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## **THE INFLUENCE OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL LEADERS ON FOLLOWERS: A CASE STUDY IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN MAURITIUS**

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### **Abstract**

*Impression management forms an integral part of the arena of tools which school leaders use to influence their followers. School leaders are now called upon to lead schools in the wake of challenges and changes brought about by new policies and reforms in the educational sector. They are more and more being held accountable for the performance of their schools. This has created very complex situations at school. Many school leaders have had to revisit their practice and consider how to create the appropriate opportunities at school. One solution they found was to reconsider the links established with their followers. Although, not well documented in the literature, the role of followers has been recognized as being important in the interplay between leaders and followers. This paper examines the influence of impression management of school leaders on followers. The followers are the section leaders who have, by nature of their duties, to work closely with the school leaders (n=7). A qualitative research design was followed. Semi-structured interviews with the section leaders were used to collect data while content analysis was used to identify themes and analyze the data collected. The research established that section*

*leaders experienced many challenges and confusion when school leaders resort to using impression management. Based on the findings of this study, measures were suggested on how school leaders could have resort to more effective practices in order to influence followers.*

### **Keywords**

School Leaders, Practices, Impression Management, Followers

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## **1. Introduction**

In Mauritius, education is free and compulsory from the age 3 to 16. The education system follows a 2+6+7 pattern. It means that after having spent 2 years in pre-primary schools, children move to primary schools for 6 years. After their primary, they go the secondary schools where they can complete their higher school certificate. Those students who want to leave the academic stream can also opt to follow the pre-vocational stream and then move to prevocational institute. The government relies heavily on the education system to provide the country with the necessary workforce and be able to overcome all the challenges which a small island state like Mauritius has to face. Consequently, much attention is given to ensure that schools are well lead and managed. Heads of schools are supposed to see to it that all the structure are in place to lead and manage schools in the most appropriate way.

Consequently, this puts the school leaders under the limelight. Leithwood, Seashore-Louis (2012) claimed that “to date, we have not found a single documented case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership” (p.3). In fact, school leaders have to adopt new practices. They have to shift from modelling “excellent teaching, to observe teachers in classrooms and to directly advise and guide the work of all teachers” (Cuellar & Giles, 2012, p.297). Thus school leaders are called upon to be more often in contact with their followers. They also need to use these encounters in order to push forward changes that they need to bring at school. Thus their encounters with their followers, they thus try to include them “in the frontline of educational change” (Congo-Poottaren, 2014, p.243).

School leaders have to find ways and means to influence their followers so as to get the work done. One tool used by school leaders to influence their followers is known as impression management. This is done to achieve the goals set for the organization (Enns, Huff & Golden, 2003; Enns & Mc Farlin, 2005; Falbe & Yulk, 1992). As far as school leadership is concerned, the use of impression management is of relevance because school leaders are called upon to take

up a role of responsibility. Nowadays there is a worldwide aim to improve schools (DeVita, 2010; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Rice, 2010). This has led to a situation where “the demands and the stresses on principals have never been greater” (Duncan, 2009). It is thus recognized and acknowledged the prime role which school leaders play in improving the school performance and in the success of their schools (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). It has also been found that school leadership influences the effectiveness and motivation of teachers (Ladd, 2009; Boyd et al., 2009; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007). Additionally, it has also been found that school leaders have to perform a vast amount of functions. They now have a “set of tasks in which principals engage in order to promote, support, and improve the implementation of curricular programs in classrooms” (Grissom & Loeb, 2009, p. 10).

In fact, people act in a particular way in order to elicit a specific impression from other people (Goffman, 1959). They act in a way which is related to the impression that they want to make on people. Individuals have a specific motive in mind when they interact with others (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). At the same time, when they act, they also consider the values and preferences of their audience (Baumesiter & Leary, 1995). The reason why individuals shape their behaviours with respect to what they believe their audience expects is also done with the aim of controlling or dictating the actions of the audience (Schlenker, 1980). They go out of their way, even work on their verbal and non-verbal behaviours, their appearance and even the physical environment in order to impress other people (Baumesiter & Leary, 1995). Individuals who consciously work out to impress others want to create a specific identity.

