

Same but different: head teachers' perceptions of leadership in Kenya and Sweden

I Thylefors , O. Persson , M Thylefors , J.O Agak & D.T Kipchirchir Serem

To cite this article: I Thylefors , O. Persson , M Thylefors , J.O Agak & D.T Kipchirchir Serem (2007) Same but different: head teachers' perceptions of leadership in Kenya and Sweden, Africa Education Review, 4:2, 42-59, DOI: [10.1080/18146620701652697](https://doi.org/10.1080/18146620701652697)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/18146620701652697>



Published online: 25 Apr 2008.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 104



View related articles [↗](#)



Citing articles: 1 View citing articles [↗](#)

Same but different: head teachers' perceptions of leadership in Kenya and Sweden

.....

I. Thylefors
Department of Psychology, Göteborg
University, Sweden

O. Persson
Department of Psychology, Göteborg
University, Sweden

M. Thylefors
Department of Social Anthropology, School of
Global Studies, Göteborg University, Sweden

J.O. Agak
Faculty of Education, Maseno University,
Kenya

D.T. Kipchirchir Serem
Faculty of Education, Maseno University,
Kenya

Corresponding author:
I. Thylefors, Department of Psychology,
Göteborg University, Sweden,
ingela.thylefors@psy.gu.se

Keywords: leadership; management; school; head teachers; cross-cultural

Abstract

This article compares Kenyan and Swedish head teachers' views on leadership. Data were collected by 20 interviews in each country and analysed to generate descriptive categories, themes and conceptual ideas. In order to support the qualitative analysis, differences between the two groups were tested by Chi².

Kenyan and Swedish head teachers have a lot in common. They describe and analyse their role along the same dimensions. Even though similarities dominate the picture some

42

ISSN 1814-6627 Online 1753-5921
DOI 10.1080/18146620701652697
© University of South Africa Press



Africa Education Review 4 (2)
pp. 42–59

differences appear. The Kenyan head teachers, for example, emphasise results and a vertical and external dependency in contrast to the Swedes, who stress staff concern, development and a reliance on horizontal relationships. This difference in orientation is reflected in the perception of staff needs. The Kenyan head teachers regard them mostly as a hindrance to goal achievement while the Swedes express them in terms of *consideration*.

Noted differences could be interpreted in terms of situational as well as cultural factors.

Introduction

To contribute to effectiveness and quality in education, Maseno University in Kenya and Göteborg University in Sweden have started a collaboration. This study is a first step in that project. It is envisaged that there are particular benefits to be gained from cross-cultural comparisons. First, comparison between country-specific systems may highlight the “taken for granted” but nevertheless significant factors. Second, identification of “the interestingly different” may generate ideas and guidelines for further development and improvement. Third, there may be beneficial transference of best practice from one system to another. This article presents Kenyan and Swedish head teachers' views on leadership.

Reasonably reliable data have been accumulated concerning leadership, organisational structures and management systems. Even though the amount of knowledge gained is quite impressive, issues still remain where empirical research has been carried out only to a limited extent, especially within the human service sector. A number of authors (Collins 2005; Hasenfeld 1992) highlight the importance of taking the unique characteristics of human service organisations into consideration.

The proposition that national culture influences organisational behaviour, educational leadership included, has won considerable support since the mid-1960s (Crozier 1964; Harrison and Huntington 2000) but it has also been questioned (Bottery 2006; Koslowsky, Sagie and Stashevsky 2002; Triandis 2001). The findings of Brodbeck et al. (2000) are consistent with the assumption that leadership is culturally endorsed. So does the comprehensive GLOBE study (House, Wright and Aditya 1997) with data from more than 60 countries in different geopolitical regions.

Besides, several studies report cultural differences with respect to specific factors relevant to leadership. Cultural differences are, for example, to be found with respect to negotiation (Ma, Anderson, Wang, Wang, Jaeger and Saunders 2002), personality traits (Hofstede and McCrae 2004), risk-taking tendency (Tse, Lee, Vertinsky and Wehrung 1988), motivational factors (Mathur, Zhang and Neelankavil 2001), conflict management (Daun 1989) and self-enhancement (Kurman 2002). On the other hand, decision-making style is found to be more correlated with nature of task (Foxall and Payne 1989) and with psycho-emotional maturity (Roy and Chaudhary 1987) rather than with nationality or ethnicity. Yukl, Falbe and Joun (1993) noted that the choice of influence tactics is a matter of role expectations and social norms – and they may

or may not be shared between different cultures. Consequently, Branzei (2002) found an ambiguous link between culture and influence tactics: support for culture-specific influence tactics was found in the more concrete and specific situations.

