

Applying Management Theory into Practice at Secondary School in Zimbabwe: Teachers Impressions of Classical Management Functions at Mapakomhere Day Secondary School in Masvingo

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Abstract

This study sought to measure the application of the five main classical management functions in the educational management processes, namely: planning, organising, directing, staffing and controlling. The study was qualitative and thus made use of a focus group discussion. The study established that the classical management functions are very important in school management systems. Schools come up with plans and thus identify their mission and objectives of the school. They then organise and put in order of priority and preference the resources which are available. The school headmaster provides leadership by delegating duties and responsibilities to staff, and by motivating them. The school management is also responsible for staffing involving assessing, appointing, evaluating and developing the employees at work in the school. And lastly there is controlling which is about monitoring and evaluation to ensure that everything is in the right direction to ensure attainment of set goals. All these classical management functions were found to be useful and practiced at Mapakomhere Rural Day Secondary School in Masvingo district.

Keywords: Management theory, teachers, classical management functions, Mapakomhere Rural Day Secondary School, planning, organising, directing, staffing, controlling

1. Introduction

Management is a matching process (IPMZ, 1996). It involves the alignment of resources to meet organisational objectives. Traditionally the process involves planning, organising, leading and controlling. Usually this is the responsibility of chief executives and managers, sometimes assisted by board of directors/governors who represent shareholders, owners or stakeholders. This paper looks at teachers' impressions of classical management functions at their school in Masvingo rural. The paper starts by exploring the theoretical framework of classical management theory before discussing and illustrating its application at the rural secondary school as per the teachers' perception.

2. Defining Management

Management can be defined as the act of coordinating the efforts of people to accomplish desired goals and objectives using available resources. Management involves the alignment of resources to meet organisational goals and objectives. Traditionally the process involves planning, organising, staffing, directing and controlling as illustrated in Figure 1. The process in Figure 1 does not occur in a tidy step-by-step order. Managers do not plan on Monday, organise on Tuesday, lead on Wednesday, control on Thursday, and take corrective action on Friday (Musingafi, 2012). The model in Figure 1 is designed to simplify the complex management process. These functions may be done simultaneously, in a different order, with or without some variations, depending on the situation at hand. Management is thus contextual.

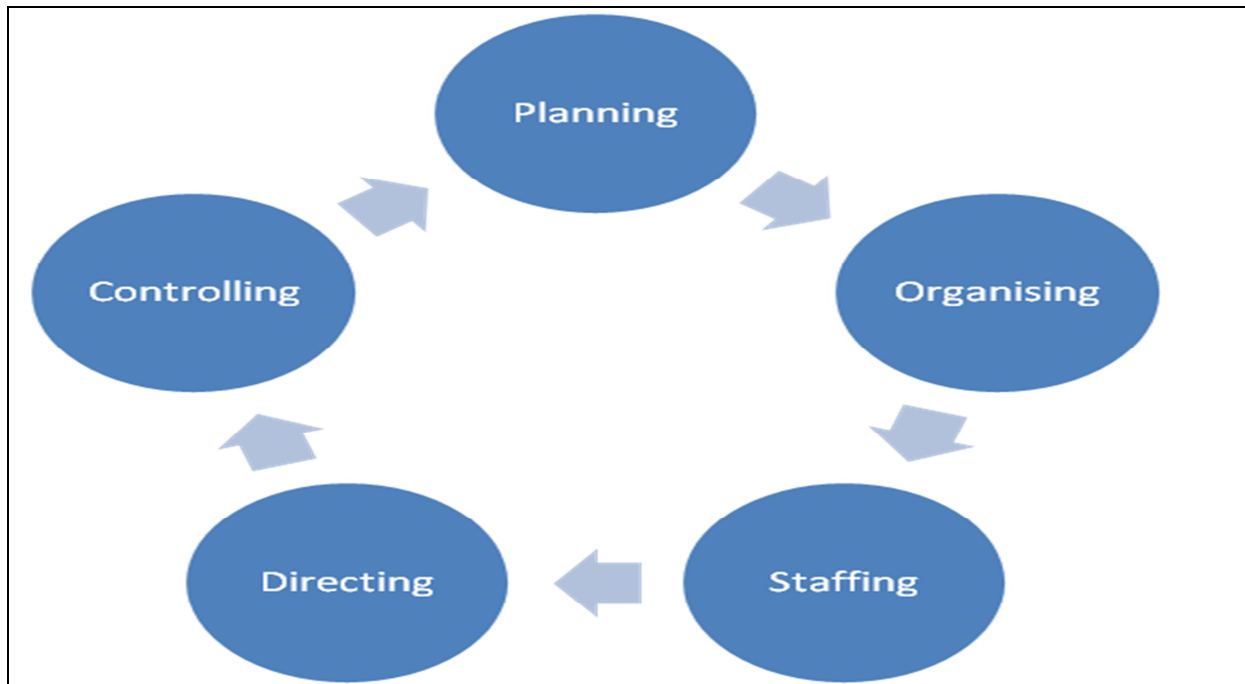


Figure 1 Mapakomhere Secondary School Management Functions Cycle
(Adapted from Musingafi; 2012)