As school leaders they are responsible to motivate their teachers and to increase their organizational commitment (Muhamad, Muhamad, & Abbas, 2016). Furthermore, the link between school leaders and job satisfaction has been established and needs to be considered (Yangaiya & Magaji, 2016). These are important elements which contribute to place the relationship between the school leaders and the teachers under the flashlight. However, it was found in one study that school leaders are not very successful in developing their teachers (Congo-Poottaren & Beebeejaun-Rojee, 2017). This is indeed a cause of concern as there is a dyadic relationship between school leaders and their teachers.

### **1.1 Aim**

The aim of this research is to investigate the influence that the impression management strategies used by heads of schools have on followers.

## **1.2 Research questions**

What are the types of impression management strategies used by school leaders?

How do impression management strategies used by school leaders influence followers?

## **1.3 Significance of this study**

This study aims at bringing into the limelight the types of impression management strategies used by school leaders and their influence on followers. Findings from this study will help to have a different perspective on the use of impression management by heads of schools since voice will be given to the followers. Heads of schools might then reconsider their use of impression management. At the same time, since impression management is part of the arsenal of management strategies which heads of schools use, this item could be included in the training of heads of schools so that they make an effective use of them.

## **2. Literature review**

This research aims at investigating one dimension of impression management. It wants to find out what is the influence of impression management strategies used by heads of schools on followers. Hence the literature review will be on impression management strategies.

### **2.1 Impression management strategies**

Jones and Pittman (1982) developed impression management taxonomy. This taxonomy consisted of five impression management strategies.

#### **2.1.1 Exemplification**

Actors go out of their way to demonstrate dedication to the goals of the organization. They hope that by performing tasks and behaving in ways which show that they are fully committed and dedicated to the organization and its goals, they will gain the dedication of the followers. Jones (1990) calls this strategy a “power-oriented” one (p.194). The actors will perform effective or appropriate behaviors when they know that they are being observed. Furthermore, they will participate in activities which are highly visible and will act in accordance with the values which are espoused by the followers. They are also engaged in behaviors which involve self-sacrifice. They will tend to put forward that they are ready to sacrifice personal interest for the benefit of the organization. According to Rosenfeld et al. (1995) when an actor

resort to exemplification he tries to “influence and control through inducing guilt or distributions of virtue” (p.54). Jones (1990) claims that those who are good at using exemplification usually try to act consistently in an honest and morally worthy way (p.195). This is because as claimed by Jones (1990) “truly virtuous people do not claim virtue; those of high moral standing presumably are known for their selfless acts” (p.195).

### **2.1.2 Ingratiation**

Actors behave in ways which will make them be seen as having particular qualities which are seen desirable on social level. These include qualities such as being friendly or considerate. This involves “making salient one’s most favorable characteristics” (Jones, 1990, p.178). This is done to create an impression of likeability. Here the actors construct and identity of being likeable. According to Jones (1990) actors have the innate desire to be well liked. The actions of the actors are such that they want their audience to like them. The actors act purposefully (Gardner & Cleavenger, 1998; Jones, 1990; Rosenfeld et al.1995). The actors decide what kinds of behaviors will be appreciated by the audience. If they feel that the audience needs to be praised, then they will praise the audience. The actors when engaged in ingratiation resort to profiling to determine the types of behaviors which are expected and valued by the audience. Once these types of behaviors are determined, the actors induce in them to impress the audience.