The message is also contradictory when it comes to participative management. Botzger, Hallein and Yetton (1985), for example, found that when task structure and leader power are high, managers are less participative regardless of their own nationality. In a review on cross-cultural aspects on industrial/organisational psychology Hui and Luk (1997) suggest the existence of a culture-free theory of leadership. They recognise, for example, that the familiar two-dimensional leadership theory appears under different labels in several cultures. But although this dualistic model works in different cultures, the behavioural expressions associated with the two dimensions vary from country to country (Smith, Peterson, Misumi and Bond 1992). Hui and Luk propose a refinement of the theory: they add a new facet to the *consideration* dimension, a culture-specific role model. Also Lord and Maher (1991) pay attention to such a role model, stating that the better the match between an individual and the leadership concept held by a culture the more likely it is that he/she will be recognised as a leader. Thus the importance of a role model is universal but its appearance differs from culture to culture. Also Ekvall and Arvonen (1994) propose an extension of the two-dimensional leadership model and introduce a third dimension, change.

Many studies do stress differences between cultures but many authors (e.g. Kossowsky et al. 2002; Yukl 1998) claim there is an overrepresentation of findings giving support to culture-specific differences due to reluctance in social science literature to publish non-significant findings.

Leaders' significance to organisational efficiency is put beyond doubt even if their role is assigned a more or less heavy weight compared to other factors (Hogan and Kaiser 2005; Lam 2002). Quite a few international studies on head teachers look at the relationship between leadership and effectiveness: according to Bush (1998, 3) "it has become received wisdom that the quality of the head is the single most important variable in school effectiveness".

The success factors identified in general leadership research recur in educational leadership studies. For example, the importance of transformational leadership (Bass 1997), including the visionary approach, is reported as a key dimension with respect to school development and student outcomes (Leithwood 2000). The generally convincing arguments for participative and empowering leadership are also supported from within the school system: Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson and Hann (2002) as well as Muijs and Harris (2003) show a positive link between an empowered school staff and organisational improvement and learning. Another matter of vital importance to leadership is the personality of the leader (Gurr, Drysdale and Mulford 2006; Hogan and Kaiser 2005). A specific personality trait, the need for power, is identified by McClelland and Burnham (1976) as requisite for successful leadership. Several authors on educational leadership (e.g. Bush and Middlewood 2006; Ekholm, Blossing, Käräng, Lindvall and Scherp 2000) have gone into this trait.

The Kenyan and the Swedish school systems

Over the last decades immigration has caused a cultural revolution in Swedish schools, which now need to accommodate a multiethnic population rather than the formerly homogenous population. A major source of concern is a perceived lack of resources and a growing number of school leavers who are not fully literate (Swedish Institute 2007).

The challenges faced by the Kenyan education system are no less substantial. In spite of scarce resources, there is the ambition to provide "quality education for all eligible learners" and to stimulate lifelong learning to facilitate the development and industrialisation of the nation (Olemba, Wanga and Karagu 1992). Because of historical and financial constraints, the external interest groups supporting a school may, for better and worse, interfere with local management and head teacher assignment.

In both countries the overriding responsibility for public education rests with government and parliament. The State defines the overall goals and guidelines for school activities, and local authorities are responsible for putting them into effect. In both countries school matters come under the control of the national Education Act. Both countries have more or less the same national objectives for education. Both school systems focus on promoting individual development and learning, responsibility and equality as well as "right" values; in Kenya these values find expression as moral and religious values (Kenya Institute of Education 2002), in Sweden as democratic values (SoU 2002). Beyond that, the Kenyan schools have a manifest nation-building function in terms of their Education Act.

Kenyan and Swedish schools have some structural differences. Kenyan schools are generally smaller, especially with respect to the number of employees. In Sweden most schools are run by the public sector. The public sector is also the major player in Kenya but is to a greater extent supplemented by nongovernmental providers. The trend in Sweden's education system has favoured a maximum of decentralisation in decision making (Swedish Institute 2007) and the same process has been apparent in Kenya since the late 1980s (Chepkwony 1987). This decentralisation is, however, accompanied by centralisation and a strengthening of the education ministry's regulatory power (cf. Berkhout 2005). The public sector exerts pressure with a focus on good results, in both countries. Annual evaluations and ranking systems were introduced in Kenyan schools some years ago, and Swedish schools are now also subject to national evaluations. Although in many respects the two countries, one agrarian and one post-industrial, have the same problems, there are differences in proportion.

Aim

The aim of this study was to explore common ground for cooperation in the Kenyan-Swedish project by asking the following two questions. Is the congruence between the Kenyan and Swedish head teachers' perception of leadership enough to allow a

meaningful exchange of experiences? Is the incongruence great enough to stimulate creativity and new perspectives?

Methodology

Two sites, in total 40 schools, in western Kenya and western Sweden, covering urban as well as rural areas, were involved in the study. The Swedish schools were all open to both boys and girls, in contrast to the Kenyan ones: 11 of the Kenyan schools were either boys-only or girls-only. Of the Kenyan schools, ten were boarding schools that were also open to non-boarders. The Swedish schools were all within the public sector. For Kenyan schools the position was more complex, involving a mix of affiliated organisations.

Sample

The sample, a sample of convenience, consisted of 20 head teachers from each country. As far as possible a gender balance was sought within each category. Eight Kenyan and ten Swedish females took part in the study. Six of the Kenyan head teachers were running primary schools and 14, secondary schools. The Swedish head teachers were managing six primary and five secondary schools, and nine schools at both primary and secondary levels. Participation in the study was voluntary and all information has been treated in strict confidence, to protect the identities of the individual respondents.

