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**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES AND LEADERSHIP**

Perceptions Of Primary School Heads On Their Instructional Leadership Role In Mitigating  
Challenges Of Covid-19 At Chilota Cluster, Hwange District

BY

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my entire family and friends for their encouragement and support before, during and at completion of this research project.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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May you all find abundant blessings from the Almighty!

## ABSTRACT

The study was to explore perceptions of primary school heads on their instructional leadership role in mitigating challenges of COVID-19 at selected primary schools in Chilota cluster, Hwange district. Study objectives were; to explore school heads' perceptions on the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning within Chilota Cluster primary schools, to establish the effectiveness of online teaching and learning in Chilota cluster, to examine challenges of online instruction perpetuated by the COVID-19 pandemic and to suggest strategies to mitigate the challenges of online teaching and learning in rural primary schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. The qualitative approach was employed to collect, analyse and interpret data. The questionnaires and interview guide were instruments used to collect data. Research findings were that school heads and teachers had mixed views on the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning at Chilota cluster in Hwange district. Both positive and negative impacts were established by the study, that no online teaching learning was done at the primary schools that participated in the study, that a number of challenges perpetuated by the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on online teaching and learning in schools under study and that there is need for school leadership, local communities and other key stakeholders to work together providing and supporting online learning platforms to be used in teaching and learning during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The study recommended that, schools be equipped with appropriate ICT tools enhance instruction, that school heads in consultation with SDCs, need to come up with SDPs that will guide action at the school during unforeseen circumstances, that government spearheads continuous staff development programs so that teachers improve ICT skills and further research be conducted in the entire Matabeleland North province to establish best ways to implement online instruction as a measure to address effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the province.

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## **LIST OF ACCRONYMS**

CBC	Competence-Based Curriculum
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DSI	District Schools Inspector
H.O.D	Head of Department
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MoHCC	Ministry of Health and Child Care
MoPSE	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
PIMRS	Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale
SDC	School Development Committee
SDP	School Development Plan
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nation Children's Emergence Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation
ZPP	Zimbabwe Peace Project

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### 1.0 Introduction

This chapter looks at the background of the present study. It also focuses on the statement of the problem, the study aim and objectives as well as research questions. The significance of the study, assumptions of the study and definitions of key terms are also stated in this chapter. It is also in the present chapter where key terms used in the present study are defined. The delimitation of as well as the limitations to the study also form part of this chapter. The chapter summary ties up the issues that form the present chapter.

### 1.1 Background to the study

In March 2020, the COVID-19 virus was detected in Zimbabwe leading to the closure of schools throughout the country. The first case was reported in Zimbabwe on the COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly reformed schools and the manner in which, they are managed and led globally (Pollock, 2020). Philippines and China, for example, announced numerous solutions during the pandemic in order to continue with instructional programs in all educational institutions (Asio & Bayucca, 2021). At continental level, Nigeria and South also had schools closed in February and March 2020 respectively after cases of the pandemic were reported (Ogunode, Abigeal & Lydia, 2020; Mahaye, 2020). In March of the same year, Zimbabwe, like many other countries the world over, prematurely closed schools (Duraku & Hoxha, 2020; Mandikiana, 2020; UNICEF, 2021) after the country reported its first Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) death case. Many countries' education system continue to be hard-hit by this pandemic (Mahaye, 2020; Ogunode et al., 2020; Onyema et al, 2020).

According to UNICEF (2021; Mandikiana, 2020) the pandemic has negatively affected the learning of many learners globally. In Zimbabwe alone, about 4.6 million learners have been negatively affected by the pandemic. Its impact on education has and continues to be felt. Schools remained closed during the first term of 2020 until October 2020 (Chamunogwa, 2021) as government put introduced lockdown measures in an effort to minimise the impact of the virus (Mandikiana, 2020). Since the pandemic started schools have been following a phased approach to schools opening. The continued phased approach to school opening has left and continues to leave a serious dent on the learners, the quality of instruction as well as academic outcomes in schools.

As a result of the pandemic, and during the whole of 2020, the Government of Zimbabwe has been putting some alternative measures to ensure continuity of teaching and learning in schools. Amongst the measures put was broadcasting of school lessons on the radio (UNICEF, 2021). Although this was a noble arrangement by the government, not all learners benefited from it. For example, in some remote rural district schools, there was no radio signal. This meant learners in such areas never benefited from the arrangement. Moreso, as averred by UNICEF (2021), there was no digital library where learners could later access the broadcast radio lessons. This was a critical challenge, which called for the intervention of school leadership to ensure something is done to mitigate the challenge.

Heads of schools are doing their very best to try to balance the demands of doing the best thing for their learners, staff, as well as meeting policy imperatives and directives. However, there are material and candid concerns for learners and teachers' various other concerns that school heads have to consider for effective and learning to take place in the wake of the pandemic. For example, most schools were not ready for the change resulting from the effects of COVID-19. Most hard-hit are poor rural schools that are lagging behind

in terms of adequate and suitable infrastructure and material resources to enhance teaching and learning. The implication therefore, is that such rural schools will continue to lag behind even in terms of providing quality education to their learners.

When school heads enter their first headship, they entitle themselves to their views of being an instructional and curriculum leader in their schools. Rallis & Highsmith (1986) posit that educational leaders structure their leadership through instructional leadership as a model to develop the human element and other systems befitting learners. However, they find their time trapped in the day-to-day administrative tasks that are consistent to a typical school day. The crisis is hitting hard on all socioeconomic development's constitutive elements and schools have not been spared the devastating effects.

It would look like the pandemic was superimposed on unresolved tensions between people and technology, between people and the planet, between the haves and the have-nots. Parents, although having a keen interest on their children's learning, the COVID-19 pandemic created a shift from their daily routines to the 'new normal' of parents' unpreparedness their children in virtual learning (Duraku & Hozha, 2020). These tensions are already shaping a new generation of inequalities; pertaining to enhanced capabilities, the new necessities of the 21st century, as defined in the 2019 Human Development Report (UN, 2020). The response to the crisis is thus, shaping how these tensions should be addressed and whether inequalities in education provision can be reduced.

While the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have yet to be fully understood (Daraku & Hoxha, 2020) it is already clear that education provision has been done a heavy blow. Although the introduction of online teaching and learning was aimed at reducing learner isolation interaction with new tools, apparently, the success or failure of introduced

technology relies on the user's capability. As stated by Alodwan (2021), teachers and students encountered challenges when using Information Communication Technology (ICT) for teaching and learning (Chamunogwa, 2021). The capacity of teachers to provide effective instruction other than traditional face-to-face teaching and learning (Olsson, 2021) was therefore another major setback (Chamunogwa, 2021).

In rural areas in particular, the absence of network connectivity deprived the already hard-hit schools as learners were not able to access radio lessons that the government had initiated as stop gap measures to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 on education (Chamunogwa, 2021). According to ZIMSTAT PICES (2020) report, most learners in Zimbabwe were not able to engage in online teaching and learning. This has the effect of widening the gap between the rich and poor, the 'haves' and the 'have nots.' School leadership's responsiveness therefore, calls for a shift from the teachers' understanding of traditional approaches to instructional matters at school level in line with the status quo.

Decision making is a critical process in educational leadership. Gabriel (2003) echoes that a decision is a choice or judgment of what we need to do to achieve a certain objective. Moorhead & Griffin (2001) concur and add that decision making is the process of choosing from among several alternatives. In this regard, decision-making therefore involves planning a course of action and setting controls to check if the plan is proceeding towards the set objectives. However, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, school heads were not in a position to make such sound decisions as to how they can manage the situation at school level. Government's decision to introduce online learning made the situation even worse because from an instructional perspective, not all schools were prepared for online instruction. Rural schools according to Chamunogwa (2021) and Mandikiana (2020) were severely affected.

In the context of understanding the challenges of such rural schools, the present study was initiated in order to explore the real challenges encountered by school heads on their role as instructional leaders in mitigating challenges of COVID-19 within primary schools in Chilota cluster, Hwange district. Chilota cluster is a cluster within Hwange district. Most of the schools in the cluster are so poor. They are not electrified and have no access to mobile phone and internet connectivity (Barrot, Llenares & del-Rosario, 2021). Such schools automatically have challenges with regards to conducting online teaching and learning thereby impinging on instructional programs in the COVID-19 era.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

The outbreak of COVID-19 has created disruptions in the provision of quality education in schools (Barrot et al., 2021). As a practising teacher, the researcher has noted with concern, lack of professional will by most rural primary school heads mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on learning. Heads of schools from some well-established and resourced private and urban schools in the district introduced measures to mitigate challenges perpetuated by loss of instructional time. Online teaching and learning was introduced by these schools. However, this was not the case with most poor rural schools in the district in general and those from Chilota cluster in particular. This increasing gap in the provision of online instruction must not continue to impinge on effective education provision in schools. Therefore, there is need to investigate the perceptions of school heads on their instructional leadership role in mitigating COVID-19 challenges at Chilota cluster so as to have a clear position obtaining in Hwange district as a whole.

## **1.3 Aim and objectives the study**

### **1.3.1 Research aim**

The main focus of the study was to explore the perceptions of primary school heads on their instructional leadership role in mitigating challenges of COVID-19 at selected primary schools in Chilota cluster, Hwange district. The pandemic has continued to impact negatively on education provision and the most hard-hit are rural schools, which are already constricted in terms of resource and infrastructure availability in such schools. In view of the above, there was need to investigate what became of learners as well as what could be done to bridge the gap created as a result of ineffective teaching and learning in rural primary schools.

### **1.3.2 Research objectives**

The objectives of the study were to:

- explore school heads' perceptions on the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning within Chilota Cluster primary schools.
- establish the effectiveness of online teaching and learning in Chilota cluster.
- examine challenges of online instruction perpetuated by the COVID-19 pandemic in rural primary schools.
- suggest strategies to mitigate the challenges of teaching and learning in rural primary schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **1.4 Research questions**

### **1.4.1 Main research question**

The main research question guiding the present study reads:

What are the perceptions of primary school heads on their instructional leadership role in mitigating challenges of COVID-19 at Chilota cluster primary schools, Hwange district?

### **1.4.2 Sub-research questions**

The following research questions will guide in the review of related literature as well as the collection of primary research data:

- How do school heads at Chilota cluster perceive of the COVID-19 pandemic on school programmes?
- To what extent is online teaching and learning effective in rural primary schools in Chilota cluster?
- What are the challenges of online instruction as a measure to curtail the effects of COVID-19 in rural primary schools?
- How can teaching and learning challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic be addressed to enhance effective instruction in rural primary schools?

### **1.5 Significance of the study**

The researcher believes that the study will be of great value to several stakeholders in a number of ways. Considering that the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) is still being at infancy in terms of its implementation, the COVID-19 pandemic will impinge on its effective implementation. The study will contribute to the knowledge on leading and managing schools in a crisis situation perpetuated by the COVID-19 pandemic. It will also be the basis upon which stakeholders would understand and appreciate the importance and dictates of the CBC in the era of the pandemic and the future of the Zimbabwean education. It is therefore, the researcher's belief that the study will be of great value to the following in the manner stated:

#### **1.5.1 The researcher**

The researcher will benefit from the study by gaining a deep understanding of instructional leadership as well as how it impacts on effective instructional practices in educational

institutions in the era of the novel COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has had devastating effects on education provision in general as well as teaching and learning in particular.

### **1.5.2 School heads**

The study will enable school heads as instructional and curriculum leaders to understand the effects of change hence be prepared for unforeseen change as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic era or other pandemics that may come impacting on education provision.

### **1.5.3 Teachers**

The COVID-19 pandemic took educational practitioners by surprise as none of them was prepared for its devastating effects. This meant that teachers as curriculum planners were supposed to move with time and have continuous professional development programs so as to mitigate unplanned change as was the case with virtual teaching and learning in some schools. In that view, the study will help teachers to plan in advance on what programs to do that will prepare them for such unplanned circumstances.

