The Evolution of Management Theories: Implications for Supervisory Practices on the Early Childhood Development Programme in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines critically the evolution of management theories and how they have informed the supervisory practices of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Programme in Zimbabwe. The paper identifies a number of management theories that have influenced the supervision of the ECD Programme in Zimbabwe. Theories that have been found to have greatly informed the supervision of the ECD Programme in Zimbabwe include Scientific Management, Systems and Contingency. However, the Bureaucratic Management, Administrative, Human Relations, Total Quality Management, Learning Organisation and Re-engineering theories have had some influence on the supervision of the ECD Programme. The paper was a desk review.

Unlike others, the study established that the Quantitative Theory of Management was not as influential in the supervision of ECD because of the view held by most supervisors that managerial decisions and the nature of the ECD Programme itself cannot be quantified. The paper concludes that supervisory practices at any given point in time are indicative of the influences of the management thought prevalent during such a period and the human element in place. An important issue that emerged is that, even when and where new theories tend to be more pervasive, the influences of the already existing ones remain visible and influential to some extent.

Keywords: *Management; Supervision; Early Childhood Development Programme*

1. INTRODUCTION

The effective management of Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes depends on the quality of supervision at the ECD centres. Supervisory practices differ from one manager to the other depending on the assumptions underlying the practices of the supervisor. Various schools of thought exist theoretically and practically in management resulting in evolving practices over time and contexts. Evidence of the evolution is abundant in the supervisory practices of the (ECD) programme in Zimbabwe. This paper

examines how the development of management theories has informed the supervisory practices of the ECD programme in the Zimbabwean context. The paper begins by explaining the terms management and supervision, briefly describes the ECD programme in Zimbabwe and then examines the development of management theories and their various contributions to the supervisory practices of the ECD.

1.1   Management

Generally, the term management refers to the process of getting things done through other people. Robbins and Coulter (2003) refer to management as the process of coordinating work activities so that they are completed efficiently and effectively with and through other people. The management process is the set of ongoing decisions and work activities in which managers engage as they plan, organize, lead and control. Managers' roles are basically centred on controlling, delegation, authority, overseeing, administration, supervision, planning and evaluating (Smith and Cronje, 2003; Robbins and Coulter, 2003). Thus, supervision is just one aspect of management.

Specifically, management is the process of planning, organizing, leading and controlling the resources of an organisation to achieve stated organisational goals as productively as possible. This view comes from Smith and Cronje (2003). What seems to emerge from the management views cited is the basic idea of efficiency and productivity. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that, management of ECD programmes is the process of coordinating activities to reach their efficient and effective completion in order to realize intended goals. This seems to suggest a great deal of input on the supervisory practices hence the term supervision needs to be clarified.

1.2   Supervision

Decker and Decker (1988) view supervision as programme leadership and personnel development. They further refer to supervisors as directors, principals, programme or curriculum consultants or helping teachers. In this regard, supervision is generally seen as a component of administration hence its execution by administrators. Supervisory practices, thus, include providing leadership in programme planning and implementation, working with teachers, both beginners and practicing, and evaluating the activities of these teachers. Supervision therefore may be considered as the backbone of educational improvement which emerged as a replacement to the domineering punitive role of inspection. In the same vein, Beach and Reinhartz (2001) also look at supervision as a complex process that involves working with teachers and other educators in a collegial, collaborative relationship to enhance the quality of teaching and learning within schools and that promotes the career-long development of teachers.

Supervision is provided to help educators and educational administrators do a better job. It is mainly concerned with, among others, providing leadership and guidance and it

incorporates checking, enquiry, fact finding, keeping watch, surveying, correction, prevention, inspiration, guidance, direction, diagnosis and improvement. Therefore, it is clear that supervision is not a single activity but an all-encompassing task whose successful accomplishment rests upon the person bestowed with that valuable role – the supervisor. Supervisory practices in this paper can only be understood in the context of the ECD programme in Zimbabwe. The next section provides a brief description of the ECD programme in Zimbabwe.

1.3   The Early Childhood Development Programme in Zimbabwe

Early Childhood Development (ECD) refers to a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to eight years of age, their parents and caregivers (UNICEF, 2001). In the same vein, UNESCO (2006) also defines ECD as thus,*"… a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to eight years of age, their parents and caregivers, aimed at protecting the child's rights to develop his or her full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential."* Considering the importance of early stimulation, Essa (1996) defines an ECD programme as a planned, organized and developmentally appropriate set of activities targeting the holistic development of the child from birth to eight years of age. In addition, Burkatko and Daehler (1998) put it as, the entire curriculum planned for children between zero to six years of age, which includes all aspects of children's growth and development.