TABLE 1: DESCRIPTIVE BACKGROUND DATA; MEANS (M) AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS (SD)

Variable	Kenyans M	SD	Swedes M	SD
Age	42.2	5.6	51.3	7.4
Years as a head teacher	8.7	1.7	11.8	1.8
Management training in weeks	21.5	29.5	17.8	24.7
Span of control	17.9	15.8	41.5	23.4
Total numbers of subordinates	31.8	24.5	73.0	41.5

Interviews

Data were collected from interviews based on a semi-structured schedule allowing follow-up questions and clarifications. In Kenya, one of the Kenyan members of the research team conducted all the interviews. The Swedish interviews were carried out by two Master's psychology students under close supervision of the first author. The interviews were carried out in English and Swedish, respectively, at the respondents' workplace over a one to two hour period. The following topics were focused on:

- work content
- motives for taking on a managerial role
- role demands and expectations
- challenges and problems
- future plans
- advice to future head teachers
- suggestions for improvement

Data analysis

The interview data were analysed to generate descriptive categories, themes and conceptual ideas. The approach to the data could mainly be described as template analysis or thematic coding (King 1998). Some responses were classified parallel, that is within more than one system of codes/labels, and some hierarchically in search of clusters of codes, higher-order codes.

The qualitative data analysis followed four steps. (1) The three Swedish researchers tried to find themes emerging from the data as a whole: themes cutting across the different questions and “hiding between the lines”. Each researcher first treated the material independently and then together, in order to identify common and distinguishing themes in the two samples. (2) The Swedish key responses to the single questions were translated into English and then all key responses were listed, Kenyan and Swedish mixed together. The research team, two Kenyans and three Swedes, then tried to find meaningful categories covering the responses. (3) The category schemes were tested in a few interviews, with minor modifications as a result. (4) Finally, the responses from every single individual were coded. The aim was to get consensus among the researchers. This was almost reached in all cases when the responses were put in a Kenyan or a Swedish context. Altogether, the data were filtered through 159 first-order codes.

To support the qualitative analysis most differences between the two samples were tested by Chi² -analysis.

Results

After reading all the interviews, the overall impression is that Kenyan and Swedish head teachers have a lot in common. At the same time a number of differences emerge.

Commitment as well as devotion to their work characterises both Kenyan and Swedish head teachers. In both countries the head teachers work hard and long hours, driven by a vision mainly synonymous with the missions, aims and values expressed in the Education Acts of their country. To a certain extent the head teachers regard themselves as pillars of society, the Kenyans somewhat more than the Swedes.

The head teachers share an awareness of a complicated managerial role implying substantial and often incompatible demands and high expectations and, according to the vocabulary used, the same theoretical frames of reference. Their work content also shows more similarities than dissimilarities. Though there are situational differences, there is one common denominator: scarcity of resources – worse in Kenya, of course.

Some differences stand out against the background of similarities. A couple of situational factors are obvious. Compared to their Swedish colleagues the Kenyan head teachers have a narrower span of control, are managing smaller schools and depend more heavily on more stakeholders. Also the Kenyan head teachers still actively teach in the classroom.

Though all head teachers stand out as highly motivated, the Kenyan ones seem more devoted to their work. They articulate many of the values, ideals and ambitions that were characteristic of Swedish teachers at the onset of the welfare state system in Sweden. And different vocabulary is used: the Kenyans express themselves in more normative and moralising terms while the Swedes use more explanatory and neutral language. Two visions emerge from reading the interviews. The Kenyan head teachers are walking in the front line towards a distinct goal, as visible role models, with their staff behind them. Meanwhile their Swedish colleagues stand behind their staff, encouraging and enabling them to move on and find the goal.

In the following discussion this general impression will be underpinned by analysis of responses to the single interview questions.

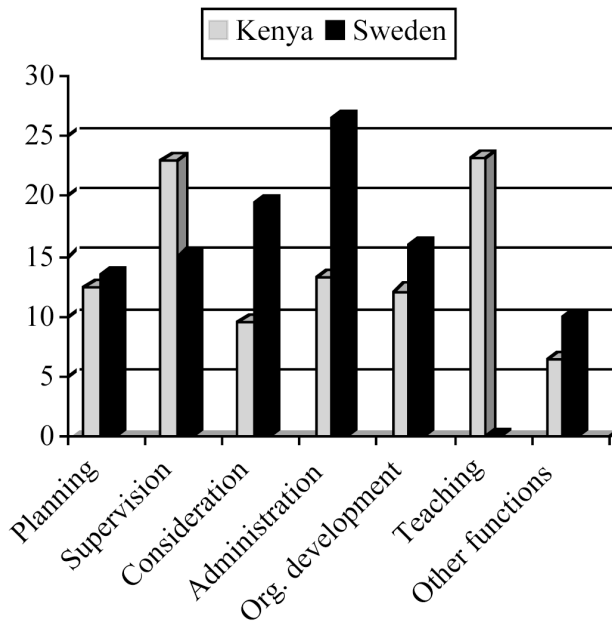
The head teacher role

A role may be described by its content and an introductory interview question was: “Describe your formal job assignment, your main tasks.” Responses were either very general or very specific. Typical responses were: “I am running the school on a day-to-day basis” and “I am in charge of all activities taking place at the institution”, or “The job as a head teacher is a mix of administration, finance, staff management, maintenance (buildings), school development, contacts with pupils, parents and school board – everything”. This open question about work content did not reveal any differences between Kenyan and Swedish head teachers, which is in contrast to the question about working time that follows below.