### **1.5.4 Parents**

The study will help parents to understand the need for collaboration with school leadership in planning for efficient and effective education provision through provision teaching and learning materials or assisting learners as they embark on alternative ways of providing education during and after the COVID-19 era. There is need for parents to understand that change that the perpetuated by the pandemic is inevitable and inescapable hence the need to prepare for it now and in the future.

## **1.6 Assumptions of the study**

The effects of COVID-19 were heavy on every socio-economic system including the education system. The researcher assumed that respondents have a clear understanding of COVID-19 as a pandemic and their role as educational leaders responsible for leading

effective teaching and learning in schools. The researcher also assumed that participants would respond to the demands of the questions honestly given accurate responses. It was also the researcher's assumption that a health school-parent relationship could be fostered to collectively address the negative impact of COVID-19 on education provision.

## **1.7 Definition of terms**

For purposes of centralising the context of the present study, the following key terms have been defined in respect of their meaning in the study:

### **1.7.1 Challenges**

In the context of the present study challenges are operationally defined as impediments or hindrances to effective implementation of any educational program at school level.

### **1.7.2 Cluster**

For purposes of this study, a cluster is operationally defined as a group of schools that share proximity collectively participate in all educational programs together so as to contribute to the overall quality of education in the district.

### **1.7.3 Corona virus**

Corona viruses are a large group of virus that may cause illnesses in animals or human beings. Several of these viruses are known to cause respiratory infections to human beings (WHO, 2020; Government of Zimbabwe (2020).

### **1.7.4 COVID-19**

COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered corona virus (WHO, 2020; GoZ, 2020). This disease was before the outbreak unknown prior to its outbreak in Wuhan, China in December 2019. It is this disease, which has led to various perceptions on its impact on teaching and learning schools.

### **1.7.5 Instructional Leader**

An instructional leader is an educational leader who engages in collaborative goal setting, distributed leadership, and crucial facilitation to propel schools forward (Brazer & Bauer, 2013). In the light of this study, the school head, the deputy school head and the teacher-in-charge of the infant school will all be referred to as instructional leaders.

### **1.7.6 Instructional leadership**

According to Ismail, Don, Husin & Khalid (2018) instructional leadership is defined as an approach used by educational leaders to focus on teachers' behaviour in educational activities impacting on students' learning.

### **1.7.7 School leadership**

GoZ (2018) defines school leadership as a management practice that involves inspiring others to act in a way that benefits subordinates and the organisation (school). The main task of school leadership is none other than the promotion of the best education for all learners, thus promoting the quality of education in a school. In the context of the present study, school leadership refers to the Head of a school, the Deputy Head and the Teacher-in Charge and or Head of Department (H.O.D).

## **1.8 Delimitation**

The present research study was confined to rural primary schools within Chilota Cluster of Hwange district. More clustered could have been part of the study but due to COVID-19 regulations, only Chilota cluster was covered by the study. COVID-19 regulations limited people's movement from one place to another as well as social and physical distancing among people. Furthermore, the research study covered rural primary schools within Chilota cluster because that was where the researcher identified the research problem as well as

where primary data would be collected. The study covers the period between March 2020 and July 2021 for purposes of looking at the challenges of COVID-19 in the education system.

### **1.9 Limitations of the study**

Realising the very nature of the research topic, the present study was carried out during a serious pandemic. It was not easy to access selected schools for data collection purposes due to COVID-19 lockdown regulations that were imposed by the Zimbabwean government in order to mitigate the pandemic. These regulations impacted heavily on schools, especially rural schools, as learners were forced to stay at their homes for a very long period of time. On another note, teachers were on industrial action for some time as such, schools were deserted with most teachers not found in selected schools within the cluster under study. In view of the above, the researcher had to extend time of conducting research to ensure that time constraint was overcome and the research findings become useful.

### **1.10 Summary**

The introductory chapter outlined the background and the importance of the study. The chapter covered the research objectives as well as the research questions. The chapter further stated the research problem, study assumptions, delimitations, limitations and significance of the study. Key terms have been used in the study have been defined for contextual meaning. The next chapter focuses on review of literature related to major issues as emanating from research questions and study objective.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.0 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the background of the study. Chapter two focuses on reviewing literature related to the study. Conceptual frameworks to be reviewed are COVID-19 as a pandemic negatively impacting on education provision as well as literature related to instructional leadership. The chapter aims at reviewing literature related to the above concepts so as to unpack and to provide a platform for the two concepts to communicate to each other thereby addressing the research problem.

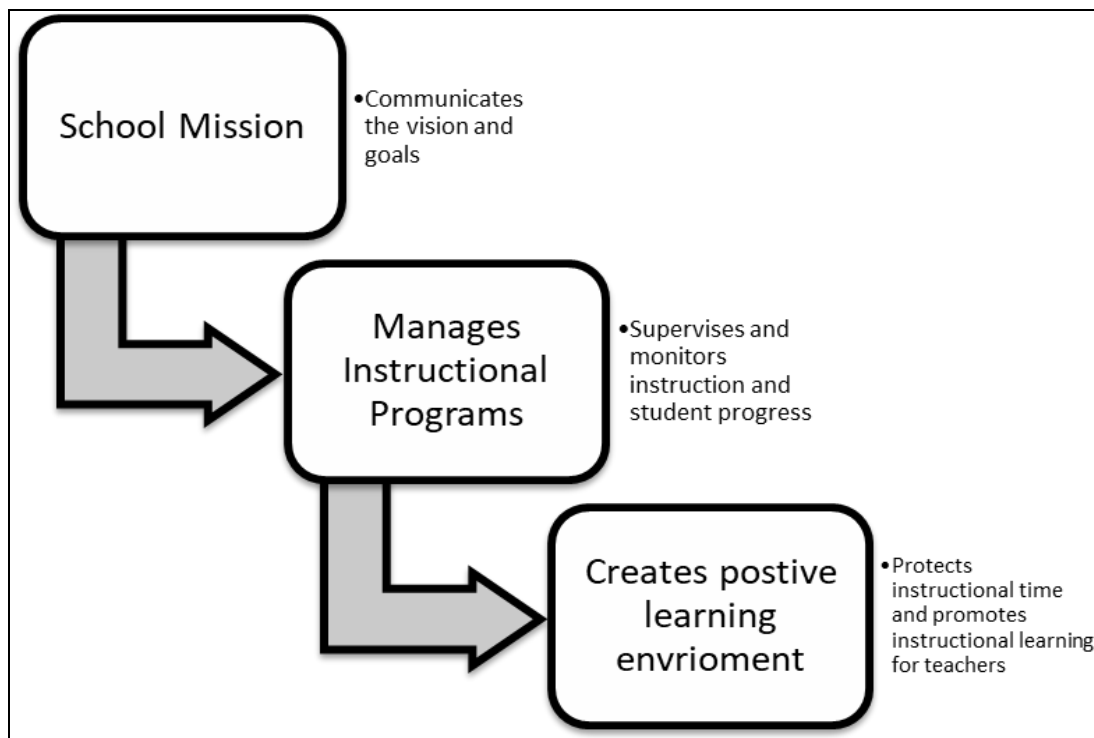
#### 2.1 Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework is an analytical tool, with several variations and contexts and used in making conceptual distinctions and organise ideas (Beveridge, 2013). Conceptual frameworks explain the theory surrounding the research problem and necessary to reach to possible solutions. The conceptual framework that guides the present study is Hallinger & Murphy's (1985) Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) model. Hallinger & Murphy (1985) proposed a model for defining and measuring the instructional leadership role of the principal (school head). The model according to Hallinger & Murphy (1985) proposes three dimensions in the instructional leadership role of the school head and these dimensions are as follows:

- defining the school's mission;
- managing the instructional programme; and

- promoting a positive school learning climate.

The above broad dimensions were more defined into ten instructional leadership functions as shown in Figure 2.1. The model became known as the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) framework (Hallinger & Lee, 2014).



**Figure 2.1: Principal Instructional Leadership Model. Adapted from Hallinger & Murphy (1985:221)**

The dimension ‘*defining the school’s mission*’ has two functions namely ‘*framing the school’s goals* and ‘*communicating the school’s goals*.’ The functions according to Hallinger & Lee (2014) concern the school head’s role in working with his or her members staff ensuring that the school as an organisation has a clear mission that is focused on the academic progress of learners. While this dimension does not assume that the principal defines the school’s mission alone, it proposes that the school head is responsible for ensuring that such a mission exists and that it is widely communicated to organisation’s stakeholders.

*Managing the instructional program* emphasises on the role of the head in ‘managing the school’s technical core’. The dimension combines three leadership functions namely: *supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum* and *monitoring student progress*. Although the above instructional leadership responsibilities must be shared with teachers and other educational administrators, the framework assumes that coordination and control of the school’s academic program remains the school head’s key leadership responsibility.

*Promoting a positive school learning climate* is wider in scope and intent than the second dimension. As Hallinger (2003) and Leithwood, Louis, Wahlstrom, Anderson, Mascall & Gordon (2009) point out, the dimension overlaps with aspects of the transformational leadership frameworks. Several functions, that is; protecting instructional time; promoting professional development; maintaining high visibility; providing incentives for teachers; and providing incentives for learning are included. Through presentation of the above functions, successful school heads create an ‘academic press’ and a culture that nurtures and rewards continuous academic success. In the context of the present study, the model provided a guide through which the review of related literature and formulation of research questions was guided. The next section reviews literature related to perceptions of school heads with regards to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on instructional practices.

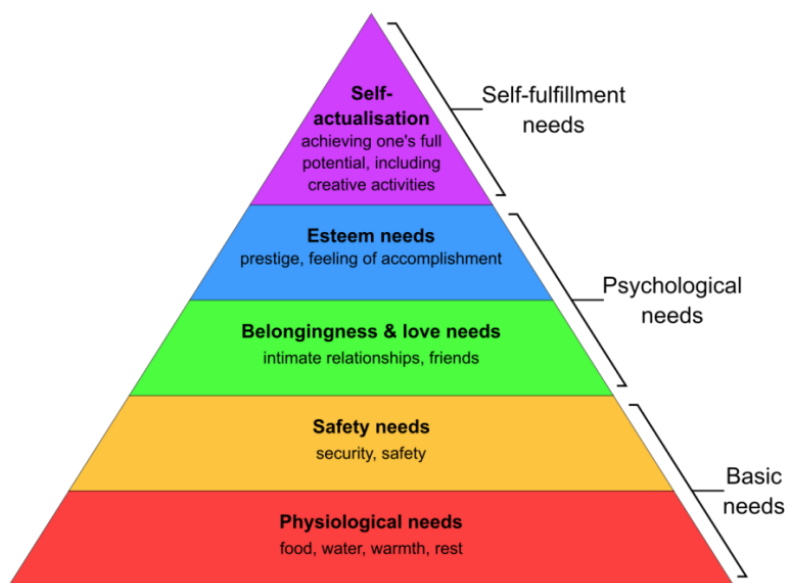
Leading and directing the human element in any organisation, including a school, to achieve its goals requires effective leadership capabilities. Therefore, the school head as the leader leading both the instructional and curriculum program must be flexible enough to adapt to the differences that may find their way in the school as a result of the effects of COVID-19. The situation that prevails as a result of the COVID-19 calls for collective efforts in dealing with that situation. In the context of the present study, the drive to raise school standards,

educational leaders all recognise that the core purpose of the school is to provide a learning environment that enables all learners to achieve their potential. The quality of instructional leadership, at headship, deputy, H.O.D or Teacher-in-Charge (T.I.C), is critical to achieving this enabling environment and to continuously improving student outcomes in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **2.2 Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework underpinning the present study is Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. Maslow (2013) cited in Mandikiana (2020), argued that learning is associated with one's freedom, potential and supportive environment. The classification of human needs according to Maslow (2013) is done in the form of a pyramid. The base of the pyramid indicates that the very basic needs of the human being are at the bottom and these are the needs that must be met. These needs include food, water and air with safety coming in next in the pyramid. Belongingness, esteem and self-actualisation complete the pyramidal set up of Maslow's needs theory. COVID\_19 therefore, has been classified as a health-related security threat (Mandikiana, 2020). The pandemic has deprived people of their right to physiological needs as pointed out by Maslow (2013).

