



Chapter Four

ADMINISTRATION IN ITS CULTURAL CONTEXT: Approaching the Task Personally

1 Exploring How Administration and Culture Mix – 1

In our exploration of administration in its cultural context, we have identified some values and looked at the type of tasks a pastor might typically undertake in a three-day period. In themselves, these do not help us with a solid grasp of *why* certain administrative tasks are done or not done – or are done differently from other cultural contexts.

Why, for example, would it take more than five hours of arguing to arrange a 150-car-long queue of tired, frustrated motorists anxiously waiting for fuel? Why, indeed, would the manageress of the service station, observing and assessing the situation at 6:00 a.m., wait until 9:00 a.m. before starting to serve customers? Why would someone, knowing that an event starts at a specified time, be prepared to miss the opening segment of the event and deliberately come late without any sense of hurry or of missing something important? Why is it considered necessary to start a church service promptly, but not a committee meeting?

To answer these kinds of questions, it was necessary to explore beyond the mere identification of values and tasks and to look more deeply at key factors that may explain the rationale behind the approach. What assumptions and expectations, fears or concerns do people actually have when they exercise administration? What issues do they consider and why; what do they ignore and why? How are administrative tasks actually done? Why are they done that particular way?

This stage of the process, then, required a personal, in-depth examination of the participant's views of and approaches to administration.

1.1 Individual Interview Questions

1.1.1 Format

Initially, I devised two basic groups of questions, one set for ministry leaders and another for trainers, according to the specific focus for each.

The former set became a mixture of 43 broad, open-ended and particular questions asked on an individual basis, with the interview lasting about two hours. There were seven sections: (1) Background/Introductory; (2) Views of Administration in terms of the five basic components of (a) Time, (b) Planning, (c) Organising, (d) Leading and (e) Controlling; and, lastly, (3) Questions relating to a possible theology of these elements.



The trainers' questions (75 in all) were also mixed with, in addition to the broad questions, a focus on the specifics of how worldview issues are dealt with in helping people develop their managerial and administrative competence. My initial rationale for including trainers in the enterprise, as explained below in section (c), was to examine how administration is taught or passed on and, in the process, how cultural and worldview dynamics would be handled, especially where these were problematic in a cross- or multi-cultural setting.

In recording the responses, I used a computer to set the questions in a personalised table, with three columns. The first contained the question; the second the answer, which I typed as they spoke, and the third was for any follow-up questions and answers. I chose to use a laptop to record the responses rather than shorthand because it is so much easier and quicker.

1.1.2 Purpose

It is pertinent at this juncture to address the matter of why *my* questions in the first place and not those of the participants, particularly since the underlying research approach is social construction and personal narrative? Although these questions were mine, they were formulated from observation and consideration of daily life issues that are socially endemic and, therefore, worth exploring. Having asked several of them in informal contexts and not having had substantive answers, I felt it was necessary to explore them more formally. As such, they reflect issues that society in general is struggling with but not answering. In one sense, they represent my rationale for exploring this subject in depth. Certainly, this is true of the Church; and the questions are mirrored in the broader African social, economic and political crisis. The question then becomes: Why not these questions? Equally, why not ask my participants what the questions are about administration? That would be a useful starting point, provided your participants understand the issues and can articulate them, together with some possible solutions. But, as we have seen, most people are not in that position when it comes to thinking about administration or worldview.

Hence, my questions were intended to serve three purposes: (1) To alert my co-researchers to some of the issues behind the identification and practice of administration; (2) To further prompt reflection on cultural dynamics and (3) To provide the basis for further in-depth discussion. As mentioned previously, the respondents were satisfied with the basic five-fold framework and, indeed, as with the data questionnaire, found it helpful in putting some shape to the nature of administration, identifying some of the key issues involved and reflecting on the related problems. In our conversations, they often affirmed that questions touched on important issues, some of which they had not previously considered. (As I shall later narrate, I suggested to the focus group that they devise their own questions instead of discussing mine;



they said they had no idea of what questions to come up with and, as mine seemed quite pertinent, they would be happy to respond to those. See below for further comments on this aspect.)