The head teachers were given the following description of tasks:

- *planning*: goal setting, organising, long-term staffing
- *supervision*: leading, directing, controlling, allocating tasks
- *consideration*: concern for staff and the atmosphere at work
- *administration*: budgeting, short-term staffing
- *organisational development*: change and development at individual, group and organisational level
- *teaching*: tasks related to professional role, not to managerial role *other functions*

Assuming full working time as corresponding to the quantity 100, the head teachers estimated their actual working time on the different tasks (Figure 1).



As the Kenyan head teachers spend time teaching in the classroom, in contrast to their Swedish colleagues, they have less time for managerial tasks. How the available time is spent on different managerial tasks may partly be explained by differences such as school size and span of control (Table 1).

Demands and expectations

Another way of describing a role is to analyse the expectations attached to a certain position. Two interview questions focused on explicit expectations: “What expectations do you have of yourself as a manager?” and “What do your co-workers expect of you as a manager?”.

TABLE 2: EXPECTATIONS OF THE HEAD TEACHERS THEMSELVES AND THEIR PERCEPTION OF STAFF EXPECTATIONS OF THE MANAGERIAL ROLE – PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION

Variable	Kenyan Head teachers N1 = 33	Staff N = 42	Swedish Head teachers N = 43	Staff N = 43
Staff concern and development	12	71	33	44
Result and goal attainment	36	7	9	0
Development and improvement	12	0	19	5
Pupil concern	18	0	14	9
Self demands ² /demands on the manager as a “person”	12	19	23	30
Miscellaneous	9	2	2	12

¹N = number of responses. ²Expectations such as being a good role model, present, reliable, etc.

If the self-expectations are compared to perceived staff expectations there is an evident incongruence in the Kenyan sample.

Becoming a head teacher

Sorting the responses to the question “What attracted you to the current position?” according to some established motivation theories did not make complete sense. Instead, two dimensions from the overall impression were tested in order to categorise the responses: “Altruism” and “Egoism”, for internal and external motives.

TABLE 3: MOTIVES FOR BECOMING A HEAD TEACHER – REPRESENTATIVE RESPONSES

Category	Internal	External
Altruism	“It is a noble profession, I want to serve my country.” “My love for the children.” “I am interested in developing good school for all kids.” “To contribute to a holistic view on the pupils.”	“Support from the staff, they wanted me.” “Both the parents and my former head encouraged me.”
Egoism	“It was a way to improve my salary.” “My need for identification with excellence.” “I have an interest in managerial work.” “I was looking for a challenge, it was a perfect time in my life for that.”	“I was persuaded by my boss, I had no choice.” “Otherwise I would have been forced to go to another school.”

Although the motivation pattern is similar as regards taking on the head teacher role, the main sources of motivation to continue as a head teacher are different for the Kenyans

and Swedes (Chi^2 ; $p < .001$). Nine Swedes referred to a satisfying private life, drawing strength from their family life, hobbies, and so on. The Kenyans didn't mention these factors at all. Most important to them was external support from stakeholders, parents, superiors and NGOs (17 Kenyans; 2 Swedes). The Swedes, instead, stress the importance of support from their head teacher colleagues (2; 15) and the staff (5; 15).

All intend to stay on as head teachers, except for three who will be retiring in the near future. In contrast to the Swedes the Kenyans articulated clear plans for their school, such as "transform the school to a model", "improve the curriculum" or "establish computer classes". The Swedes are more inclined to move on to another school and a new head teacher position.

Skills and competencies

Motivation is a good start but not enough to guarantee success in the head teacher role. Skills and competencies are needed. The responses to the question "What skills and competencies are demanded in your managerial role?" were treated together with the responses to "What advice would you give to someone moving into a position like yours?", as well as advice, centred on skills and competencies needed. Most responses were covered by three main categories (Table 4). However, a number of responses could not be grouped as competencies, but rather as personality traits.

TABLE 4: MANAGERIAL SKILL AND COMPETENCIES – PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION

Competence	Skills and competencies		Advice Kenyan	
	Kenyan N1 = 47	Swedish N = 77	Swedish N = 67	N = 104
Professional teaching, education, child development, etc	6	18	7	13
(Psycho)social interpersonal skills, such as communication, conflict management, etc.	43	57	43	37
Managerial administration, work flow, budgeting, data, etc	51	25	50	50

¹N = number of responses.