On another dimension, Wilson (2006) posits that learning and education are always changing and, such a change needs to be embraced by the school head if it is not negatively impacting on education provision. Therefore, the school head should establish new ways and methods of delivering teaching and learning material to learners. Effective teaching and learning in the wake of COVID-19 can be achieved if school leadership clearly understands the role played by technology as well as the importance of continuous professional development. Figure 2.2 shows the diagrammatical representation of Maslow's hierarch of needs theory.



**Figure 2.2: Maslow's hierarchy of needs:** Adopted from

<https://aliceinmethodologyland.com/2020/12/03/what-is-the-practical-use-of-maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-in-education/>

According to Maslow (2013), self-actualisation puts the teacher at the position of being able to grow professionally thus improving on one's skills set. The above position is consistent with the present study, which seeks to explore the perceptions of primary school heads on their instructional leadership role in mitigating challenges of COVID-19 at selected primary schools in Chilota cluster, Hwange district. This is further in line with the dictates of the Zimbabwe CBC, which, according to GoZ (2015) places the learner at the centre of the curriculum, and the teacher being the facilitator of learning. The CBC aims at empowering learners to think creatively and critically. In view of the covid-19 pandemic, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is central and consistent with the present study as it exposes learners to diversified forms of attaining and applying knowledge and skills in the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic where the learners' social security (health and education) has been severely compromised.

### **2.3 Analysing the COVID-19 situation in Zimbabwe**

Zimbabwe recorded its first case of COVID-19 on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 2020 (Dzobo, Chitungo & Dzinamatira, 2020) and thereafter policy makers were prompted to restrict the number of people gathering for various functions such as funeral, church gatherings sporting activities and many other social functions (Mandikiana, 2020). By the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2020, Zimbabwe had a total of 8 610 confirmed cases of the pandemic with a total of 255 deaths perpetuated by the pandemic (Dzobo et al, 2020; Munge, Fashoto, Akinnuwesi, Gurajena, Metfula & Mashwama, 2020). The continued increase in COVID-19 cases in the country resulted in the introduction of lockdown measures so as to contain the pandemic.

The role of the school head in the present decade has changed and there has been a stronger emphasis on leadership other than management. They are thus encouraged to be instructional leaders with a keen interest in the direct supervision of instructional processes. They are tasked with ensuring that their schools remain focussed on effective teaching and learning. It is therefore critical for school heads to identify tasks that are required to set school goals, define the purpose of schooling as well as provide resources to ensure that effective teaching and learning takes place without compromising the quality of education.

Of all management functions, leadership in the context of school managers involves school heads directly with subordinates. The school head is the central part of the manager's role, which involves working with and through others to achieve school goals. To a larger extent, as alluded to by Longmuir (2021), the school head's leadership ability to motivate, influence, direct and communicate with teachers and other key stakeholders on COVID-19 related matters determines the school head's response to a crisis situation and organisational effectiveness. Educational change will continue to manifest in educational spheres and as such it is now even more important for school heads to develop skills that will make them

manage change effectively. Change in education challenges school heads to get much involved and assume instructional leadership roles. Bennet, Glatter & Levacic (1994:18) once said, “Knowing where we are going to is what makes leaders attractive to followers.” The implication of the above assertion is that effective leaders have a vision of their schools as learning organisations and that bringing that vision to fruition is of prime importance. This is in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. New conditions and phenomena affecting education directly or indirectly create new challenges and perspectives for the school heads’ role as educational leaders.

As pointed out by Beauchamp, Hulme, Clarke, Hamilton & Harvey (2021); Nhongo & Tshotsho (2021); Nhatuve (2020) the closure of schools on a large scale during the novel pandemic has raised a myriad of issues and concerns in the practice of education in general and specifically teaching and learning throughout the global village. In the education sector in general and in schools in particular, the pandemic has forced major adjustments to the planning of education programmes and other curriculum activities at short notice. The effect of school closures (Nhongo & Tshotsho, 2021) as well as unrelenting accessibility to effective teaching and learning is not equally distributed across Zimbabwe.

#### **2.4 The impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning**

The fundamental role of the school head as an instructional and curriculum leader is to create an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning in the school. As pointed out by Longmuir (2021) the COVID-19 endemic, which began in 2020 developed into an experience of crisis that has had a global impact on everyday life. The far reaching effects do not preclude education and the social well-being of children not only in Zimbabwe but throughout the world (Asio & Bayucca, 2021; Chamunogwa, 2020).

The emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic not only associated with its negative impact on teaching and learning per se. There positive results emerging from the effects of the pandemic. The emergency of online teaching was indeed a new dimension in the education paradigm. Ullah, Ashraf, Ashraf & Ahmed (2021) avow that the term ‘online learning’ has become a buzz word. What it means therefore, is that online learning has become an alternative to the traditional face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 era (Ullah, et al., 2021). Maphosa (2020) is his study on teachers’ perspectives on remote-based teaching and learning in the COVID-19 era posits that the emergence of ICT in education has influenced every aspect of human life. To a greater extent, this includes education. ICTs have transformed teacher-centred teaching and learning to a more encompassing learner-centred paradigm. According to Maphosa (2021) such new ways of instruction offer learners active participation, flexibility, as well as freeing them from location and time constraints.

Pursuant to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, learners across the globe can now access rich ICT tools in the comfort of their homes where they learn to create content, solve problems, engage, collaborate, and network, thus laying a foundation for 21st-century learning skills acquisition (Papadakis & Kalogiannakis, 2017; Rambe & Bere, 2013). The implication to the above assertion is that leaning can happen anywhere and anytime with the advance of technology as long as the electronic devices within the learner’s reach. No one can doubt that mobile tools such as smart phones, laptops, and tablets are living necessities. These have realigned the process of teaching and learning with contemporary global demands thus bridging gaps that existed between developed and developing nations in terms of education provision. For example, in rural schools where mobile phone connectivity is available, teaching and learning can be done using WhatsApp. WhatsApp is such an application, which can easily be downloaded and installed without hassles. In the context of

this study, it can be pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic brought about new dimensions in the practice of teaching and learning in schools.

Education is an indispensable aspect of the human race, therefore, the continued presence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the abandonment of face-to-face teaching and learning in schools exposed a magnitude of challenges (Chamunogwa, 2021; Alodwan, 2020; Olsson, 2020) since most schools are going through hard times in terms of implementation of responsive measures to mitigate the pandemic. Block et al (1971) once reiterated that poor instruction affects disadvantaged learners the most. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the value of online was less recognised in most educational institutions but the opposite is now true. Online learning has become the 'new normal' in most countries' education agenda including Zimbabwe.

Olsson (2021) conducted a study on online education effectiveness and the challenges, established that online education is going to be a permanent feature in the education systems of many nations. The implications of the above finding are that there is need for a paradigm shift so as to embrace the change, which has been brought about by the pandemic. While such change may have positive effects on education provision, the negative side has been the perpetuation of inequalities in in the quality of education as well as education provision. For example, the closure of schools from March 2020, only to be opened in October 2020, meant disruption to effective implementation of the reformed curriculum. Moreover, access to education and the quality of educations was greatly compromised as a result of the shift to alternative instructional delivery methods.

A related study was conducted by Alodwan (2020) in Jordan on online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspectives of students of English as a Foreign Language.

From that study, it was established that e-learning, as a measure to curtail the effects of the pandemic, apart from challenges had its own strengths in the education sector. Chief among many advantages has been allowing learners to attend lessons at their convenient times. The implication of the above is that learners did not waste time travelling to actual educational institutions to access learning materials, as has been the case with tradition mode of face-to-face instruction. However, this according to Barrot et al (2021) was only the case with those learners who had access to internet and/or had proper resource materials for that.

Some learners and teachers, especially in rural schools and those with special learning needs were not able to engage in virtual learning due to the absence of suitable infrastructure and gadgets needed for enabling effective teaching and learning (Chamunogwa, 2020). The above position concurs with findings of Mandikiana's (2020) study, which sought to ascertain the way forward for the education learning systems in Zimbabwe and other countries, beyond COVID-19 and other future pandemics. The rapid global transition of abandoning face-to-face education due to the COVID-19 pandemic has thus exposed that online instruction as a mitigatory factor fuels inequity in schools. In that view, at a national level, particularly in the light of the lack of warning of the impending crisis, communication and dialogue with key stakeholders, together with a clear message about objectives and plans, are seen as essential.

As mentioned by Asio & Bayucca (2021) and eLearning Africa (2020) governments across globe closed down educational institutions early. This problem faced the Zimbabwean government in particular with a wide disparity in education provision for the 'elite' and for less advantaged people, mostly in rural areas. According to Chamunogwa (2020), the launch of educational programmes on radio was quickly done hence this did not fully address what those programme was intended to. In most rural schools for example, radio lessons were only

accessible to learners with access to a specified signal such as radio, mobile phone or internet connectivity has always been a challenge in such areas (Ullah et al., 2021). In urban schools there were challenges too since online learning was only accessible to learners with internet access as well as appropriate gadgets. What this meant was that children from poor families were left out in accessing educational programs due to connectivity challenges or expensive data bundles.

Pan & Chen (2011:339) state, “The ability of educational institutions to adopt to such change is necessary to satisfy new demands for human capital and national competitiveness.” This explains the need for school heads to change from that of being managers of schools to that of instructional leaders who are capable of creating a collaborative learning culture in their schools. This can be achieved if the school head as an instructional leader involves staff members in shared decision making for enhancing teaching and learning in the school. In the context of the present study, school leadership has a crucial challenge to implement measures to improve instructional practices and learners’ access to quality education during and after COVID-19 era.

## **2.5 The effectiveness of online teaching and learning**

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in Zimbabwe and the world-over has made school heads to cultivate digital transformation in their schools by the introduction of virtual teaching and learning (Ossianilsson, 2018). The crisis experienced globally requires school heads as instructional leaders to operate within new paradigms of management and leadership. Surrounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, school heads need to utilise various skills such as risk taking, following as well as leading, making use of available information,

fostering long sighted vision as well as negotiating for a win-win situation on provision of resources for teaching and learning.

The impact of COVID-19 has not stopped at national borders but has hit each and every nation. Its effects on education have not been the same among countries. The pandemic has exposed a number of short comings on countries' education systems. The COVID-19 pandemic has also created a unique situation, even for countries that have suffered major health tragedies in the past. It affected every school in many countries and every sector of education in a different way. According to Mette (2020) and Pollock (2020) educational practitioners had to adapt to new pedagogical concepts and modes of delivery of teaching, for which they could not have been trained. In Canada for example, the impact of the pandemic on schools depends on the location of that school (Pollock, 2020). This means effective teaching could not have been taking place. Moreso, learners in marginalised groups without access to digital learning resources or lack of resilience and engagement to learn on their own are at great risks of falling behind. Their education has been heavily impacted on.

As access to different platforms of virtual learning during the pandemic varied, so too did their uptake and effectiveness (Maphosa, 2020) when properly and effectively implemented by teachers and learners (Nhatuve, 2021; Maphosa, 2020; Nhongo & Tshotsho, 2021). Innovative methods to monitor and assess learning, such as telephone-based assessments, should be invested in by heads of schools in their roles as instructional leaders if effective teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic was to be done. As schools start to prepare for further closures during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond, understanding of who has access and how effective remote learning programmes are becomes critical to creating resilient teaching and learning programs specifically in rural in schools.