1.1.3 Selection of Participants

My original selection of participants was based on three criteria: (1) Those involved in local church ministry; (2) Those in para-church ministry, and (3) Those in a training capacity (secular or Christian). My assumption was that the administration demands for each of the first two would be somewhat different, given the nature of their ministries, while for the third, I was interested in seeing how worldview factors are translated and transmitted in the training process.

For the first group, I sought denominational, ethnic and demographic balance. I approached several people from Catholic and Evangelical churches, with an equal mix of Pentecostal and non-Pentecostals, and, of course, a balance of Shona and Ndebele. I also intended to invite those in rural areas as well as high- and low-density or city-centre suburbs. My rationale here was based on two assumptions: first, that the approach to administration would be affected by denominational polity, structure and tradition and, second, that because of higher levels of sophistication through education and exposure, plus access to resources, there would be a significantly different approach to the praxis of administration in urban as opposed to rural areas.

I also wanted to test the hypothesis that the praxis of administration is shaped, at least in part, by the nature of the organisation (that is, church vs. para-church). I approached two of the latter, only one of which responded positively (interestingly, also a training institution.) The head of the other organisation made it very clear – in a culturally polite way – that he was not interested. As I reflected on his particular context more, however, and having observed the operations of him and his staff, I realised that the administrative issues he faces are very similar to those of a low-density or city centre church anyway. Hence, I concluded that involving someone like that would be mere repetition.

The third group was training institutions. This was an attempt to assess how worldview issues might be conveyed, dealt with and/or adjusted in the training process. I approached three such establishments; two were secular and one was Christian oriented. Fortunately, it was the latter that I was able to interview first. That was positive and fruitful and also gave me insight into the relevant set of questions, which I prepared to adjust for the other interviews. Unfortunately they did not take place. In one case, I asked to interview the Regional Director (an Ndebele speaker). Unfortunately, she was away that first day and I spoke then to the



Business Manager. Clearly, she was unwilling to be interviewed herself and seemed to be concerned that she not go over her boss's head and usurp authority. She asked me to fax the list of questions and would then liaise with the Regional Director as to a possible date for the interview. Regrettably, the Regional Manager never had the courtesy to contact me or return my calls and, despite telephoning six times in six weeks, I was never able to speak to her. There was clearly a great deal of suspicion as, at one point, I was informed that my questions had been taken to Head Office in Harare. The Business Manager later told me I could interview the National Director (in Harare) if I wished. Quite apart from the added expense and time of travel, I had wanted to interview the Regional Manager primarily because of her local environment.

Although I never had a chance to ask specific questions in this case, their overall response nevertheless highlighted several worldview factors. The Business Manager was reluctant to take the initiative and accept the responsibility of being interviewed. The Regional Director demonstrated a high level of discourtesy in not even returning a single phone call, let alone giving any excuse not to be interviewed. She, too, was afraid as shown by her taking the questions to Head Office. Neither of them was willing to say, "No, we're not interested, thank you." Rather, the response was a cold shoulder and an apparent reluctance to accept responsibility. I have discovered from previous interaction that this is a cultural approach intended to politely indicate a lack of interest. When an answer does not come, it is to be interpreted as a "no". But this raises questions as to what, then, is passed on to their trainers in similar situations, especially regarding ethics as impacted by worldview, particularly in a cross-cultural setting. For the average Shona or Ndebele, there probably would be no ethical problem: after all, that is the normal way and the final message is accepted. Nevertheless, the question remains: What to do with the problems this approach creates?

In another case, I approached a training organisation that uses volunteers. I spoke to the Receptionist who took down my details and promised to call back once she had contacted any of the trainers. Again, despite several follow-up calls, nothing materialised. In this case, I put it down to the Receptionist not appreciating my task and, therefore, not having sufficient interest in pursuing it when faced with obstacles. Moreover, if she did not fully understand me or appreciate my task, it was probably difficult for her to convince others of the value of their being involved. Again, from a worldview perspective, a face-to-face approach is always much more beneficial and more likely to achieve the desired result. In this case, unfortunately, this did not happen with these particular trainers. Hence, none of them felt obliged to contact me to follow up on my enquiry.