There is a significant difference between the Kenyan and the Swedish responses (Chi^2 ; $p < .001$). The Kenyans stress the managerial above all, the Swedes social competence. But with respect to advice to future head teachers, the Swedes stress managerial competencies as much as the Kenyans.

“The Big Five”

All the responses to questions about skills, competencies and advice to future head teachers describing personal characteristics were organised according to the Five-Factor Model (Costa and McCrae 1992). The majority of the head teacher responses, 95%, could be placed on four of the five dimensions (Table 5). Extravert traits were not mentioned: No discriminative value among teachers?

TABLE 5: POSITIONS ON THE FIVE-FACTOR MODEL – PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION

Dimension	Position	Kenyan N = 61	Swedish N = 80	Responses, examples
Conscientiousness	Focused	31	28	dedicated, be prepared to sacrifice your whole life, decisive, give directions, learn to focus, put limits
Negative/ Emotionality	Resilient	25	26	calm, confident, stress tolerant, accept what is said about you, strong “psyche”
Agreeableness ¹	Adapter/ Challenger	26	24	diplomatic, empathy, owe everybody a hearing, be firm and at the same time open to others, dialogue
Openness	Explorer	11	15	creativity, imagination, visionary, open to others’ ideas, be curious

¹The responses were mainly grouped in the middle of the dimension *agreeableness*.

So in both Kenya and Sweden the ideal head teacher above all ought to be: *resilient* or stable, calm and stress tolerant as well as *focused* or effective, well balanced and persistent, *open* to experience and with a balanced position on *agreeableness*, that is combining firmness and empathy. There is a relatively strong correlation between the Big Five traits and leadership effectiveness. Judge, Bono, Ilies and Gerhardt (2002) find in their meta-analysis that successful leaders are relatively extraverted, emotionally stable, open to new experiences and conscientious. The factor of agreeableness shows a negligible correlation.

Challenges, problems and solutions

A couple of questions focused on identifying difficulties, problems and challenges experienced by the head teachers. Several head teachers mentioned the existence of challenges, that is problems with positive connotations, as a motivating factor. With respect to differences, the Kenyan head teachers are, above all, more concerned about pupil needs, and external obstacles and criticism, while the Swedes see the legal system as problematic ($Chi^2; p < .001$).

TABLE 6: CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS – PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION

Challenges	Problems			
	Kenyan	Swedish	Kenyan	Swedish
Category	N = 60	N = 38	N = 53	N = 21
Resources, lack of	17	26	30	38
Staff issues ¹	23	24	19	14
Pupil needs	10	5	26	5
Laws, systems and policies	8	16	2	19
External obstacles and criticism	15	3	13	0
Output/effectiveness/performance	17	5	8	0
Head teachers' own shortcomings	3	8	0	
Change and development	3	11	0	
Miscellaneous	3	3	2	
¹ Covering aspects such as control, staff motivation, staff competence, working atmosphere and personal shortcomings.				

Consequently, the suggested solutions differ between the two groups mirroring their work situation ($Chi^2; p < .001$). “Financial and material resources” (34%), “support from superiors and stakeholders” (20%) and “improved staff attitudes” (15%) head the Kenyan list. The Swedes want a specific resource: “administrative support” (38%), followed by “role clarification” (16%), and “teamwork and cooperation with other head teachers” (11%). (The Swedes spend one quarter of their working hours on administration.)

Focus of attention

Detailed analysis of the interview data confirms the initial overall impression. A pattern emerges from the observed differences presented above. The two head teacher samples differ with respect to focus of attention.

Pupil versus staff focus

The general impression of a stronger pupil focus among the Kenyans and a stronger staff focus among the Swedes was tested by summarising all pupil-related and staff-related responses on six questions. Counting number of responses, staff issues are mentioned more often than pupil issues in both groups. But the Kenyan head teachers do focus more on the well-being of their pupils. As teaching is a part of their job they are also more exposed to pupil needs (Figure 1). The Kenyans do not differ from the Swedes when it comes to staff focus. However, the Kenyan and the Swedish responses, both pupil-focused and staff-focused, differ in character.

Kenyan respondents indicate more problems within both areas, with a more intense mental focus. The Kenyans show a great concern for pupil needs concerning drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, poverty, and so on. Staff needs are seen rather as a hindrance to attaining goals. Several head teachers portray their co-workers as demanding when it comes to wages, career possibilities and job security, for example, and as demonstrating a negative attitude. They are not ignorant of their co-workers' expectations of more staff-centred leadership, but they are not prepared to meet those expectations.

In contrast, the Swedes are occupied with staff matters that are usually seen under the heading of consideration for staff concerns: such as staff participation, development and support, and understanding and listening to staff.

