

EVALUATING THE STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT SKILLS EXHIBITED BY GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS IN MUTARE DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Strategic management skills are essential to the success of government secondary schools with regard to achievement of their visions, missions, goals and objectives. The study assessed strategic management skills exhibited by government secondary school administrators in Mutare district. The administrators constituted top management as follows: heads, deputy heads and senior teachers from each of the ten schools studied. A sample of ten heads, ten deputy heads and twenty senior teachers bringing the total to forty respondents was obtained by convenience sampling, purposive sampling, stratified sampling, census and simple random sampling. Simple random sampling was used in obtaining four schools intended for pilot study. A qualitative research design was employed by the study. Prior to the actual data, a pilot study was conducted to ascertain the reliability and validity of the instruments, in particular the two sets of questionnaires. The instruments used two sets of open-ended questionnaires, one for heads of government secondary schools and another one for senior teachers, an in-depth interview guide for deputy heads. Non-participative observations were adopted to complement other instruments. The qualitative data was analysed under themes consistent with the research objectives. The study established that government secondary school administrators in Mutare district are rigid in respect of knowledge and practices of strategic management skills despite administrators displaying a reasonable comprehension of the strategic management issues. Strategic management skills are a rare phenomenon in government secondary schools. The study also established that even though administrators displayed their visions, missions and values among others, these higher level policy documents were not being shared with the rest. Furthermore, the study established that most schools lacked enough financial resources to implement their strategic management skills. It also emerged from the study that most government secondary school administrators lacked strategic leadership which had a positive effect on strategic management. The study recommended that government secondary school administrators be involved in sensitizing all stakeholders about strategic management issues in schools through training and other awareness programmes. The teachers and local community members would mobilise support in preparation and implementation of strategic management skills. Government should decentralize authority and hence responsibilities especially when considering allocation of resources. Strategic planning and strategic plans should be made mandatory as a condition of government funding. Finally, promotions must consider managerial competence as opposed to the period one has remained in service or otherwise.

Keywords: Strategic management, Strategic management skills, School administrators, Government secondary schools, Leadership, Strategy.