### **2.1.3 Self-promotion**

Actors behave in ways which will demonstrate to their audiences that they are competent and are of value to the organization (Jones, 1990; Turnley & Bolino, 2001). They will inform the audiences about their skills, competences and achievements. They will promote themselves as individuals who have the necessary skills to lead the organization. They can also engage in self-promotion by displaying diplomas, awards and trophies in their offices or in areas which are visible by the audiences. The actors can also resort to some kind of coalition whereby they get other people to talk about their skills and competencies as well as about their dedication and loyalty towards the organization. They put forward claims about their competencies since they want their audience to see them as competent. This strategy may however be dangerous as individuals who use this strategy may give the impression that they are smug, superior or haughty (Gardner & Cleavenger, 1998; Jones & Pittman, 1982).

### **2.1.4 Intimidation**

Here the actors indulge in behaviors that will intimidate other people. The actors want to be seen or perceived as dangerous and one who will not hesitate to harm people who do not do what they are told to do. All those who fail to do what the actors expect from them run the risk of being harmed. They use power to instill fear and submission in people. In fact, intimidation is at the other extreme to ingratiation. According to Rosenfeld et al (1995) “while the ingratiatory dangles a carrot, the intimidator wields a big stick” (p.53). They use warnings to sanction behaviours which are unacceptable. They will apply sanctions to punish those who have behaved in unacceptable ways to make it clear that they are serious and want to be seen as ruthless. Rosenfeld et al. (1995) claim that intimidators may feel that their actions are “liked and accepted when in fact it is loathed and detested” (p.53). Additionally, intimidators should remember that “they may get their way by projecting a capacity and the inclination to provide negative outcomes, they rarely become endearing in the process” (Jones, 1990, p.195). Hence, this strategy must be used with caution.

### **2.1.5 Supplication**

This is known as a “last resort” strategy (Jones, 1990, p.196). Actors use this strategy when they want to gain sympathy from the audience. They reveal their inadequacies or they tend to underestimate themselves. They behave in a humble manner and they demean themselves. Jones (1990) describes this strategy as “bending over backwards in acknowledging inadequacies, flaws and weaknesses” (p.181). The actors try to look incompetent in the eyes of the audience without causing irremediable harm to their reputation (Rosenfeld et al.1995). When actors behave in such a way, they expect the audience, guided by social norms, to be kinder and more forgiving towards them (Jones, 1990, p.196). This works because there is a “powerful social rule known as the norm of social responsibility that says we should help those who are in need” (Rosenfeld et al., 1995, p.56). This strategy is hard to use because the actors have a dangerous balancing act to do. The actor has “to let modesty reflect the secure acceptance of a few weaknesses, that are obviously trivial in the context of one’s strengths” (Jones, 1990, p.181). This tactic might be more successful if there is “an exchange of benefits” (Jones, 1990, p.196). The audience will react positively if they believe that in return for their support they will enjoy a benefit. Jones (1990) describes this as enjoying “compensatory benefits” (p, 197). Additionally, if the actors use this tactic often, then they run the risk of being seen as being incompetent or socially hopeless (Rosenfeld et al., 1995, p.56).

### **3. Methodology**

For this study, a qualitative research has been undertaken. Qualitative research has been defined as “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). One major advantage of qualitative research is that it allows for the exploration of the richness, depth and complexity of the phenomena. It enables the research have access to rich insights into the participants’ experiences of the world, and “may be epistemologically in harmony with the reader’s experience” (Stake, 1978, p.5). Data has been gathered using interviews from seven section leaders. Purposive sample has been used as these people work close to the head of school and will have the data needed to answer the research questions. Interviews were chosen as the means of data collection because it was found to empower both the researcher and the participants (Williams & Katz, 2001). In fact, Arksey and Knight (1999, p.32) claim that “interviewing is a powerful way of helping people to make explicit things that have hitherto been implicit – to articulate their tacit perceptions, feelings and understandings”. Through interviews the researcher is able to have interesting data as interviews allow “the richness of responses” to emerge (Gray, 2004). As far as the sample was concerned, purposive sample was used to choose seven participants. These participants are the section leaders and work in close collaboration with the head of school. Hence they have the experience needed (Allen, 1971). The data once collected have been analyzed using thematic analysis. Hence qualitative data analysis follows an inductive approach and leads to the emergence of conceptual categories and descriptive themes. This gives rise to findings which result “from the words and voices of the people involved” (Clark et al. 1996, p.203). This is possible because thick descriptions have been provided to support the themes.

