School Leadership in Neurotic Contexts: Surviving or Drowning?

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to bring forth into the contemporary education landscape the issue of institutional neurosis based on schools in the Zimbabwean context. There are a lot of disorders and disengaged gears in schools that have crippled the provision of quality education to learners who are in dire need of it. Broken educational bridges are a common feature and this is failing to take education to greater heights. The study was undergirded by the interpretivist philosophy. Qualitative research methodology was thus employed. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who were school leaders and school teachers because they were the information-rich cases for study. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were employed to generate data. The major findings were that there is serious lack of communication in schools. Leadership is not instructional at all and such lack of direction results in neurotic conditions in the schools. Teachers lack deep cutting approaches to teaching and employ information processing approaches which scratch the surface. There is high level of burnout by teachers due to eroded salaries and poor working conditions, the situation which culminates into neurotic conditions. The study thus recommends a series of capacity building workshops on issues to deal with instructional leadership, morale for teachers and school leadership, technology use, ethics and professionalism, leadership development, among others. These will go a long way towards dissolving neurotic circumstances that have found a home in most schools.

Key terms: neuroticism, school leadership, dilemma, quality education, neurotic context

INTRODUCTION

Neuroticism promotes dysfunctional cultures that cost the effective functioning in organisations (Motamedi, 2006). In schools, the cost of neuroticism is unbearable and results in ineffectiveness if school leadership is weak. School principals have long been thought of as important figures within a school and community but today school principals are facing tremendous pressures from both inside and outside the school building (Hansen, 2016). It is also argued that:

> Only principals who are equipped to handle a complex, rapidly changing environment can implement the reforms that lead to sustained improvement in student achievement (Fullan, 2002, p. 1).

The argument advanced from the work of Fullan emphasises the need for school leaders to be able, and not just to cope with rapid changes, but also to adapt and bring about sanity to neurotic conditions and circumstances in schools.

School leaders are the life-forces that animate the schools they lead. School principals are expected to play a pivotal role in enhancing quality teaching and learning in their schools (Huong, 2020) but they are finding themselves in difficult contexts today (Raae, 2020). An expanding base of research and practice shows that school leaders exert influence on student achievement by creating

challenging environments, caring for students, and providing supportive conditions conducive to each student's learning. They are expected to relentlessly develop and support teachers, create positive working conditions, effectively allocate resources, construct appropriate organisational policies and systems, and engage in other deep and meaningful work outside of the classroom that has a powerful impact on what happens inside (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2020).

School leadership is considered as the bolt and nut, most advanced and resolute section of the school organisation, that section which pushes forward all others. In a 1977 U.S. Senate Committee Report on Equal Educational Opportunity, the principal was identified as the single most influential person in a school. "If a school […] has a reputation for excellence in teaching, if students are performing to the best of their ability, one can almost always point to the principal's leadership as the key to success" (U.S. Congress, 1970, p. 56). In the same vein, Wallace Foundation (2009) recognised that effective leadership is vital to the success of a school. Research and practice confirm that there is a slim chance of creating and sustaining high-quality learning environments without a skilled and committed leader to help shape teaching and learning.

There is growing evidence that successful school leadership influences the practice and implementation of school issues (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005). The link between high-quality leadership and school improvement is also acknowledged by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL):

> The evidence on school effectiveness and improvement during the last 15 years has consistently shown the pivotal role of effective leadership in securing high quality provision and high standards…effective leadership is a key to both continuous improvement and major system transformation (NCSL, 2001, p. 5).

However, in a neurotic school system, this becomes utopia. Neurosis is the result of complex interrelations between the individual and his/her environment (Christozov, Bozhanov & Yonchev, 1976, p. 64). Institutional neurosis is creeping into schools with a myriad of challenges being experienced by school leadership. Most schools are now characterised by apathy, lack of initiative, loss of interest by parents, teachers and school leadership in the school issues, submissiveness, and no expression of feelings for hard work and diligence (Tobin, 2014; Barton, 1976). The need to investigate the lived realities and pressing concerns among school leadership should take agenda status in the education landscape. Disjuncture in schools leads to more than disengagement and results in institutional neurosis which depicts lack of positive disposition born out of disturbing discourses among educational institutions. The education of learners is so important that we cannot leave it to chance in neurotic institutions. Ignorance of factors that contribute to such kind of neurosis is likely to lead schools into doldrums and decadence.