In the third instance, I contacted another national secular business training institute and, initially received a favourable response to an interview. However, making an actual appointment proved difficult as the Director was constantly out on training stints and, after several weeks of fruitless attempts, we agreed to meet on a Sunday afternoon, but his mother was rushed to hospital that morning and the session was postponed. When I subsequently went for that rescheduled appointment, he never arrived. In the end, I assessed the one productive interview and realised that many of the issues the trainers face are the same as others: the cultural and social alterations they have to make in the rural-urban and pastoral-technology “clash” are very similar to those that others in administrative positions also have to make.

So, my final interviews were held with a total of six co-researcher participants (as outlined in Chapter Two): Joyce (initially as a trainer and, later, as a replacement for Barnabas), Barnabas, Chris, Dixon, Dawson, Bekithemba and George.

1.1.4 Preparation

In preparing for this stage, I first devised one set of interview questions for those in Christian ministry and another set for those in a training position. Next, I constructed a Task Survey to identify the administrative tasks carried out by my intended interviewees and their general attitude toward them. Then I held five “test” interviews. The first was with an urban church leader (an Ndebele deacon in a high density Baptist church), while the second and third were with a Catholic Archbishop (Ndebele) and the Catholic Cathedral Dean (Shona). The fourth was with a rural Ndebele Baptist pastor.

The first three interviews served several purposes. First, they highlighted weaknesses in my questions, both in terms of content and approach. Second, they prompted me to rearrange the presentation into key areas to raise issues not previously considered. Third, I became aware of ethical factors in such interviews because, with the second two, I had to consider their professional positions in the light of church polity. Fourth, I was able to gauge the potential interest level in the overall issue under consideration, as well as with some of the issues raised in specific questions. Lastly, they gave me a better sense of the time required.

The fourth interview was significant as it highlighted major logistical limitations on my planned approach to rural pastors. Since I am not fluent in SiNdebele, I had to arrange for an interpreter to take me to the rural homestead. This necessitated arranging a mutually convenient time to travel, which also had to be tied to the rural pastor’s availability. Initial contact had to be made first to arrange a suitable time. While I had every confidence in my interpreter, since he was a former student of mine and I thus knew he understood the



intricacies of the issues behind the questions and the factors to look for, there was no guarantee that my questions or the answers were being communicated exactly as intended. Irrespective of the competence of the interpreter, working through a third party must always involve some distancing from the original intent and, likely, some unintended distortion over and above the normal in such communication settings. Whereas in the other preliminary interviews I had I was aware of the irrelevance of some questions, this was highlighted even more so in this case. Although my interviewer answered the questions I put to him satisfactorily, I did not come away with the sense that he really appreciated the underlying importance of the issues we had discussed. Frankly, though, that did not surprise me. Because of these language and logistical limitations, I subsequently decided against pursuing rural pastors any further. (Since then, too, fuel, has become scarce and very expensive, thus limiting the opportunities to travel any significant distance out of town.) See below for related comments on the group interviews.

The fifth interview was held jointly with three pastors from one Pentecostal church. I had not planned to meet them together but they had arranged it that way because they were not entirely sure what I wanted and felt secure in numbers. Unfortunately, that increased the possibility of copying each other or agreeing to another's answers without having to think for oneself. It was difficult to avoid the feeling, too, that for many of the questions, they gave me the answers they thought I wanted – a very typical cultural dynamic. However, what put me off was that I had to go no less than four times to collect the Task Survey responses, but failed to get two of them. I came away feeling they thought they had done me a favour with the interview and were no longer interested in the project. So, once again, I moved on.

These preliminary interviews, useful as they were, suggested some adjustments were called for.

1.1.5 Adjustments

The first adjustment pertained to the questions. While the original ministry list comprised 43 questions in total, I found, first of all, that I did not have sufficient time to ask all of them in each interview as I was conscious that my interviewees are busy people and I did not want to abuse the time they graciously gave me. (I also tried to be sensitive to their initial response to participating in the project and, if I felt they were not yet convinced of its importance, I did not prolong the interview beyond the bare minimum.) By the time I had selected my core group, I had realised that the initial one to 1½ hours I thought sufficient was not and I needed two or more hours per interview. Also, I discovered that some answers would overlap, such that it was unnecessary to ask certain questions. A third dynamic was the fact that, as I progressed



with the interviews, the person's ministry background became a clearer pointer to their likely approach to administration because of specific demands upon them in that regard; hence, some questions were more relevant for some than for others.