In the context of the present study therefore, realising that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on rural primary schools as well as on teaching and learning in those schools is so unique, and that the response to the pandemic is new too. It thus becomes difficult to say with absolute confidence, at this stage, what constitutes the best approaches to mitigate the effects of the pandemic at the same time enhancing effective teaching and learning in schools. That will perhaps, only become clear with the passage of time and after a period of serious reflection and review on the impact of the pandemic on education provision. The challenges posed by online teaching and learning in schools in general and rural primary schools in particular are thus explored.

## **2.6 Challenges of online teaching and learning in schools**

The COVID-19 pandemic knows no geographical and demographic boundary. Educational disruptions that have been caused by the pandemic in schools have proven that they are difficult to manage. It is more worrisome to note that reports coming from other countries throughout the world indicate the devastating effects perpetuated on different sectors of the economy (Onyema et al, 2020). The pandemic has forced education practitioners and learners globally to get accustomed to online communication. However, learners and teachers become innovative and adaptable when they are in a position to use relevant Information Communication Technology (ICT) tools, processes in order to achieve educational outcomes.

In a recent study by Lorensius, Warman, Silpanus & Ping (2021) which aimed at examining leadership models and planning strategy of private Catholic colleges in Samarinda city, Indonesia, the researchers highlighted the importance of networking in education to address learning problems of lecturers and learners. Although their study was biased towards education at tertiary level, the importance of networking in education circles is of similar

importance at all levels in the education system. School heads should, of course, have a broad repertoire of leadership approaches at their disposal, adapting their behaviour to achieve the required educational outcomes, especially in the backdrop of a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. School heads' leadership capabilities should enable them to work with key stakeholders at all times so as to collectively attain school goals and objectives.

From a global perspective, challenges emerging from the introduction of online teaching as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic have been multi-faceted. In a study by Ulla et al., (2021), it was established that online instruction mainly focussed on the transfer of educational content and not online teaching and learning delivery method. An analysis of the above finding explains the need for teachers and learners to be skilled if they are to effectively use ICTs to enhance teaching and learning. For example, when online teaching and learning was introduced in some schools in Hwange district, Zimbabwe, no adequate training was done to enable teachers and learners to fully and effectively use these ICT tools. This therefore, compromises the quality of instruction.

Another challenge emanating from the introduction of online teaching and learning pertains to social marginalisation of learners. This marginalisation has been perpetuated by some learners' failure to sufficiently access ICT gadgets as well as unavailability of internet connectivity (Barrot, et al, 2021; Maphosa, 2021). Because the introduction of online teaching was done without any pre-assessment of ICT infrastructure in Zimbabwe (Nhatuve, 2021), it did not take time for the MoPSE to dismiss it as an alternative method for online teaching during the COVID-19 lockdown periods. For purposes of this study, the pronounced inequities in access to technology, connectivity and electricity both within and between schools mean that multiple delivery channels for remote learning are needed to reach all learners.

Lack of latest technology for use in schools has been another challenge impacting on the provision of online learning (Nhatuve, 2021; Ullah, et al, 2020). According to Nhatuve (2021:56), the use of latest ICT significantly impacts on education because “the exchange of information in teaching and learning has become easier and quicker than ever.” In an learning program, learners need feedback so that they can as well assess themselves in terms of learning progress. On the other hand teachers must mark submitted written work and give feedback thereto. This being the case though, some technologies are so outdated and may not be compatible with current softwares that can be used in online learning. For example, Google Classroom has the provision to mark using ticks as is done in traditional marking using a red ball-point pen. However, ordinary phones that can be used for WhatsApp cannot perform that function.

On another note, online teaching and learning has limited interaction between the teachers and learners also among learners themselves (Ullah et al., 2020). This defeats the whole purpose of learner-centred education when learners are not in a position to interact among themselves. This, according to Nhatuve (2021), is because the teacher and learners cannot share the same physical classroom space for instructional purposes as has always been the case in traditional face-to-face teaching and learning. It is against this background that regular curriculum reform should be done in order to maximise on learner opportunities and societal needs (GoZ, 2015). The virtual unlimited access to information has created new contexts and demands for educational leaders, teachers and the learners. Teachers are no longer regarded as the sole sources of knowledge and information. Instead, teachers are now expected to assist learners develop competencies to access and process information independently, and responsively as well as develop broader life skills that will be of great value in unexpected crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. In the context of the present study, life-long learning offers opportunities for the continuous acquisition of competencies throughout the lives of learners. Such competencies will become useful in all situations during teaching and learning.

## **2.7 Addressing teaching and learning challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic**

School heads as instructional and curriculum leaders play a crucial role towards the success of instructional programs in their schools. They have a number of responsibilities (Shen & Cooley, 2010) to manage instructional matters. Assessments, curriculum matter, instructional materials, teacher professional development (Murphy, Elliott, Goldring & Porter, 2007), teacher-learner relationships (Quinn, 2002), and communication with parents and the surrounding community (Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010; Goldring, Huff, May, & Camburn, 2008; Spillane, Camburn, & Pareja, 2007) are all the school head's key instructional leadership responsibilities. Stakeholder engagement in times of such as the COVID-19 pandemic is one critical role of the school head as an educational leader.

Teaching and learning challenges during the pandemic seemed to be of various magnitudes throughout the world (Nhongo & Tshotsho, 2021; Alea, Fabrea, Roldan & Farooqi, 2020; Nhatuve, 2020). Nhatuve's (2020) study findings indicated that lecturers did not give adequate feedback to their students due to the fact that they had challenges with online teaching and learning. From that study, training programs by institutions of higher learning in Southern Africa on online teaching and learning were recommended. Basing on the above recommendation, one would then compare what was, and is still obtaining in the Zimbabwean education especially during the schools closure in March 2020 and June 2021.

When the Zimbabwean government introduced remote learning as a result of the pandemic, not all teachers were conversant with ICT tools for instructional purposes. This was a challenge experienced by the researcher as well, in his attempt to embrace online teaching without adequate knowledge on the use of both ICT tools and software packages. Such a challenge resulted in failure to give adequate feedback to learners on assignments given. As

Alea et al (2020) claims, to keep abreast of remote learning education trends, teachers should be equipped with the knowledge and skills in distance learning education.

Pursuant to continued school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic in Zimbabwe, schools are no longer functioning effectively. Realising that instructional programs have been handicapped, especially in rural schools, there is need for heads to be innovative and come up with specific measures to address the challenges arising online teaching and learning. That is, traditional education practitioners need to be conversant with online instruction knowledge in order to become effective in e-teaching and learning, which is the trend of the day.

The timing of school closures required swift decisive action by the GoZ. The introduction of radio lessons and other online instructional programs in the initial lockdown period called for school preparedness in all areas for effective teaching and learning to take place. In China for example, when the Chinese government introduced lockdown measures and advised school closures, quite a number of measures were put in place to ensure continuity in teaching and learning (Government of Zimbabwe, 2015).

In Philippines, similar measures were put in place (Alea et al, 2020) with the Philippines government investing in infrastructure and equipment for virtual learning to enhance educational institutions' capability in delivering online learning to students. However, such arrangements may not be possible in developing countries like Zimbabwe due to severe socio-economic challenges the country is going through at the present moment. The COVID-19 pandemic has even worsened the crisis the nation is going through thus a continued impingement on the provision of quality education in rural schools in particular.

Social distancing while in the classrooms and during play has been another measure taken by schools to contain the spread of the virus during face-to-face teaching and learning in the

COVID-19 era. According to Ncube & Modise (2020:200) “social distancing has proven to be one effective reaction to the threat of increasing numbers of COVID-19 cases and fatalities.” While such a measure may bring positive results in some schools, this may not be so with most rural schools that are heavily constricted in terms of material resources such as furniture and text books to be used. Most rural schools are heavily populated with inadequate classrooms and furniture. In such situations, effective teaching and learning may not be possible. In the context of this study, teacher and learner capacity development programs in the use of ICT tools will be an integral part of the implementation of the curriculum during the COVID-19 era.

## **2.8 Summary**

Chapter two reviewed literature related to the studies conducted in respect research questions. Issues such as the conceptual and theoretical frameworks were discussed. The chapter also analysed the COVID-19 situation in Zimbabwe together with discussion of literature on perceptions of educators on COVID-19, its impact and challenges thereto on teaching and learning, as well as strategies to mitigate COVID-19 challenges on instruction in schools. The next chapter will focus on research methodology adopted for the collection and interpretation of research data.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

The previous chapter reviewed literature related to the themes that formed the research objectives. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology adopted the study. The research design, variables, location of the study, target population, sampling techniques and sample size, research instruments, pilot study, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures and ethical considerations will clarified in this chapter. A summary of the chapter will be presented at the end.

#### **3.1 Research paradigm**

The present study adopted the interpretive research paradigm. This type of research assumes that reality is socially constructed and that there are multiple realities (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). From the interpretivist perspective, the investigator and the research participants are interconnected in an interactive process prescribing a more personal interaction mode of data collection (Mertens, 1998). Given that perspective, the interpretivist view has been chosen as the research paradigm so as to understand school heads' social life as well as how they construct meaning in their natural settings and lived experiences (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research provides descriptions of a case, a group or an event. In this case, the intention of the research is to gain a holistic overview of the context under study.

## **3.2 Research design**

Magwa & Magwa (2017) describe the research design as a plan of how the study will be structured. The research design is the researcher's overall plan for obtaining answers to the research questions. It spells out the basic strategies that the researcher adopts to develop information that is accurate and interpretable (Moyo et al., 2016). This agrees with Dawson's (2002) assertion when she points out that qualitative studies explore attitudes, behaviour as well as experiences by getting an in-depth opinion from research participants.

In order to have a full understanding of the research problem in the present study, the researcher adopted a qualitative approach using an exploratory case study design. The qualitative approach in the present study was necessary for it enabled the researcher to fully explore and understand (Creswell, 2014) schools heads and their perceptions and experiences on the challenges they faced as instructional leaders pursuant to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, an exploratory case study approach enabled the research to have an in-depth study of Hwange district's Chilota Cluster with the aim of producing a nuanced description of the pervading socio-economic impact on education provision in the cluster.

## **3.3 Population and sampling**

### **3.2.1 Population**

Tuckman (2013), Chiromo (2009) and Dawson (2002) define a research population as the group from which the researcher is interested in gaining information and drawing conclusion. Similarly explains that a population as specification of group of people to which the study is to be addressed. In this study, the population is the primary schools found in Hwange district. Hwange district has a total of (number) primary schools.

### 3.2.2 Sample size

Cohen et al. (2018) and Kumar (2011) define a sample as a subset or a subgroup of the population a researcher is interested in. It is a fraction of the population under study and thus represents the entire population. Khan (2006) that a sample must display all characteristics of a given population for it to be representative of the population under study (Cohen, et al. 2018). In the present study the selected sample is Chilota Cluster. Hwange district is divided into (number) education clusters. On average, each cluster consists of six to seven primary schools. Chilota Cluster has a total seven primary schools. In the present study, five schools were studied. From each school, the head, the deputy head and two teachers making a total of twenty (20) participants formed the study sample as indicated in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Sample of research participants from five sampled primary schools**

<b>Description of respondent</b>	<b>Number per school</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Heads of school	5	25
Deputy Heads of schools	5	25
Class Teachers	10	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>

### 3.2.3 Sampling techniques

The present study adopted a qualitative approach using the case study design. In that view appropriate sampling techniques that correspond with the qualitative nature of the study to be adopted so as to enable collection of significant data

#### 3.2.3.1 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling was an appropriate sampling technique. Purposive sampling according to Magwa & Magwa (2017) a type of non-probability sampling where the researcher selects research participants on the basis of their ability to provide significant data in the study. On

the other hand, Chiromo (2009:18) posits that purposive sampling “involves the researcher handpicking the cases to be included in the study.” In the present study all the school heads of the selected schools were purposively selected on the basis of their ability to provide significant data on the school head’s instructional leadership role.