The state in which most schools are functioning demonstrates that they are in a disengaged gear. There is institutional neurosis, illness which makes schools defunct. Misbehaviour by students, teachers and even school leadership is rampant, and schools survive upon chance. Bad contact between teachers and the community, among teachers themselves and between teachers and school management, loss of contact with the outside world, brutality among students

and enforced idleness among teachers, bossiness of staff, among others, characterise most schools today. The concept of neurosis does not have a very high priority in the history of school leadership and management. Institutional neurosis is not popular in the field of school leadership. Schools can be likened to organisms which have the nervous system that feed into the other body organs. In that view, the ineffective functioning of each body part leads to poor performance of the total system. For a person who is observing this kind of failure, it sounds like neurosis in schools.

Schools are social systems with complex properties and subsystems (parts of the larger whole) and supra-systems with permeable boundaries (Bowen, 2007, p. 2). The effective functioning of each subsystem leads to the smooth running of the school. If any part of the school malfunctions, the net effect of all this is institutional neurosis. The malfunctioning becomes a neurotic condition that needs diagnosis and treatment for the school to continuously function effectively. Senge (2011) argues that teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders who lack capacity build neurotic conditions within their environments. The principal thesis is that the organisational structure, associated work and technologies, key operational systems should evolve, be unique, and expect to be impermanent in response to emerging knowledge and the environment (Gortner, Nichols, & Ball, 2007).

Delivering high quality education in a dynamic and challenging environment and in poorly resourced conditions is a big challenge particularly in schools in developing countries. As the Commonwealth Secretariat's report has stated:

> This is certainly a problem in much of Africa where: without the necessary skills, many heads are

overwhelmed by the task...strategies for training and supporting schools' heads are generally inadequate throughout Africa (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1996, p. 418).

Governments might not achieve effective schools' standards if there is disorder. Developing countries like Zimbabwe are struggling to reach the standards of effective schools. Tchombe (1998) summarised the characteristics of effective schools in a developing country context as:

> level of performance, infrastructure, teacher/pupil ratio, community involvement, financial autonomy, progress rate of students, healthy competition between male and female students and attendance. While, government tries to ensure access, its policy recognises and protects the diverse educational heritage from the different colonial culture and educational values. It attempts to make the beneficiaries of education to be more involved in the management of education and reduce cost, encourage efficiency, transparency, and quality education (Tchombe, 1998, p. 2).

Lack of the characteristics identified above brings about disorder in schools which cripples the education system.

Leadership development in rich school experiences is fundamental in removing neurosis in schools. The approach should be underpinned by a philosophy that

links leadership development to personal and professional learning. It is argued that:

> The primary criterion for leadership is the ability to learn from experiences in order to enhance … capability … If leadership is to be developed in everyone then they have to be helped to process their personal and professional experiences through a value system and in response to others in order to evolve a growing understanding of what it means to be a leader (West-Burnham & O'Sullivan, 1998, p. 24).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Research seems to be ignoring the prevalence of neurosis in schools, yet some schools need therapeutic interventions. Poor quality results characterise most schools. There are high cases of poor relationships between students and teachers, teachers and school leadership, teachers and co-workers, school staff and parents, among others, and this seems to be affecting the effective functioning of schools in many ways. Newspapers talk of students beating up one another to death and beating up even teachers. Teachers are complaining of poor working conditions against the large classes which they teach highlighting that handling a class of 92 learners is abnormal. In many schools, it is argued that the system of education and finance management is very weak (Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam, 2012 cited in Atkinson, 2013). Against this background, students are producing poor results and parents are complaining strongly against that. There is need to investigate the lived realities and

pressing concerns for schools and ensure that the issue of institutional neurosis takes agenda status in the discourse of school leadership. It is the object of this study to look closely at the source of the disjuncture and disengagement resulting from the many situations in schools. Very few studies have been carried out on factors that cause neurosis in schools. This study seeks to fill the void. The problem can be sated thus: **What factors cause institutional neurosis in schools?**