The ECD programme, in Zimbabwe, is a post independence initiative meant to increase access to and equity in early education for all children regardless of race, religion and socio-economic status (Dyanda, Makoni, Mudukuti and Kuyayama 2005).   The term ECD programme shall be used in this paper to refer to all integrated early learning programmes for children aged from zero to eight years irrespective of the programmes they attend.

2. THE EVOLUTION OF MANAGEMENT THEORIES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECD SUPERVISORY PRACTICES IN ZIMBABWE

Although the theory and practice of management are informed by some perspectives that have stood the test of time, management theories generally change with time hence no single theory can be said to be sacrosanct. The next session examines management theories as they developed and shows how, at each point in time such theories informed the supervisory practices of ECD in Zimbabwe.

2.1   Classical Theories of Management

These are the oldest and perhaps most widely accepted viewpoints in management practice. They stress upon the need to increase efficiency and productivity within an organisation. The theories underline high concern for production. Classical management perspectives include the scientific, administrative and bureaucratic. These shall be examined to see how each one of them has informed ECD supervisory practices in Zimbabwe.

2.2   Scientific Management Theory

This theory is based on the premise that there is one best way of doing things. The practising managers who pioneered this school of thought mostly occupied themselves with organisational efficiency, more production against very little wastage (Robbins and Coulter, 2003). Early prominent theorists in this field include Friedrich Taylor and his followers Frank and Lillian Gillbreth who studied the work habits of employees so as to come up with ways to increase output and ease job movement (Wilson, 2003).

The works by Henry Gantt (1910-1915) also substantiate the concern for productivity in an organisation. Henry Gantt was concerned with the planning and controlling of work as well as recording progress of a project. He also stressed the need for industrial efficiency through scientific analysis. Henry Gantt further linked the bonus paid to managers to their ability to influence employees to improve performance (Chatfield, 1996). Robbins and Coulter (2003) postulate that, scientific managers believed in prescribing the one- best - method of doing tasks at an organisation. They would develop the best method first and then carefully select, train and actually teach the workers to use that best method in a bid to maximize production. Smit and Cronje (2003) add that Taylor and his followers believed in motivating the worker to produce more goods through the use of money payable for exceeding the set standard of production.

The need for efficiency in education is a direct consequence of these scientific managers. The ECD programmes supervisors, be they school heads, Teachers In Charge (TIC) or Education Officers, were much concerned with the work output in the classrooms. These supervisors performed the role of superintendents who simply checked to see if their subordinates were executing the work tasks as prescribed. Manjengwa (1994) noted that ECD teacher training was such that the trainees emerged with teaching kits to use in particular subjects. Schemes of work were prepared for the ECD teachers to use in the classrooms regardless of the nature of children in the different contexts. Timetabling and scheduling of activities and lessons was done systematically across all ECD classrooms and this was done at the Curriculum Development Unit at national level. This means that, like scientific managers, the supervisors worked out procedures and operating ground rules for the ECD classes. The supervisors of the Grades 1-3 teachers would then just establish checkpoints so that they ascertain that their prescriptions are being done as per intended "best method".

Supervision of the ECD activities in the ECD classrooms concerned itself with monitoring teaching closely, and criticizing teachers for doing things wrongly if they slightly departed from the prescribed content and methods. There was no room for innovations and creativity. This stifled the children and teacher's creativity and thinking. They were regarded as pre-programmed and not as individuals with different needs, interests and learning requirements. It was very difficult to cater for individual children especially the 'slow performers' as this would be tantamount to failure to meet deadlines for completion of the given resource books (syllabi, teacher's guides and pupil's texts). In line with this theory are supervisory concepts such as the "produce or perish' and supervisee's reaction is likely to be that of compliance. The teachers do no more or less of what is required of them thus limiting the development of children in other important domains.

To date, the scientific theory continues to inform the field of ECD in Zimbabwe but there has been modifications in the manner things are being done. For instance, Statutory Instrument Number 106 of 2005 specifies that; curriculum should be appropriate to the mental, social, emotional and physical needs of the 3-5 year olds in the ECD A and B classes but does not prescribe the actual content. This is consistent with the variations that can be found in children's contexts of growth and development. Thus, the ECD supervisors contend with the fact that ECD teachers and caregivers can use their knowledge of child development to design developmentally appropriate activities for different ECD classes. Although the Scientific Management Theory appears to have informed the practice of syllabus development for ECD grades, the idea of using prescribed schemes of work has sunk into oblivion. The ECD teacher can use their own discretion to scheme, plan and innovatively use ideas in the syllabus. School heads, TICs and Education Officers no longer expect the ECD teachers to be passive recipients and implementers of the ECD curriculum at whatever level.