Production versus staff orientation

All relevant responses were analysed according to the classic two-dimensional leadership style model. Comparing responses on one hand, mentioning tasks, results, goals and efficiency (production orientation) on the other hand, responses showing concern for staff needs (staff orientation) reveal a difference. The Kenyan head teachers stress the production dimension somewhat more than the Swedes. It is not only a matter of number of responses; there is also a qualitative difference. The Kenyans often express their goal orientation in terms of what they want to accomplish and show more of a personal identification with that ambition. Their responses suggest a higher need for achievement compared to the Swedes'. Responses such as "doing a good job" and "want my school to be one of the ten best in the region" are common. This goal orientation among the Kenyan head teachers is also mirrored in greater ambitions when asked about future professional plans.

On the other dimension, staff orientation, the Swedes gave relatively more responses. They are more attentive to the needs of their staff and also invest twice as much time on consideration of staff concerns (Figure 1). This attentiveness is, however, often instrumental in its character: staff satisfaction is regarded as a means to school efficiency.

Vertical versus horizontal orientation

Both the general impression and the separate responses indicate another difference: a vertical versus a horizontal orientation. Kenyan head teachers spend more time on supervision, including control, and are more dependent on support from superiors and external stakeholders. Also, they are keen to satisfy the needs of their superiors – and of pupils. Their trust in their co-workers is somewhat limited. As noted, the Kenyan head teachers are aware of their subordinates' expectations, but do not respond to them to any great extent.

The Swedish head teachers have a more horizontal orientation, depending on their staff and their head teacher colleagues and consequently anxious to meet their needs.

Accordingly, the two head teacher groups to some extent highlight different skills and competencies (Table 4).

Discussion

Neither the Kenyan nor the Swedish head teachers had any difficulties discussing their jobs in terms of motivational forces, role demands and expectations – even though this theoretical frame of reference may stand out as mainly European and Anglo-American. This is not unexpected. The sample consists of well-educated professionals who have imbibed more or less the same knowledge. However, use of the same frame of reference does not mean culture-specific phenomena and expression cannot be identified. Nor does it mean arriving at the same normative conclusions.

The data present a fairly consistent pattern, summarised in Figure 2. The variables in the model are all relevant to the understanding of the head teacher role in Kenya as well as in Sweden. Some are, however, more emphasised in one sample than in the other.

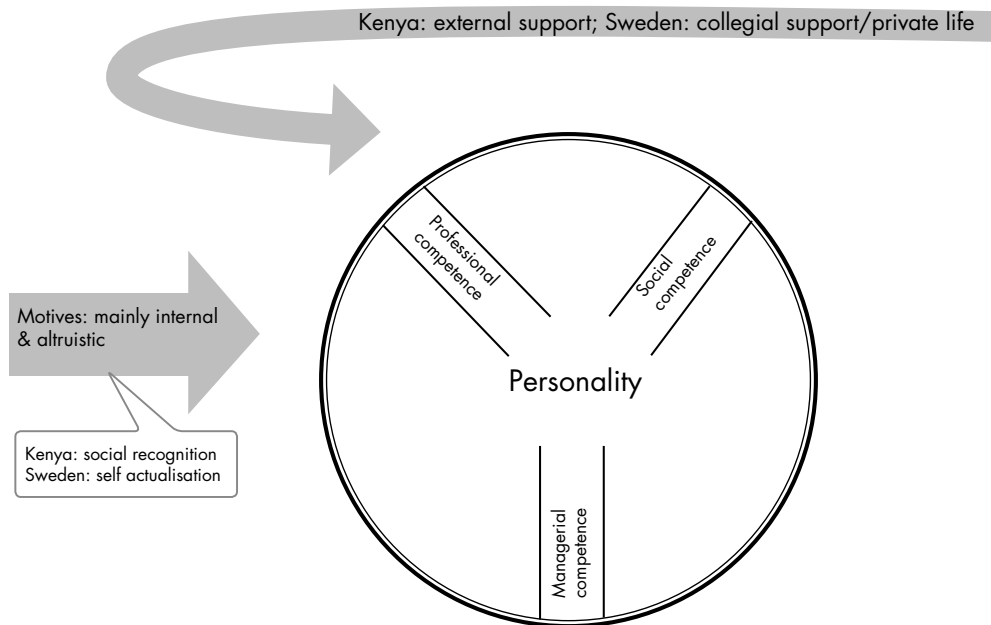


Figure 2. The managerial wheel.

So the agreement between the Kenyan and Swedish perception of leadership and management is enough to allow a meaningful exchange of experiences. Leadership is understood and articulated by head teachers in Kenya and Sweden along the same lines.

Further, from an organisational psychologist's point of view, noted incongruence may be interpreted in terms of situational rather than cultural factors. Leaders are responding to the same demands in more or less the same way but the situations or demands differ. The vertical and the horizontal orientation could be understood as expressions of an authoritarian culture but also as a rational orientation due to financing, employment

contracts and so on (i.e. a higher degree of actual dependence on external stakeholders and superiors). The Kenyan schools are also used to an annual evaluation and exposure to external criticism. For Sweden, this is a fairly new experience. Besides situational and cultural factors, the stronger focus on achievement among the Kenyan head teachers may be understood in the light of individual psychology. A genuine interest in contributing to others' growth and staff development is enhanced by those with midlife behind them who have entered the generative phase in the life cycle (Erikson 1997). On average the Kenyan head teachers are nine years younger than their Swedish colleagues.