### **3.2.3.2 Convenience sampling**

Convenience sampling is a type of non-probability sampling technique where the research picks the nearest individuals as respondents (Chiromo, 2009). In this study convenience sampling was used to sample Chilota cluster. Lock down regulations precipitated the researcher into adopting this sampling technique in response to laid down COVID-19 policy issues.

### **3.2.3.3 Simple random sampling**

In simple random sampling, every element in a population has an equal chance of being selected (Magwa & Magwa, 2017; 2015). In this study, this type of probability sampling was used to sample class teachers who participated in the study.

## **3.4 Data collection methods**

Although this study adopted a qualitative approach, mixed methods were used in the collection of primary research data. Questionnaires and interviewing were methods of collecting data. Questionnaires and interviewing allow the researcher to collect in-depth data based on the respondent’s lived experiences (Cohen, Morrison & Manion, 2018). The questionnaire comprised of closed ended and open ended questions while semi-structured interviews were also used to collect data from school heads. Data collected through such techniques can be used to generalise the findings of the research.

### **3.5 Research instruments**

Research instruments refer to tools that a researcher uses to collect data in a field of study (Magwa and Magwa, 2017 and 2015). Some of the tools at the researcher's disposal include the questionnaire and interview guide. For this study, the researcher developed and administered questionnaires and interviews guides to collect primary data from respondents.

#### **3.5.1. The questionnaire**

Questionnaires are widely used as data collection instruments because they enable collection of large amounts of data from a large number of people in a short period of time and in a relatively cost effective way (White, 2002). McMillan & Schumacher (2006) define a questionnaire as a list of questions aimed at extracting particular information. Kombo & Tromp (2007) aver that a questionnaire as a research instrument allows gathering of primary data over a large sample. Questionnaires are simple, easy to administer and well laid out for easy collection and analysis of collected data. However, Magwa & Magwa (2015) argued that questionnaires do not depict some of the respondents' communication such as changes of emotions, behavior, feelings and so forth. Therefore, people may read differently into each question and thus reply basing on their own interpretation of the question. Moreso a questionnaire may have a low rate of return rate and that for one to be able to answer the questionnaire respondents should be literate enough. The above disadvantages were however mitigated by the researcher's explanations of the requirements of questionnaire items.

#### **3.5.2 Interviews**

McMillan & Schumacher (2010) regard an interview a conversation meant for a purpose. It may be a one-on-one dialogue aimed at an outcome to benefit one or both parties taking part in a dialogue. Salmons (2011) noted that an interview comprises of standardized open-ended questions that are usually simplified for the respondent to answer. Interviews also involve personal interaction and there is need for co-operation among members (Salmons, 2011).

With regards to this study, the researcher held semi-structured focus-group interviews with school so as to look at the research problem at different angles albeit its limitations and weaknesses. This enabled the researcher to collect data on heads of schools' perceptions on impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning in rural primary schools. Data collected enable to answer the first research question.

### **3.6 Data collection procedures and analysis procedures**

Data will be presented in the form of diagrams, pie-charts and tables. Statistical frequency table will be used in the presentation of data from close ended questions, while data from open ended questions will be presented qualitatively by deducing meaning from respondents.

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**

Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009) refer to ethics as the appropriateness of the research behaviour in relationship to the rights of those who became the subject of the researcher's work and/or are affected by it. The general issues of ethical concerns addressed were as follows:

#### **3.8.1 Informed consent**

The principle of informed consent as defined Diener and Crandall (1999) in Cohen et al.; (2011:11) refers to the "procedure in which individuals choose whether to participate in and investigation after being informed of the facts that would be likely to influence their decisions." Seeking consent from all research participants, that is the school head, SDC members, the TIC, parents and ECD teachers. The Principle requires that where possible people should not be involved in a research without in-depth understanding and free involvement in it. The following ethical considerations were observed:

### **3.8.2 Privacy**

The study did not disclose the identity of participants thereby ensuring their privacy. The researcher recognized the rights of participants by ensuring that their identities remained private and confidential. For purposes of maintaining the privacy of participants, the researcher coded the names of the respondents.

### **3.8.3 Access and acceptance**

The principle deals with gaining official permission to undertake one's research from the target population. The researcher sought for permission from MoPSE (Appendix E) to conduct research at the sampled school and the permission was granted (Appendix D).

### **3.8.4 Confidentiality**

Information that was obtained from participants was not disclosed to third parties. This was done to protect participants' confidentiality in participation in the present study.

## **3.9 Summary**

The research methodology was outlined and the descriptive survey design was adopted in the present chapter. The research instruments used in collecting research data were discussed at further highlighting their advantages and disadvantages. The chapter also dealt with how data was collected and analysed thus making the study's methodology. The next chapter will focus on the presentation, analysis and discussion of primary data.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

The previous chapter focused on the methodology and research design adopted by the study. Chapter 4 focuses on the presentation and analysis of research data collected as well as the discussion of findings. The collected data will be presented using charts, tables and graphs so as to answer research questions. Data will be analysed using mixed methods as determined by the type of data collected from respondents. This will be done first by the presentation and analysis of respondents' demographic data and thereafter look at primary data based on research participants' responses to research questions. The chapter concludes with a chapter summary which ties up the loose end of the chapter.

#### **4.1 Data presentation**

##### **4.1.1 Respondents' response rate**

Data collection in the present study was to ensure that research questions are answered from the primary data from research participants. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from research participants through questionnaires and interview guides as data collection tools. Table 4.1 presents a summary of questionnaires distributed to and returned by school leadership respondents as well as interviews conducted with class teachers.

**Table 4.1: Response rate (n=20)**

<b>School leadership questionnaires administered (n=10)</b>		
No. of questionnaires administered	No. of questionnaires returned	Percentage (%)
10	10	100
<b>Teachers' interviews conducted (n=10)</b>		
No. of teachers requested	No. of teachers interviewed	Percentage (%)
10	10	100

Questionnaires were self-administered to school leadership (heads and deputy heads) by the researcher. Interviews with class teachers were also conducted by the researcher. In both instances, a 100% response rate was achieved. As shown in Table 4.1.

#### **4.1.1 Personal demographic data**

Section A on both questionnaire and interview guide collected data on respondents' demographic data. Research participants' demographic data were collected and analysed quantitatively and qualitatively in Tables 4.2 to 4.7.

Question 1 on both questionnaire and interview guide sought to establish the sex of respondents. Data collected are shown in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2: Distribution of respondents' sex (n=20)**

Sex	School leadership		Class teachers	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	3	30	3	30
Female	7	70	7	70
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.2 shows that the majority of school leadership and teachers (70% respectively) are females while 30% of school leadership and teachers respectively are males. Both males and female respondents were necessary in providing various views in respect of respondent's perceptions on school heads' instructional leadership roles in mitigating challenges of COVID-19 in the cluster under study.

Question 2 on both questionnaire and interview guide sought to collect data on respondents' age category and data collected are shown in Table 4.3

**Table 4.3: Respondents' age category (n=20)**

Age category in years	School leadership		Class teachers	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
30 years and below	2	20	1	10
31 – 41	2	20	2	20
41 – 50	4	40	7	70
51 years plus	2	20	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.3 shows that the majority of school heads (40%) and that of class teachers (70%) are in the age category 41-50 years. This is followed by that of school heads' 30 years to 41 with

a combined total of 40% while that of class teachers (31-40) stands at 20% and 10% represents the class teacher respondents in the age category 30 years and below. The above data findings show that the above respondents are well represented in respect of age hence their understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic and school leadership's response to it in educational context was well-balanced.

Question 3 on the questionnaire sought to collected data respondents' highest professional qualification and collected data are as given in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4: Respondents' highest professional qualification (n=20)**

Highest qualification	School leadership (n=10)		Teachers (n=10)	
	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Diploma/Certificate in Education	6	60	8	80
Bachelor of Education Degree	4	40	2	20
Master of Education Degree	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.4 shows that the majority of school leaders and class teachers (60% and 80% respectively) are holders of Diploma/Certificate in education with 40% and 20% of school leadership and class teachers respectively being holders of a Bachelor of education degree. From the above data, it can be established that most school heads are that position on an acting basis hence their understanding of their instructional leadership role during a crisis situation could be compromised.

Question 4 on the school leadership questionnaire sought to collect data on respondents' official grade in the MoPSE. Table 4.5 shows the collected data.

**Table 4.5: Respondents' official grade in the MoPSE**

Official grade in the GoZ	School leadership ( <i>n=10</i> )	
	Frequency	Percent (%)
Teacher	4	40
Deputy Head	3	30
Head	3	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

Data as shown in Table 4.5 show that most school heads (40%) are officially in the teacher grade, and 30% are deputy heads while another 30% are officially substantive school heads pointing to the fact that most of schools that were part of this study are headed by school heads that are under qualified for management positions. Managing a crisis situation in schools calls for school heads to have effective and efficient leadership and managerial skills in in order for informed decisions to be made. In the context of the above findings, most respondents' instructional leadership positions could compromise effective decision making and crisis management.

To collect data on school leadership's time spent at their present workstations, Question 5 on the questionnaire for school leadership and Question 4 on the interview guide for teachers were asked. Table 4.6 provides an illustrated version of the data collected for these study questions.

**Table 4.6: Experience at present station ( $n = 20$ )**

Experience at station (in years)	School leadership ( $n=10$ )		Teachers ( $n=10$ )	
	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
5 years and below	4	40	8	80
6 – 10 ears	2	10	0	0
11 – 15 years	0	0	0	0
16 – 20 years	2	20	1	10
21 years plus	2	20	1	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.6 reveals that most heads and class teachers (40% and 80% respectively) are in the category of 5 years and below experience at the present station. A combined 40% of school heads and that of 20% for class teachers falls within the category of 16 years and above. It can be concluded that there was a balanced representation of respondents' experiences at the present station hence their perceptions on the phenomena was well-balanced.

Question 6 and Question 5 on the Questionnaire for school leadership and teachers' interview guide respectively sought to collect data on respondents' experience as head of school. The collected data from school heads and class teacher respondents are shown in Table 4.7.

**Table 4.7: Respondents' experience as head and teacher ( $n = 20$ )**

Experience (in years)	As school head ( $n=10$ )		As class teacher ( $n=10$ )	
	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
5 years and below	6	60	5	50
6 – 10 ears	1	10	1	10
11 – 15 years	3	30	0	0
16 – 20 years	0	0	1	10
21 years plus	0	0	1	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

Data in Table 4.7 shows that the majority of respondents (60% school heads and 50% class teachers) were in 5 years and below category of being head and teacher respectively. A combined 40% of school heads have been in that position between 6 and 15 years while 10% of class teacher respondents have a teaching experience of between 6 and 10 years. A combined 20% of class teachers have teaching experiences ranging from 16 years and above. The above data shows that respondents experiences and heads and teachers in their respective schools enables them to understand crisis situation such as the COVID-19 pandemic in the context of the schools in which they were stationed and Chilota cluster in particular.

## **4.2 Data analysis based on research questions**

### **4.2.1 Data generated through questionnaires**

#### **4.2.1.1 School heads' perceptions on the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning**

Question 7 on the questionnaire for school leaders sought to collect data on the critical role of school leadership as instructional leaders in times of a pandemic such as the COVID-19. The following responses by school heads were obtained:

- *Staff developing teachers, learners and the community on how they should conduct themselves during the COVID-19 era.*
- *Monitoring both learners and staff so that they follow the COVID-19 guidelines Collaboration with other school heads and other stakeholders in the cluster for support.*
- *Encourage use of ICT gadgets in teaching and learning Dissemination of correct information to teachers, learners and the community.*

The above responses denote various instructional leadership roles of school leadership in times of pandemics such as the COVID-19 ones as viewed by participants in the present study.