As a related issue, I had recorded the responses in the first test interviews in shorthand on copies of the questionnaire. Once I had narrowed my choice of co-researchers and began the main interviews, I switched to using a lap-top computer, confirming with each participant that they were comfortable with that approach. There were no objections.

The second adjustment had to do with the final choice of co-researchers. As mentioned previously, I was keen to have an ethnic, denominational and ministry balance and so I approached six pastors. Three were from high-density and three low-density or city-centre churches; three were Shona and three Ndebele; three were Pentecostals and three were not. These six, initially at least, seemed enthusiastic about the project (even though none of us knew at that stage exactly what we were getting ourselves into and where we would be going!) Apart from the balance factor, I also considered that small is better: it is easier to dialogue with a smaller group than a larger one and the logistics and arrangements would be easier to handle.

1.2 Interview Questions (Appendix 2) –

These were geared initially to two groups: pastors in vocational Christian ministry (the same six as above) and those involved in the training of administrators. As noted above, however, only one of the latter participated in the end; it also happens to be Christian-based.

For the pastors, the questions were divided broadly into seven sections. These covered Background, the administrative components of Time, Planning, Organising, Leading and Controlling, and then a short section on Theology. While I was looking for issues connected to worldview, the primary focus with these questions was the personal understanding, philosophy and approach to administration. The intention here was to gain insight into how administration is perceived and practised and, in the process, to identify problem areas – which is the focus of this chapter. Since worldview dynamics – which are the emphasis in Chapter Six – were to be more specifically covered in the focus group discussions, I did not emphasise that element here. However, where the responses either raised flags about worldview or where worldview related examples were given, I sought to utilise that to probe further. These were also used later as follow up in the focus group discussions.

For the trainers, the questions were more deliberately mixed between administration 'principles' and worldview issues. This was necessary since I only intended to interview them



once. I expected that the trainers' responses to worldview factors would also prompt further discussion later with the pastors.

1.2.1 Responses:

The interview questions were grouped into seven basic categories: Background, Time, Planning, Organising, Leading, Controlling, and Theology. I will present the responses to the questions in each, interspersing them where appropriate, with my actors' stories and my comments. My own 'story' will be integrated and I will conclude the entire interview process with a summary analysis.

1.2.1.1 *Background* –

I began each interview by asking for a definition of administration. This may seem a little trite, but there were two reasons for this. First of all, as I have stated previously, administration is a woolly, imprecise concept and most people have difficulty in deciding which specific activities constitute administration. So, it was important that I establish individual perceptions of what the concept entails. Second, and equally important, I wanted my co-researchers to establish their own definitions rather than me either imposing my own or assuming an understanding which may not be correct.

In most cases, the definitions and understanding of administration were fairly clear, although for most of the pastors – perhaps not unexpectedly – this is not a question they have been challenged to consider often. Nevertheless, they were able to articulate a reasonably clear understanding of the phenomenon. Interestingly, they were given the opportunity to define terms from a cultural perspective, but they all used terminology typically culled from Eurocentric views. Unfortunately, because of the extent of Western education, it is now difficult to determine how much of current understanding actually has an affinity with cultural roots and how much has been inculcated because of foreign educational influence. They also described concerns and problem areas they feel or face about administration. The concepts of efficiency and effectiveness were well grasped and, generally, distinguished fairly clearly. It was evident, understandably, that those with more leadership and administrative experience were better able to articulate the subtle nuances than those with limited experience. Also, those with administrative help seemed to have a clearer grasp of the fundamentals than those without.

As expected, however, this was more succinctly so from the trainers. Joyce and Mandla, for example, usefully distinguished between administration and management, saying the former is "how the organisation runs. It is the internal systems – the workers and their welfare – ensuring the organisation is effective in delivering services and a quality product. It differs



from management which looks at planning, organising and leading. However, you can't divorce the two."