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

THE CONCEPT INSTITUTIONAL NEUROSIS

The concept of neurosis has to do with some kind of paralysis (Koppe, 2009). Some works dealing with the concept of neurosis are said to have been done J. M. L. Pienero (1983) and an earlier one by J. S. Maier (1948). Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) is said to have defined the modern concept of neurosis but it is argued that it was not Freud who coined the term 'neurosis' (Andkjaer Olsen and Koppe, 1986). The origin of this concept leads back to the Scottish physician William Cullen (1710–90) who introduced neurosis as a concept in connection with his classification of diseases (Cullen, 1769). Cullen looked at 'the neuroses' as the broad designation for all disorders of the nerves as well as the designation within the clinical side of neurology, or neuropathology, which had existed at least since the time of the English physician Thomas Willis (1621–75). It is also frequently mentioned that the neuroses slowly changed character from being identical with nerve diseases to covering the group of nerve diseases that do not have any demonstrable anatomical basis (Koppe, 2009). These diseases are also called functional in that they are apparently a function of conditions in the nervous system which remain concealed (Hunter and

Macalpine, 1963; Porter, 1997). Romberg wrote the first German textbook on neurology and divided neurological symptoms into *sensory neurosis* and *motor neurosis* (Romberg, 1846).

Cullen said (as quoted by Pienero):

> In this place I propose comprehending under the title neuroses, all those preternatural affections of sense and motion, which are without pyrexia as a part of the primary disease; and all those which do not depend upon a topical affection of the organs, but upon a more general affection of the nervous system and of those powers of the system upon which the sense and motion more specially depend (Pienero, 1983: 14; original italics).

From the preceding discussion, it can be argued that neurosis affects the individual's thinking skills and behaviour. In a school system, neurosis thus affects the nerve system of the school which include teachers, parents, learners, school leadership, among others. Neurosis also affects the parts of the organisation and affects its efficiency and effectiveness. What people see institutions failing to do is a result of many disorders inside the organisation that are sometimes concealed but have a negative impact on the smooth running of the schools. Disorders in institutions result in loss of skills development among members of staff, loss of networks and communication and total disengagement of the working gear, among others. From the foregoing discussion, it appears that institutional neurosis is common language to psychiatric institutions, but it is proving with no doubt that features of

neurosis also appear in schools where disorder is the order of the day. Diagnosis into the causes of such disorders in schools is important to see the etiologic, treatment and preventive measures for the provision of quality education.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS:

Neurotic Leadership theory

This study is premised on the neurotic leadership theory. Neurotic leadership lies within the framework of psychodynamic theory that applies psychoanalytic theories to the study of organisations (Motamedi, 2006; Stacey, 2005; Czander, 1993; DeBord, 1978; Kets deVries, 1991). The focal point concerning neurotic leadership is the idea that organisations portray similar behavioural pathologies as those shown among individuals receiving psychoanalytic counselling (Kets De Vries & Miller, 1984). Schools are not spared. Furthermore, it is the psychological pathologies (illness of the mind) of individuals with power that permeate organisation with their personality orientation.

This study utilises four categories of neuroticism as presented within the work of Kets De Vries & Miller, 1984). The categories are paranoid, compulsive, depressive and narcissistic. These constructs influence the behaviour of school leadership, teachers, and parents within the school, especially people who have power in the school. Paranoid category refers to a school leader or teacher who is suspicious and exhibits mistrust of others. The individual is very secretive about things related to the work unit and uses others to find out what others are doing. The individual creates an atmosphere of apathy among other staff members. Such behaviour patterns are a recipe for institutional neurosis in schools. The second category is the compulsive.