Henri Fayol is credited for systematically coining management functions (planning, organising, commanding, coordinating and controlling). "To manage is to forecast and plan, to organise, to command, to coordinate and to control" (Fayol, 1949). Gulick and Urwick (1937) expanded Fayol's list to seven executive management activities summarised by the acronym POSDCORB:

- planning: determine objectives in advance and the methods to achieve them;
- organising: establish a structure of authority for all work;
- staffing: recruit, hire and train workers; maintain favourable working conditions;
- directing: make decisions, issue orders and directives;
- coordinating: interrelate all sectors of the organisation;
- reporting: inform hierarchy through reports, records and inspections;
- budgeting: depend on fiscal planning, accounting and control.

Later scholars summarised these functions into four classical management functions (planning, organising, leading and controlling) (see IPMZ, 1996).

Generally in the school system emphasis is put on the planning, organising, staffing, directing, monitoring / supervising and evaluating functions.

3. Study Methodology and Participants

For the purposes of this study the researchers used a qualitative research design largely based on focus group discussion. The study participants were made up of 5 teachers at Mapakomhere Rural Day Secondary School in Masvingo district.

The guiding focus group discussion questions were as follows:

- How important are the classical management functions in your school?
- To what extent have authorities at your school implemented these classical management functions?
- What do you think should be done to improve management of your school?

Mapakomhere Rural Day Secondary School has a total of 32 teachers. Only 5 of the 32 possible participants were conveniently chosen for the study. The researchers visited the school and asked for permission to carry out a short and simple study on management functions in schools. The headmaster referred the researchers to the deputy head master who simply gave them five teachers who were not in class by that time. These included:

- two heads of departments (HODs) from the Languages department (female) and Sciences department (male) respectively; and
- three subject teachers (Maths-female, Fashion and Fabrics-female, Shona-male).

All participants were in the 35 to 45 years age group.

4. Crucial Management Functions at Mapakomhere Rural Day Secondary School

Mapakomhere Rural Day Secondary School was established after independence in 1984 as an upper top (secondary school situated at primary school) at Tadzembwa Primary School in Masvingo district. In 1985 it moved to its present site 300 metres north-east of the primary school. Like other schools in Zimbabwe, the chief executive of Mapakomhere Secondary School is the headmaster who, in consultation with his teachers is responsible for the localised mission and vision of the school. The main purpose of a school's existence is to enable teaching and learning process to take place. In this context Mapakomhere Secondary School management is expected to create conducive conditions that allow quality teaching and learning. This is ensured through the performance of five crucial management functions among others: planning, organising, staffing, directing and controlling.

4.1. Planning

Participants identified planning as the first crucial function that educational managers engage in. They all agreed that planning is the basis on which all other functions fall. Lucey (1992) defines planning as deciding what to do in advance and how to do it. For Gabriel (2003) planning involves defining goals of the organisation and the determining activities and resources required to achieve them. Thus in simple terms planning is preparing for tomorrow (Kreitner, 1995).

One of the participants saw planning as involving the drawing of plans of actions that combine unity, continuity, flexibility and precision given the school's resources, type and significance of work and future trends. In simple terms this would mean deciding in advance what to do, how to do, why to do, where to do and who will be responsible for doing it.

Participants concluded that creating a plan of action is the most difficult of the five tasks. The process requires the active participation of the entire school although this is not usually adhered to. Planning must be coordinated on different levels and with different time horizons. The first action of the headmaster is to identify the mission of the school as derived from the provincial and ministry overall mission, and set objectives accordingly. The headmaster will then need to identify different strategies by which to achieve the agreed mission and objectives. Through the planning process the headmaster aims to manage an efficient and an effective school. Efficient means using minimum resources to get maximum results on time. Effective means to achieve the set of objectives. The third part of the planning stage is thus to decide on an appropriate strategy.

The following were, thus, identified as some of the management planning tasks at Mapakomhere Secondary School:

- translating national education policies into school-based teaching and learning objectives and targets;
- planning both the long-term acquisition of relevant teaching and learning resources (including finances);
- preparing school syllabuses, schemes of work, timetables and schedules of activities; and
- preparing schedules for meetings of the heads of departments, level heads, parents teacher association, staff, etc.

4.2. Organising

Participants identified organising as the second crucial function performed by educational managers. Gabriel (2003) sees organising as involving the acquiring of resources that the organisation needs to achieve its aims. It, thus, involves the division of work into functions and sub-functions, grouping of activities that are closely related in their nature, assigning of duties and responsibilities to the employees and finally delegation of authority and power to each employee or the group to discharge their duties accordingly (Ibid). Thus organising involves putting in order of priority and preference the resources which are available.