In a similar vein, though, Chris identified administration as "keeping things in order. That comprises making sure things are done on time, properly and correctly; it is planning, evaluating and monitoring." He added that "this is not just doing things haphazardly; it needs some procedure and principles." Asked why this is important, he said, "It helps you remain focused and to accomplish your goals." For Chris, "properly" is a synonym for efficiently and effectively. Likewise, he drew a distinction between administration – systems and procedures – versus management, which is "basically dealing with people."

Similarly, Dawson sees administration as "Getting work done properly. [It is] a system or a means by which tasks or work must be done that includes planning, delegating and following up." For him, "properly" means "as per plan, goals."

For Dixon, administration "involves a lot of things: organising people and resources so that we can accomplish given tasks and objectives, to fulfil the vision as efficiently as we can. It's also about motivating staff so they can enjoy what they're doing."

Barnabas understands the administrative process as "Maintenance – because it's a system that has to function properly. Planning comes in. It relates to people: you're managing people and what they have to do." Asked, then, how administration differs from management, he explained that management can be likened to the parish council, policy formulation; projects, programmes and budgets whereas administration is "Myself and my secretary implementing what council decided. I need to have flexibility to make certain decisions (for example, signing cheques)."

By contrast, George considers administration to be "Planning, organising, leading, goal-setting and evaluation." As a former student of mine, however, I wonder how much of this is my influence as opposed to that gained from the school of experience?

Beki's understanding of administration is that it involves "Setting goals; putting in place mechanisms to achieve these goals. So it involves planning, initiating what you've planned, evaluating and [then] time management and resources."

Personally, I would tend to agree with these perceptions. My own definition of administration is that it is "everything that needs to be done so that the main ministry can be done efficiently and effectively." Or to put it another way, the idea of '*ministration*' is "giving of help and service" or '*ministry*'. Since "add" is "to put together with" and is about enlarging, the concept can be understood as *administr(y)ation*. And we note that the "ad" component, as a prefix, is



crucially at the front of the serving, suggesting the importance of it being done first. Thus, we are not dealing with a necessary evil or with something that is simply *ad hoc* and 'stuck in there' but, rather, is an integral part of the entire process. It would appear from the above definitions that the concept, while not articulated in exactly that way, is nevertheless, at least partly understood as such.

Not surprisingly, those elements that the respondents found either enjoyable or otherwise about administration differed widely. Chris, for instance, said, "[I struggle with] communication. Trying to work with a team without good communication lines. Where there are no laid-down guidelines, procedures are not in place, there are no job descriptions." He added that "worldview comes in with time management: here. I struggle with those who have a different view. For example, when people bring in reports [some time during] the day, as opposed to a specific time that I've requested on that day. Or, I might say keeping good relations in the team is needed, while someone else may say getting the job done is more important. So I find myself in a difficult situation." For Chris, then, the bugbear is that his expectations of the work are not shared by others and performance then differs.

For Dawson, the discomfiting aspect of administration is, "[Not] getting work done properly. This wastes time. This is associated with the kind of team you work with. So, the main problem is the team: either they didn't understand or they're not able to do it." Again, expectations come into play, but in this case, he is concerned with the group's performance.

Likewise, Dixon is also frustrated with "the challenges of communication and delegating to staff. Competency, efficiency, running with the vision, people [not] seeing the same thing. Sometimes I feel I need to work at all this to achieve maximum results."

George struggles with a lack of planning and goals. When asked if this is his own problem or one he typically perceives in others, he commented: "This affects most people in leadership [because of] a lack of education and training [and] a lot of damage is caused along the way [before they learn]".

Barnabas has a problem in that he tends to take on too much at times. "I lose track of time [in conversations]." At the same time, he excuses himself on this score, saying that, by spending that time, the person doesn't think they're left out. "I'm not ruled by time (except in a service)," he added. Asked if this was a question of time management or a lack of self-discipline, he admitted it was more the former. "I'm not ruthless with myself."

Similarly for Beki, the problem is time. "In an African setting, it's an event rather than hours and minutes and seconds. We tend to say 'in the morning' or 'the afternoon.' [But,] urban as



opposed to rural people see this differently. For rural folk, we have met and achieved what we wanted. Hence, your timetable should not be rigid. I see it as a problem because we are now part of a global village. We can't excuse ourselves and say we're isolated from the world."