2.3   Bureaucratic Management Theory

In this theory, Max Weber, a German Sociologist, stressed the need for a strictly defined hierarchy, governed by clearly defined regulations and authority (Everard, Morris and Wilson 2004). Bureaucracy is based on legal authority that comes by virtue of a manager's position. The relationship of a supervisor to a subordinate is along the lines of authority and obedience. Smit and Cronje (2003) expound that obedience is not owed to a person but to a position in the hierarchy of an organisation hence positions outlive the people who occupy them. Thus, the power of the bureaucrats is in the office and such offices are led by symbols. Examples of symbols include Permanent Secretary, School Head, District Trainer and Education Officer (ECD).

Bureaucratic thinking has been and is still evident in the supervision of the ECD programme in Zimbabwe. There are people who have authority that comes from the positions they hold in the educational hierarchy. For instance, in Zimbabwe, the TIC at a primary school has always been and is still responsible for supervising the activities of the ECD department comprising ECD A (3-4 years) and ECD B (4-5 years) and Grades 1-3 (6-8

years) classes. All staff members in the department respect that TIC and accords him or her respect consistent with that position.

Bureaucracy manifests itself in clearly defined hierarchical levels and roles that are established in the ECD programme in order to maintain efficiency and effectiveness. Things are done in a systematic manner following some kind of irreversible, impartial and strict regulations. The highest ranking official has the final say in the decision making process. Meritocracy typifies the bureaucratic management theory, which means that people are appointed to do jobs on merit. For instance, by virtue of one being the head of a primary school where there is an ECD centre, he or she automatically qualifies to be the supervisor of that centre even if little is known by him or her about ECD (http://www.managementhelp.org/mgmnt/history.htm). Because of the position they hold and the authority granted to them, the heads exercise some degree of control over the actions of the ECD teachers. They ensure that curriculum and syllabi for ECD are adhered to. Supervision is used as a kind of quality control with emphasis on improving teaching practices in schools.

2.4 Administrative Theory of Management

This theory thrives on the need to manage the total organisation. In 1949, Henry Fayol argued that management is an activity common to all human endeavors, be they in business, government organisations or even in the home (Robbins and Coulter, 2003). Fayol focused on the personal duties of management which he said comprised five roles or functions namely; forecasting and planning, organising, commanding or directing, coordinating and controlling. The forecasting and planning role entails anticipating the future and acting accordingly. Organizing refers to the development of the institution's resources, both material and human. Commanding encompasses keeping the institution's actions and processes running. Co-ordination was the alignment and harmonisation of the group's efforts and controlling meant that the above activities were performed in accordance with appropriate rules, regulations and procedures. According to Fayol, all managers have to perform these functions in an organisation if a common goal is to be realized. What managers do and what constitutes good management are the most critical standpoints in this theory (http://www.ejff.net/HistMgt.htm).

The theory refutes the notion that "managers are born, not made" and hence, Fayol identified fourteen principles that the managers have to understand and implement if they have to be effective (Smit and Cronje, 2003). These principles substantiate Fayol's concern on the manager's action and how well the manager does his or her job. Smit and Cronje (2003) and Robbins and Coulter (2003) concur that Fayol developed fourteen principles of administration to go along with the five roles or functions and these are: Division of labour; Authority and responsibility; Discipline; Unity of command; Unity of direction; Subordination of individual interests to the common good; Remuneration; Centralization; Scalar Chain; Order; Equity; Stability of tenure of personnel; Initiative; and

Team spirit. These principles indicate that Fayol undoubtedly believed that personal effort and team dynamics were elements of a perfect organisation.

Supervisory practices of ECD in Zimbabwe have been evidently drawn from the administrative theory. Supervisors of the ECD programme have performed each of Fayol's five primary functions. ECD teachers as supervisors of ECD classes have planned, organized and coordinated activities that are developmentally appropriate to the ages of the children in a bid to realize the goal of providing quality instruction. ECD centre supervisors appointed by the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture (currently Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education), as spelt out in the Statutory Instrument 106 of 2005: Section 14, ensure that they furnish the Secretary with particulars of periods of instruction given at the ECD centre. Decker and Decker (2003) postulate that the planning function helps supervisors of the ECD programmes, the world over, to improve the quality of instruction, ensure mutual growth of the supervisor and the teacher and evaluate the programmes.