School staff displaying compulsive behaviour shows a preoccupation with trivial details before deciding especially school leaders. The individual is overly concerned with teachers submitting to organisational rules and procedures and is obsessed with controlling people and concerned with rank and status. Over-emphasising on rules, regulations, status, rank, among others, might result in disobedience by teachers and other staff members, which becomes a neurotic situation. The depressive pattern of behaviour in the school suppresses new ideas of other teachers and does not encourage people to think without a box. The individual does not look for new ways of doing things to improve organisational performance but insists on doing things according to the book. The dramatic pattern of doing things is shown by individuals who express their emotions and draw attention to themselves and appear to have a craving for excitement. The individual is overly concerned with impressing others (Bellamy & Bellamy, 2016).

Justification of the Neurotic leadership theory

The neurotic leadership theory is of value to this study as it explains the complex interactions that happen in schools that must be understood by school leadership. The theory helps the school leaders to dissect and see the inner theatre of the school with clinical lenses which then give proper remedy to unwanted situations. Schools need proper identity, and the school leaders should act as the motivating drivers.

Transactional Analysis

In this study it is also important to look at transactional analysis as one of the theories that undergirded the study. In addition to the analysis of the interactions between individuals, Transactional Analysis also involves the identification of the ego states behind every transaction. Berne (1961. P. 4) defines an ego state as "a consistent pattern of feeling and experience directly related to a corresponding consistent pattern of behaviour". Transactions are a critical and fundamental communication processes that can cause a deficit in a system if they are not properly done. Deficit arises when school leaders, teachers and parents operate in a wrong ego state or hold inappropriate transactions. The three fundamental ego states are Child-Adult-Parent. However, not all transactions between humans are healthy or normal. In such cases the transaction is classified as a crossed transaction. Problems arise with crossed transactions. Crossed transactions are messages from one ego state that are responded to with messages from an inappropriate or unexpected ego state, for instance, Adult to Child or Parent to Child (French & Bell, 1978). In a crossed transaction, an ego state different than the ego state which received the stimuli is the one that responds (Berne, 1964). For a school system to operate smoothly it requires transactions that are not crossed, and this prevents neurosis in the school system.

LITERATURE

Today's school leaders are confronted, on a daily basis, with a variety of issues from how to implement curriculum and standards, to handling irate parents, to supporting overwhelmed teachers (Tobin, 2014). School organisations are getting complex due to complicated policy, practice, diverse workforces who lack requisite knowledge and skills of teaching particularly the early childhood education classes, and unanticipated world events (Gibbs et al., 2019), such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The scope of leadership tasks has been broadened, and individual schools are facing higher demands regarding self-organisation and responsibility of their operations

(Brauckmann-Sajkiwicz, Pashiardis & Goldring, 2021). School leaders need to keep a balance between the external and the internal operations of the school, by looking both outside and inside the school, as they are responsible for the school in its entirety. Such antecedents bring in neurosis in schools.

It is also argued that today's principals have a very heavy workload and work at a rapid pace that is both hectic and taxing (Lunenburg, 2011). School principals work for countless hours every day. Leithwwod & Riehl (2003) add to the list of tasks done by school leaders and argue that educational leaders face complex environments of meeting curriculum standards, policy directives from many sources, diverse student characteristics, income disparities, physical and mental disabilities, variation in teaching and learning capacities, rapid developments in technology, planning and implanting school budget, among others. How school leaders react to these issues determines the level of institutional neurosis.

School leaders are assumed to primarily possess pedagogical leadership potential, but also to be fully committed to and held responsible for a high-quality development of the organisation and its staff. Leaders need to take into perspective the increasing accountability and the consequences of public education systems being granted more autonomy for decision making at the school level (Brauckmann-Sajkiwicz, Pashiardis & Goldring, 2021). Thus, school leaders who lack staff development and school development skills cause neurotic situations to surface in the school.

Some schools are failing to come up with a culture of hard work. They fail to observe the pillars that build a positive culture for excellence. Literature points to four pillars that can foster a culture in school. Loyalty and commitment, transparency and efficiency, trust and then finally teamwork (Madden, 2017) are the driving pillars that are missing in most schools and makes them less effective. This becomes a source of school neurosis.