One of the participants argued that an action plan is needed in which actions and activities are scheduled. He further observed that in order to give the plan 'teeth', targets are set. These targets should be quite easily attainable within a short period of time. Thus, organising is about providing capital, personnel and raw materials for the day-to-day running of the school, and building a structure to match the work. The school organisational structure depends entirely on the number of staff and students. An increase in the number of functions expands the school horizontally and promotes additional layers of supervision (headmaster, deputy, senior masters / mistresses, teachers in charge, HODs, and so on).

Thus, this study established the following as some of the management organising tasks at Mapakomhere Secondary School:

- preparing up-to-date job descriptions for all employed staff, and assigning roles, responsibilities and duties to staff and pupils;
- arranging for the appointment of new staff and the selection and appointment of all staff and students holding responsibility posts;

- organising financial, human and material resources through class allocations and purchase of textbooks and stationery; and
- preparing timetables and arranging classrooms for examinations .

4.3. Directing

Participants identified directing as the third important educational management function. Directing is the umbrella term for communication, leadership, motivation and other related concepts / functions (Gabriel, 2003). Directing is nothing but guiding and leading the people in an organisation. It is not just giving instructions by a superior to the sub-ordinates but also is a process of supervising, guiding and motivating the latter to achieve the organisational goals. It is a complex function of management that ensures the employees work effectively and efficiently.

Participants agreed that the headmaster needs to direct the implementation of the school plan. He or she should provide leadership by delegating duties and responsibilities to staff, and by motivating them. They were on agreement that the directing process also involves co-ordinating and controlling the supply and use of resources.

Thus, the following are some of the management directing tasks identified by participants at Mapakomhere Secondary School:

- inducting new teachers, pupils and parents;
- communicating regularly and fully, by the most appropriate means, to all those with an interest in the school, about school programmes and activities; and
- holding formal and informal discussions with individuals and groups, including staff and students, and those outside the school, about all aspects of school life.

4.4. Staffing

One of the participants defined staffing as the process of making out, assessing, appointing, evaluating and developing the employees at work in the school. This process involves determining the characteristics of a job and measuring that the right number of and kind of employees are placed at the right places and at the right time when the organisation is in need of them. Staffing function of management begins with notifying the vacancies in the organisation and selecting the best individuals as employees.

Performance appraisal and manpower development were also identified as the other processes involved under the staffing function of management.

Thus, the following were identified as some of the management staffing tasks at Mapakomhere Secondary School:

- interviewing prospective staff;
- inducting new staff members; and
- staff developing established members of staff.

4.5. Controlling

In education controlling is sometimes referred to as monitoring and evaluation. Controlling is the process that ensures whether the resources are obtained and used efficiently in achieving the organisational objectives. So the headmaster needs to supervise the work which is being done, ensuring that activities are carried out in line with agreed standards, and taking steps to correct problems.

The controlling function is closely linked with the planning function because, it includes checking the performance of employees to see whether the planned performance is being achieved by them or not. Budgetary control, inventory control, quality control, profit and loss control, management audit, cost accounting and cost control, production control, financial control, break-even analysis and internal audit control were identified as some of the important control devices of controlling techniques.

The final part of the control function is to assess the results and compare them with the set targets and objectives. In the education field this is what is referred to as evaluation. The performance of all the staff including the managers should be assessed. The feedback is needed in the adjustment of future plans.

Thus, the following were identified as some of the management controlling tasks at Mapakomhere Secondary School:

- ensuring that classes are held, and that pupils' work is marked and assessed;
- monitoring standards of learning and teaching in the classroom;
- checking the schemes of work and lesson plans of the teachers;
- ensuring attendance and punctuality of both staff and pupils;
- conducting a full and fair appraisal of all staff, including observations, discussions and in written reports;

- taking stock and physically checking the resources and equipment of the school;
- preparing the annual report of the school;
- analysing examinations results and making recommendations for raising standards;
- reviewing the performance of all aspects of the school;
- setting new targets for individuals, departments and the school; and
- presenting financial statements and reports to the appropriate authority

5. Conclusion

This study identified five main functions of headmasters in educational management, namely: planning, organising, directing, staffing and controlling. These may be seen to form a management cycle as in Figure 1. The first major function of a school manager is identified as planning that involves identifying the mission of the school and setting objectives of the school. The headmaster identifies different strategies by which to achieve the agreed mission and objectives. The second major function is identified as organising that involves putting in order of priority and preference the resources which are available. The third major function is directing which is about the implementation of the plan. Here the headmaster provides leadership by delegating duties and responsibilities to staff, and by motivating them. Then comes staffing which is about assessing, appointing, evaluating and developing the employees at work in the school. And lastly there is controlling which is about monitoring and evaluation to ensure that everything is in the right direction to ensure attainment of set goals.

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