temperatures that fall as low as below -5°C degrees. The majority of parents in rural and remote areas such as Struizendam, Metsimantsho and Parakarungu live in absolute poverty and are unable to buy their children winter clothes. This situation is compounded by the fact that schools in those places do not provide heating systems. Classroom floors are bare cement. Furniture is metal chairs and tables. In some schools there are shortages of classrooms and pupils are taught outside, sometimes in cold blowing winds. In such conditions children either absent themselves or drop out from school completely. The homogeneity and rigidity of generic school calendar policy prescribes school times and daily school attendances. The prescription contradicts the local context. The contradiction is a huge challenge on the school management and leadership, which is then judged to be non-performing, especially when the school national examination results are comparatively poor. As Hoyle and Wallace (2005) indicated, the heads merely manage while polices run the schools, creating tension between policy and practice. Guided by the prescriptive calendar, school timetables and daily attendances policies, school heads do well in their managerial models in line with the Taylor, Fayol and Weber's scientific management methods. When proper learning fails to effect and learners perform poorly, school heads are condemned as poor performers.

Summary

Performativity has totally displaced a trust in teachers' professionalism, particularly those in disadvantaged areas. Plewis (2000: 91) argues that:

The league tables have a clear, built-in bias against schools in disadvantaged areas, where educational performance is lower because socio-economic circumstances are worse. This bias is likely to increase inequality if schools adopt certain policies designed to try to push them up the league table ... The pressures on school managers created by the league tables are not likely to be in the best interests of ... pupils in most need of extra attention.

Heads and teachers serving in the difficult disadvantaged areas are preoccupied with the fear of losing their job and are distracted by a fear of failure from innovatively managing their schools.

Walker and Stott (2000) argue that the 1980s educational reforms have produced no evidence of sustainable improvements in standards. This is true of PEIP and PSMDP given the status as per Tables 1–4, despite the huge external attention and support from USAID and DfID Aid Agencies. The PMS system in its current shape, providing performance stimulants, that in rural and remote schools only lower the morale of heads, demotivate them and cause them stress. The main problem with PEIP and PSMDP is that there was never an attempt to study the problems such policies introduced, such as those affecting language, curriculum and calendar. Both USAID and DfID brought with them the ready-made programme to improve school management skills, and lost focus on the real problems or and overlooked policy dislocation within the context they were being applied.

Experience has shown that most of the claimed achievements from foreign aid programmes in developing countries have been difficult to sustain and have little impact on the majority of citizens in aid receiving countries, who live in rural areas. This is a situation that Hoyle and Wallace (2005: 55) call 'policy pathos'. For example, despite the PEIP and PSMDP with their in-service and leadership training modules or units, rural schools in Botswana continue to perform poorly in the national examinations.

Heads of failing schools face the pressure of strict control and close supervision from inspectorate systems. This is exacerbated by competing waves of innovation and change taking place in education, guided by foreign-driven agenda such as the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All projects of World Bank and UNESCO (Crossley and Watson, 2003). For example, policy issues on 'access to basic education', which affect rural and remote schools more than urban centres is rarely debated adequately. Heads have remained passive recipients of prescribed EFA and MDG policies on 'access to basic education'. It is argued that in this era of productivity, competition and performativity, 'contexts matter' (Crossley and Watson, 2003). It needs to be accorded due attention. This demonstrates the weaknesses in how reforms are transferred to developing countries through donor agencies.

Conclusion

Neoliberalism and globalization driven policies and nation-state building strategies have introduced managerialism that gave implications on the efficiency, productivity, competition and performativity levels of heads. This is noticeable in the hyper-control school management and leadership policies on language, curriculum and school calendar. The behaviour of heads has become more managerial than professional, a big challenge to performativity. As the remote schools struggle to mediate the tensions between policy and practice, and policy and context,

learner achievement remain consistently low. Consequently, heads are perceived as underperforming. I therefore contest the principle of 'one size fits it all' policy approach and argue that, as much as generic policies frustrate performances of heads, they also contribute to the social exclusion of the majority of learners from equal opportunities for further education. Homogenization of school management and leadership policies diverts government attention from addressing the context of multiculturalistic and the ruralistic nature of Sub-Saharan Africa. It reduces heads' creativity and innovativeness, and consequently defeats all efforts of school improvement and school effectiveness.

Homogeneous school policies in a heterogeneous society negate the pedagogically important role of schools in dealing with knowledge systems and the contexts of various societies. Harber and Davies (1998: 30) observed that 'running a smooth organisation, and controlling the work of principals and teachers, [has become] more important than the needs of pupils and their families'. My argument therefore is that some policies that guide school management and leadership have concentrated on efficiency, productivity, competition and performativity, and negated the educational realities of learners' needs and the expectations of sections of Sub-Saharan African societies.

The rate of learner achievement in national examinations is usually used as the major indicator of the quality of school management and leadership (Harris, 2004; Webb, 2005). However, the performance of a head cannot be judged on that alone. Attention to policies relating to language of instruction, school calendar and teaching timetabling, curriculum development and implementation, including tests and national examinations is equally important. Uncritical policy borrowing and transfer has ignored the 'differences' that exist between varying locations and contexts of schools.

There is therefore a need to shift from the uncritically borrowed management and leadership policy agendas that are monoculturalistic and nationalistic to context specific and culture responsive policies. It has been argued that, 'Diversity is key to the vitality, resilience, and innovative capacity of any living system' (Cavanagh, et al., 2002: 65). By the same token, pragmatic and progressive education systems need to demonstrate this recognition. School management and leadership policies are critical areas in which educational cultures reflect appreciation of diversity. I therefore recommend that Sub-Saharan Africa should work out new policies that aim at making school management and leadership systems more creative and innovative, paying attention to diversity and context. Recognizing that more educational research has dealt more with pedagogical issues than management policies, I also recommend Sub-Saharan Africa to focus research energies on the impact of school leadership policies on issues of equity, equality opportunity, quality and relevance of education systems, and on the performativity of those who manage and lead schools.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Professor Eric Hoyle of the University of Bristol and all the anonymous referees who contributed to the make up of this article.

Notes

1. Performativity refers to the ability of a management and leadership to raise productivity and competition. Beckmann and Cooper (2004) call it a disciplinary system of judgments, classifications and targets towards which schools and teachers must strive and against and through which they are evaluated
2. West should be taken to mean European and American donor countries.

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