Velma, Vijay & Arasu, (2018) carried out a study on reasons for lack of commitment among teachers in government schools in North Kancheepuram District in India and point out that teachers in government schools lack commitment, motivation, and skills. They are not interested to take effort to learn new teaching methodologies and do not want to take risk by implementing new ideas to their teaching system. This kind of practice is a recipe for school neurosis and disorder.

One of the biggest challenges in male led schools is that of women who are expressing themselves so that they also take chances in leadership. Women have been largely absent from positions of formal authority. Such posts were routinely led by men. Women now want to exercise leadership in the most visible public settings like schools. They become stubborn so that they are recognised because they want power (Keohane, 2020). What is beyond doubt is that women want to emancipate themselves from the bondages of isolation because their possibilities have been stifled and lost to humanity and in their interest, it is high time to take their own chances. Such situations breed neurotic conditions in schools.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was informed by the interpretivist philosophy. The central endeavour of the interpretivist philosophy is to understand the subjective world of human experience. The approach makes an effort to get into the head of the subjects being

studied, and to understand and interpret what the subject is thinking or the meaning s/he is making of the content (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This was relevant to the study as it sought to find out what teachers see as causes of institutional neurosis in schools. The study emphasised understanding of individual participants and their interpretation of neurosis in their schools, hence reality was socially constructed (Levitt et al., 2018; Creswell & Hirose, 2019). In line with the interpretivist philosophy, qualitative research methodology was utilised. Creswell (2012, p. 16) noted "qualitative research is best suited to address a research problem in which you do not know the variables and need to explore". Purposive sampling was employed to select the participants. Purposive sampling is one way of achieving a manageable amount of data (Ames, Glenton & Lewin, 2019). The participants included five school heads, five deputy heads, five senior teachers and ten classroom teachers who were selected purposefully from various schools in Masvingo district. The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research (Patton, 1990, p. 169). For data generation, semi-structured interviews as well as focus group discussions were employed. Both focus group discussion and semi-structured interviews were used since they are widely used in conversation social science and participatory research (Nyumba et al., 2017). Thematic analysis was used in this study because it was considered as a systematic and comprehensive process of identifying themes and patterns to address the qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Quite a number of themes were generated from the semi-structured interviews that were carried out with teachers and school leaders from both rural and urban schools in Masvingo district. These are presented and discussed below.

Lack of balance between the demands that are put on school leadership and their ability to perform the tasks

The inability to perform tasks and meet the demands of the job is an issue of concern. Participants had this to say:

> School Leader 1: Sometimes the tasks that are given to a person become an overload and there is no consideration of one's capability and capacity.

> School leader 4: Our duties have just become undefined, and one is expected to teach, supervise, attend and organise meetings, among the many responsibilities. It becomes difficult to balance out.

Craft competence is a necessary condition for effective school leadership and lack of it results in the malfunctioning of the school. Rhodes et al. (2009) have conducted a detailed assessment of head teachers' experience of the NPQH and have argued that some aspirant heads are overwhelmed by "deeply rooted perceptions of the difficulties associated with headship" (Rhodes, et al, 2009, p. 449) and that the NPQH does not provide sufficient confidence building, networking and contact with incumbent heads to address these perceptual concerns.

Stress caused by excessive demands of the work

The issue of excessive demands was raised as a critical factor causing institutional neurosis. This was pointed out by participants when they said:

School leader 3: You get stressed by being given excessive demands from every office at the top. Our classes are just too large to cope with and marking such large piles of exercise books leads to surface marking. Interpreting the new curriculum that you were not part of its design is a mammoth task. The life of a classroom teacher has been made difficult really.

School teacher 2: Demands on teachers have reached unsustainable levels particularly due to the introduction of the updated curriculum. One really becomes overwhelmed with these tasks without any guidance at all.

School teacher 1: The workload constitutes a serious risk to our mental and physical health, and you just get stressed by such volumes of work. The updated curriculum is very demanding and almost undefined. You do not seem to understand its boundaries and scope.