ECD programme supervisors in Zimbabwe have used Fayol's controlling function in a bid to improve instruction through supervision. What happens in the classrooms is controlled through the allocation of classes to qualified teachers, maintaining low teacher-pupil ratios and staff developing practicing ECD teachers and caregivers. Parents are from time to time invited to the ECD centres by the School Heads or Directors (in the case of a private ECD centres) to appraise them on the progress of their children. Parents sometimes bring in new and better ideas as to how best their children could be supported to achieve desired results. However, supervisors need to explain to the parents, why, for instance, lack of proper reading, writing and number work could be detrimental to the cognitive development of the young child in the ECD programme.

The administrative theory is concerned about the manager's action and how well the manager does his or her job. Reflecting on ECD supervisory practices, one can vividly picture examples like the division of work and responsibilities among ECD staff. While the ECD teachers are assigned the actual teaching in the various classrooms, there are caregivers who are teacher aides and are responsible for the upkeep of the children as they engage in teaching/ learning interactions. Working together with the manager, who is also referred to as the director, are other staff members like the driver, cook, cleaners who also have critical responsibilities without which the ECD centre cannot thrive well. Although each of the staff members is responsible for a particular job, what is consistent with Fayol's principles is that; everyone receives instruction from one supervisor (unity of command), each one works to achieve the ECD programme goals (unity of direction) and that all workers are paid fair wages for their services (remuneration).

However, the degree to which the various staff members at an ECD centre are involved in decision making may not be as is the case in Fayol's ideal organisation in the supervision of Zimbabwean ECD programmes. ECD teachers are expected to implement directives from their superiors (heads and directors) who sometimes just pass on messages they get from the head office of their responsible ministry. Administration is guided by policy and

the administrators are policy implementers. For example, when the Secretary's circular Number 14 of 2004 directed primary schools to attach ECD centres and monitor their activities, Dyanda *et al* (2005) report that most supervisors (the school heads and TICs) did not know what to supervise. The situation was later corrected by the Director's circular Number 12 of 2005 and the Director's Circular Number 48 of 2007 which then brought guidelines on the implementation of the ECD programme in Zimbabwe.

2.5   Human Relations Theory of Management

This theory took off as a criticism to the concern for work at the expense of the worker that was prevailing in the scientific management. Hellriegel and Slocum (1993) elucidate that the theory brought a paradigm shift in management foci. Concern for people conquered the concern for production. Robbins and Coulter (2003) submit that though varied and distinct, all the contributions of these theorists had in common a belief that people were the most important asset in the organisation and should be managed accordingly.

This school of thought thrives on the basic assumptions that, the social dynamics of the team of workers were a stronger force on productivity than doing things "the one best way" as Taylor had earlier on propounded. Use of varied work methods does not harm the overall productivity and with minimum supervision by management and a great deal of worker freedom, higher productivity can be achieved (http://www.accel-team.com/motivation/hawthorne_03.html).

Stemming from this perspective, it would appear, is the team idea of the formation of departments within the school systems where we have the TIC and team comprising the ECD Department of primary school. Given the necessary autonomy and resources for their work, the department performs wonders on behalf of the school. Within the ECD Department are sub committees such as the Grade 1 Teachers Committee. Such committees have been observed to be quite influential in determining the different teaching methods that can be used, for instance in teaching reading to the beginners. Without the supervision of the TIC, it is amazing how the Grade 1 teachers successfully manage their own professional tasks to their successful completion. Unlike the one best method previously dominant in the scientific management theory, this behavioral management theory leads to productivity through the workers' own initiative. Morale comes when successful work performance is through team effort under conditions of mutual trust, support and respect.

This theory has informed the supervisory practice of selecting new teachers in the ECD programme, basing on their previous experience as a key indicator that they will fit into the demands of ECD work. Section 13(7)(c) of the Statutory instrument Number 106 of 2005 clearly specifies that the written notification to the Secretary shall contain the following information in respect of each new teacher; the length of teaching experience or other relevant experience, and nature of such experience. This suggests that the Secretary as the supervisor at the helm of the ECD programme in Zimbabwe

acknowledges what the immediate supervisor values in terms of the new recruit's valuable experience. Induction of new personnel, which is the responsibility of the ECD programme supervisor, is done in a warm and relaxed manner. The induction ensures that the newly appointed teacher has the best possible picture of the ECD centre.