### **4. Data findings and analysis**

Below are the findings from the semi-structured interviews.

#### **4.1 Demotivating**

The reaction of the school leader indicates that using intimidation leads to compliance on the part of the followers. They would go about carrying out their duties in an apathetic way. They are not enthusiastic and make only a minimal or acceptable effort. They do not show any initiative. It would seem that at time when the school leader chooses to use intimidation, this

leads section leaders to feel demotivated. This seems to match what Jones (1990) has found. As a result of which the section leaders are not determined to go out of their ways to do their job. They seem to work to rule and to do only what their scheme of duties expects them to do. Hence when followers adopt that attitude it then shows that they do not appreciate to be intimidated. Thus is also what Rosenfeld et al. (1995) found. Although some would be satisfied that these people are actually doing the job for which they are paid, others might feel that the way the job is done is also a matter of concern. Hence the use of a 'big stick' as described by Rosenfeld et al. (1995, p.53) does not seem effective. The comments made by the participants support this element.

*“The rector often threatens us. Whenever he is under pressure, he vents out his frustration on us and threatens to have us replaced!. This is annoying and you feel frustrated as well because he does not appreciate what we are doing” (Participant 2)*

*“I am angry at times. The rector believes that he is all powerful and acts like a dictator. He always seems to be busy trying to intimidate us. He never has a kind work. Always complaining” (Participant 4).*

*“I believe that an important aspect of quality leadership is knowing when informal observations or class visits are an interruption and when they are appropriate. I told the rector so and he threatens to give me a warning. Now, I do not say anything” (Participant 6).*

#### **4.2 Frustration**

It seems that the use of supplication leads to followers feeling frustrated. They do not find it correct or appropriate of the head of school to behave like that. They do not find that he is worthy of being able to give them advice. Those contradict Rosenfeld et al (1995) since it seems to have created some harm to the reputation of the head of school. This is seen in the comments which some participants made. Here again we can say that this tactic is unsuccessful. It leads to resistance on the part of the section leaders. The section leaders are opposed to the actions that they are requested to do and they try to avoid doing it by arguing and disregarding the request.

*“I am sick and tired of having the rector coming to observe my class. He himself has confessed many times that he was not a great teacher. How come he will help me to refine my performance?” (Participant 1 )*

*“It’s difficult for me not to laugh when the rector talks about conducting assessments and how we are to prepare the assessments. When he was still a teacher, he used to complain that other people do it better than him. It’s frustrating” (Participant 2)*

*“During the staff meeting the rector told us that we need to teach in an integrated way. When a teacher asked him to give an example, he could not. What a joke. He is of no help. We need to do everything by ourselves. Not easy at all” (Participant 4).*

However, at times, followers do also respond positively to supplication. This tends to follow what Rosenfeld et al. (1995) describe as the norm of social responsibility. It implies helping those in need. This leads to a give and take attitude. However, as explained above, this tactic can at times be successful and thus leading to commitment on the part of the section leader. Their feelings of pity for the school leader make section leaders agree internally with a decision. They, however seem to have to work hard in order to be enthusiastic about the requests made. They will exercise initiative and work with persistence in order to carry out the request made by the school leader and make it a success. This also happens as described by the comments below

*“Sometimes, I feel pity for the rector. He goes about looking o vulnerable that I tend to tone down what I have to say to him. I try to help him instead” (Participant 3).*

*“The rector praises my teaching and says he is greatly impressed that I am so good at my teaching, whilst he admitted that it took him many more years to teach like me. I had to tell him that what he says is not true, that he was my favorite teacher” (Participant 5).*