The staff orientation among the Swedish head teachers is probably a result of a participative tradition formed by strong labour unions and a democratic constitution, for example. An autocratic management style would not be successful in Sweden: Swedish managers have to cooperate with their staff. And cooperation demands social competence, stressed more by the Swedes.

Another factor apparent in the situation is the lack of public communications, good roads and private cars. A Kenyan head teacher will do better to stay on and improve her/his school, rather than move on to new challenges some miles away. The possibility of larger school units is also restricted by the same reasons. Moreover, the span of control affects leadership style and tasks.

What lessons can each country learn from the other country's practices and experiences? The Kenyan head teachers would probably be even more efficient if their goal orientation was supported by a certain degree of the "Swedish" perspective on cooperation with staff. The Kenyans may be running in a vicious circle: they are clearly aware of the value of participation, but their own and others' strong emphasis on quality and results does not motivate them to delegate power to the staff. A move from directive to democratic leadership may lead to a period of insubordination and uncertainty. Swedish schools experienced that period and most head teachers have found participation eventually to be productive. In Sweden, leadership style had to change because it was recognised that schools were not efficient and that better resources were needed. In Kenya, head teachers are not in the same position because they not enjoy the same tolerance as their Swedish colleagues.

On the other hand, the professional pride expressed by many of the Kenyan head teachers may inspire their Swedish colleagues to recapture the feeling of having an important mission in society. And a sense of mission will strengthen goal orientation. A simplified way of expressing this is that the Kenyans know where to go and the Swedes know how to get there.

Most lessons will probably be learnt in personal meetings, an approach that is strived for in the project. Hot topics in a discussion between Kenyan and Swedish head teachers may, for example, be pros and cons of separate schools for boys and girls, size of schools, the combination of the head teacher and the teacher role, and cooperation with head teacher colleagues. Doubtless, both Kenya and Sweden have their problems and a change in the school system will be part of a resolution.

References

- Bass, B. 1997. Does the transactional-transformational leadership paradigm transcend organizational and national boundaries? *American Psychologist* 52 (2):130–139.
- Berkhout, S. 2005. The decentralisation debate: Thinking about power. *International Review of Education* 51 (4):313–327.
- Branzei, O. 2002. Cultural explanation of individual preferences for influence tactics in cross-cultural encounters. *Cross-Cultural Management* 2 (2):203–218.
- Bottery, M. 2006. Educational leaders in a globalising world: A new set of priorities? *School Leadership and Management* 26 (1):5–22.
- Bottger, P. C., I. H. Hallein and P. W. Yetton. 1985. A cross-national study of leadership: Participation as a function of problem structure and leader power. *Journal of Management Studies* 22:358–368.
- Brodbeck, F., M. Frese, S. Akerblom, G. Audia, G. Bakacsi, H. Bendova, D. Bodega, M. Bodur, S. Booth, K. Brenk, P. Castel, D. Den Hartog, G. Donnelly-Cox, M. Gratchev, I. Holmberg, S. Jarmuz, J. Correia Jesuino, R. Jorbenadse, H. Kabasakal, M. Keating, G. Kipiani, E. Konrad, P. Koopman, A. Kurc, C. Leeds, M. Lindell, J. Maczynsky, G. Martin, J. O'Connell, A. Papalexandris, N. Papalexandris, J. Prieto, B. Rakitski, G. Reber, A. Sabadin, J. Schramm-Nielsen, M. Schultz, C. Sigfrids, E. Szabo, H. Thierry, M. Vondrysova, J. Weibler, C. Wilderom, S. Witkowski and R. Wunderer. 2000. Cultural variation of leadership prototypes across 22 European countries. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 73 (1):1–30.
- Bush, T. 1998. The national professional qualification for headship: The key to school leadership? *School Leadership and Management* 18 (3):321–333.
- Bush, T. and D. Middlewood. 2006. *Leading and managing people in education*. London: Sage.
- Chepkwony A. 1987. Factors affecting the interpretation of the components of the role of a secondary school head in Kenya. M. Ed. dissertation. Laramie, Wyoming: University of Wyoming.
- Collins, J. 2005. *Good to great and the social sector*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Costa, P. T. and R. R. McCrae. 1992. *Revised NEO personality inventory (NEO-PI-R) and NEO five-factor (NEO-FFI) inventory professional manual*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.
- Crozier, M. 1964. *The bureaucratic phenomenon*. London: Tavistock.
- Crowther, F., S. Kaagan, M. Ferguson and L. Hann. 2002. *Developing Teacher Leaders: How teacher leadership enhances school success*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.
- Daun, Å. 1989. *Svensk mentalitet*. Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren.
- Ekholm, M., U. Blossing, G. Käräng, K. Lindvall and H. Å. Scherp. 2000. *Forskning om rektor – en forskningsöversikt*, Stockholm: Statens Skolverk/Liber Distribution.
- Ekvall, G. and J. Arvonen. 1994. Leadership profiles, situations and effectiveness. *Creativity and Innovation Management* 3 (3):139–161.