The Elton Mayo and Associates Hawthorne studies in the 1950s gave birth to the theory of motivation in management by Abraham Maslow and McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y. Maslow's major contribution was motivation. He developed a hierarchy of human needs beginning with basic physiological needs (food, clothing and shelter), safety needs, love/ belonging needs, esteem needs and self-actualisation. Donnelly, Gibson and Ivancevich (1992) posit that lower needs have to be satisfied before those higher up the hierarchy, hence, management should concern themselves with the worker's welfare first before the job at hand can be effectively accomplished.

Maslow's ideas provide the foundation upon which to understand some of the supervisory practices prevalent in the ECD programme. There was a time during the post war period in Zimbabwe (around the 1980s) when most schools engaged in vast house construction projects, a move meant to provide descent shelter to the incumbent teachers amongst whom were ECD practitioners. ECD classes and preschool children were provided with supplementary food such as Corn –Soya blend porridge and Nutrimix mahewu. Children were being motivated to attend preschools and accord their parents especially mothers, some chance to engage in other productive national duties. In the process, the government's overall call of increasing access to ECD was realized. The ECD teachers were motivated to work with children because they were paid salaries and provided with descent accommodation at schools (Teacher's Forum, 1983). The esteem needs of personnel in the ECD programme have been recognized through the use of promotions and high level of work achievement awards. The Teacher's Forum (1983) reports that hardworking ECD teachers were promoted to the post of TIC and this would gain them recognition and respect by other teachers. They would in turn be motivated to manage the ECD department activities. Thus, supervision of ECD children in this perspective has led to the treatment of children with affection and parental love. Children feel loved and secure and in turn learn to love other people too. This has remained the status quo.

While Maslow was concerned with motivating the worker, McGregor focused on two basic assumptions about people and their approaches to work. The assumptions, Theory X and Theory Y, take opposite views on people's commitment to work. Theory X managers view workers as constantly requiring to be coaxed into putting effort in their work, regarding work as distasteful and in need of money, force or praise to do tasks. The Teacher in New Africa (1972) submits that, Theory X could be assumed to inform the colonial period practice of inspectors superintending the activities of teachers in schools, paying unwarranted visits and hideously playing the "the peeping Tom" when observing lessons. These inspectors supervised all levels, including the ECD teachers. A senior teacher at a former group A school in Harare quoted verbatim said, "*I am not sure whether the school inspectors had any belief in the teachers they supervised, they were*

always recommending extra effort to be put in the execution of work, the foreseeable charges for underperforming and definitive withdrawal from the service due to bad behavior that was never defensible. "

This merits the fact that the inspectors acted like Theory X managers. Only in very few circumstances would inspectors be positive about their supervisees. An example was cited by the same School Head at the same school as the senior teacher, who said, '*For one time, an inspector was quite impressed by the flower garden that the ECD department nursed and wrote a very positive report about the straight flower beds, blooming flowers and the good moisture'*. As if that was not evidence of a positive attitude towards their work, the inspector went on to comment that the TIC ought to force other teachers and pupils to water the flowers. This is an indication that the teachers and children were somehow distasteful about their work.

Theory Y managers, on the other hand, view workers as people who take pleasure in work and seize it as a prospect to develop their capacities (http://www.accel-team.com/motivation/hawthorne_03.html). This manifests in supervisory practices such as the staff development meetings held by the ECD personnel to discuss new ideas and develop strategies to deal with them together. Some ECD centres hold get-together sessions for all workers and children so that some issues can be ironed out transparently. Click and Click (1990) view meetings and get together sessions as fertile ground for promotion of effective supervision. Supervisors who view other staff members as knowledgeable and as being able to contribute meaningfully to the success of the ECD programme always get support from their subordinates.

2.6   Quantitative Theory of Management

This approach to management focuses on solving technical rather than behavioral problems. Donnelly, Gibson and Ivancevich (1992) are of the view that computers have contributed greatly to the Management science viewpoint in organisations. This theory is based on the premise that management decisions should be based on quantifiable information. The theory is mainly concerned with the applications of statistics, optimization models, information models, and computer simulations to management activities. Greatest contributions of this theory are evident in planning and controlling functions of management. Robbins and Coulter (2003) contend that the theory is useful in scheduling, capital budgeting, cash flow management and inventory control.

The theory remains quite significant to the role of and duties of the supervisors of ECD centres. School heads or directors of some private ECD centres have done some needs analysis and forecast some future requirements with regards to resources, be they financial, material or human. They have predicted sometimes with precision, the number of personnel to be recruited, the quantities of resources such as food, transportation and stationery to be procured. The supervisors have prepared budgets and allocated resources to various sectors of the ECD centres on time before their supervisee's report of

any shortages. In the case of private centres, this theory seems to link quite well with the idea of the management advertising vacancies and disclosing the conditions of service as well as the salary payable upon assumption of duty. The idea behind selling this information is for the applicants to see how the ECD centre values them in a quantitative manner. When new staff members are inducted, the supervisors stipulate the number of children one will be taking care of and specify the salary to be paid for specific hours of work per day.