#### **4.3 Commitment/renewed interest**

Here we find that the tactic is successful at times. In these circumstances, the request make arouses enthusiasm because it appeals to the followers’ values, ideals and aspirations. Furthermore, it also seems to increase the followers’ confidence that they can do what is being skid out of them. Hence we can say that exemplification when successful has a kind of inspirational appeal on followers. This leads to commitment. Additionally when discussing with the followers that the school leader acts as if he is consulting them. Hence this leads to followers developing a more favorable attitude than was formerly felt. Consequently, we find a new sense of ownership is developed because of having participated in decision making. However, when the school leader cannot keep up the pace, then this leads to resistance from followers. They get

to be very critical and judgmental of their school leaders and they are not enthusiastic. **Exemplification** seems to work both ways. When the head of school use it to work more it galvanizes the followers and they also want to work more. However, as mentioned by a follower the opposite also happens. It matches what Rosenfeld et al. (1995) describes. This is what comes out from what the participants have revealed during the interviews.

*“At times you notice the rector going about the school in a very industrious way. He seems to be doing many tasks at the same time. He takes an interest in us. He helps us to build our confidence. He assists us in lesson planning. This helps us to be stimulated and we want to go the extra mile.” (Participant 7)*

*“I met the rector one afternoon and he was very pleasant and in a good mood. We discussed about school matters. I was mesmerized by the way he was talking about the school. I felt more motivated and wanted to excel in my teaching” (Participant 6)*

*“I find that my rector is like the weather. He can be very active at times, but then he would rarely leave his office. When he is very active he does leads of work, sacrificing his lunch time. It’s contagious. This makes me want to work harder, but the opposite may also happen. I can become sluggish” (Participant 1)*

#### **4.4 Triggers approval from followers and motives them**

In this case, we find that that the school leader gets the followers in a good mood. He works on getting followers to develop a positive image of him before he comes forward with a request. Here the school leader tries to increase the followers’ cooperation by increasing their disposition towards him. At times, when the head of school uses **ingratiation**, followers like it and approve of how he is behaving. This is in line with what Gardner and Cleavenger (1998) found. The rector seems determined to know what kinds of behaviours followers are expecting and behave accordingly. He can be said to be shrewd but it has a positive impact on the followers. The followers get more motivated. Hence supporting what Jones (1995).

*“I have noticed that the rector works hard to create an atmosphere conducive to effective teaching and learning. I like it when he seems determined to do his job well. It’s good for the morale” (Participant 5)*

*“You know, the rector he knows that we scrutinize what he does. This is why you see him inviting us to collaborate and to give our opinions. It’s true there are things that are not negotiable, but in areas where it can be negotiated, he listens to use, this is good practice. I feel valued and important” (Participant 7)*

*“I do not really know where I stand with the rector. Sometimes, you see him looking at us strangely, as if wanting to know what we are thinking. This is weird. He can also surprise us by saying things which we thought he would never say. Even more weird”. (Participant 3)*

#### **4.5 Competition**

Here the followers definitely do not appreciate the head of school when he engages in self-promotion. It seems that what the participants reveal is more in line with what Gardner and Cleavenger (1998) and Jones and Pittman (1982). The followers find that all the information about his skills and his competencies angers them and but also leads them into a competitive stance. This tactic leads followers to withdraw from the school leader and to focus only on their classes. While we can but feel appreciative that teachers are effectively motivated to do their classes, we cannot but feel worried that their commitment might not include outside classroom activities. Given the current situation and the pressures which school leaders are facing, there is more and more need for teachers to expand their roles and take up further or more responsibilities which are related to the whole school. If because of the school leaders’ use of self-promotion, followers do not volunteer to do much more than teaching, then the tactic the school leader has been using has not been successful.