Question 8 on the questionnaire for school heads sought to collect data on what respondents would consider to be the positives brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic with regards to teaching and learning at their school and respondent had to say the following:

- *Hidden talents of some teachers were exposed as they shared innovations in handling their learners on various needs. Use of ICT improved as teachers researched and shared amongst themselves answers to specific problems.*
- *Improved hygiene at school as learners and teachers practised hand-washing all the time.*
- *Alertness and managing to work effectively as a team.*
- *Time lost through play is now being constructively utilised in productive projects by teachers and learners. General knowledge and information about the global village.*
- *More resources (furniture, textbooks, and installation of Wi-Fi) to augment teaching and learning as necessitated by the need for maintaining social distance during teaching and learning.*
- *Living positively and continuing with teaching and learning in the 'new normal.'*

Question 9 from the questionnaire for school leaders sought to collect data on the negative impact of the pandemic to teaching and learning in schools. Responses obtained are as indicated below:

- *Most learners are backward in terms of syllabus coverage and academic performance hence teachers have to start afresh to ensure learners catch up somehow.*
- *Lack of online instructional media for both teachers and learners.*
- *Teaching and learning discriminated against the poor and the rich as the poor could not access online learning because they could not afford to purchase online teaching and learning gadgets.*

- *Reduced learning time as well as not doing some activities due to Standard Operating Procedures (S.O.P).*
- *Exposing teachers to lack of craft-competence on the use of ICT tools and software for teaching and learning.*
- *The long break made learners forget what they had learnt previously.*
- *Some parents and guardian lost jobs there by failing to pay school fees and levies, resulting in failure to procure resources that can be used for online teaching and learning.*

#### **4.2.1.2 Effectiveness of online teaching and learning**

To collected data on the effectiveness of online instruction, Section C on the questionnaire for school heads had question items 10, 11, 12 and 13.

Question 10 sought to establish whether or not online lessons at selected schools were conducted during the lockdown period. Table 4.8 provides data collected.

**Table 4.8: Conduction of online instruction in schools**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Yes	0	0
No	10	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

From Table 4.8 data collected shows that all school heads (100%) indicated that no online instruction took place in schools under study. The above findings show that learners in schools understudy severely lost both in instructional time as well as on the provision and access to education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Question 11, 12 and 13 on the questionnaire for school heads were follow-up questions if ‘Yes’ was the response to Question 10. Question 11 sought to collect data on platforms used to conduct lessons. Question 12 sought to establish the effectiveness of the online platform used to conduct lessons while Question 13 sought to establish whether learners had access to radio lessons. Basing on data collected, no online learning took place hence no online learning platform was used. In that regard, Questions 11, 12 and 13 on the questionnaire for school heads were rendered not applicable since online instructional was not done at all selected schools under the study.

#### **4.2.1.3 Challenges of online teaching and learning**

Section D of the questionnaire for school heads sought to establish challenges encountered by selected schools in the study. Three items in this section, that is, Questions 14, 15 and 16 were generated to collect the sought data.

Question 14 was meant to collect data on the extent to which learners were accorded equal access to online learning tools and equipment by schools. The following responses were obtained from selected school heads:

- *Learners, including their parents do not have smart phones. Lack of online learning tools and equipment at school is a big challenge.*
- *Most of the learners cannot afford buying smart phones.*
- *Learners did not have access to online learning at all,*
- *No online learning took place due to lack of ICT tools.*

From the above responses, it can be concluded that non-availability ICT tools was the major cause of having no access to online teaching and learning in schools under study.

Question 15 sought to collect data on how teachers were assisted with online teaching and learning tools. The following were responses obtained from school heads:

- *They were not assisted, but were advised to be innovative and research on their own.*
- *No teacher was assisted*
- *Teachers were encouraged to buy smart phones and conduct online teaching.*
- *Staff development sessions were done on how to teach using online platforms. No tools were availed to teachers.*
- *WiFi is available to all members of staff. Staff development workshops were done on how to teach online using WhatsApp.*
- *Nothing was rendered as assistance for teachers for online teaching.*
- *Teachers were advised to join online teaching groups for their grades and learn skills and technologies for teaching learners online*

From the above responses, it can be established that teachers in most schools were not assisted anyhow with online teaching tools and technologies. However, only one respondent indicated access to school WiFi by all teachers at that school.

Question 16 specifically sought to establish constraints that hindered effective online instruction at schools under study. The following were responses from school heads:

- *Some teachers live in remote areas where network coverage is close to nil. WiFi was disconnected and the school had no money for reconnection.*
- *Most of our learners have no smart phones to use.*
- *Lack of online tools and equipment for both learners and teachers.*
- *Poor connectivity and no electricity.*
- *Lack of online instructional tools and data bundles; craft incompetence from teachers and earners; limited funds to support online teaching and learning at the school.*

- *Lack of ICT tools from parents' side.*

Basing on the above responses, it can be established that there were quite a number of challenges that militated against effective online teaching and learning, However, the major challenge was lack of ICT tools necessary for conducting online teaching and learning effectively.

#### **4.2.1.4 Strategies to mitigate online instruction challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic**

Section E on the questionnaire for school heads sought to collect data on strategies to mitigate challenges of teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Three items, that is, Questions 17, 18 and 19 were generated for purposes of collecting the sought data.

Question 17 sought to collect data on how school heads as instructional leaders ensure continuity of teaching and learning during lockdown periods. Responded provided the following responses:

- *Encourage parents to have smart phones; get a radio for the school and also to encourage parents with radios and phones to use for learners to learn.*
- *Encourage parents to take their children to place where online teaching and learning takes place, such as in towns.*
- *It was a big challenge since our area has no network coverage.*
- *Teachers were encouraged to give their learners work to be done in advance during the lockdown period.*
- *Teachers gave learners holiday tasks like written and oral homework.*
- *I sent the Grade 7 teacher phone numbers for Grade 7 learners and encouraged the teacher to engage learners in online lessons. There are reading camps that were*

*introduced by World Vision. I liaised with the reading camp teachers to engage the learners.*

The above responses indicate that, while schools hoped for continued instructional programs in selected schools, pointed out challenges continued to impact negatively on continued teaching and learning. However, certain measures were put in place to ensure learners somehow, were engaged in learning to some extent. On another note, creating synergies with parents and other stakeholders ensured that teaching and learning did not completely die.

Question 18 on the questionnaire sought to collect data on formal and informal steps taken to ensure that teachers teach effectively during unforeseen pandemics such as the COVID-19 one. The following were responses from school heads from selected schools in this study:

- *The school budgeted for data bundles for teachers so that they can research and teach their learners. Parents and guardians were also encouraged to buy smart phones.*
- *Provision of records towards duties they are supposed to perform. A follow up on assignments with regard to our station (school) was to be done after lockdown.*
- *Assessment on teachers*
- *We conduct school staff development programs.*
- *No measures put up yet to monitor teacher performance during such eventualities.*
- *Advised teachers to join WhatsApp groups for their respective grades and learn what their colleagues in other schools are doing. Encouraged the SDC to buy bundles for teachers so that online learning takes place. SDC to encourage parents to buy smart phones.*

The above responses indicate that various formal and informal steps were taken by school heads to ensure that teachers performed their duties effectively during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Question 19 on the questionnaire for school heads sought to gather data on what school heads considered as best approaches to effective teaching and learning during such pandemics as the COVID-19 one. Responses from school heads in schools that informed the present study were as given below:

- *Organise online lessons for the whole school. A budget to be put in place for financing online lessons. Government to provide ICT gadgets to rural schools so that the Zimbabwean children walk on the same space.*
- *Use radio lessons and social media platforms for teaching and learning.*
- *Staff develops teachers so that they are able to offer online instruction. Avail ICT tools in schools in order to initiate online instruction in schools.*
- *Conducting video lessons, radio lessons and other online lessons using platforms such as Google Classroom and WhatsApp where there is network coverage.*

The above responses from selected school heads that formed the participants of the present study show that school head mixed feelings on what they considered to be the best approaches to effective teaching and learning during a pandemic such as the COVID-19 one.

## **4.2.2 Data generated through interviews with class teachers**

### **4.2.2.1 Perceptions of teachers on the impact of COVID-19 to teaching and learning and Chilota Cluster**

Section B on the interview guide sought to collect data from teacher respondents on their perceptions on the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning through question items 6, 7 and 8. An analysis of teachers' responses to the questions is given hereunder.

Question 6 on the interview guide specifically sought to establish from school teachers on what they regarded as a big impact of COVID-19 to teaching and learning. Responses from the interviewed teachers showed mixed views. Some teachers who were interviewed stated that COVID-19 took schools by surprise as they were ill-prepared for such a pandemic while some teachers stated that due to the pandemic, teachers were forced to learn new instructional strategies that they should use for teaching and learning to take place.

Question 7 sought to collect data on what teachers regarded as their additional leadership role in times of pandemics such as the COVID-19 one. Interviewed teachers stated that their additional leadership role was ensuring that they are able to respond to the demands of the 'new normal' so that learners do not lose out in respect of learning. One teacher pointed out that as classroom instructional leaders, they were supposed to be initiative if they were to offer effective and equitable instructional programs to all learners.

On the other hand, Question 8 on the interview guide sought to collect data on what teachers considered to be positive and negatives of the COVID-19 pandemic with regards to teaching and learning. Interviewed teachers stated that there were no positives since learners in schools that were part of this study did not have access to teaching and learning.

#### **4.2.2.2 The effectiveness of online teaching and learning**

Section C of the interview guide sought to collect data on the effectiveness of online teaching and learning. Questions 9, 10 and 11 sought to collect data from teachers that were interviewed.

Question 9 on the interview guide specifically sought to collect data on online instruction mechanisms that were put in place to ensure the continuity of teaching and learning during lockdown periods. All the interviewed teachers stated that there were no mechanisms that were put in place as a result no online instruction took place in all the selected schools in the present study. Thus the effectiveness of online teaching learning was not established.

Question 10 was meant to collect data on how effective the put measures were with regards to teaching and learning. All respondents stated that no online lessons took place hence the effectiveness of the set measures could not be ascertained.

Question 11 on the interview guides was meant to collect data from class teachers on how assessment of learning was ensured during online teaching and learning. All the interviewed teachers stated that because there was online teaching and learning did not place, assessment of learners' progress through online instruction was not done.

#### **4.2.2.3 Challenges of online teaching and learning**

Section D on the interview guide sought to collect data on challenges of online teaching and learning perpetuated by the COVID-19 pandemic through question items 12 and 13.

Question 12 was meant to collect data on how teaching and learning was done during lockdown periods at the selected schools. All of the interviewed teachers stated that teaching and learning never took place at all selected schools during lockdown periods.

Question 13 sought to collect data from class teacher respondents on constraints that hindered effective online instruction at selected schools. Interviewed teachers pointed out a number of constraints such as lack of ICT tools and equipment in schools lack of parental unwillingness to changes in response to the demands of the new normal, unavailability of electricity and

network coverage, and lack of funding so that procurement of ICT tools and equipment to effect online teaching and learning at selected schools is done.

#### **4.2.2.4 Strategies to mitigate challenges of online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic**

Section E on the interview guide solicited for interviewed teachers' responses on strategies to mitigate challenges of online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Question items 14, 15 and 16 were included on the interview guide for class teachers.

Question 14 on the interview guide sought to collect data on the class teacher's leadership role during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers who were interviewed had different perceptions on their leadership roles. The general position taken by most teachers (serve for T3, T7 and T9) was that they emphasize on being initiative and responsive to the demands of the '*new normal*,' which called for strict adherence to local and international COVID-19 regulations and protocols. Other interviewed teachers stated that teachers as leaders in their own classes addressed and emphasised on strict adherence to COVID-19 protocols.

Question 15 on the class teacher interview guide was meant to collect data on what teachers did to ensure learners had access to teaching and learning during lockdown periods. All interviewed teachers stated that they encouraged their learners to join social media platforms that conducted online teaching and learning. Some teacher respondents also stated that learners were encouraged to listen to government planned radio lessons. Others, however, stated that the government should also be part of the solution and ensure that learners in all schools have equitable access to online teaching and learning during such pandemics and lockdowns.

Question 16 on the class teacher interview guide sought to collect data on what teachers formal and informal steps teachers took to ensure that learners their school assignments during lockdown periods. Again, various responses were obtained from the interviewed teachers. Some teachers stated that they liaised with parents that had phones that could connect to the internet for learners to at least have something to do. Others however, stated that they advised learners and parents to join different social media groups that conducted online teaching and learning. It was also established from the interviewed teachers that some of the teachers had actually given out holiday work that learners were working on throughout the lockdown period. This ensured that learners were at least doing something.

### **4.3 Discussion of data findings**

Basing on empirical data collected through questionnaires and interviews, the interpretation of data findings was necessary so as to understand what research participants made sense of their responses. Sections 4.3.1 up to 4.3.4 discusses the findings from the collected data on the basis of research questions with the intention of finding solutions to the research problem.

#### **4.3.1 School heads' perceptions on the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning**

As a result of the covid-19 pandemic, there were complexities in respect of respondents' perceptions emanating from the need to holistically understand the pandemic's effects on teaching learning. The fact that the pandemic took everyone by surprise, no was prepared for its ripple effects. In the context of school leadership's preparedness to the pandemic's effects on education provision, and management of educational programs, schools heads who participated in the present study had mixed views with regard to their perceptions on the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning. Some school heads and class teacher respondents on their perceptions on the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning show

that respondents had mixed views. Both positive and negative perceptions were revealed through respondents' responses.

Data collected in the present study are consistent with findings from a recent survey by eLearning Africa (2020) on the experiences and opinions of educators and technology specialists on the effects of COVID-19 on education in Africa its implications for the use of technology. The survey finding, among others, was that it was primary school education that was not in a position to cope with disruptions perpetuated by the pandemic because learners at primary school level are not in a position to effectively use online instruction as a substitute to the traditional face-to-face teaching and learning they are used to. This is because primary school learners on their own, have less experience to studying outside the classroom set-up. Responses from research participants indicate a shift from the traditional face-to-face teaching and learning to online instruction having fuelled inequity among schools and learners at the same time opening up avenues for education systems to adopt online learning as an alternative measure to addressing education related issues resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. In that view, good instructional leadership practices by school heads enable them to obtain and maintain community support for instructional programs that can yield positive results. Thus, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the present study, the school head as instructional leaders should be able to identify effective instructional and supervisory skills to use in the supervision of teachers and learners in times of a crisis.

A study on the use of technology on learning by Dyson et al (2015) proved and disclosed that technology can assist different educational processes. Such initiatives have enabled learning to become more open as well as adopting more flexible teaching methodologies that allow learner independence in their learning activities.

In the present study therefore, it has been revealed that school heads' perceptions on the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning at primary schools under Chilota cluster show positives emerging from what schools benefited as a result of the effects of COVID-19 to negatives that were perpetuated by schools failing to access online teaching and learning as a measure to address the impact of the pandemic on education in rural primary schools in particular. The next section discusses data findings on the effectiveness of online teaching and learning in the COVID-19 era at Chilota Cluster in Hwange district.

#### **4.3.2 Effectiveness of online teaching and learning in Chilota cluster**

The rapid transition of abandoning tradition face-to-face instructional methods in schools as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed that online teaching and learning in schools is inevitable in today's education systems. COVID-19 is here to stay until a cure has been found to eradicate it, if ever this will be the case. It therefore, means that online instruction will also be there to stay as long COVID-19 cases continue to exist in Zimbabwe. However, equity in today's education provision should be considered in online learning.

Data collected in the present study highlighted that no online learning took place in schools that participated in the present study. That was a clear indication that in terms of its effectiveness, online teaching and learning had far reaching negative effects on learning at primary school understudy. Data collected in the present study concurs with findings from a recent study by Olsson (2021) the effectiveness challenges of online education, it was established that online education is there to stay and that it will be popular and gain more ground over time. However, if this type of education continues to be ineffective with no prospects of it being prioritised in primary schools understudy, there is a growing likelihood of a polarised and compromised education system in schools. Thus, education provision as

well as the quality of learners, who are products of a compromised education system, will be ineffective.

In a recent study by Alodwan (2021) conducted in Amman, Jordan, it was concluded that online education was optional in most countries. In the Zimbabwean situation, there has not been any legal provision to make online education mandatory. During the two lockdown periods, some schools did conduct virtual lessons while some did not conduct such lessons at all. The implication of such in the context of the Zimbabwean education system is that the effectiveness of online teaching and learning in schools that were part of the present study cannot be talked about. This is because learners in rural primary schools that participated in the present study were not accorded such opportunities that elite private schools in urban schools were according. Against this background, it is undisputable that educational opportunities and educational equity are crucial and essential factors for creating responsible citizens of democratic citizens (Sammons, 2007 and Kelly, 2020). Although research on the effectiveness of online education in developed countries proves effective (Alodwan, 2021;

With data findings through questionnaires and interviews in this study, it was revealed that online teaching and learning in in primary schools under Chilota cluster of Hwange district was ineffective in its present form. Given the significance of the school head's instructional leadership role in effective teaching and learning in schools as well as the inevitability of change, every school head should consider how best they can equip themselves so that they are able to respond to the COVID-19 crisis and create equitable opportunities for all learners to be accorded opportunities that promote equal access to online instruction. In the next section, data collected on challenges of online teaching and learning at Chilota cluster are analysed and discussed.

### **4.3.3 Challenges of online teaching and learning at Chilota cluster**

Introduction of digital transformation and online education according to Adodeyin & Soykan (2020) are not novel phenomena global. Zimbabwe has made significant strides in the area of digital transformation benefiting both the private and public sector management and administration. The introduction of digital transformation in educational institutions marks the much needed innovations needed for improved education provision and learner assessment. However, such developments cannot be witnessed without specific limitations attached to them. With COVID-19 therefore, it has become prudent that education systems throughout the global village is also undergoing transformation and susceptible to several challenges.

In the present study, respondents expressed a number of challenges with regard to online instruction at schools under study, among such challenges being absence, of network coverage, electricity, data challenges, lack of ICT gadgets and tools as well as craft incompetence by teachers, learners and parents. What that meant was provision of quality education during COVID-19 pandemic had serious drawbacks. As pointed out by Adodeyin & Soykan (2020), online teaching and learning is dependent on availability of technological devices and the internet. In the case of the present study, data collected revealed that the dependence and provision of ICT tools for teaching and learning was a big challenge hence implementation of online instruction in schools that informed the present study had adverse shortcomings.

While some respondents indicated lack of ICT gadget as one of the challenges to online teaching in selected schools, non-availability of electricity was cited as another drawback to implementation of online teaching and learning. Kigwilu & Akala (2017) conducted a study, which investigated how Catholic-sponsored community colleges in Nairobi, Kenya utilised physical facilities and instructional resources for effective curriculum implementation. Basing

on the findings from Kigwilu & Akala (2017)'s study, it was concluded that the inadequacy and unavailability of resources hinder effective teaching and learning. Effective teaching and learning can be hindered by some disruptions and unforeseen circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic in the present circumstance. Such disturbances may lead to failure to cover the syllabus thereby compromising implementation of the curriculum. The Zimbabwean education system is in the implementation process of a new competence-based curriculum. With such disruptions to teaching and learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, effective implementation of this new education policy may not be effective.

In that view, school heads as instructional leaders should realise that the school belongs to the community and that it serves to educate the community's children. Against this background, school heads need to maintain sound relations with their communities and other key stakeholders ensure availability of resources such as electricity, ICT infrastructure and tools for implementation of online teaching and learning during a crisis period like the COVID-19. Good instructional leadership and community relations enable school heads as instructional leaders to obtain and maintain community support for school projects like electrification of classrooms. Such kind of support is only possible when good relations between the school head and the community exist.

#### **4.3.4 Strategies to mitigate online instructional challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic triggered a number of responses. The closure of schools, for example, meant that as a nation, we start to question what will become of the many learners in all schools. Moreover, there was need to ask ourselves as Zimbabweans whether or not online learning ensured continuity of "education provision during and after the COVID-19 era" (Mandikiana, 2020, p.290). To that effect, schools were to a greater extent,

compelled to come up with measures so as to address the ripple effects of the pandemic on online teaching and learning. This section analyses and discusses data collected from respondents on suggested strategies that to address challenges encountered in the implementation of e-learning at Chilota cluster primary schools.

In the present study, collected data revealed a number of measures as suggested by research participants. Some respondents stated the need for organising online lessons for the whole school after budgeting and sourcing funds for the acquisition of online teaching and learning tools. Through exposure and manipulation of ICT tools, learners develop skills through various activities (GoZ, 2015). It is through use of ICT tool that learners also learn about different application software and their purposes as well as their appropriate uses. However, research data shows that the state of affairs in most schools understudy does not allow the 'normal situation; to prevail. Most rural schools by nature are affected by limited material and financial resources to enhance effective teaching and learning (GoZ, 2019). The advent of COVID-19 has just aggravated this dare situation faced by most primary schools in general and primary schools in Chilota cluster of Hwange district in particular. It was the general feeling of respondents in the present study was for the government of Zimbabwe to ensure network coverage and the electrification of all schools so that they are able to offer online instruction even at primary school level.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of teachers, especially in times of change, is critical in addressing changes in schools. The school heads as instructional leader should be in a position to identify needs of all teachers at all levels as this needs to be reflected in the School Development Plan (SDP). In the present study, all respondents stated the need to staff develop teachers on how to use ICT tools in teaching and learning in rural primary schools because in today's education systems, ICT plays an important role as it enhances the

traditional teaching of learning areas. In a recent study whose aim was to establish the learning gap induced by the COVID-19 health regulations in Zimbabwe and other developing nations by Mandikiana (2020), it was recommended the gap between the *haves* and the *have nots* be bridged and the establishment of provisions and support of online learning platforms for implementation in all schools. It is against this background, where school heads as instructional leaders mobilise adequate resources for the implementation of online teaching during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **4.4 Summary**

Chapter 4 mainly focussed on the presentation, analysis and discussion of data based on the findings from primary data collected through questionnaires and interviews with school heads and class teachers respectively. Data were presented and analysed using tables as well as qualitative discussion of findings base on the four research questions that guided the study. The next chapter provides a presentation of the summary, conclusions that will be drawn from the findings of the study as well recommendations for education practice and further research.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

The previous chapter centred on the presentation, analysis and discussion of primary data generated through interviews and questionnaires. The analysis and discussion of data findings was based on study's research questions. Chapter 5 covers aspects such as study recommendations based on research findings. The chapter concludes with a summary of issues covered in the entire chapter.