Saaranen, Tossavainen, Turunen & Naumanen (2006) show that Finnish school teachers suffer from occupational well-being problems in the form of urgency and pace of work, problems in working space and inadequate supporting resources. In the same vein, it is argued that where there is no personal commitment by teachers and school leadership to achieve the vision and objectives of the organisation (Senge, 2006; Lunenburg, 2011), the situation becomes neurotic.

Lack of cognitive complexity by school leaders

The importance of intelligence and possession of cognitive complexity is undeniable among school leadership to guard against institutional neurosis. Participants had this to say:

School teacher 2: School leaders get large volumes of information at the same time which they need to manage and process. To do that, they need to think in abstract terms and lack of such abstract thinking results in mental disorders, I think.

School teacher 1: Schools need people with higher levels of cognitive abilities. Lack of such complex cognitive skills is tantamount to poor patterns of doing work. Leadership has tended to be very demanding today with several challenges haunting the landscape of education and one needs high levels of cognition.

School teacher 4: Schools today are becoming so dynamic and require leaders who possess some considerable amount of

abstract thinking ability. There is no substitute for dynamic and intelligent school leaders who face issues head on.

The possession of an intellectual capacity is being considered as fundamental by participants as a strategy to rub off school neurosis. The higher the level of thinking, the more a school leader can step back from the immediate situation and see long term, large-scale patterns and trends (Smith & Piele, 1996, p. 21).

Poor quality leadership in schools due to lack of structured leadership development programmes

It is being noted that lack of structured leadership development programmes is a condition that brings neurotic conditions in schools. This was pointed out by participants when they said:

School teacher 4: The quality of school leaders that are being deployed in schools is just questionable. You wonder whether we will get there.

School teacher 2: I think the major cause for concern is the lack of leadership development programmes that lack within the education system in our country. We need structured leadership development programmes that give not only newly appointed school leaders capacity but even those who have been there so that they do their old jobs in new ways.

The above findings are in line with a belief that the quality of leadership makes a significant difference to the effectiveness of schools by deepening the knowledge, expertise and behaviours of school leaders (Brungardt, 1996; Collins, 2002; Rhodes, Brundrett & Nevill 2009). In the same vein, it is argued that lack of structured leadership development programmes is one of the contributing factors to poor school performance (Ashu, 2014).

Lack of equipment and materials to implement the updated curriculum

The issue of inadequate resources and equipment was raised as a subject of concern by the participants. Their voices were loud and clear as follows:

School teacher 3: There is a general lack of equipment to teach subjects like computers in rural areas. One is just told to teach the subject but there are no provisions at all.

School teacher 1: We are really in trouble trying to teach some matter that we do not know. The crafting of the new curriculum left out the implementers and there is the source of apathy and confusion in schools.

School teacher 4: There is need for people to realise the complexities and limitations of their environments before they craft a new curriculum otherwise it becomes utopia.

School teacher 2: The challenge is that policies are

made at a broad level, yet challenges are place specific. Although national policy makers think globally rather than the local school level, this is not serving the specific school-based needs of most communities that are in deprived contexts.

The above voices resonate deeply with the Education Amendment Act, 1991, which stipulates that each school should have a School Development Committee to run the financial affairs of the school. This showed that the government philosophy of redistributive equity was weaning out. This placed schools in poor environments in a complex shortage of resources without the government support. Disorder in schools is perpetrated by lack of adequate equipment and resources for teachers and school leadership to act purposefully on the stage. Wallace Stegner captured the issue of being conscious of your environment when he advanced the argument that, "if you do not know where you are, you do not know who you are" (Stegner, 1992 as cited in Maringe, Masinire & Nkambule, 2015, p. 366). Standard 5 of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders of NPBEA notes that "Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student" (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015, p. 13).

Lack of commitment to teaching and learning by teachers

Participants raised concern over lack of commitment to serious business in schools. They had this to say:

School teacher 2: You see, people do not show any serious commitment to teaching and learning. They spend a lot of time pursuing personal goals and very little time to serious business.

School teacher 1: When you walk past the classrooms, you hear lots of noise in the classrooms. Learners will be like orphans without a guardian.

School teacher 3: There is very little learning in most schools these days. There is no commitment at all.

Madden (2017) pointed to commitment as one of the pillars of building an effective school culture. Where commitment lacks, teachers also do not take up responsibility with efficacy.

Too many unprofessional fingers determining the school curriculum

Teachers and school leaders are worried over implementing a curriculum they did not craft. One of the participants clearly pointed this out and said:

School teacher 1: When the updated Zimbabwean curriculum was put in place, the process involved civil society who in some cases did not even know what must be learnt and what must be taught in schools. Such unprofessional fingers might not be the very best source to determine the future of the country. Now when the teachers and school

leadership try to implement what has been determined by lay people, it becomes chaotic and disorderly.

Pinar points to the intricate relationship between society, politics and education when laying out the foundations of a curriculum. He had this to say:

> The educational point of the public-school curriculum is understanding, understanding the relations among academic knowledge, the state of society, the processes of self-formation, and the character of the historical moment in which we live, in which others have lived, and in which our descendants will someday live (Pinar, 2004, p. 187).

Lack of instructional leadership

The situation becomes neurotic in a school if the school leader does not devote adequate instructional time to improve school effectiveness. These were the sentiments of participants:

> School teacher 3: It is the role of the school leader to ensure that teachers are supervised, and their teaching skills are developed. Supervision should be used as a critical tool to develop the teachers' instructional abilities. Lack of such is tantamount to a crisis in school performance.

> School teacher 1: Schools need to make an ex-ray on how best instruction

should be given. Leadership has this critical function.

Instructional time include utilising school meetings, planning, facilitating professional development for teachers, developing an educational programme across the school evaluating curriculum, using assessment results for programme evaluation and development, among others (Loeb, Horng & Klasik, 2010). When school leaders fail to devote time for instructional activities this causes disorder and disengagement because that is the fountain of school effectiveness. This is the kind of neurosis that arises.

Poor decision making

In schools, decision making is a central part of daily interactions and school leadership is tasked with that responsibility. In a neurotic environment school leaders fail to engage in meaningful decision making. Participants had this to say:

> School teacher 1: The school leader needs a moral mind to make effective decisions. Some seem not to understand the role of moral considerations in decision making.

> School teacher 4: In a neurotic school environment, the school leader does not even seek for advice, guidance and support from colleagues on issues affecting the school.

> School teacher 2: it seems school leaders do not deepen their knowledge and minds

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It is argued that some school leaders lack efficacy in the decision-making process because they do not employ much effort, they do weigh their options analytically and rely on their instinct (Scott and Bruce, 1995 as cited in Othman, Othman, Hallit, Obeid & Hallit, 2020)**.**

Hostile teachers, parents, and communities

The issue of hostility was pointed out by participants as one of the causes of neurosis in schools. They had this to say:

> School teacher 4: At some schools, l notice that teachers, parents, and communities are generally hostile and there is no peace at all. Parents always think that school heads mismanage funds. Relationships are sour and there is no trust between one another. That is neurosis. How can the business of the school be done in such an environment?

> School teacher 3: Hostility is a common phenomenon affecting the ease at which schools are run. Some parents fail to cooperate and only come to school for showdown. They threaten teachers, school heads and even School Development Committees.

Neutroticism is characterised by anxiety, anger, insecurity, impulsiveness, self-consciousness, and vulnerability (McCrae & Costa, 1990, p. 2). High neurotic individuals have high levels of negative affect, are easily irritated, and more likely to inappropriate coping responses, such as interpersonal hostility (Camps, Stouten & Euwema, 2016, p. 117).

High levels of teacher burnout in schools

Teachers are a major cause of neurosis in the school through burnout. The sentiments by teachers capture it all when they said:

> School teacher 1: Teachers are causing lots of problems these days. Their salaries are very low, and they absent themselves arguing that they are looking for money to meet life demands. They dislike their working conditions and feel that they are working for peanuts. Some teachers say that their status has been reduced to that of a popper.