Due to the nature of the approach and its focus on mathematical expressions of management practices and outcomes, managers seldom use this approach. They feel that most managerial decisions cannot be quantified. The theory has not had much influence on management practices of ECD in Zimbabwe. It has however, led to the effective forecasting in terms of cost-benefit analysis. Some ECD programme personnel have not succeeded in determining the cost effectiveness of the preschool education. Myers (1992) observes that some skeptics have regarded the ECD programme as not worthwhile because the supervisors have not been able to give quantifiable outcomes. Merits of the ECD programme have been pointed to qualitative behavioral performances such as increased mental, social and physical ability.

To date, the use of performance or Result Based Management (RBM) in the supervision and overall evaluation of ECD teacher's performance is a derivative of this management science viewpoint. The teachers are rated using a scale that ranges from 1 to 5 with 1 indicating the lowest while 5 indicating the highest. The supervision of teachers is done throughout the year with quarterly performance reviews done between the TIC as appraiser and the ECD teachers as the appraisees. The whole process tries to quantify every task that the ECD teacher performs as part of the Key Result Areas. It is really miserable to note that ECD teachers today at times give children some written exercises simply because the TIC or school head wants to see a certain number of children's work-quantifiable information (Robbins and Coulter, 2003). Too much time is spent preparing for the final rating. Observations and experience reveal that supervisees are more concerned with their documentation of the process to an extent that some of that documentation is just for the sake of the rating exercise. Thus, the focus is on the outcome and not on the work that appeared to have been done. The end product becomes more important than the process.

2.7   Systems Theory of Management

Owens (1995) expounds that the systems theory emerged and began to challenge the dominance of the human relations theory. In 1934, Ludwig Von Bertalanffy looked at what goes on in the realm of management and concluded that organisations were like a set of interrelated and interdependent parts arranged in a manner that produces a unified whole. Managers should view the organisation as a whole and maintain a balance between the several subsystems as well as between the organisation and its external environment.

Systems are made up of inputs, processes and outputs, with feedback flowing into and out of the system. Smit and Cronje (2003) state that the inputs are the resources and the transformation processes are managerial processes and systems, the outputs are the products or services and feedback is the reaction from the environment. The systems theory envisages two types of systems namely open and closed. Owens (1995) describes open systems as having input – output relationship with the environment or community. Inputs are absorbed from the environment in the form of people, raw materials, finance, cultural values and skills. These are processed and sent back to the environment as goods and services. In other words, there is exchange of information or two-way communication between the organisation and its external environment.

In Zimbabwe, the ECD director, as the supervisor of the ECD centre has a very special responsibility of coordinating the activities of the interdependent and interconnected ECD classes A and B so that their curricular is relevant to the Grade 1 formal learning. Director's Circular Number 12 of 2005 reveals that Heads of schools, Education Officers and ECD District Trainers are expected to give professional advice on how best to deliver ECD services. Thus, the professional advice that is given constitutes the element of feedback which flows into the system and could also be expertise input which is essential for the effective teaching and learning processes at the ECD centre. As is the case in a system, the ECD centres are subdivided into subsystems for effective management and supervision. There are departments like the catering, transport, teaching, care giving, and the health services. Though varied, the departments are closely supervised to ensure that they all execute their tasks as per plans and set goals. The supervisor organizes resources and allocates jobs to the departments according to their expertise. The activities of each subsystem are thus, monitored, directed and guided for effective achievement of the ECD centre goals.

The systems theory's view of an organisation that exists in a larger social environment where feedback is continuously flowing into and out of, in an input- output relationship is evident in the management of ECD centres in Zimbabwe. First, the ECD centres have been brought under the supervision of the nearest primary school through Secretary's circular number 14 of 2004. School Development Committees are also expected to play a crucial role in the developing and promoting the ECD programme at their school. The ECD centre director or TIC or School Head as the supervisor involves parents of the children so that they contribute towards projects at the centre. The parents provide inputs in form of resources where feasible and also provide invaluable feedback about the quality of ECD services offered by the school. The need to maintain a state of homeostasis or equilibrium is witnessed in the link between the school and its clientele. If the parents do not send their children to the ECD centre then there is no balance in the system. Therefore, ECD supervisors are renowned for building and maintaining good community relations, which ensure that children continue to be churned into the ECD programme from the community.

