

# Reflective Management: The Heartbeat for Successful School Practices

**Meeme Julius M'Lingera**  
*Kenyatta University, Kenya*

**Kiende Hellen Guantai (PhD)**  
*Kenyatta University, Kenya*

## Abstract

*Just as a human body cannot function without an active human heart, so is an educational institution that cannot thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century without an effective reflective manager. Therefore, modern-day educational institutions require that managers do not just rely on the various types and sources of power that is at their disposal nor on their dictatorial, bureaucratic or democratic tendencies, but they require managers that clearly understand who they are, who they are with, where they have come from, where they are, why they are where they are, where they are going, and why they are going there. For this to be possible, the managers require to embrace an effective reflective management practice that does not only help them focus on themselves but that also helps them think critically about the impact of their actions to themselves, to others and to the school. The purpose of this paper is to outline the importance, determinants and characteristics of reflective leadership in school management. It also addresses the Principles-Levels-Stages (PLS) model of reflective management practices comprising of 12 principles, 3 levels and 3 stages that are critical in directing managers into systematic logical thinking focusing not only on themselves but also on their interactions with others and the school that they are serving, in order to steer them to a competitive advantage.*

**Key Words** - *Reflective Management Practices, Reflective Models, School Management, Educational Management, Educational Practices*

## I. Introduction to Effective Reflective School Management

According to Roy (2017), reflection is a Latin word meaning to bend back. Therefore, reflection for school managers is the process through which a school manager sets some time aside of his normal routine to critically think about his personality, conduct and relationship with others and the school, in order to gain insights and knowledge that can be applied for the good of himself, others and the school. This meditative activity is required to be executed by every school manager once in a while in order for him to focus on his way of thinking and execution of activities (Edmonson and Fisher (2002). During this process, the school manager critically reflects on his experiences and everything that has happened to him and to others in relation to his conduct in order to gain deeper insights about himself and others and gain knowledge that can be utilized to effectively and reflectively lead the current-day dynamic educational institutions.

Carver and Klein (2016) states that the proponent of reflective thinking John Dewey in 1933 explained that reflective practice enables an individual to think about a situation before taking any action and this gives this individual an opportunity to take accurate and appropriate actions whose consequences have been properly thought about. Consequently, if school managers take time to think about the outcomes of their actions to themselves and to other members of the institution, they are bound to take actions that are acceptable by almost everyone, in addition to enriching the way schools are managed. This is because with effective reflection, a school educational manager is able to have a clear focus and vivid understanding of the current status and future expectations. This reflective practice would then lead the educational manager and the school to the pre-determined future in terms of achievement of the school vision and mission.

Further, Carver and Klein (2016) espouses that in 1987, Donald Schon improved on Dewey's ideas on reflective thinking by differentiating between those actions that are merely done as a routine and those actions that are undertaken after an individual has critically thought about them. An effective school manager should therefore be somebody that takes time to critically think about his past experiences in relation to the routine tasks that are carried out by himself and by others in line with the school vision and mission. The manager is expected to come up with creative and innovative ways of executing the same tasks in order to attain higher levels of productivity. For this to be possible, the school manager should be internally driven to undertake reflection on his management style so as to make accurate, effective and well grounded decisions that can propel the educational institution to greater heights. This comes from the realization that execution of routine tasks in the same way they have been executed in the past may not foster effective and efficient management. Therefore reflective practice is a mandatory process for innovative and creative management practices for any educational institution that wants to retain its relevance and sustainable productivity in the evolving world.

Just as Göker and Bozkuş (2017) explained concerning reflection, the school managers should have an internally driven role to continuously and persistently think about their individual experiences by holding a meeting within themselves and/or with others in a reflective session. By so doing, they are able to gain insight that can be applied to change their individual life, as well as the life of the school in reference to their managerial operations. That's why Dewey the father of reflection stated that reflection is an intentional activity that a person undertakes in order to find out the best way of handling a challenge through the use of the most appropriate solution.

Further, Horton-Deutsch (2013) espoused that reflective management is a good practice for active and thriving schools because a manager clearly understands who he is and the consequences of his actions. He applies the lessons learnt from his own personal human experience to lead others from a point of knowledge of what is important to himself and to the school. This is because when a school manager has a clear understanding of himself and is able to critically think about his past experiences, he is able to have a clear understanding of what is required thus becoming a quality manager. As such, in modern day educational institutions such as schools, it's vital for every manager to note that schools are supposed to be reservoirs and generators of knowledge that can be best tapped through reflective practice. They are then able to have a clear review of their actions and experiences culminating to acquisition of new knowledge that can be utilized for the improvement of educational programs and policies to catapult the school to the peak in academic ladder.

It's for the same reason that Ersozlu (2016) explained that for any school to be able to realize her current and future objectives, as well as to successfully maintain her operations both at present and in future, the managers must embrace reflective management. So, a school manager whose mandate and interest is to oversee the success and victory of the school has no option but to make reflective practice and reflective management common place.

Carver and Klein (2016) explains that whereas through training an individual can become knowledgeable about some aspects of management, it is important for individuals to train themselves on how to think about issues and take actions whose outcomes have been clearly and logically thought out. Every school manager should think decisively, critically and deeply on each action before, during and after executing it. This will ensure that any single action taken or any decision made will prolong, revitalize and empower this vital and sensitive entity called a school to not only thrive in the midst of existing crisis, but also to grab crisis and convert it into a pillar that can propel the school into becoming better than it was before the crisis.

Therefore, as Carver and Klein (2016) explains, with a good systematic and repetitive reflective thinking, a school manager is able to build up his capability to analyze even complex data and complex situations. He is also able to come up with the most appropriate and effective methods and actions for effectively dealing with every situation or solving any problem that he or the school might encounter.

## **II. Importance of Effective Reflective School Management Practices**

Ersozlu (2016) explains that reflective management practice is very significant for the success and sustainability of educational institutions that are evolving and fitting within the modern environments and modern technologies. Further Fridman (2017) espouses that due to the fact that the school environment is changing rapidly in terms of human resource management, it's very important that the schools embrace reflective management because it does not only inspire everyone to do their best, but it also catapults the rate at which the school's goals are attained.

According to Sullivan and Wiessner (2010), educational school managers who usually take their time to reflect on their management practice, have always been found to be very effective in terms of maintaining conducive school environments for everyone, as well as in being able to cope with emerging trends in the educational sector. This is because they are always prepared for any eventuality by putting in place very clear professional development programs for the staff, maintaining very good relationships amongst themselves and their school environments, embracing change without resistivity and have very little staff turnover. However, for this to be realized, and for the school manager to be able to successfully steer the educational institution into achieving her goals, such a manager require to have attained high level of self-awareness, which is only possible through execution of reflective practices (Göker & Bozkuş, 2017).

In addition, Fitzell (2019) explains that reflective practice is very important for school managers in order to help them to think critically about the past in relation to their actions and decisions made. Through this practice, they are able to either reaffirm the positions they might have taken, reconsider their decisions or alter their management practice. They are also able to put in place stringent measures to manage challenges such as: emerging trends in the

school educational environment, much pressure from colleagues in school as well stress emanating from one's psychological status and execution of daily chores in school. This reflective practice helps the manager to understand his feelings and conduct and be able to come up with ways to enhance his actions, modify his actions or halt his actions for the success of the school. Therefore, for schools to be able to experience the much needed growth, they must invest resources in reflective practice that is well structured in order to be able to empower their managers in interpretation of their feelings and experiences and be able to utilize them positively for the welfare of themselves and the school.

Edmonson and Fisher (2002) added that reflective practice is very important in the assessment of the educational standards in the school. This is because through reflection, the educational manager is able to not only compare what has been done with the predetermined goals and standards, but is also able to think about why what has been accomplished is of the standard attained. In this case, use of reflection to measure educational standards in the school becomes the key towards realization of the school vision and mission, for it creates conducive exploratory environment on various deterrent mechanisms for the deviations noted.

Further Hendricks (2019) explains that when a school manager exercises reflection in whatever he does, he is able to make accurate and wise decisions. This enables him to approach every issue with high levels of confidence leading to enhanced productivity. This is because the school manager takes an action that has been proved to be the best for bringing out the expected results in the educational institution and he is thus very sure of the expected benefits and challenges to be dealt with.

Also, Bengtson, Airola, Peer and Davus (2012) adds that when school managers are engaged in activities of reflection while helping each other to learn, they are bound to acquire skills and knowledge that they can be able to effectively apply in their management in order to attain meaningful change in terms of performance both at personal and school levels. Therefore, through reflection the school manager is able to clearly understand what his work should entail other than what his roles should be.

Reardon, Fite, Boone and Sullivan (2019) elaborates on the importance of reflection in schools by explaining that reflection process is very important for helping the school managers and even adult learners to lead and learn effectively even in the midst of challenges. This is because, with effective reflection, the school managers are able to navigate around the challenges they are experiencing and discover ways of dealing with the challenge for effective school management. It is imperative that school managers critically think about their behaviors, beliefs and practices in order to understand concepts and situations thoroughly and be able to avoid any errors that may recur in future. They are also able to make the necessary adjustments in order to enable them become effective managers.

Further Hackett and Lavery (2010) observes that the school managers inclusive of teachers should always carry out reflection to not only think about how they progressed during their work session, but also to evaluate what they did, why they did it and what they should do next. This contemplation on a manager's action helps identify some of the actions that he did in an inappropriate manner and determine suitable interventions for effective work implementation in future.

Further Edmonson and Fisher (2002) espoused that through reflection a school manager is able to focus on all his duties and responsibilities, gain insights on the details and technicalities of the activity or the job and be able to improve on his management or

professional practice. They are also able to identify discrepancies between what they thought they knew and what they actually realized. This helps them harmonize any discrepancies noted between what is theoretically known and what is practically possible.

Hendricks (2019) expresses that reflective practice is key for successful educational institutions because through it the manager is able to critically think through his educational managerial experiences in order to come up with ways of improving those experiences for the success of the school that one is serving. In addition, through this reflective practice, the school manager is able to meditate about his feelings in relation to the workplace, why he is feeling the way he is feeling, the lessons learnt and what he can do to deal with those feelings for the success of both himself and the school.

Also, Businessballs (2019) notes that through reflective practice, the school managers as well as their followers are able to utilize their self-awareness as well as their interactions in order to be able to gain knowledge that they can apply for the success of their management and the school. They are also able to see opportunities in the school where problems or challenges seem to exist and are able to utilize them not only to gain satisfaction for themselves but also for those they are leading. In addition, through consistent and structured reflection, the educational managers are able to attain self acceptance and be able to approach management issues with high levels of self esteem.

Reflective practice enables the school manager to identify innovative approaches in his management that can steer the school into attaining higher goals than expected. It also boosts staff morale and enhances harmony amongst them in addition to strengthening teamwork and raising team spirit. Also, with reflective practice, the school manager is able to get divergent views from staff thus improving his scope of perceiving the situation and hence coming up with various functional solutions to issues that emerge. Consequently, with reflective practice, nothing is ignored regardless of its magnitude because it will have an impact on the situation at hand. The manager thinks in 360 degrees on every aspect and takes the most appropriate to deal with the issue.

Roy (2017) argues that an effective reflective school manager is also able to embrace all types of diversity in the school environment and utilize it for the benefit of all those involved. This is because through reflection, the manager is able to see the value of diversity among staff and harness the same to foster effective school management. This also helps the school manager to know how to handle each individual based on his characteristics for the sake of accommodating all the differences. The manager is also able to interrogate assumptions and stereotypes in respect to diversity and utilize the same to develop a school culture that embraces that diversity for progressive succession towards the destiny of the school.

Also Fridman (2017) notes that in schools where the manager is a reflective manager, the rate of staff turnover is highly minimized because all the employees are highly motivated to work and to do their best because they are given room and opportunity to exploit their potential in whatever they do. In fact, in such schools where the manager thinks before acting and takes his time to think and brainstorm about past experiences, the staff do not get demoralized and feel like leaving the school, but they yearn even to work more for the success of the school regardless of the challenges they may be experiencing.

However, if the school managers or managers do not take time to critically think about any action before implementing it, the unforeseen and unprecedented consequences may be dire not only to the school but also to the individual (Reardon et al., 2019). This is

because acting without thinking blurs the manager from having a clear focus of the outcome of his actions leading to unpredictable results (Göker & Bozkuş, 2017). So, when school managers or staff fail to take some time to reflect about their actions, their behavior and their feelings in relation to their work, they are not able to make calculated moves to improve situations and are usually caught up in situations or occurrences that had not been predicted and hence are not able to handle those occurrences in an informed manner (Hendricks, 2019).

Therefore, for any manager in an educational setting to be able to propel the institution to greater heights and avoid or minimize on unprecedented or unpredictable occurrences, a manager should commit and dedicate his time to always critically think and examine every situation before taking any actions and without making any assumptions. This is because, when a school makes decision after having critically thought about it, he is able to take responsibility of the result of the action taken without blaming others. This helps to improve the institution's level of transparency and accountability in relation to the manager's actions, duties and responsibilities (Carver and Klein, 2016).

### **III. Determinants for Effective Reflective School Management**

Effective reflection in management in an education institution is determined by how much experience that a school manager possesses and his ability to reflect on the same and improve his management skills and methods based on the insights gained. This is because experience enhances the scope and extent of reflection by this principal which is also bound to help him in generating new knowledge that can be applied later in the management process if he takes them to rethink about it. Reflection normally concentrates on what has already happened so that the school manager can understand more about it, gain insight from it and make a decision on the way forward. Therefore, when a school manager has a vast level of experiences, he is able to have a wide variety of occurrences and how he responded to each of them, thus enhancing his level of insight and thus he is able to make rich decisions on way forward for effective management (Bengtson, Airola, Peer and Davus, 2012).

However, Carver and Klein (2016) explains that, whereas the school manager may have vast experience from the past, this experience may not determine the effectiveness of reflective practice if he lacks supportive skills. Therefore, what is more important is for the school manager to possess adequate relevant skills for effective reflective practice such as critical thinking, creative thinking, logical thinking, decision making and even problem solving skills. For this reason, the school managers and the rest of the staff require to be taken through professional development programs through which these skills can be gained. Once the manager is fully equipped with these skills, he is able to utilize them in a reflective session. This is bound to lead to acquisition of productive and rich insight about his personal life and his relationship with others and the school.

In addition, Carver and Klein (2016) posits that effective reflective thinking requires adequate time for practice because the more the number of times one spend reflecting on situations as an individual, the better the decisions that one is able to make in various situations. School managers should thus be regularly setting some time aside after a certain period of time to think about their thinking, to think about their personalities, and to think about their behavior and conduct in relation to their fellow colleagues and the school. If, it's possible, every school manager should set aside an official day or session for reflection and have it integrated within the school calendar. This will ensure that every member of

management team participates in this important activity and helps build a reflective culture for a bright and successful future not only for the school but also for those involved.

Hackett and Lavery (2010) adds that one of the best ways to reflect is to create time and identify a lonely place whereby one can retreat and think critically about one's work in the school. This will help him to find out whether he is really executing his mandate as required and if not, be able to come up with ways of ensuring that he remains focused as a manager in order to perform his mandate well. This reflection practice should not just focus on how one is going to execute his duties but should also focus on the reason for doing whatever he does. This does not only help the manager to be able to understand how he is applying his working experience but it also helps him improve in his working competences.

This aspect of managers retreating to a secluded or private place away from the school working environment for reflective practice was also emphasized by Göker and Bozkuş (2017). They explained that the school managers require identifying places away from the school environment whereby they can be able to execute reflective practice by themselves or together with those they are leading. During this reflective session, the school managers together with the other team members should have sessions both for individual reflection and the team based on their duties and responsibilities. This group reflective session should entail brainstorming on their experiences and the lessons learnt. As they reflect on their experiences, they need to point out on where they went wrong and the mistakes each one might have committed without apportioning blames. Each member should be given an opportunity to express his feelings and explain what he was able to do or not to do, explain the lessons learnt and also propose on what can be done to help him or her become much more productive. This session should be guided by the motto which is: everyone is capable, everything is possible and there is always a great room for self and group improvement.

Edmonson and Fisher (2002) explained that for reflective management to be successful, a conducive environment of mutual trust has to be established between the school manager and the followers in order for everyone to be comfortable. This would provide a good atmosphere for free and open discussions where all the persons involved are able to feel that they are accepted, and that their newly found knowledge and skills are valued by everyone. It is thus important that the school managers create a warmly, supportive and collaborative environment whereby every staff is free to freely express his feelings and opinions about any issue without any fear of intimidation. This would help everyone to open up, explore and share his experiences during the reflective session for the attainment of both individual and the school goals and objectives. Through this open and explorative reflective session conducted under an environment of mutual trust, every team member is able to learn from his mistakes and experiences as well as from the experiences of others thus being able to internalize what has been learnt and how they can be able to utilize the knowledge gained in their lives not only at the present but also in the future.

According to Fitzell (2019), in order for school managers to be able to make progressive reflections, it's important for the manager or manager to always keep a documentation of whatever he does and how he felt about the action taken. Then by going through the written series of actions and feelings that accompanied those actions, one is able to critically meditate about the consequences of his actions and assumptions made and come up with ways of dealing with similar experiences in future. Through this reflective practice, the manager is able to identify and understand the reasons and causes behind his habits and his assumptions thus enabling him to be able to break from those habits and also appreciate other people's characteristics and personalities.

#### IV. Characteristics of an Effective Reflective School Manager

According to Fridman (2017), an effective reflective school manager always encourages creativity and innovation with minimal supervision. He offers the necessary support and inspires the staff to improve themselves professionally while working with them as peers collaborating for the attainment of the school goals. He continuously encourages the followers to do their level best while correcting them and showing them direction in an empathetic way. This manager is required to be somebody of high integrity and confident in whatever he does because he is not only knowledgeable in his area of specialization but he also sets a good example on the same while being aware of his personal strengths and weakness.

This aspect of creativity was also emphasized by Göker and Bozkuş (2017) who emphasized that a reflective school manager should be able to confront the normal way of carrying out tasks and venture into new ways of doing the same things but in an innovative and creative way. For this to be possible, the school manager require to have reflected on the tasks and gained insight on what he intends to achieve from the action to be undertaken and how it should be undertaken. Therefore a reflective school manager always treats management as an opportunity to learn on how best to lead as well as create opportunities for others to learn guided by insights gained and lessons learnt during a reflective session.

In addition, an effective reflective school manager should always be ready to get feedback from the rest of the colleagues and think critically about the information received. Then based on knowledge gained from that feedback, the manager should think about the various actions that can be taken and select the best alternative that will improve the situation from the way it is.

A school manager that practices reflection will always assess himself in terms of his strengths and weaknesses and the situation around the school environment in order to see vividly whether whatever he is doing is moving the school towards the attainment of the pre-defined set goals and objectives. If any anomaly is detected, the reflective manager has to think about the most appropriate and effective change to make beginning with himself in order for the school to be back on track (Reardon et al., 2019).

Further, Göker and Bozkuş (2017) states that an effective reflective school manager does not do something first and then think about it, but he first thinks about everything concerning every action before making a decision to undertake that action. While in this process of thinking everything about the action before undertaking it, the reflective manager should also be able to consult others that have had similar experiences on the same issue and once he feels that he or she is ready and prepared to execute the task, he then moves on to implement the decision made from an informed perspective.

Reflective school managers should also be people that are also always ready to engage other members of the school in reflecting on any action before making a decision on whether to implement it or not. For this reason, each and every educational stakeholder is supposed to be consulted and his views on every aspect put into consideration when the school manager is thinking about making a decision that may affect these stakeholders. Then once the school manager has received the feedback from the various stakeholders, he has to further re-evaluate it through reflection and make a decision on the way forward (Göker and Bozkuş, 2017).



So, effective reflective school managers are usually open minded and are always ready to listen to various people's ideas concerning an issue because they believe that there are very many approaches to doing the same thing and therefore others might have much better ideas than themselves. They thus pay attention to everyone's views and then consolidate those views in coming up with much acceptable and effective decision or action (Sullivan and Wiessner, 2010).

Also, reflective school managers should always treat conflicts and disagreements as opportunities for learning and should thus take them positively in case they occur without victimizing the concerned individuals. When such disagreements arise, the reflective school managers should communicate effectively about the same, engage those involved on strategies of dealing with the situation and gain some insights from the same. In order to avoid some conflicts, the reflective managers should always consult every party that may be involved or affected by any action or decision to be made (Göker & Bozkuş, 2017).

It's also very important that a school manager in the 21<sup>st</sup> century be somebody that holds frequent meetings with himself or herself to analyze his strengths and weaknesses and identify his talents and natural capabilities. This is because these personal elements play a key role in determining how he treats himself and others. By so doing, the manager is able to utilize those personal elements in the process of attainment of not only the school goals but also his personal goals.

In addition, an effective reflective school manager gives room to others not only to freely discuss about his behavior and personality but also to discuss about his management style without getting offended or being defensive. This is because, a reflective leader is always aware that constructive criticism is always the stepping stone to greatness, not only in whatever that one does but also in enhancing self discovery. By allowing his followers or subordinates to openly speak freely about him, he is not only able to improve his understanding about himself but is also able to understand the people he is leading and those people are also able to understand him in a better manner. This aspect also creates an excellent environment where everyone clearly understands everyone's viewpoint and thus great teamwork and team spirit are developed (Businessballs, 2019).

Effective reflective manager creates very effective two-way communication channels through which everyone within and around the school is able to air his or her viewpoints both formally and informally without fear of intimidation. This creates very healthy productive and collaborative environments that can catapult the school into higher levels of attainment of educational goals. Through it, the school manager is able to clearly understand about everything that is going on in individual's minds and take the necessary actions to ensure that all the issues raised and all the views raised are utilized in developing strategies to improve the lives of everyone within the school environment and even after leaving the school.

A reflective school manager creates frequent meetings for people to air their views and for him to inform the followers about the expectations and happenings. He does not keep anything that concerns his followers in secret. He continuously reminds the staff what is required of them and how they are required to carry out their mandate. The manager continuously inspires the followers by reminding them about the vision and the mission of the school. He thus always brings everyone around the table in order to discuss about the expected changes and also think about how best to go about the change as a team (Horton-Deutsch, 2013). This has potential to foster effective school management because of the shared views which most of the times are very enriching.

In addition, reflective school managers are not only supposed to be aware of themselves but are also supposed to be aware about each and every member's capabilities and how each of them can contribute to the realization of the institutional goals and gives each of them an opportunity to do so. By doing so, the manager is able to transform the institution to a high level of productivity and contentment for all (Ersozlu, 2016). Reflective school managers should always appreciate the capabilities, talents, skills and gifts that their followers possess without feeling threatened or intimidated and create opportunities for those followers to utilize those competences and skills not only for the attainment of educational and school goals but also individual goals. They try to eliminate any obstacle that may stand on the way of their followers deterring them from progressing positively. This manager does not fear about anyone replacing him or taking his position, and his peace is usually in his personal competence and they pass this information to their colleagues (Horton-Deutsch, 2013).

Therefore, a reflective school manager always believes that when his colleagues succeed in whatever they do, he has succeeded too. In this case, this school manager assigns his members tasks, duties and responsibilities based on each member's gifts, talents, hobbies, interests and skills in order to give them opportunities to help them attain self satisfaction from what they do while the school is also attaining her goals. Thus, in order to empower all the members of the school, an effective reflective school manager does not work as the boss but as a part of the peers that are all working towards accomplishment of the same goal. Such a manager does not use his position, authority or power to intimidate others but he uses it to solve any differences that may be emerging between him and the subordinates for a harmonious and collaborative working environment (Businessballs, 2019).

Further, effective reflective school managers put a lot of emphasis on mutual and cordial relationships among all the members of the school. They ensure that there are clear structures put in place for everyone to freely air his or her views and grievances at any given time. They also ensure that every member of the school feel respected, honored and valued by engaging everyone and maintaining successful relationships amongst all the followers. They also don't blame others for any actions they have undertaken, but they always seek to find out what they should have done to make things better and what their role was in the actions of their followers. They don't apportion blames to others and are always ready to take blame on issues resulting from their followers actions. Such school managers set the best example for others to follow by acting as a role models on what they profess and advocate (Businessballs, 2019).

In addition, a reflective school manager is always supposed to be an effective communicator and an effective listener. He should be able to understand those that he is leading through both their verbal and non-verbal cues and seek for clarification on what he might not seem to clearly understand by being empathetic and having mutual respect for others. He ensures that there is no ambiguity in whatever he says, and he gives the members an opportunity to seek for any clarification in case they might not have understood something.

Also, a reflective school manager should always have a very clear focus on the direction he wants to take and an expectation of the exact results that he wants to attain. He helps the members visualize vividly what they expect to achieve at the end of the activities they are undertaking. He thus mobilizes them as a peer collaborator towards the school's vision by helping them see it, conceive it and possess it and even without having physically obtained it (Göker & Bozkuş, 2017).

A reflective school manager is always very cautious in whatever he does or says, and he acts or speaks anything from a point of information backed up with adequate empirical evidence. This is because he always creates as many avenues as possible to learn and thus has a very clear understanding of all that he is doing and what he intends to do together with the expected results. He ensures that in addition to thinking about how his behavior affect those under him, he also evaluates his management style in order to see how best he can utilize it to improve his employees' performance.

In addition, effective reflective school managers always create time to analyze various assumptions in order to gain insight on how to deal with those assumptions and translate them into solutions and alternatives for solving educational problems. Through reflections, those assumptions or contradictory ideologies that make a manager tarry in taking actions are well analyzed and the manager is able to generate ideas on the best way forward. As a result, reflective school managers do not act from the point of assumptions but from the point of knowledge. A reflective school manager is thus able to clearly clarify a problem or risk and develop a clear strategy on how to approach the problem and turn it into an opportunity (Ersozlu, 2016).

Effective reflective school managers are also committed in their work and their actions and decisions are always dynamic in order to cope with the changing educational environment and accommodate the various new ideas and positive viewpoints from the stakeholders. Reflective school managers are thus always inquisitive to gain new knowledge and are observant, investigative and realistic in their decisions and actions. This enables them to learn continuously through critical thinking and analysis of one's past experiences and application of the knowledge gained to show others direction in a collaborative and empathetic manner in order to create a conducive learning environment for the attainment of the individuals and educational goals.

Therefore, a reflective school manager should be able to inculcate the reflective practice amongst the institutional members so that reflection becomes a culture that precedes and supersedes every action or operation in the school for sustainable development and progressive attainment of educational goals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is because effective reflective management is the main pillar towards sustainable educational development, the engine towards educational sustainability and the heartbeat for every educational practice for progressive knowledge acquisition and production of competent manpower for the evolving modern labor market.

## **V. PLS Model for Effective Reflective Management**

Whereas various reflective models have focused on guiding an individual on how to undertake the reflection process, majority of them have concentrated on the individual or the self and have neglected the aspect of thinking about the consequences of one's action to others and to the environment. Therefore, the authors of this article believe that, whereas reflection is contemplation and concentration about the self (the manager), the scope of reflection process should encompass the self, others and the environment. This is because, any decision made as a product of reflective practice does not only affect the individual but it also affects the followers as well as the school. For this reason, the authors of this article propose an all-rounded model of reflection called the PLS model for effective reflective management. This model is composed of three mandatory key components which are the

twelve principles (P) to guide the reflection process, the three reflective levels (L) and the three stages (S) of effective reflective practice as indicated in figure 1.

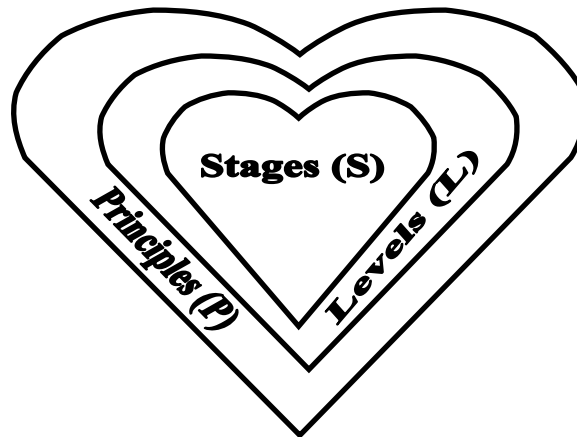


Fig. 1 PLS Reflective Model

This model is designed as a heart to indicate the mandatory nature of reflective practice guided by the three components for a successful, effective and dynamic reflective management. The integration of the three components and layers indicate that none of them can work without the other and when a school manager executes a reflective practice guided by the three components, whatever he does will steer the school to greater heights just as a heart facilitates a living organism to accomplish much while alive. The outer layer is composed of principles (P) as an indication that no single level or stage in the reflective practice can be executed without adhering to the principles. The levels (L) are in the midst of principles and stages to indicate that any level in the reflective practice must be guided by the principles and has to go through all the stages in the reflective process. The stages (S) are at the center of the model to indicate that they are the core of the reflective process and thus the principles and the levels have to focus on every stage in the reflective process.

The following are thus the three components of the PLS model of effective reflective management:

#### **A. Principles (P)**

The following are the 12 principles that have to guide a reflective manager while executing a reflective session and none of these principles can be complete without the others:

- 1) Never act or speak anything before you have critically thought about it and gained a clear insight on the most appropriate and effective way forward for the success of the school
- 2) Never undermine, underestimate or belittle anyone for whatever reason because diversity in opinions and characters are key ingredients to dynamically successful and life-changing productive schools
- 3) Always create a conducive and supportive environment to embrace creativity and innovation expressed by members while in the process of execution of their duties and responsibilities
- 4) Never undertake any action without prior participatory consultation and input from all others in an honest, open and empathetic manner

- 5) Always remember that you are not a sole fountain of knowledge but accurate and effective knowledge is a cumulative sum of empirically grounded views from yourself and from others.
- 6) Always enrich the wealth of your knowledge through open-minded channels of communications and team reflections for quality decisions and effective results
- 7) Always remember that you are not a boss to anyone but you are just an inspirational peer collaborator to all
- 8) Always remember that equal chances and opportunities exist for all and thus use the opportunity that you have to bring forth a positive permanent change to yourself, others and the school
- 9) Always think logically about yourself and your relationship with others and the school through a clear focus spanning from the past experiences to present status of affairs and to the future expectations
- 10) Always remember that your thoughts and your actions is the heartbeat that drives the school and thus they must always resonate with the vision and the mission of the school
- 11) Never work or lead continuously without periodically creating time for yourself and for others to meditate about their past, present and future actions in relation to themselves, to others and to the school
- 12) Never forget to think about your thinking because your thoughts are the wheels to self-awareness that brings forth quality attributes for quality management

## **B. Levels (L)**

Any reflective process should focus on three main perspectives. These are perspectives about the self in terms of one's personality, character, behavior, and other personal attributes; perspectives on how one's personal character and attributes have affected those around him, those working under him and those executing various roles within the school; and perspectives on the effect of one's character, behavior and conduct on the school in relation to the school's internal and external factors. These perspectives form the three levels of effective reflective practice and the proponents of this model, who are also the authors of this article have summarized those perspectives as the self (S), the others (O) and the school environment (E) respectively.

This means that the reflective process should commence by the school manager focusing on himself (the self), then proceed to focusing his relationship with the rest of the staff (others) and finally focus his reflection on the school internal and external environments (environment). This reflective process is thus organized in form of three levels abbreviated as follows: (L = S→O→E). Therefore every piece of thought should flow through the three key levels of reflection from Self (S), to others (O), and to the environment (E) in accordance with the principles of effective reflective management.

In addition, during the reflective session, the manager should raise interrogative questions in sequence through the three levels and critically generate solutions on the same, as well as picking lessons learnt that can be applied in future (commencing at the end of the reflective session). The manager should also ensure that he thinks about the positive and the negative effects that any insight gained or lessons learnt may have on his personal life, on the life of others and on the school (internal and external environment), in order to ensure that it does not hurt or harm him, others or the environment.

### C. Stages (S)

Whenever a manager is executing a reflective session, he should have a very clear focus on every issue being reflected ranging from the past experiences, flowing to the current status of affairs and focusing on the future implications of implementation of any of the insights gained or lessons learnt to the individual, others and the school. These stages can thus be abbreviated as follows: (S = P →C →F).

This means that an effective reflective session should entail thinking in a sequential manner commencing by focusing on an issue from the P (past) →C (current) →F (future). Its therefore very important to ensure that the manager always begin focusing on any issue based on its past status (P), then proceed to critically thinking about it and interrogate it based on its current status (C) in relation to the past experiences and progressively thinking and forecast on the implications that the insights gained or lessons learnt will have in the future (F) incase an any action is either taken or incase nothing is done in respect to the leader, those led and the school. In every stage, the manager should always ensure that he carries out the thinking and interrogation process within the boundaries and in reference of the principles for effective reflective management practices

### D. Application of the PLS Model

In order to effectively apply the PLS model of effective reflective management, the school manager can follow the following process in order to realize maximum benefits for a comfortable and productive working environment that can guarantee successful attainment of the individual and school goals:

- 1) The manager should have a very clearly stated purpose and objective for wanting to undertake a reflective activity and to have a reflective session
- 2) The manager should then remind himself about the 12 principles for effective reflective management to guide him through the entire reflective session
- 3) Then based on these principles, the manager should commence by focusing on the past (P) events in relation to self (S), effects of one's actions to others (O) and the effects of one's actions to the environment (E). The self refers to the manager, others refers to those being led by the manager and those within the school and environment refers to the school's goals, physical outlook as well as the internal and external factors. At this stage, the manager should think carefully through all the occurrences of the past, activities that were done as required and were beneficial to the self, others and the environment, as well as think about those mistakes that occurred in the past and the consequences those mistakes had in relation to one's self, others and the environment, and also think about the causes of those mistakes and how they could have been avoided. At this stage, the manager can also read through any existing literature and make consultations about the happenings in the past in terms of their benefits and challenges to one's self (manager), the others (followers or staff mates) and the environment (school's internal and external environment)
- 4) The manager should then proceed to focus on the current (C) status of the self in relation to others and the environment guided by the principles for effective reflective practice. Therefore, the manager has to critically think about his current conduct in relation to himself, others and in relation to the purpose and goals of the school. In doing this, the manager should reflect back to the information generated at step 3 above and compare that information to the current happenings

in the school. This helps the manager to clearly understand whether the current status of the self, others and the environment is the same as it was in the past or whether it has changed for the success of the self, others and the environment.

- 5) Once the manager has carried out adequate analysis of the past occurrences and has critically analyzed the current status of the self, others and the environment in relation to the school, the manager should then document the insights gained and the lessons learnt and make a decision on how to conduct himself and what to do as from then henceforth. Therefore, the school manager develops strategies to improve the status of self, the others and the environment in accordance to the principles of effective reflective practices in order to ensure that the past mistakes are not repeated, improve the current status of the self, others and the environment for a bright and successful future for oneself, others and the environment.
- 6) Then, from this well informed position and guided by the principles for effective reflective management practices, the manager moves on to implement the strategies developed in stage five in relation to changing, altering or modifying his conduct for the sake of improving his management skills for acceptance and comfort of the followers in steering the school to a successful and productive state not only for the benefit of the school but also for the benefit of the self and the others (staff).

## VI. Conclusion

The success of any educational institution today is the type of management practice that those in charge decide to embrace. However, great and effective school managers in the current human resource management era embrace reflective management practices whose benefits are not short-lived but have a bountiful long-lasting benefits as highlighted above, not only to the school managers themselves, but also to those being led and even to the school. It is therefore important that modern-day school managers embrace the reflective management practices guided by the PLS model of effective reflective management, because effective reflective management practices is the heartbeat for the thriving schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## VII. Recommendation

The authors of this article recommend that, for the modern-day school managers to effectively and efficiently lead the schools towards gaining a competitive edge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and for them to progressively thrive in these turbulent times, they have to embrace effective reflective management practices as guided by the PLC model whose proponents are Meeme and Guantai.

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