> School teacher 3: When teachers would gather for tea break and lunch time, they normally talked about problems that learners face during teaching and learning. They would also discuss strategies and solutions to such problems. These days they share ways of how to survive in the complex environment. Work issues do not matter anymore.

Researchers have concluded that teacher burnout and lack of motivation can cause anger, anxiety, depression, boredom, a high absentee and/or turnover rate, cynical attitudes, decreased performance, a reduced tolerance for classroom behaviour problems, and, in extreme cases, nervous breakdowns (Acevedo, 2018; Friedman, 1991; Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). Teacher burnout can also

lead to feelings that "their work is meaningless and that they are powerless, alienated, and isolated" (Howard & Johnson, 2004, p. 400). Given the influence teachers can have on a school's climate, school administrators must be aware of what factors can lead to teacher burnout and what actions could be taken to decrease or eliminate teacher burnout.

Changes in the lifestyles of learners

Some learners are used to doing what they want in their homes and some parents just leave such behaviour uncontrolled to the extent that it becomes their pattern of doing things. When such learners get to school, they might find themselves being misfits. Schools cause changes in the lifestyles of learners and such changes cause hostility among the learners. Participants had this to say:

School teacher 4: The school environment brings in a lot of changes in the life of learners particularly those in the early years. They are used to free play which becomes controlled now. Their time is also controlled. Young learners do not easily accept such changes.

School teacher 1: Demands become more complex for the child in the new school environment.

School teacher 3: You normally hear some children fighting, pulling one another, taking some other's food, threatening one another and the like. Some show high levels of indiscipline even those in the upper classes. They go for break and never

come back. Given individual work, they do not attempt, given homework, they never do it till we meet next day. This is typical of neurosis in a school.

Christozov, Bozhanov & Yonchev (1976) opine that the school places the child in a new and much more complicated social environment. Each of these transitions from one stage of life to another has its own tensions and conflicts which result in neurotic behaviours.

Lack of an ethical culture in schools

There are a lot of unethical practices that are being noticed in schools and participants are worried that if these are not corrected schools remain neurotic and thus lack effectiveness. They had this to say:

School teacher 2: We need a revolution to clear off unethical practices that we see in schools.

School teacher 4: School heads are engaging in financial embezzlement. Teachers are stealing whatever comes their way, be it vegetables, maize for feeding learners, in fact whatever they can get. That culture must stop.

School teacher 3: School staff no longer fear to engage in unethical practices. It is surprising.

The issue of lack of ethics is worrisome and school leadership is thus encouraged to develop a culture that people believe is ethical and sustain the school environment because it leads to

organisational effectiveness. A culture of hard work should be created by school leadership. It is argued that school leaders are confronted with a variety of issues as they provide leadership and organisation to their schools. Donaldson concluded, "Principals shape the culture and interpersonal dynamics of their school" therefore, "have the most leverage to create the conditions for cultural change" (Donaldson, 2013, p. 872).

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that in schools that lack proper communication and have crossed transactions, institutional neurosis becomes rampant. Schools lack ethical standards and that results in neurotic environments. Schools are posing a lot of demands for both school leadership and teachers, and this is causing illness of the institution. Lack of structured school leadership development training is a cause for concern. Schools have paucity of materials and equipment for use to effectively implement the updated curriculum and this causes neuroticism in schools. Leadership is not instructional at all in schools and such lack of direction results in neurotic conditions in the schools. There is high level of burnout by teachers due to eroded salaries and poor working conditions, the situation which culminates into institutional neurosis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study thus recommends a series of capacity building workshops on issues to deal with instructional leadership in schools. There is need to capacitate school leadership with pedagogical leadership so that they can meet leadership challenges with zeal and destroy elements of neuroticism in schools. There is need by the government to boost the morale for both teachers and school leadership so that they become effective in

their practices in a bid to improve school performance. Several workshops must be run on technology use, ethics and professionalism, leadership development, among others. Staff development programmes that help school leaders to care, see over and beyond, respond to the needs of teachers and learners so that no one is left behind, are critical. These will go a long way towards dissolving neurotic circumstances that have found a home in most schools.

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