2.8 Contingency Theory of Management

The contingency theory rests on the premise that the best approach to management has to be determined by the specific situation to which the approach needs to be applied (Smit and Cronje, 2003). In other words, the theory can be likened to the "goodness of fit" test-answering question; what could be done? Managers using this perspective try out different options available to different occurrences such that there is not even a holy way of doing things. Similar problems can be resolved using different methods successfully depending on the context. Robbins and Coulter (2003) submit that, contingency variables include the organisation's strategy, size, technology and degree of environmental uncertainty.

This view of management seems to have informed the ECD supervisory practices of the post independence era in Zimbabwe. This is the period after 1980 when attainment of independence was no longer an issue. The ZANU (PF) government promised the electorate mass preschool education in its 1980 and 1985 election manifestos hence the mushrooming centres. Most were found in open air, under trees and in very few cases in classrooms and halls at schools and in the community. The establishment of community-based preschools in the majority of rural areas made it quite impossible to set any specific standards for the feasibility of supervision. Instead, each centre had its own structure and size as well as purpose. The preschools did not have policy back up to control their governance.

The supervisors, the supervisees and the supervisory practices were dependent upon the context of the preschool. Where the preschools were just feeding points, the supervisor would ensure that food is prepared in a healthy manner and given to the children whilst still warm. In the case of child development initiatives, the supervisor made it a point that the activities were developmentally appropriate to the total growth and development of children. Dyanda *et al,* (2005) report that the government had to promulgate Statutory Instrument Number 72 of 1999 in order to differentiate between centres that had gone beyond feeding points to child development initiatives.

Currently, the contingency view dominates the ECD programme supervision. The best supervisory practices can only be deduced from the actual circumstances to which they are applied. The situation of the ECD centre is the best determining factor. For instance, supervision of an ECD centre at a mine is different from one at a satellite farm school. This is because the mine and the farm have different living, working and environmental conditions that call for different supervisory practices. Any supervisor's choice of managerial style may be based on the values or beliefs that person holds about the context and people.

Contemporary Theories of Management

These are the most recent perspectives in management practice. These include Total Quality Management (TQM) Theory, Learning Organisation Theory and Re-engineering Management Theory examined in the following section.

2.9 Total Quality Management (TQM) Theory

This is a philosophy of management driven by the continual improvement and responding to customer needs and expectations. In this perspective a customer is anyone who interacts with the organisation's product or services internally or externally. It encompasses employees and suppliers as well as the people who purchase the organisation's goods or services. TQM was inspired by a group of quality experts the most famous of whom are Edwards Deming and Joseph Juran (Black, 1995). Major principles of the TQM are: intense focus on the customer; concern for continual improvement; process focused; improvement in the quality of everything the organisation does; accurate measurement; and empowerment of employees. In fact, TQM is a departure from the earlier management theories that focused on low costs as the road to increased productivity.

Intense focus on the customer has been the major concern of ECD supervisors in Zimbabwe. They have organized open and consultation days so that they meet with the parents and discuss any 'burning issues'. However, some of these meetings have resulted in parents bringing to the attention of the supervisor some expectations that are too high for the ECD children. For example, some parents expect their three-year -old child to be taught to write their name, some activity, which could be difficult for the child. The supervisor has to communicate with the parent in a manner that helps him or her to understand the nature of child growth and development. The supervisors ensure that what happens in the home is consistent with what happens at the ECD centre to smoothen the bridge between the home and school. This will support the concern for continual improvement, the focus on the process and the improvement in the quality of everything the ECD centre does.

To achieve total quality, supervisors of ECD have also empowered their employees. ECD teachers have been given in-service courses and staff development programmes. There is a general belief in subordinates as capable of making worthwhile contributions to the improvement of their own practice. Relationships between supervisors and supervisees are characterized by respect and trust.

2.10 Learning Organisation Theory of Management

The Learning Organisation Theory of Management was propounded by Peter Senge in 1990. The theory is a consequence of the unprecedented rate at which change takes place. It is also based on the Systems Theory of management and is an offshoot of the Total Quality Management (TQM. Robbins and Coulter (2003) view a learning organisation

as one that has developed the capacity to continuously learn, adapt, and change. This perspective views the manager's function in cultivating an atmosphere contributing to learning as being able to craft learning capabilities throughout the organisation. Critical in the learning organisation is the much-sought understanding of the value of knowledge as an important resource just like cash, raw materials and office equipment. Managers have to deliberately manage knowledge. Knowledge management entails cultivating a learning culture in which organisational members systematically gather knowledge and share it with others in the organisation so as to achieve better performance.

Smit and Cronje (2003) opine that learning disabilities are tragic to children, but they are fatal in organisations and cause them to live half their actual life spans. Senge cited in Smit and Cronje (2003) identifies seven organisational learning disabilities which are: the delusion of learning from experience; short-term inclination that inhibits creative learning; the myth of team work; confusion of work positions with personal identities; the enemy is out there syndrome; the illusion of taking charge; and the parable of the boiled frog (reaction to dramatic change whilst ignoring gradual processes that may be bigger threats). These disabilities can only be overcome through Senge's five disciplines thus: becoming committed to lifelong learning; challenging one's own assumptions and generalizations about the organisation and world around them; sharing a vision for the organisation; encouraging active dialogue in the organisation; and promoting systems thinking.

The ECD programme is currently being managed in a manner that fits well into the learning organisation perspective. The ECD centre supervisors are committed to lifelong learning. Quite a substantial number of them are continuing to upgrade themselves through staff development as well as manpower development programmes in schools and ECD teacher training college and universities. Gone are the days when supervisors thought they were the 'know it all'. Everard, Morris and Wilson (2004) observe that managers of important programmes such as the early education have realized they need to have management skills pertinent to that field so that they can encourage staff to try out new ideas, learn new skills and take on new tasks.

Meetings are being held between administration and the other ECD teachers where members will be sharing the vision for the organisation. Click and Click (1991) say that the centre director or head provides leadership. He or she communicates aims, goals, mission and vision of the centre to the parents and involves self and staff in professional matters. The supervisors value approaches that enhance interaction and communication between and among all staff members. They have departed from the witch hunting and fault finding purposes of the classical view of management to a more receptive and positive view of the worker.

2.11   Re-Engineering Theory of Management

The theory is centralized on the belief in reassessment of what an organisation is all about and entails reappraisal about the way that organisations operate (Smit and Cronje, 2003).

It is based on the assumption that the current process is irrelevant- does not work and must be forgotten and then started over. http://www.prosci.com/bpr-benchmarking.htm presents that the re-engineering theory concerns itself with the larger patterns of relationships in which they work and influence the lives of others. For successful re-engineering, there must prevail the following conditions: powerful external forces for change should make change inevitable; top management should vigorously back the re-engineering initiative; re-engineering projects should focus on the processes improvements; thorough knowledge of the needs of the customers is therefore essential; all major departments affected by the processes should be represented on the team; and change in human resource programmes and information technology should be closely coordinated with the re-engineering effort.

The re-engineering theory has found a place in the supervision of the ECD programme in Zimbabwe, particularly in the area of policy development. Pursuant to the recommendations of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (1999), a policy circular was promulgated in 2004. The government wanted to monitor children's access to ECD which they had previously been denied by the colonial regime. This move was like re-engineering and starting the ECD programme all over again. This does not mean to say that there was no ECD before, but simply that there was realization from the top officials that issues of equity and access to ECD had been left to chance or unsupervised.

Secretary's Circular Number 14 of 2004 reintroduced ECD classes A and B in the primary school system. This had been the case in the colonial era when there were Sub A and B classes in the primary school. The school heads who now supervise ECD classes ensure that the children are included as part of the school enrollment so that they receive grants like other primary school children. Manjengwa (1994) observes that grants were previously issued starting with the upper grades and used to be exhausted before they reached ECD classes in the 1960s. Thus, bringing children under the management and supervision of the primary school personnel is in a way re-engineering the whole system.

http://www.prosci.com/bpr-benchmarking.htm cites resistance to change within the organisation as more often than not, the number one obstacle to successful implementation of the re-engineering endeavors. Consistent with this view is the fact that when private ECD centres were directed to attach themselves to the nearest primary school for supervision, there was an outcry from both the centres and the primary school Heads. They were not receptive to change in policy and hence blocked the implementation of that policy citing ambiguity and lack of clarity as its weaknesses (Dyanda *et.al*, 2005).

3. CONCLUSION

The ECD supervisory practices have significantly evolved in Zimbabwe. Thus, supervisory practices in the various ECD programme structures shifted in as much the same way as the management theories evolved within and across time. As has been highlighted, ECD supervisory practices at any given point in time are indicative of the influences of management thought dominant or prevalent during such period. However, this paper concludes that when and where new theories tend to be more pervasive, the influences of the already existing ones remain visible. Based on the influence of management theories on the ECD supervisory practices, the paper recommends the drawing of principles from different management perspectives as dictated by circumstances.

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