*“It’s really painful when you hear the rector talk about himself all day long. He seems to think that he is the only one who is intelligent and hardworking. He seems to think that he is the only one who is intelligent and hardworking. It makes me want to do more than him” (Participant 2)*

*“I want to record him when he dos a staff meeting and make him listen to himself. Hopefully he will realize how pompous he sounds. When he talks like that he does not provide much value for us. I want to give up at times, but then I remember that my first responsibility is towards my students. So I continue with business as usual” (Participant 4)*

*“I find the rector vain. Someone with a little decency would realise that you cannot go about acting like that. I try to stay away from him as often as possible. It’s only in class that I feel happy and useful” (Participant 6)*

## **5. Conclusions**

Followers and leaders are linked in a dyadic relationship. They are engaged in working for the best interest of the organization and help it reach its objectives. In order to do so, they have to interact constantly and this is the crux of this piece of work. It has been found in this case study that the strategies used by the school leader to impress his followers can backfire on him and be ineffective. Consequently it is recommended that these strategies be used with caution or that more effective strategies be found.

How do the findings talk to the literature review? The literature warns that the use of impression management strategies when used too often can have a negative influence on followers. This is exactly what the findings have revealed. In fact it seems that it is important to find the right balance when using impression management. The influence is volatile. It is likely to change rapidly and unpredictably, especially for the worse. The influence lasts only for a moment. If school leaders make an abuse of impression management strategies, then they stand to lose their credibility. In this particular case, followers seem to have a very definite picture of their school leaders.

## **6. Recommendations and future direction**

The heads of schools need to be aware of the various reactions that their impression management strategies are having on their followers. These might at times work against what they wanted to achieve and thus defeat the purpose. Hence the following recommendations can help school leaders to be more caution when using impression management.

### **6.1 Restructure and update school administration and leadership programmers**

There is need for higher education institution to restructure and update their administration and leadership programmer in order to include research-based and practice oriented approaches to school administration and leadership which take into consideration new challenges. These challenges relate to accountability, efficiency, effectiveness and how to relate these to school leaders’ communication skills and strategies. These would also include how to make effective

use of impression management strategies. There should also include opportunities during their training where they would be able to demonstrate how they are going to use the knowledge and skills that they have acquired. There is also need for them to be evaluated in an authentic way. They should be provided with tasks which can help them bridge the gap between theory and practice. They should be faced with situations where contextualized learning takes place. The assessment should target actual knowledge, skills and dispositions desired of school leaders as they are used in school leadership context rather than rely on remote proxies. They should also be given tasks which will help them to integrate knowledge within and across their learning experiences. They should be encouraged to take ownership of their learning and of the tasks given. School leaders should be able to show the relevancy and meaningfulness of the tasks they submit. These types of tasks will allow trainees to engage in deeper and more relevant and productive learning. They will also be able to reflect on school events in more systematic and structured way and produce unique responses and not make use of predetermined answers. These skills might help school leaders to be more effective when dealing with followers and then to make a better use of impression management strategies.

## **6.2 Encourage school leaders to go for continuous professional development**

It is important for school leaders to realize that they now lead in an era where there is short-shelf life of learning. School leaders must be encouraged to go for continuous professional development on a more regular basis. Learning has shifted from a once-in-a-while activity to a more continuous and ongoing one. However the professional development available should be able to strike the right balance between giving too much information and giving the right information. In these courses school leaders must also come to realize that they need to own their career development. It is a fact that highly-structured and one-size fits all professional development are not effective. Hence school leaders must own, self-direct and control their professional development futures. School leaders must be able to work around their heavy workloads in order to get continuous professional development. This is related to the school leaders' personal development and opportunities school improvement initiatives. They must be prepared for career-staged professional development.

## **6.3 Review their responsibilities**

Heads of Schools need to go back to the fundamentals. They need to review their responsibilities and find out if they are performing them correctly. They also need to ask

themselves some basic questions in relation to these responsibilities. It is important for them to take stock of the influences of their behaviors on their followers and how the latter are disturbed by such behaviors. Heads of Schools need to behave more appropriately so that they can become more credible in their roles. This will allow them to be taken more seriously by their followers. They would then be able to better coordinate the entire school activity and deal effectively with school issues. It is important for the head of school to engage more seriously with instructional leadership. While the school leaders have many other duties, they should nevertheless put time aside to reflect on and monitor teaching and learning. They need to keep abreast of the latest development in teaching and learning and assist in selecting and implementing instructional materials which are more appropriate for the school. It is also important for them to understand that their professional development should be taken care of. This will ensure that they keep bringing about necessary changes. They will also be able to help ensure that there are no inconsistencies among practices and materials and those they are aligned with the school's mission and vision.

#### **6.4 Meet teachers on their turf**

Heads of schools could try to meet teachers on their turf by conducting informal class observation. These will not only allow the head of school to gather information on how teaching and learning is going on in the classroom, it will also allow the heads of schools to meet and discuss with individual teachers when they provide feedback. This would be a useful way of making the head of school more visible and less office-bound. It could also help reduce the isolation that most teachers feel because they keep away from the head of school. It is important to note that getting into the classrooms will help the head of school to get to know the students in a classroom set up and also identify the instructional strengths and weaknesses of the teachers. While they will be able to provide advice to teachers, they will also get to know more about the curriculum at each grade level and kept informed about what is happening in class. These informal observations could provide excellent opportunities for heads of schools to reinforce and praise good practice when they catch teachers doing something right. They could also provide advice to teachers to help them improve their practice.

#### **6.5 Gain the respect of teachers by taking an interest in teachers**

Instead of concentrating on themselves they could spend time and energy in taking a genuine interest in their teachers. Heads of Schools are in an excellent position to help teacher

cope with the issues concerning teaching and to provide support. They are in a good position to identify the issues which are impacting on their teachers and work on eliminating these problems. This would help teachers build their confidence. Heads of schools could even assist teachers in preparing lesson plans and try to motivate them by providing appropriate resources and materials. This will motivate teachers and show them how to exceed normal expectations. Interpersonal relationships are not easy to develop and maintain. Yet, by being in regular contact with teachers they will have the opportunity to develop sufficient rapport for them to feel comfortable enough to open up and talk about the problems that are bothering them. It is also important for the school leader to focus on making the creation of trust an explicit objective. It should be clear that the issue of trust is essential for the school leader.

### **6.6 Self-awareness**

Heads of schools must work on their impression management strategies and their communication strategy. They need to know how well they communicate in terms of impression management strategies. They need to identify what works and what does not work in their strategies. If they have not yet realized the influences of the impression management on followers, they need to gather feedback so that they come to know about their strengths and weaknesses. Heads of schools need to ask mattering but not matter-of-facts questions. They need to have a positive attitude towards other people, challenging situations and the way forward. They also need to develop their resilience and expand their capacity to hold up under stress.

### **6.7 Find common ground**

Heads of schools must try to find qualities they share with their followers and build upon common understandings. Finding common ground does not mean finding absolute agreement. This means that they find sharable grounds marked by boundaries of what is acceptable or not and where both can live within them. It is important that followers also feel valued and if the heads of schools acknowledge that they followers too have qualities, then it might help to develop effective communication between them. It is also important for heads of schools to listen to their followers. They should not dominate the conversation with trying to promote themselves. They should instead monitor closer how they are responding and listening to their followers. They should ensure that they are providing the appropriate cues to the followers and that the conversation is not pushing them apart.

### **6.8 Practice new ways of conveying impression**

Heads of schools should review their impression management strategies and could instead plan and practice what they are going to say and how they are going to say it so that they are not wrongly perceived by their followers. Heads of schools should also let followers contribute to interactions. When they let followers speak they focus on the other person and they can be seen as more competent. Practicing alter-centrism can help to convey better impression.

As see from the findings above, the influence of impression management on followers does not bring much contribution to creating a conducive environment where teaching and learning can take place in the best possible conditions. Hence, the school leaders need to work on improving relationship and better control their impression management. This will help to bring about healthier interpersonal relationship. While the purpose of this study was to investigate the influence that the impression management strategies used by heads of schools have on followers, it has nevertheless open new avenues which could be investigated further. The logical next step would be to continue with this line of investigation and to determine the circumstances and contexts which should exist for impression management to be successful.

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