#### **5.1 Summary**

This study was concerned with exploring the perceptions of primary school heads on their instructional leadership role in mitigating challenges of COVID-19 at selected primary schools in Chilota cluster, Hwange district. The investigation's objectives were; to explore school heads' perceptions on the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning within Chilota Cluster primary schools; to establish the effectiveness of online teaching and learning in Chilota cluster; examine challenges of online instruction perpetuated by the COVID-19 pandemic in rural primary schools as well as to suggest strategies to mitigate the challenges of teaching and learning in rural primary schools during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The study adopted a qualitative approach so as to have a full understanding of the research problem in the present study. Hand delivered questionnaires and telephone interviews were used to collect data from a sample of 20 (10 school heads and 10 class teachers respectively). The researcher experienced delays in the return of questionnaires since most school heads were not yet at their respective schools due to COVID-19 regulations as well as the industrial

action by teachers in the Civil Service. Both instruments were found to be effective in the collection of primary data. Major findings of the study were:

- School heads and teachers had mixed views on the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning at Chilota cluster in Hwange district. Both positive and negative impacts were established by the study.
- No online teaching learning was done at primary schools that participated in the present study.
- A number of challenges perpetuated by the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on online teaching and learning in schools under study.
- There is need for school leadership, local communities and other stakeholders to work together providing and supporting online learning platforms to be used in teaching and learning during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

The present study established that the COVID-19 pandemic affected and will continue to affect education provision as well as implementation of the competence-based curriculum in schools. The need for a paradigm shift where online teaching and learning in the entire Zimbabwe education system needs to be seriously considered if we are to educational tame the COVID-19 pandemic. In view of the above, the study concluded that:

- COVID-19 has affected the provision of quality education in poor rural primary schools not only in Hwange district but the entire Zimbabwean nation.
- The provision of ICT tools for implementation of online teaching and learning was inevitable as COVID-19 has highlighted the shortcomings and inequalities in the provision of quality online education.

- Continuous professional development of teachers is a prerequisite in order effectively conduct online teaching and learning in the entire Zimbabwe education system.
- The school head's instructional leadership role is vital in enhancing effective teaching and learning especially in crisis-driven times such as the COVID-19 era.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The study revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted positively and negatively on education provision. However, the negative impact means that something must be done to prevent further damage to the entire education system. Realising that online instruction seems to be the only solution to the continued provision of education, especially during such health related pandemics, it is recommended that:

- Schools be equipped with appropriate ICT tools enhance teaching and learning at all times.
- School heads in consultation with School Development Committees (SDCs), need to come up with SDPs that will guide action at the school during unforeseen circumstances.
- The government is encouraged to spearhead continuous staff developed programs so teachers improve ICT skills necessary for implementation of online instruction in all primary schools.
- Further research be conducted in the entire Matabeleland North province to establish how best schools can implement online instruction as a measure to address effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the province.

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## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A: Questionnaire for School Leadership

The researcher is a student at Midlands State University doing a Bachelor of Education in Educational Management and Leadership degree. As part of the program requirement, I am conducting a research study on *Perceptions of primary school heads on their instructional leadership role in mitigating challenges of COVID-19 at Chilota cluster, Hwange district*. You are requested to respond to questions on this questionnaire accordingly and be as honest as possible. Your identity must not be indicated on this questionnaire. Data collected through this study will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will not be disclosed to any third party. Data collected will be for academic and professional purposes only. Should you wish to withdraw from the study at any point during the course of the study, you are free to do so.

Kindly indicate your preferred response with an (X) in the provided box or write briefly your views in the spaces provided for in the questionnaire.

### SECTION A: Personal demographic data

1. Tick in the appropriate box to indicate your sex:

Male	
Female	

2. Tick in the appropriate box to indicate your age category.

30 years and below	
31 – 40 years	
41 – 50 years	
51 years plus	

3. Indicate your highest professional qualification.

Diploma/Certificate in Education	
Bachelor of Education Degree	
Master of Education Degree	
Other qualifications (state)	

4. What is your official grade in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education?

Teacher	
Deputy Head	
Head	

5. Indicate your experience at the present station.

5 years and below	
6 – 10 years	
11 – 15 years	
16 – 20 years	
21 years plus	

6. Your experience as head of school

5 years and below	
6 – 10 years	
11 – 15 years	
16 – 20 years	
21 years plus	

**SECTION B: Perceptions of school heads on the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning at Chilota cluster**

7. What would regard as the critical role of school leadership as instructional leaders in times of a pandemic such as the COVI-19 one?

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8. What would you consider to be the positives brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic with regard to teaching and learning at your school?

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9. What would say are the negatives of the pandemic to teaching and learning at your school?

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**SECTION C: The effectiveness of online teaching and learning**

10. Did you conduct online lessons during lockdown period?

Yes	
No	

11. If *yes*, indicate with an (X) the platform your school used to conduct those online lessons.

WhatsApp	
Zoom	
Google Classroom	
Other (state)	

12. Indicate the effectiveness of each platform to teaching and learning at your school.

<b>Online learning platform</b>	<b>VE</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>NEA</b>
WhatsApp				
Zoom				
Google Classroom				
Radio lessons				

Key:      **VE:** Very effective                      **E:** Effective  
              **SE:** Somehow effective                **NEA:** Not effective at all

**13.** Did learners at your school have access to radio lessons?

Yes	
No	

**SECTION D:            Challenges of online teaching and learning**

**14.** To what extent were learners given equal access to online learning tools and equipment at your school?

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**15.** How were teachers assisted with online teaching tools and technologies?

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**16.** What were the constraints that hampered effective online instruction at your school?

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**SECTION E: Strategies to mitigate challenges of teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic**

**17.** How did you as instructional leader ensure continuity of teaching and learning during the lockdown period?

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**18.** What formal/informal steps do you take to ensure that teachers perform the duties effectively during such unforeseen pandemic such as this covid-19 one?

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**19.** What would you consider to be best approaches to effective teaching and learning during a pandemic such as the COVID-19 pandemic?

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**APPENDIX B: Interview guide for teachers**

The researcher is a student at Midlands State University doing a Bachelor of Education in Educational Management and Leadership degree. As part of the program requirement, I am conducting a research study on *Perceptions of primary school heads on their instructional leadership role in mitigating challenges of COVID-19 at Chilota cluster, Hwange district*. You are requested to respond to questions on this questionnaire accordingly and be as honest as possible. Your identity must not be indicated on this questionnaire. Data collected through this study will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will not be disclosed to any third party. Data collected will be for academic and professional purposes only. Should you wish to withdraw from the study at any point during the course of the study, you are free to do so.

Kindly mark your preferred response with an (X) in the provided box or write briefly your views in the spaces provided for in the interview guide.

**SECTION A: Personal demographic data**

1. Tick in the appropriate box to indicate your sex:

Male	
Female	

2. Tick in the appropriate box to indicate your age category.

30 years and below	
31 – 40 years	
41 – 50 years	
51 years plus	

3. Indicate your highest professional qualification.

Diploma/Certificate in Education	
Bachelor of Education Degree	
Master of Education Degree	
Other qualifications (state)	

4. Indicate your experience at the present station.

5 years and below	
6 – 10 years	
11 – 15 years	
16 – 20 years	
21 years plus	

5. Your experience as teacher at this school

5 years and below	
6 – 10 years	
11 – 15 years	
16 – 20 years	
21 years plus	

**SECTION B: Perceptions of teachers on the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning at Chilota cluster**

6. What would you regard as a big impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to teaching and learning?

7. What would you regard as your additional leadership role in times of such pandemics?
8. What, according to your opinion, could be the positives and negatives of COVID-19 with regard to teaching and learning?

**SECTION C: The effectiveness of online teaching and learning**

9. What online instruction mechanisms were put in place to ensure continuity of teaching and learning during the lockdown period?
10. How effective were these measures with regard to teaching and learning at your school?
11. Academic assessment is one of the cornerstones of the success of an effective school.  
How did you ensure that this criterion was met through online teaching and learning?

**SECTION D: Challenges of online teaching and learning**

12. How was teaching and learning done at your school during the lockdown periods?
13. What constraints, if any, hindered effective online teaching and learning at your school?

**SECTION E: Strategies to mitigate challenges of teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic**

14. What leadership role as teacher did you have during the lockdown periods?
15. What did you as a teacher do to ensure that your learners had access to teaching and learning during the lockdown period?
16. What formal/informal steps did you take to ensure that learners did their school assignments during lockdown periods?

*Thank you so much for your time and acceptance to take part in this research study.*

## **APPENDIX C: Informed consent form**

**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH:** Perceptions of primary school heads on their instructional leadership role in mitigating challenges of covid-19 at Chilota cluster, Hwange District.

### **Consent to take part in research**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ do hereby voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw my participation at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves responding to interview questions.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded. I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview, which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in research report (dissertation).
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in my student file and disc until confirmation and publication of results in respect of this program.

- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two (2) years from the date of carrying out the interview.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

**Names:** DR R Guvhu (PhD)  
**Contact Cell:** 0776102317  
**Email:** [guvhur@staff.msu.ac.zw](mailto:guvhur@staff.msu.ac.zw)

---

Signature of research participant

---

Date

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

---

Signature of researcher

---

Date

## APPENDIX D: Permission to carry out research

All communications should be addressed to  
"The Provincial Education Director"  
Tele-Fax: 67574  
E-mail: [matnorth12@gmail.com](mailto:matnorth12@gmail.com)



Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education  
Matabeleland North Province  
P O Box 555  
Bulawayo  
Zimbabwe

02 September 2021

**Midlands State University**  
P Bag 9035  
**Gweru**

**Attention:** Dube Dubani      **Reg No.:** R15221Z

### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH PROJECT: HWANGE DISTRICT: MATABELELAND NORTH PROVINCE**

Reference is made to your letter dated 27 August 2021, requesting for permission to carry out a research project entitled "*Perception of Primary School Heads on their Instructional Leadership Role in Mitigating Challenges of COVID-19*" at Chilota Cluster in Hwange District, Matabeleland North Province.

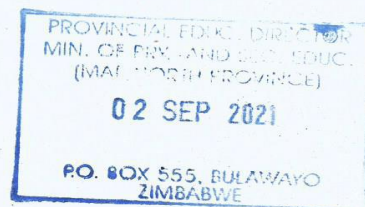
You are hereby granted permission to carry out your research in the above mentioned district. However, your research should not in any way disturb the smooth running of teaching and learning activities in schools.

You will be required to furnish the Province with a copy of your findings after the research.

**NB:** Before proceeding into schools, please ensure that you pass through the District Education Office – Hwange.

**J. A. Mpofu (Mr)**  
**Provincial Education Director – Matabeleland North.**

Cc: District Schools Inspector - Hwange



**APPENDIX E: Application to conduct research**

Midlands State University  
P. Bag 9055  
Gweru

27 August 2021

The District Schools Inspector  
Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education  
P.O. Box 230  
Hwange

Dear Sir

RE: REQUEST TO CARRY OUT AN ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN HWANGE DISTRICT BY DUBE DUBANI REG. No R15221Z

I am writing this letter to request for permission to conduct an academic research in Hwange District. I am a teacher at Chilanga Primary School, Hwange as well as a Bachelor of Education Degree (Educational Management and Leadership) student with Midlands State University.

As part of the requirement of the programme, I am required to undertake a research and thereafter present a research report in partial fulfilment of the degree programme. My research topic reads:

*‘Perceptions of primary school heads on their instructional leadership role in mitigating challenges of covid-19 at Chilota cluster, Hwange district’*

I am therefore requesting for permission to collect data from the following Schools and teachers from the following schools: Dinde Primary, Chibala Primary, Luseche Primary, Nekabandama Primary School and St. Mary’s Primary School.

Yours faithfully

**Dube Dubani**  
**Reg. No. R15221Z**

**APPENDIX F: Clearance to carry out research**



# MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY

P. BAG 9055  
Gweru

Telephone: (263) 54 260404/260337/260667/260450  
Fax: (263) 54 260233/260311

## FACULTY OF EDUCATION

---

### DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES AND LEADERSHIP

---

**27 August 2021**

#### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The bearer, **DUBANI DUBE Reg No R15221Z** is a BEd student at this university. She/he has to undertake research and thereafter present a Research Project in partial fulfilment of the degree programme.

In this regard, the university kindly requests both your institution and personnel's assistance in this student's research endeavours.

Your cooperation and assistance is greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

Dr L. Museva  
Chairperson

APPENDIX G: Turnitin originality report

# PERCEPTIONS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL HEADS ON THEIR INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP ROLE IN MITIGATING CHALLENGES OF COVID-19 AT CHILOTA CLUSTER, HWANGE DISTRICT

## ORIGINALITY REPORT

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