- Erikson, E. H. 1997. *The life cycle completed*. London: Norton.
- Foxall, G. R. and A. F. Payne. 1989. Adaptors and innovators in organizations: A cross-cultural study of the cognitive styles of managerial functions and sub-functions. *Human Relations* 42:639–649.
- Gurr, D., L. Drysdale and B. Mulford. 2006. Models of successful principal leadership. *School Leadership and Management* 26 (4):371–395.
- Harrison, L. E. and S. P. S. Huntington, eds. 2000. *Culture matters*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hasenfeld, Y. 1992. The nature of human service organizations. In *Human service as complex organizations*, ed. Y. Hasenfeld. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Hofstede, G. and R. R. McCrae. 2004. Personality and culture revisited: Linking traits and dimensions of culture. *Cross-Cultural Research* 38 (52):52–88.
- Hogan, R. and R. Kaiser. 2005. What we know about leadership. *Review of General Psychology* 9 (2):169–180.
- House, R. J., N. S. Wright and R. N. Aditya. 1997. Cross-cultural research on organization leadership: A critical analysis and proposed theory. In *New perspectives in international industrial organisational psychology*, ed. P. C. Early and M. Eres. San Francisco, CA: New Lexington.
- Hui, C. H. and C. L. Luk. 1997. Industrial/organizational psychology, in *Handbook of Cross Cultural Psychology, Volume 3*, eds. J. W. Berry, M. H. Segall and C. Kagitcibasic. London: Allyn and Bacon.
- Judge, T. A., J. E. Bono, R. Ilies and M. W. Gerhardt. 2002. Personality and leadership: A qualitative and quantitative review. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 4:765–780.
- Kenya Institute of Education. 2002. Ministry of Education Science and Technology. *Secondary School Education Syllabus, Volume. 4*.
- King, N. 1998. Template analysis, in *Qualitative method and analysis in organizational research – a practical guide*, ed. G. Symon and G. Cassell. London: Sage.
- Koslowsky, M., A. Sagie and S. Stashevsky. 2002. Introduction: Cultural relativism and universalism in organizational behaviour. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management* 2(2):131–135.
- Kurman, J. 2002. Measured cross-cultural differences in self-enhancement and the sensitivity of the self-enhancement measure to the modesty response. *Cross-Cultural Research* 36 (1):73–95.
- Lam, Y. L. J. 2002. Defining the effects of transformational leadership on organisational learning: A cross-cultural comparison. *School Leadership and Management* 22 (4):439–452.
- Leithwood, K. and D. Jantzi. 2000. The effects of transformational leadership on organizational conditions and student engagement with school. *Journal of Educational Administration* 38 (2):112–129.
- Lord, R. and K. Mahler. 1991. *Leadership and information processing: Linking perceptions and processes*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Ma, Z., T. Anderson, X. Wang, Y. Wang, A. Jaeger and D. Saunders. 2002. Individual

- perception, bargaining behaviour, and negotiation outcomes: A comparison across two countries. *Cross-Cultural Management* 2 (2):171–184.
- McClelland, D. and D. H. Burnham. 1976. Power is the great motivator. *Harvard Business Review*. 54: 100–110.
- Mathur, A., Y. Zhang and J. P. Neelankavil. 2001. Critical managerial motivational factors: A cross-cultural analysis of four culturally divergent countries. *Cross-Cultural Management* 1 (3):251–267.
- Muijs, D. and Harris, A. (2003). Teacher leadership - improvement through empowerment? An overview of the literature. *Educational Management and Administration*, 31 (4), p 437–448.
- Olembu, J. O., P. E. Wanga and N. M. Karagu. 1992. *Management in education*. Nairobi: Educational Research and Publications (ERAP).
- Roy, G. S. and P. Chaudhary. 1987. Personality maturity and risk-taking behaviour. *Asian Journal of Psychology and Education* 19:38–41.
- Smith, P. B., M. F. Peterson, J. Misumi and M. H. Bond. 1992. A cross-cultural test of the Japanese PM leadership theory. *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 41:5–19.
- SoU. 2002. Skollag för kvalitet och likvärdighet. *Statens offentliga utredningar, SOU* 2002:121.
- Swedish Institute. 2007. Compulsory schooling in Sweden. <http://www.sweden.se/factsheets> (accessed 16 June 2007).
- Triandis, H. C. 2001. The study of cross-cultural management and organisation: The future. *Cross-Cultural Management* 1 (1):11–17.
- Tse, D. K., K. H. Lee, I. Vertinsky and D. A. Wehrung. 1988. Does culture matter? A cross-cultural study of executives' choice, decisiveness, and risk adjustment in international marketing. *Journal of Marketing* 52:81–95.
- Yukl, G., C. Falbe and J. Y. Joun. 1993. Pattern of influence behaviour for managers. *Group and Organization Management* 18 (1):5–28.
- Yukl, G. 1998. *Leadership in organizations*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall.