

**The process of strategic research design for
the Centre for Applied Social Sciences
in the University of Zimbabwe:
Opportunities and obstacles
by
Phanuel Mugabe (Ph.D)**

CENTRE FOR APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCES

**A MEMBER OF THE WORLD CONSERVATION UNION
UNIVERSITY OF ZIMBABWE**



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Acknowledgements

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Phanuel Mugabe (PhD)

Introduction

The Centre for Applied Social Sciences has a vision to become a pre-eminent Research unit in Zimbabwe, Southern Africa, and the world. It is a unit that wishes to pursue policy relevant research and teaching programmes that service a constituency of stakeholders that includes policy-makers, and various agents in the field of societal transformation and rural development. This is not a new thinking. CASS has always been relevant for change and policy processes in the region.

The Centre holds tremendous pride in the role it has played at national and regional levels in the evolution of policy emphasizing community based natural resources management, and the whole paraphernalia of activities related to community participation in resource management. The history of research at CASS can be summed up as focussed on livelihood strategies. The Centre emphasizes the potential of marginalized members of societies, more specifically the rural poor, who have to change their own socio-economic circumstances in the existence of a conducive socio-political environment.

History of research done in the foregoing two decades places the Centre at the cutting edge of today's scholarship. Evolution of theory on management of common property, application of academic explorations in the lives of the rural poor, and capacity to work with grass-roots people and communities are strengths that position CASS at the centre of the stage in transformative research.

The Centre is currently performing at less than the possible maximum capacity for a number of reasons. Confidence started to go down both in clientele and stakeholders when the previous generation of scholars and researchers left the unit. The new team that came into the unit has not been able to assert themselves at the same level. It is however surprising that it is in the current phase of under par performance that the research and activity budgets of the Centre have expanded tremendously. This is an indicator of the favourable socio-economic environment for nurturing the up and coming potential of the Centre.

A successful research and policy unit should have a good human resources base to implement its programme. This is an important element in research that should be supported by a good administration and a team that has outstanding academic leadership. The team should work under very clear division and inter-linkage of responsibilities. Academic leadership and the spirit of sharing, taking constructive criticism openly, and focused effort, are important elements in the team.

A good and effective network of similar teams surrounds most successful research teams. Linkages become an important element. Most academic linkages are strengthened by a balanced flow of outputs in both directions, and commitment to the existence of networks in all participating units. A shared purpose is of course very important in strengthening ties.

The field of applied social science is a discipline whose research programs have to be grounded in real life issues of the day. This definition leaves it to the specific researchers to narrow down the issues and construct research themes and topics. Research coming from this set up has to be relevant to the problems being experienced by society. People are looking for answers. These form the constituency

of CASS as defined in the strategic planning document. Our specific research issues have to provide solutions, policy guidelines, and recommendations that are missing in the mosaic of today's struggle for livelihoods. Geographical application could be varied. This is again left to individual researchers and their respective spheres of influence.

Out of the foregoing comes research ideas. The process of constructing a research program is a result of ideas that form and raise debate. These should be synthesized into research programs and proposals. Flow of information is an important component of the process of communication. The responsibility to develop proposals should be taken up by all individuals in an organization. This should not be seen as a function of the department head alone. The department head has a responsibility to cultivate and maintain networks. These are another important component that builds up the research organization.

Past works and history

Needless to say, CASS is no newcomer into the world of analytic work. The Centre boasts a proud history in the area of research and analysis of livelihood issues in Zimbabwe and Southern Africa. In the early days, CASS was doing work in the racial problems of the country. This was the most serious problem of the day in Rhodesia. With the coming of independence in 1980, activities focused on the socio-economics and livelihood issues in Zimbabwe. Issues tackled related to the role of the informal sector, agriculture and livelihoods, policy issues in natural resources management, and other aspects of rural livelihoods.

The department's activities in the natural resources management sector have resulted in major policy shifts in the empowerment of the communal people in terms of access to resources. This saw the birth of the CAMPFIRE program that has addressed a lot of problematic issues in the wildlife management sector. CASS worked in a team of organizations that have different objectives from our own. The ability to integrate in a significant way with WWF, and Zimtrust is an important aspect in our potential to participate in collaborative networks.

CASS has a strong appreciation of the ability of communities and local institutions to manage affairs that affect their livelihoods. Past years have witnessed the expansion of programs in the Centre to include aspects in leadership, rural development, and basic socio-economic surveys. We have collaborated at the regional level in the natural resources management sector. Our participation in the SADC Natural Resources Network, CASS/PLAAS regional network, Integrated Rural Development Program, and the regional fisheries comparative analysis give us a strong position at the regional level.

The centre has been running a series of publications that is widely read by scholars the world over. The publication series is an invaluable resource for NGOs in the respective sectors, donors and other public agencies. The publications are important in linking experience in the field with academia. CASS boasts experience in pulling out community experiences and constructing out of them useful academic materials. This has also been the focus of our higher degree programs. Most of the work done for MPhil and DPhil degrees offered in the Centre has found direct relevance in problems of the day. This has put the centre at the cutting edge of applied research.

It is important to underline that most work at CASS, has been in the area of community based natural resources management. The centre still has comparative advantage in this sector. Expansion into other sub-themes has come in partnership with our natural resources management programs. Most of our scholarship is rooted in the area and expertise in resource management. Specific sub-themes pursued include institutional development, economics of resource management, incentives for community participation, governance and natural resources management, and devolution.

It is important for all forms of thematic selection for research at CASS to take note of this entrenched position the centre holds. We should be able to start from the area where our competence is best and broaden into other themes that have linkages in some way to these. At the centre comes the issue of livelihoods and policy. The Centre has in the past pursued these issues in the area of natural resources management. These should form a core in our research intentions. We should however allow ourselves to participate in other issues related to livelihoods. It is important to focus on developing capacity in these upcoming themes so that we could meaningfully pursue specialized areas of research in them.

A look at the organizational structure at CASS shows a very rich human resource base, which in a way is misleading. The centre runs on an establishment of four lectureship positions funded by the University. Incumbents with Ph.D. qualification take up all permanent lectureship positions in CASS. There are two temporary positions. We have a doctorate and M.Phil filling up these two. There are research fellowship positions that are funded by the Trust. Most of our graduate training has been done through research fellowships.

Students have in the past been at the centre of our research activity. This is an important aspect to consider when planning for future research. Student activity in any academic department is an indirect indicator of the activities of senior members of staff. It is an indicator of the quality of academic leadership that exists in a department. CASS seeks to invest leadership in the core positions of lecturers. At the Trust we invest in the program leadership. It is important to build integrity around these forms of leadership. This is the leadership that should be able to pursue research themes without supervision from anyone. The departmental head should functionally operate through the members of staff in the lecturer group.

In the most recent years, the Centre has handled 10 graduate students annually. Table 1 shows students and their areas of research. It is important to understand the link between student output and lecturer participation. It is our past students that have driven the research program in the Centre. Conscious efforts should be made to recruit promising and up and coming students. We do have some very good students right now. It is however important to note that output has gone down. It is especially disappointing that our research fellowship program is failing to produce outputs at the required levels.

Table 1: CASS Students

NAME	ADDRESS	SUPERVISOR	REGISTERED	STATUS
I. Malasha	20 Chelsea Crt Ceres Road Avondale	Dr. Mugabe	5/94-61/10/2000	D.Phil
A.P. Hobane	18 Sloane Street P.O. Highlands	Dr. Mamimine	1 August 2000	D.Phil
J. Latham	Feoch Trust, P O Box 85 Mutorashanga	Prof. Murphree	1/5/00-31/12/00	D.Phil
C. Chikozho	15957 Sunningdale 2, Harare	Mr Gonese		M.Phil
B. Jones	23 Chalsedoonst Eros Park Windhoek Namibia	Prof. Murphree	13/8/97- 13/8/2000	D.Phil
K. Nyikahadzoi	2754 Princess Margaret Rd Marlborough Harare	Dr. Mamimine	1 August 2000	D.Phil
S. Anstey	15 Ridge Road Avondale Harare	Prof. Murphree	1 January 2000	D.Phil
J. Manjengwa	C/O Ministry of Environment	Dr. Mugabe		D.Phil
S. Mvududu	WLSA, Stemar House 132 Harare Street	Dr. Mugabe	1993	D.Phil

As noted earlier, we will need to have a strong and committed team of lecturers to continue on the successful research path that we have been on. We need to have unity of purpose. As an organization, we need to believe in our legitimacy to survive. The University does not provide a very conducive atmosphere for high-level output in this field. We will need to believe in ourselves.

A team fraught with divisions and small camps is not likely to succeed. It is pitiful to note that such has been the situation in the last three years of the centre. We have all

made shameful contribution to the existence of such an atmosphere. My own contribution was allowing this kind of situation to go ahead. I gave too much room to it and this has had quite a negative impact on the quality of student supervision, level of production, and general unfriendly conditions in the centre.

The appointment of head of department is a participatory process. We get a chance to do this once every three years. Once appointed, the head needs our support and openness. We should move ahead with whatever choice has been made. We will not get anywhere by trying to make hidden criticisms and anticipations of other people having been heads. Let us show our special and prolific levels and potential by outputs. We should not try to outshine one another by despising the department and its members of staff in circles that are not authentic. We need to be a committed team.

For a variety of reasons, our partners have found our output in a number of joint programs inadequate. This is not to argue that these have been true reflections of the output of the centre. Many people have hailed our work in CAMPFIRE; CASS has been as the backbone of the program. However, feelings became quite hostile towards the end of the USAID funded phase of the program.

It has been argued that this is usually the case when you combine University departments with other organizations in teams. This is also a possible indicator of the non-relevance of such departments to their constituencies. CASS strives to be a different department. We want to be a department that is relevant to people's livelihoods.

We are currently running a land reform program together with the Land Tenure Centre of the University of Wisconsin in Madison. It is understood that the donor has deliberately sought to pull this program away from direct assistance of government for a variety of reasons that we cannot exhaust here. Our responsibility would have been to expand this program to address these issues somehow. Alternative funding would have been the way to go.

The first phase of the regional research program in partnership with PLAAS ended in June. It is interesting to note that there is a possibility of renewal of the program. The program would look a whole lot different if renewed. Of concern to both Ford and IDRC, the two donors, is the level of participation by CASS. There is a lot of indication that we could have done a lot better in this program. Of outstanding visibility is how poorly the meeting in Mozambique was organized. We do have a lot to learn from these mistakes but we have to be conscious what donors make of them.

We have in a big way been left out of the recent events in the natural resources management sector. We are not actively involved in the recent developments in trans-boundary natural resources management, we have not forged meaningful partnerships with the four corners project, the Environmental Management Bill does not have our participation. We need to reach out for the programs relevant to us as a team. We have to meaningfully represent ourselves when nominated to do so.

The foregoing examples may not be sufficient to cause serious concern but pre-eminence does not come that way. They are enough to raise the question relating to

our relevance to the solution of today's problems. They will still go as recorded failures, no matter how few.

Human resources for research

It is one of the major goals of creating the Trust to ensure that there are adequate resources to carry out necessary research in the Centre. In fact, the objective is to be able to carry out high-level analytic research. The Trust controls grants, which are in turn managed by coordinators. The marriage between grants and research activities has not taken place properly. The current set-up attaches a member of academic staff with the specific responsibility of coordinating research to each of the programs. This recognizes the role our academics have in ensuring good research outputs in the centre. This could be made more effective by linking outputs to incentives provided.

It is important to note that our research teams could be greatly expanded for increased output if the project coordination teams also commit themselves to research. We should all work as one team. There needs to be an incentive structure for this. That is an important structure worth encouraging.

The Centre has not engaged at a high level with people that have a peripheral attachment to it. We should embrace the participation of the general membership of academic staff in the University of Zimbabwe. The Centre needs to expand its wings to include activities by those that are relevant for its purposes. Research at CASS should not be taken as a privilege or right of only those listed under positions in the Centre. We should engage outsiders when our competence falls short.

The foregoing is true with the participation of our research associates in research at the Centre. It is important to include conditions relating to output for all appointed to the position of research associate. Their appointments should be linked to specific resources, activities and outputs. A monitoring process on progress towards expected outputs should be put into place for all associates. With this comes the need to monitor the acceptability of conduct by research associates.

As noted earlier, we do have all the necessary qualifications that make a good interdisciplinary research team. Let us strive to make this a reality. We have a very strong team on paper and we are just not applying ourselves. This year we will do a strict performance appraisal on the basis of our promised outputs. Individuals will also be judged on how they meet the expectations of projects they manage. This will be one way of truthfully reflecting on our performance.

Networking

Networks are an important component especially in a centre running multi-disciplinary and regional programs like ours. We should understand their role in reinforcing our capacity and improving the individual capabilities. Networks are important for sharing ideas, bouncing ideas and reflecting on issues. How collaborating organisations compliment each other, equality of strengths, openness, commitment as well as the level of sharing that takes place are important issues to look at in participating organizations (Jones and Offir, 2002). The strength of the symbiotic relationship is based on the foregoing.

CASS has done very well in the now defunct Natural Resources Management network in SADC. There are lots of compliments to CASS coming from the membership of this network. Academics participating in the network feel that we could have done more. Possibilities include setting up a publication forum and debate on issues on the programs in CBNRM. This could include a journal or some form of regional series of publication. This would enhance the regional positioning of CASS as a strong academic department and as a centre of excellence.

Our ability to stand up and talk about the work we do is an important aspect that is most likely to improve the quality of our work. This spirit of sharing and open criticism should emanate internally and be manifest at the level up and above CASS as an organization. Internal seminars become an important first step in this process of sharing and reflecting. This includes the ability to work together in smaller teams. It is quite shameful that only a few of CASS papers are co-authored. Most of researchers in the Centre live in an imaginary world where they cannot take constructive criticism. Criticism is a healthy aspect of academic life. It makes positive contribution to quality of academic output.

Seminars should be treated as an important aspect of the process of networking. It is disappointing to all in academic circles to note that the once interesting seminar series at CASS has completely died. We need to plan these series more seriously. The plan for seminar series should include requirements for graduate students in the centre, use of seminar presentations for performance appraisal of staff. It is important to set out objectives and expectations very clearly.

It takes time and effort to maintain networks. CASS is linked to national and regional organizations that include IUCN (ROSA), Zimbabwe Trust, Campfire Collaborative Group membership, FAO, SADC, and other Universities. Our participation in activities of these networks as a department is now more on paper than in real terms. We have all become very shy researchers that are too busy to take up responsibilities outside our set research agendas. A good researcher is one who has a good potential to stay conscious of activities happening outside his/her daily program.

Our relationship with visitors to the department is a good reflection of our openness. It is difficult, if not impossible to schedule consultative meetings with researchers at CASS for outsiders. We have become unproductively too busy and we will need to check on this. I am not sure if we need a performance appraisal that checks how many research related meetings each one of us holds per year. Maybe we need to start recording these and keeping file on the Chief Secretary's desk.

We also need to take note of Internet based networks that are relevant for our daily activities. The CBNRM regional network runs an Internet discussion group that is coordinated from PLAAS. There is very little participation if anything from us the leading partner. Ford runs a discussion group for resource management activities among its grantees. CASS has zero participation in that forum. We need to stop living in the past and come to grips with issues of the day.

We can only increase the knowledge about us, and our work through active engagement in debate and sharing ideas with the broader community. Let us also be prepared to openly show our ignorance so that we get corrected before we start

moving around as small, enclosed heroes of non-existent fame. It is within the interests of the Centre and the work we do to actively engage in existing and new networks.

Research themes

This section is not meant to pre-empt the purpose of the workshop that we are having here. One of the reasons for strategic research planning is to come up with the themes that should form substance for our research activities in a selected period of time. In the process of doing this, we should carefully look at the capacity at the centre and where the research interest in the department lies. Appendix 1 gives the members of staff enlisted for research and areas they think their best competences lie.

The department has a very good record of research in issues related to community based natural resources management. As outlined earlier specific sub-themes addressed in the past have been on governance and natural resources management, institutions and community participation in natural resources management, incentives for community participation in resource conservation, devolution, and economics of wildlife conservation, indigenous forest resource management, policy, and the whole debate of community mobilization. We should also recognize that CASS has comparative advantages in the processes involved in the mobilization of communities for resource management, specifically, and rural development in general.

The Centre is also now active in areas of leadership development. This activity is in the immediate area of capacity building and preparing communities for community development work. Together with this comes work on rural development policy and the analysis of site-specific experiences to draw lessons for both academic and practical applications. These two are relatively new sub-areas. They however find linkage with work that has been done in the area of natural resources management in terms of working with communities. It should be realized that such an expansion calls for us to exercise a bit of flexibility or increasing our human capacity to take care of new disciplines.

The issue of rural livelihoods should form the core of our broad objective in research. This should be the most important link with the natural resources sector. Experience in the two should be used to shape the path our thematic expansion process takes. What else do we bring in on the basis of what we already have? The second stage in research theme identification should question relevance of issues and importance of problems we seek to address. As noted earlier, there are programs that could form partnerships with CASS but have for some reasons not yet attracted our attention. Included are activities in trans-boundary natural resources management, conservancies, land reform, the current socio-political situation in Zimbabwe and its related impact on livelihoods and livelihood strategies, management of catchment areas (Save and Limpopo), and issues related to food security.

The purpose of this section is to flag the issues that are relevant for consideration in our efforts to come up with a list of research themes. We need to consider attractiveness of all issues to donors. The socio-political situation in Zimbabwe is quite bad. Donor climate is not very friendly to some issues when dealt with at the level of Zimbabwe alone. Our strategy should seek to place us in a regional position at the cutting edge of issues.

Activities coming after this strategic planning meeting should market the research program in the centre vigorously. The funding drive should start new partnerships with foundations and other interested organizations. We will need to go back to our current donors and boost their confidence in us as an organization that has had a fresh start. We should have a highly marketable document that discusses in short what we are all about.

The second approach we could use in identifying research areas is based on an inventory of current activities; the focuses of grants already held in the centre and use that to develop a research program around what is already funded. This will be used as a determining factor on how we position ourselves both from a human resources perspective, and from a position of developing our technical abilities to be responsive to the call by programs already funded. This process would require that our program managers pull out themes coming out of present funding and we thrash those out in the workshop to bring out topics of research. We could also expand from these as in the case with natural resources management.

The foregoing has the basic disadvantage that we lose the thematic identity of CASS over time. We will flow with the wind in terms of the dictates of what is already available to us. We are likely to find it very difficult, if not impossible, to adjust our personnel profile to the calls of the donors all the time. It has the strength that we are guided by financial resources on what are the societal issues to deal with at any particular time.

The third approach could be taking stock of our research interests and works done by staff in the Centre and use it to develop some themes and raise issues for research, and develop these small patches into a research program. This has the advantage of taking care of everybody's interests. However, this advantage may not be tenable in situations where research done was largely consultancy work and may not be reflective of actual free will interests. It may also result in the design of a program that is of no interest to anyone and may not be able to attract funding.

The fourth approach looks at the Drivers of Change Analytical Framework. The Drivers of change are variables that are constantly changing and with them come changes in the way people provide for their livelihoods. An example is the way people use and manage common property resources. This has been changing through time in Zimbabwe, due to changes in demography for example. Population increases in the last century have brought with them pressures manifesting themselves in different forms of management of Common Property Resources. The impact of drivers of change is not necessarily limited to natural resources. They may impact the whole range of the socio-political and economic relationships.

Increases in human populations change the demand patterns and result in increased pressure on resources of any kind. These could be social services including educational and health facilities. National production statistics are affected in a big way by demographic changes. Demand for resources increases with population. Changes in Zimbabwe's population have noticeably resulted on increased demand for the land resource.

In agricultural economies, resource availability is another important driver of change. Climate is a single most important determinant of the productive capacity of the biological environment in Zimbabwe. Other factors affecting this are related to soil fertility parameters. Availability of resources to support livelihoods becomes an important driver of change.

Change in tenure brings about impact on the socio-economic framework that may not be easily quantifiable. The recent changes in land holding situation in Zimbabwe provide a classic example of what this could mean. This is a governance question that should address the relationship people have with resources. It should look at different levels of access and what impact these have on the socio-economic framework. Tenure change is another important driver in socio-economic analysis.

The penetration of market forces into rural areas through the introduction of market concepts like cost for land and other natural resources, and returns to them as a form of capital is commoditization of resources. This could take place with a wide range of resources including grazing, water, and forests. Commercialization of resources may impact the management approach by either encouraging over-exploitation, shifting tenurial power to the wealthy or external actors encourage corruption, and creation of market chains with middleman. This could in a way come with lots of benefits emanating from its being a force encouraging collective action.

National macro-economic structures and performance impact many variables of the socio-economic framework. One of the most recognizable impacts of the shrinking of the urban manufacturing sector in Zimbabwe in recent years is increased urban-rural migration resulting in increased pressure on CPRs. The process of economic decline has meant that people turn themselves to managers of CPRs. The macro-economy is a significant variable in the processes of rural development and change in general. It impacts other areas like resource pressure and demand on sectors of common property.

Ideas, experimentation and innovation are important in influencing the livelihood styles of society. Sources of innovation are diverse. People learn in many ways and the level of learning is not in a way related to academic streams. Formal education is an important variable but should not be confused for the single variable. Exposure is also a way of educating. Information and knowledge and the processes of their transfer represent important drivers. Policy, and politics represent drivers that have been described as polyvalent.

The approach requires that we fit our analysis and research around identified drivers. This process starts with an analysis of drivers that are identified at national or regional levels. It moves on to analysis of them as variables that influence livelihoods and even investigating interplay and co-variation they have among themselves. We could look at population and analyze its impacts on health provision as an example.

Way forward

Let me start this section by making the observation that this paper sounds very negative and gives the impression that there is no big hope for work being done in the Centre. This is true if many aspects in the Centre are not changed. We have to

change the way we relate to one another as colleagues, and the way we relate to outsiders. Charity begins at home is a very old saying I would like to cite here. I admit that I have never fully understood what this means exactly but my guess is that the statement calls for mutual respect and understanding for one another.

The way we relate with outsiders needs to change significantly. We initially need to respect outsiders. Good relationship does not mean going around the University bragging and boasting about the number of trips we make to South Africa, boasting about the daily rates that we as individuals attract in consultancies, boasting about how as individuals we are outstanding in CASS and over-emphasizing our relative importance to the centre. Humility is the most important ingredient we need here.

Let us have pride in ourselves as a unit. The pride we need is that based on solid organizational achievements and the totality of our tangible outputs as individuals and as a team. Let our work speak for itself. We do not need to speak about the work we do if we are really producing relevant outputs. We need a serious change and re-orientation of mindsets here. That should mark our point of departure. This should mark the starting line for the important race we are about to get in. I wonder if some of us will be left behind in this.

With this in mind, we should start to take our work more seriously. We will not make it if we continue to cheat on office hours, dodge meetings, and find no time for the actual things we are employed to carry out. Teamwork and participation in all departmental activities enhance the process of achieving set goals. As a team, we need to openly criticize one another in a constructive manner.

The department is going through a lot of repackaging. We should be an outstanding department that is professional in all respects. This is the other side that should support productive research efforts. We are in the process of transforming ourselves and this process should not be taken as a snapshot. Facilities at CASS should be top of the line, we need to execute responsibilities timeously, and the face of everything passing through our hands has to tell a good story. Honesty, integrity and righteousness are virtues for which we should start to evaluate ourselves. We should always deliver on our promises, be the first ones to recall appointments, and make good our deficient past.

One thing that we should worry about and try to take care of, as a centre with this level of expertise, is ownership of programs that we run. Needless to say, a good number of our programs were conceptualised by donors and they all form part of donor programs running in other parts of the world. The fact that ownership resides with the donor rather than CASS places us at the mercy of donors. Once we accept a program from anyone, we should quickly move in and position ourselves to own it.

One of the important steps in moving towards local ownership and identity is getting away from the syndrome of single donor support per program. CASS does not own IRDP or LEARN because they are both solely run by the WKKF. Our water reform program is owned by the BASIS program. The land reform program is owned by LTC and USAID. This positions us as servants whose fate is totally in the hands of foreign interests.

It makes us subjects of unnecessary manipulation, and allows lots of interference and micro-management. This results in our engaging in programs that we are not in total agreement with. Program definition might be either too narrow or too broad. Sustainability can only come through expansion of our donor base. Let us make it a point that each program expands to include more than one donor. Final steps towards this type of sustainability should be taken before the end of the year.

The most interesting thing to me in work is problem solving. The future looks so gloomy and on the negative. I would like for us all to embrace and face this as a challenge we will overcome with lots of effort and commitment. We all need one another in this. Let us not leave this challenge entirely for the director.

Departmental leadership has to be strong. I have been assuming a lot of things about staff in the three years I have been head and I think in the second term of office, my experience has to be applied. Academics, especially those I have encountered at the University of Zimbabwe, are difficult to work with when you are in positions where you have to supervise them. This is not meant to be a stereotype, there are a lot of differences in the people I have encountered but most of them fall in the category I have just mentioned.

There is too much pride that goes with getting a degree at any level from this University. The pride goes beyond reproach, I am afraid to say. People cannot take criticism, they are always right, but more unfortunately they fully exercise the right to work less. The last characteristic really got me off-guard because where I did my most recently acquired two degrees, the culture is to work more.

It is very undesirable to work with leadership that sits on our shoulders. I have just realized that it is a necessary thing at CASS and in the coming future; we all have to accept that condition. I am not trying to create some form of military environment in the corridors of the University. All I am saying is that it is an important requirement in building teams to have a leader who is able to instruct and gets listened to.

Conclusion

It is necessary in the process we are engaging to exercise utmost care and consideration as opposed to being radical and revolutionary. We should in a sense be prepared to accept change. This is change that would determine departure from our current activities. We can only change so little given the already established tradition, areas of expertise associated with us, and investments in human resources development already made. Research design should proceed with parsimony.

It is important in this process to consider our interests and existing strengths. This will lead us to a situation where we should look into building onto what already exists in the Centre. We need to expand with utmost care. Our new interests should flow from our old and established areas of expertise. Our selected topics must in a big way be complimentary to what we already have.

Productive leadership should be shared. This means that we should have an open process facilitating participatory leadership. It is ridiculous when you have to close your door to avoid conception in the corridor when you talk about the director, or any other member of staff. Let us discuss in an open forum all that we are not happy

about. We should be prepared to leave those that thrive on gossip and rumour mongering behind, and leave these elements outside our decision-making process forever.

It is important in this paper to end with a re-emphasis of the need for excellence. We have no reason as individuals to shy away from the imperative that, it is our individual excellence and delivery that make us, and the organization we work for. We are not working for leadership. This is a variable that has to be assessed at our level as individuals. We may have differences as a team, or its leadership, we can excel as a team, if we are individuals that invest in perfection. In academic environments, we score both as individuals, and as a collectivity. Let it be the objective to achieve both in our set-up at CASS. The quality of CASS products should be visibly high.

The suggestion to take the direction of focussing on rural livelihoods runs through this paper. The issue of livelihoods has been central to activities in the Centre from perspectives of academic, and applied research. One could streamline this into leadership development, governance in natural resources management, rural development policy, natural resources policy and many other forms that our recent publications have taken. The central issue is how do all these facets contribute to the process of making the rural household access resources to carve survival strategies more easily. How is this process facilitated with policy and institutional development?

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