The conundrum of the Public Service Commission in Zimbabwean school supervision: Foucauldian view of power dynamics

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Abstract

This article discusses, problematises and proposes a critical emancipation supervision strategy (CESS) as a sustainable school supervision strategy to respond to the trajectories of school supervision in Zimbabwe as espoused by the Public Service Commission (PSC). The Foucauldian notion of power dynamics is used for rethinking and critiquing current militant approaches to school supervision as exercised by the PSC.

The methodology used was participatory action research, a qualitative approach to generating data. In implementing this methodology, we had discussions with teachers and a public service inspector in Matabeleland North province in Zimbabwe about the PSC's supervision of schools. The data was recorded and analysed through critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis was chosen because it interrogates power relations and correlates with Foucauldian notions of power relations.

Results revealed that teachers are not happy with the militant approach of the PSC to school supervision. The PSC approach instils fear, creates unfriendly working conditions and, ultimately, demotivates educators. The study also revealed a lack of professionalism among some teachers, and that the PSC perpetuates contestation, consequently compromising the quality of education.

The study recommends negotiated power relations for school supervision, between teachers and PSC officials, premised in the so-called CESS. The government, through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, should rethink the PSC supervision strategy and devise appropriate supervision instruments premised in CESS to motivate teachers and create an environment conducive to teaching and learning.

Key phrases

critical discourse analysis (CDA; critical emancipatory supervision strategy (CESS); Foucauldian theory; supervision strategy

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

School supervision in Zimbabwe has evolved within a milieu characterised by an unfriendly political atmosphere and economic meltdown, which, to some extent, propelled the Public Service Commission (PSC) to apply a militant approach to supervising many government workers, including teachers, after the 2013 elections.

The PSC was established by Section 204 to 206 of the constitution of Zimbabwe and is mandated to supervise line ministries, including Education (Constitution of Zimbabwe 2013). The PSC comprises all personnel in the service of the state and it is in charge of posts, appointments, promotions, transfers, secondments and supervision (PSC 2013). The PSC has established new power dynamics and trajectories in relation to school supervision, which involves the PSC exercising total control. Because of the trajectories associated with school supervision, we ground the article in the work of Michel Foucault, who problematises power that dominates, and who advocated for negotiated power.

The goal of this article is to suggest a friendlier, collaborative and engaging strategy (critical emancipation supervision strategy, or CESS) to enhance school supervision, to ultimately improve working conditions for teachers, heads and learners. We observed the ambiguity and ambivalence that the PSC's school supervision strategy has wrought, and are of the opinion that the strategy has caused problems for what used to be, arguably, one of the best education systems in Africa.

Supervision now involves a militant approach – similar to the tool that was used to control African workers during the colonial era (Mamabolo 2011:17; Van der Linden 2010:512). The scenario revives unpleasant memories of colonisation, which not only made schools into sites for academic and professional excellence, but also for contestation, through enforcement of the fallacies of nationalism and fear. Today the PSC is supervising schools in the same way the colonisers did. To buttress this notion, the Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (2016:Internet) says the PSC has a colonial perception, built on the premise that Africans are generally lazy and need constant supervision. Hence, this article is part of the struggle, as Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009:2) suggests, to "domesticate democracy, as opposed to sustaining colonial and apartheid structures, which are characterised by segregation and victimisation".

However, it should be noted, and we realise, that a militant approach is sometimes necessitated by a general lack of professionalism among teachers. In support of the foregoing argument De Clercq (2013):7, notes that the majority of teachers have deeply ingrained negativity and scepticism towards their jobs and developmental programmes aimed at improving the lives of learners. Hence, some teachers, because they have authority over learners, act unprofessionally, and thereby invite militant supervision.

In light of this, we agree with Lemke (2000:5), that power as a strategic game is a ubiquitous feature of human interaction; power signifies structuring the possible field of action of others, which can take many forms, among which, ideological manipulation or rational argumentation, moral advice or economic exploitation. Teachers and other school personnel are vulnerable, and forced to endure the difficulties of meeting the expectations of the PSC. Ultimately, it appears that the PSC has an agenda that is not necessarily constructive supervision.

This argument was supported by Foucault (1980:45), one of the third generation of scholars of the Frankfurt school in the 1970s and1980s, who claimed that no power is exercised without a series of aims and objectives. Because of the unfavourable approach of the PSC to school supervision, some people think challenging the way the PSC supervises schools is impossible -- they are afraid of being victimised. Overcoming this fear necessitates an emancipatory strategy that is proposed to ensure a conducive working environment that benefits learners.

Criticism of the PSC's supervision occurs in light of the scope and thinking of the Frankfurt scholars, whose fundamental principle is premised on the rejection all forms of dominance that seek to dehumanise and patronise teachers, learners and school workers. This dominance thwarts the chances of building a democratic and human-rights-sensitive society (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:191). In particular, we use the Foucauldian notion of power dynamics to critique the establishments and structures of school supervision as enforced by the PSC. Therefore, this critique clearly has to do with emancipation, not in the sense of overcoming power relations in general, but of opposing certain forms of power to achieve a state of less coercion, and thus more freedom (Messner & Jordan 2004:14).

In advocating for a friendlier, collaborative and engaging strategy, we attempt to expose various dehumanising processes of PSC supervision, and show how these processes

contribute to demotivating teachers in Zimbabwe. The demotivation of teachers through various militant and colonial strategies derails efforts to ensure a sustainable learning environment in Zimbabwean schools. The contribution of this article is that it proposes a negotiated power strategy couched in Foucauldian power dynamics between teachers and supervisors, with the aim of improving school conditions and reciprocal relations. It further provides the PSC with empirical data on the feelings, fears and perceptions of teachers regarding the manner in which supervision is carried in Zimbabwean schools.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK – FOUCAULT'S NOTION OF POWER DYNAMICS

This article is based on the Foucauldian notion of power dynamics, hence, this section serves to set out the framework of the study. Foucault's thinking drew largely on elements of French anthropological thought by Durkheim and Mauss, Callois and Bataille about sacred collective representations as structural preconditions for cultural reproduction (Harrington 2006:39). One of Foucault's contributions to critical theory is on the issue of power dynamics. He argued that power is everywhere and that man cannot escape from the complex relations of power that make up society (Daldal 2014:160).

Foucault, like Adorno and Horkheimer (Demirovic 2013:9), analysed power in a radical way, and considered some unexplored ways of living and social relations as starting points for new forms of power und domination. Foucault attempted to problematise that which we take to be self-evident, not to uncover a redemptive truth about human nature, nor to revel in the telos of human history, but merely to draw attention to previously neglected issues of change and dimensions of knowledge and power relations (Woermann 2012:112).

From Foucault's perspective, power can be understood as a grid of continuously working relations, an ongoing battle with numerous points of confrontation and agitation; relations of power are always on the verge of being inverted (Foucault 1995:26-27). Power, in this sense, is not a function of consent, it is not in itself a renunciation of freedom, a transfer of rights, the power of each and all delegated to a few. The relationship of power can be the result of prior or permanent consent, but it is not by nature the manifestation of consensus (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983:218-219).

Furthermore, power is not a commodity, a position, a prize or a plot; it is the operation of political technologies throughout the social body. The functioning of these political rituals of power is exactly what sets up non-egalitarian, asymmetrical relations (Foucault 1982:185).

Foucault was concerned less with the oppressive aspect of power, and more with the resistance of those the power is exerted upon (Balan 2010:38). Foucault situated himself squarely within the power-as-domination tradition, and his overarching project is clearly one of resistance to such expressions of power (Karlberg 2005: 4). Foucauldian power analysis is particularly suited to studying local forms of power that are constantly negotiated through day-to-day interactions immersed in local contexts (Kannabiran & Petersen 2012:4).

3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY: PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

For this article, we employed participatory action research (PAR) as the methodological approach. We choose PAR because it has been proposed as a useful and valuable methodological approach for working with groups and communities described as marginalised or oppressed to explore forms of recognition and representation (Johnson & Guzman 2013:406). PAR aims to transform practitioners' theories and the practices of others, whose perspectives and practices may help to shape the conditions of life and work in particular local settings (Kemmis & McTaggart 2007:283).

Furthermore, PAR is about respecting and understanding the people with and for whom researchers work. It is about developing a consciousness that local people are knowledgeable and that they, together with researchers, can work towards doing analyses and creating solutions. PAR involves identifying the rights of those concerned by the research, and empowering people to set their own schemas for research and development, thereby giving them tenure over the process (Cornwall & Jewkes 1995:1674).

In this case, the subjects are school heads, teachers and support staff. PAR provides a means for contesting power imbalances and transforming systems and institutions to produce greater justice. Justice is evaluated in terms of fair opportunity and access to resources, fair procedure and recognition or respect. Hence, PAR responds to a reality that states that conditions of injustice are not natural, but are produced and can therefore be challenged (Leowenson, Laurell, Hogestedt, D'Ambruoso & Shroff 2014:14).

In the same vein, Tshelane (2013:417) argues that PAR involves a collaborative effort to address specific systems. It is a cyclical and reflective research design that focuses on problem solving and improving work practices.

The sampling method used in this article is convenient sampling. This approach is informed by the nature of research among PSC personnel, where participating in PSC-related research causes fear among educators. The strength of this sampling method is that the researchers include those participants who are easy or convenient to approach, and whose opinions can be trusted (Alvin 2016:29).

Using convenient sampling, the co-researchers selected two headmasters, two teachers, two school support staff, a PSC human resource officer and two education inspectors. These co-researchers were chosen because they have served in the education field as teachers, school heads and inspectors more than 10 years. They have witnessed various power dynamics and transactions, and brought a great deal of knowledge on power dynamics and school supervision to this research project.

In order to generate data using PAR, we presented two workshop meetings with co-researchers, where we discussed PSC supervision. The discussion was guided by two research questions, namely, what are the effects of the PSC's supervision approach, and how the PSC's supervision can be improved. The data was audio taped. The authors decoded the data separately and met to identify themes emerging from the generated data.

In light of ethical consideration issues, we sought consent from the co-researchers. We understood that protection of participants through informed consent encourages free interaction between researcher and participant (Fritz, 2008:7). Having the foregoing understanding, we assured co-researchers of confidentiality. Doing so was essential, because PSC issues in Zimbabwe are sensitive, because of political interference. To hide the identities of the co-researchers, we designated terms such as educator, headmaster, school support staff, and PSC officer.

4. DATA ANALYSIS: CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

In this study, we used critical discourse analysis (CDA) to analyse data provided by the co-researchers, because CDA strives to explore how non-transparent relationships are a factor

in securing power and hegemony, and it draws attention to power imbalances, social inequities, nondemocratic practices, and other injustices, in the hope of spurring people on to take corrective action (Fairclough 1992:32).

CDA focuses on social problems, and especially on the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power abuse or domination. Analysis is possible through a thorough description, explanation and critique of the textual strategies applied in text and in discourse (Rahimi & Riasati 2011:108).

Wherever possible, CDA works from a perspective that is consistent with the best interests of dominated groups. CDA takes the experiences and opinions of members of such groups seriously, and supports their struggle against inequality (Van Dijk 2001:96).

To analyse data provided by co-researchers effectively, we analysed data on three levels, namely, text level, discursive level and social practice. Fairclough (1993:135) suggests that CDA attempts to systematically explore relationships between discursive events, texts and the wider social and cultural ideological shape of power in society.

5. FINDINGS

This section presents findings of workshop meetings informed by the first research question (what are the effects of PSC supervision approach), for which we used PAR to generate data.

5.1 PSC approach reminds teachers of colonial abuse

Co-researchers reported that some PSC staff use repressive colonial supervision strategies. One educator noted that, “PSC has become the regime’s scarecrow, PSC are ironically trying to instil professionalism in the service yet they are not professional themselves”. A headmaster in the research team said that, “PSC visits to schools seem to be more fault-finding missions than mandatory routine visits to improve the service”.

Through the discussion, the sentiments of the co-researchers indicated that the PSC’s approach to school supervision was a replica of colonial strategies, which were undemocratic and dehumanised teachers.

5.2 PSC instils fear among educators

The co-researchers reported that the presence of the PSC instilled fear in educators. One educator noted that, "I think the job of the PSC is to take away job security so that we feel indebted to the government thereby make us toe the line, see no evil and hear no evil". A school support staff member who participated in this research noted that, "The PSC treats teachers like children, they [teachers] are sometimes made to stand in queue to be inspected like goats at the market square. They [PSC] will be shouting at teachers telling that they are not good in dressing. The sad part is that some of the things are done in front of the learners".

Co-researchers were in agreement that the presence of the PSC at schools causes fear, and affects their performance, while it should actually improve the work ethic of school staff.

5.3 PSC supervision schedule interrupts lessons

Another finding of the article is that PSC supervision visits interrupt teaching and learning. One educator noted that, "The so-called PSC inspectors descended at our school, they disturbed learning process and interviewed learners, how teachers dress? How many times do they go in and out of the class? Do they answer phones in class? Do teachers eat during the teaching and learning time"?

This affects teachers' morale. Another teacher noted that, "in one schools, the PSC come and ask for the names of the teachers which deemed notorious, so that they are transferred to remote schools without their [teachers'] consent. They just hide under the disguise of over staffing". In essence, the co-researchers agreed that, instead of enhancing the performance of teachers through supervision, the presence of the PSC interrupted teaching and learning by perceived harassment of teachers.

5.4 Lack of professionalism by some PSC officers and teachers

The study also determined that some PSC officials lack professionalism. One headmaster noted that, "It's like most of the guys who are manning the PSC offices are underqualified. Most of the guys did not do philosophy, sociology and psychology; hence they lack those fundamental aspects of professionalism.

Furthermore, some of the guys have certificates on issues to do with handling government documents, which have nothing to do with teaching so it's easy to tell that the person lacks competency and hence the only suitable approach is victimisation".

On the other hand, the study also found that a militant approach was fuelled by some lazy and arrogant teachers. During the discussion, a PSC officer noted that, "well, teachers have a point, PSC, especially the inspectorate, is militant in its approach because a lot of bad things have been done in schools, hence, this is the time that cleaning process takes place.

Some teachers are lazy and there were getting paid for not working, closing very early for holidays, some teachers were deliberately missing lessons, hence, the aim is to bring sanity to the education system. PSC is left with no option but to force implementation of policy through force". When it comes to professionalism, the co-researchers played a blame game. It was clear that some PSC staff and teachers behave unprofessionally, leading to clashes.

6. ANALYSIS OF DATA AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS: TOWARDS A CRITICAL EMANCIPATION SUPERVISION STRATEGY

The reports of the co-researchers were analysed using CDA, an analysis strategy that investigates issues of power relations as exposed and expressed in discourses. Three levels of CDA were used, which are, textual, discursive and social practices.

6.1 Analysis at textual, discursive and social practice levels

The findings reported above demonstrate that teachers are unhappy about the militant operations of the PSC. Analysis of this finding at the text level indicates that teachers lack confidence in the operations of the PSC, largely because of the lack of professionalism exhibited by PSC officials. The implication is that it is more effective to demonstrate or model professionalism than to enforce it. Failure to set an example inevitably leads to resentment and bitterness among teachers about the way PSC officials execute their duties.

However, as found by this study, some teachers were also guilty of laziness. The PSC, as employer, feels obligated to ensure that people do their work, even if it means that the employer must resort to a militant supervision style. Given this context, it is logical to conclude that, if teachers perform their duties in a professional manner, issues of

harassment and intimidation are likely to be reduced, even if some PSC officials are unprofessional themselves.

On the discursive level of analysis, the "visits [of the PSC] to schools seem to be more fault-finding missions than mandatory routine visits to improve the service". PSC visits are not orderly or well organised, or focused on improving the schooling system. Instead, the PSC has caused nothing but misery for teachers, who are already suffering. The supervision system of the PSC is perceived to lead to a counterproductive cycle of insubordination and apathy (Wabule 2017:56) – teachers oppose programmes that are supposed to enhance the teaching profession and learners (De Clercq 2013:7).

Analysis from a social practice level focused on the view that, "The so-called PSC inspectors descended at our school, they disturb learning process and interview learners, how teachers dress". This report portrays a negative attitude by teachers towards the PSC, implying that teachers and the PSC are not co-existing compatibly or collaboratively in a quest to improve teaching and learning. The disagreement and hatred towards each other affect learners, who should enjoy the benefits of collaboration between teachers and the PSC to gain the benefits of a quality education.

On the other hand, the perspective of PSC human resource staff, analysed at a social practice level, is that school business has not been conducted in a manner that is professional, contrary to what school teachers and heads claim. The behaviour of some school teachers is characterised by immoral conduct, absenteeism, corruption, providing private tuition, dressing inappropriately, examination fraud, and sexual misconduct (Betweli 2013:82), which negates efforts to make schools sites of excellence and improve the lives of learners.

6.2 Critical emancipatory supervision strategy: a move to democratise supervision

This section we respond to the second research question (how can PSC's supervision approach be improved?). Informed by the contributions of the research team, we propose a less militant, more emancipatory, educational and engaging supervision approach based on the principles of CER, and, in particular, on the work of Foucault on power dynamics. We chose a Foucauldian approach largely because it acknowledges the existence of power in

every place, and argues that power that dehumanises subordinates must be challenged at every level, either covertly or overtly. Arguing from this perspective, we do not imply that power should not be exercised in schools, but rather that power that is exercised should emancipate teachers and PSC officials, and enhance professionalism.

The discussion of the research team lead to the conclusion that what is needed is a supervision strategy that combines various inputs, which we term the CESS. The strategy values emancipation from the negative effects of power, and promotes power negotiation based on rational consent among stakeholders (Swart 2007:4). The aim is to improve efficiency of teachers and the PSC, and to create working relations that benefit all parties concerned, especially learners' curriculum package, which is the core business of education stakeholders.

6.3 Tenets of critical emancipatory supervision strategy

The CESS suggests that a good supervision strategy has four tenets that, when stakeholders adhere to them, could promote good working relations, and improve professionalism among education stakeholders.

6.3.1 Critical emancipatory supervision strategy aims to improve work ethics

Together with our co-researchers we propose that an effective and efficient strategy should improve working conditions. Such an approach to school supervision has the impetus to change relations for the better, emancipate educators and promote social transformation (Peters 2005:38).

This type of approach is desirable, and Mncube and Harber (2012:44) argue that the dominant or hegemonic model of school supervision, globally, remains authoritarian rather than democratic. We argue that, in an era where democracy is upheld as the standard, a militant approach does not benefit the learning process. Instead, collaboration among key players can lead to success and improvement of human lives. Such an approach allows power negotiations that are consistently renewed and reaffirmed (Balan 2010:42) to the benefit of all.

In essence, power exercised by the PSC or teachers should aim to improve work ethics. Through a friendly supervision approach, teachers model professional behaviour that is

oriented to improving the performance of learners (Taole & Mmankoko 2014:19). Under these circumstances, we agree with Hutchings (2016:3) that there is a possibility that teachers could be motivated to exhibit a caring demeanour, and to be willing to contribute beyond time spent in the classroom, to help students.

6.3.2 Critical emancipatory supervision strategy aims to achieve social justice

Supervision that emancipates is marked by social justice, fairness and equity. In this context, social justice is collective bargaining to determine power dynamics in relation to school supervision. Mahlomaholo, Nkoane and Ambrosio (2013:xiii) claim that social justice challenges hegemony in educational policies and practices, and advocates for educational reforms and societal structures that move towards equity rather than marginalisation, victimisation and fear.

Murrell (2006:81) argues that social justice involves "a disposition toward recognizing and eradicating all forms of oppression and differential treatment extant in the practices and policies of institutions, as well as a fealty to participatory democracy as the means of this action". Furthermore, social justice is about identifying and attempting to address structural disadvantage, discrimination and inequality (Gormally 2013:2).

By embracing social justice, teachers and PSC officials can engage in joint activity and, amongst themselves, settle or acknowledge the rules of supervision and professionalism (Nieuwehuis 2010:272). This possible when teachers and PSC officials maintain dialogue (Nkoane 2010:113-114) that appreciates diversity and equity.

6.3.3 Critical emancipatory supervision strategy strives for recognition

Another aspect of CESS that makes friendlier school supervision possible is recognition. Recognition is something that people struggle to achieve throughout society and it can manifest at a number of levels (Gormally 2013:2). This recognition entails the appreciation of exercising power within the understanding that teachers are professionals. Through recognition teachers acquire a sense of self-social relations (Zurn 2003:519), which, in the process, motivates individuals.

Furthermore, recognition serves as a central criterion for the identification and overcoming of social pathologies in contemporary school management (Stojanov 2009:171). For recognition to emancipate, it must not be granted in a tokenistic sense, but must actively provide space for voice, for involvement and for genuine inclusion (Gormally 2013:2). This recognition enables teachers to function effectively in helping learners. While it is true that recognition is important in school supervision, it should be noted that professional conduct of teachers contributes to their (teachers) recognition by executing their duties beyond reproach.

6.3.4 Critical emancipation supervision strategy works to achieve emancipation

Arguably the goal of any school supervision should be the emancipation of teachers and PSC officials through reciprocal learning relations. The data provided an indication that school supervision is characterised by intimidation, consequently affecting the processes of empowering teachers to improve the lives of the learners. Emancipation, as advocated in this strategy, refers to enabling people achieve self-determination, empowerment and professional growth (Devi 2015:40). Emancipation is an important goal of supervision, since it acknowledges the multidimensionality of power relations, and challenges domination (Morrow & Torres 1995:50) to achieve more equitable or less asymmetrical distribution of power (Franek 2014:300), which creates relations of trust between teachers and the PSC. Once trust has been established, cooperation and communication will prevail, both of which are integral to productive relationships (Smit & Scherman 2016:1).

6.4 Rationale for a critical emancipation supervision strategy in school supervision

The ultimate purpose of the strategy and a desirable goal is to detach the power of truth from hegemony – whether social, economic or cultural – within which it currently operates (Foucault 1980:133), as evident in school supervision by the PSC. We problematised and suggested ways to improve school supervision, because, as argued by Brenner (1994:680), once power is conceived as a functional system, it creates points of resistance, and counter-functions that may undermine or threaten the effectiveness of schools. This (resistance and counter functions) occurs because power does not flow only in one way. Instead, there is

contestation and resistance whenever power is not managed within a milieu that promotes emancipation and social justice, and improves work ethics and recognition. Informed by foregoing argument, it is our humble call that the supervision approach of the PSC must be revisited.

We concur with Cullen, Tucker and Tui (2013:2) that failure to resolve power and representation issues may seriously harm the functioning of an innovation platform; it can also affect the priorities given to issues and it may lead to inappropriate strategies for solving problems. We do not suggest that the PSC does not have a role to play in schools, neither do we wish to undermine that role. Instead, more importantly, we propose a negotiated approach to school supervision with the goal of emancipating educators and, in turn, teachers, so that they exhibit professional behaviour that does not force the PSC to use a militant approach to supervising them. We conclude this section by buttressing the observation by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:10), that:

> "What Africans must be vigilant against is the trap of ending up normalising and universalising coloniality [dominance on the part of PSC and laziness on the part of teachers] as a natural state of the world. It must be unmasked, resisted and destroyed because it produced a world order that can only be sustained through a combination of violence, deceit, hypocrisy and lies."

7. CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The article makes various contributions to the approach to supervision of schools in Zimbabwe. It problematises PSC supervision, which very few scholars are keen to write about and, furthermore, it offers suggestions for ways that school supervision can be improved to promote an environment conducive to learning. In addition, the article challenges the colonial approach to supervision that perpetrates social injustice and oppression and, in the process, demotivates teachers, which consequently affects the teaching and learning process.

The article also highlights that a lack of professionalism among teachers and PSC officials paves the way for contestation, making the article valuable, since very little or nothing has been written about power negotiation as a way to enhance professionalism among PSC officials and teachers as a way to achieve excellence in the Zimbabwean education system.

8. LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The main limitation of the article is that it focused mainly on the perception that educators were oppressed by PSC officials. The views expressed here highlight the opinions of educators, who feel marginalised and victimised. In this regard, we recommend that future research interrogates instruments used by the PSC for supervision, and determine perceptions of learners about the effects of school visits by the PSC on their academic performance.

We also recommend other scholars to do a comparative study of school supervision strategies in different countries. Doing so will enable countries to learn and realign supervision strategies with best practices, in order to achieve emancipation through power negotiation, as suggested by Foucault.

9. CONCLUSION

The article interrogated the power dynamics of the PSC that are currently in play in Zimbabwean schools. The article reports on the conflict that exists between teachers, school heads and the PSC. In light of the power dynamics we argue that it is critical that the PSC and teachers negotiate power relations, so that a sustainable learning environment, which will benefit the most valuable client in education, namely, the learner, can be achieved.

In addition, we recommend using CESS because it offers opportunities for the PSC, teachers, school heads and school workers to negotiate power and improve relations by creating a friendly and non-threatening environment.

This article is an attempt to encourage PSC officials, educators and Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education officials to work together to promote social justice, emancipation and improvement of school conditions. This can be achieved by rethinking PSC practices in light of the points mentioned in this article, in a drive to make schools better places for teachers, learners and PSC officials.

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