In my own case, my struggles are not so much with the actions of administration since I am a process person by temperament anyway. Rather, my weak points are procrastination – where I tend to delay actioning something – and a tendency not to follow up on small details promptly (which tends to inconvenience others when they are waiting for a decision. At the same time, because I am a process person, I find myself frustrated with others who are not so inclined and, therefore, do not consider time management, planning or organising to the same degree as I do. Understanding and appreciating cross-cultural worldviews has thus helped me not only to put my own views into better perspective but also to help others think differently about theirs.

All this, of course, then raises the question of what other dynamics may explain the apparent endemic difficulties experienced in this field of endeavour. If one's understanding or definition of administration is not that big a factor in its implementation, what then militates against apparent effectiveness and efficiency? Thus, we look to some definitions of these two components.

Again, to avoid imposing my own expectations on them, I deliberately asked for their definitions and understanding of efficiency and effectiveness. The responses were enlightening.

Beki, for instance, described efficiency as, "Doing the right thing at the right time with the right purpose to get the right (intended) results." For him, "right" means "the appropriate thing; what will enhance what you want to achieve." At the same time, effectiveness is "linked to or overlaps with efficiency. Efficiency has to do with achieving what you want; effectiveness brings the intention." Thus, both are about results.

This is especially true for Dixon. "Results are very important. [The] time that we [take to] accomplish specific things is important. The way we use resources is also very important. Efficiency, then, puts all these together so that we accomplish maximum results for the church." And again, he links effectiveness and results: "If you spend a lot of time but accomplish little, you're not effective. 'Effective leadership = character + results.' Even if you have integrity, but don't produce results, you're no good. So we must be effective; people must see that the resources we've put in have been used wisely."



Similarly, for Barnabas, efficiency and effectiveness are also about results: “Time keeping, [making sure the] project is done well. No sloppiness, no excuses.” And, in the same vein, effectiveness is, “When I give an order, it must be followed through; no excuses. [Or] if I’ve been over-billed, can I get a reprieve from the company or not?”

On the other hand, Chris feels efficiency “needs laid-down principles and rules; [it’s] not just something done. You need all the right components.” And he equates effectiveness to “properly”. In other words, efficiency relates to process, while effectiveness is about quality.

George would agree: Efficiency is, “Reducing wastage – time and resources. Doing things right [while] effectiveness is “doing the right things right.”

Dawson, likewise, has the same mind-set: Efficiency is “based on various factors: Communications – have things been communicated properly, received and understood properly? Commitment – if there’s understanding, and there’s commitment, 95% of things will be done properly.” The emphasis on the concept of ‘properly’ again indicates a concern for both results and quality.

The trainers, Joyce and Mbangé, said much the same; although Joyce said the tendency is to focus on effectiveness rather than efficiency (which she defined as “doing the right thing right”).

It is clear from these definitions and observations that these particular actors are indeed aware of the fundamentals and their importance. It was noteworthy that few misunderstood the core elements. Thus, one premise I had – that there is a fundamental lack of appreciation of what constitutes administration – may not be the problem I envisaged it to be after all. That is assuming that my co-researchers are fairly typical of most others in similar work positions.

It is also clear that, for these particular pastors, administration is neither merely paperwork nor a necessary evil. While it may be true that some do not particularly enjoy it, none see it as unimportant or insignificant. Rather, it is a vital component of sound ministry. Interestingly, there is no common denominator in what they enjoy or do not enjoy about administration. This highlights both the diversity and complexity of administrative factors and partly helps to explain the variety of approaches to it – and the varied results.

The factors of efficiency and effectiveness are not only well understood but are clearly focused on results and quality – with, as I suspected, a strong sense of overlap. I found it intriguing that their definitions appeared – superficially, at any rate – not to be concretely or directly influenced by worldview aspects.



Having looked at some background issues, we then moved on to discuss the five basic components of administration. Several questions on each sought to establish understanding of the concept, its importance and, in some cases, the relevant skills for managing it properly. Again, in each case, I was careful to establish the person's own understanding of the concept and not to assume or impose my own assumptions.

1.2.1.2 *Time* –

As I had suspected, there was some disagreement as to the role and importance of time in the process of work. However, given the generally stated nonchalance with time, I was surprised at the extent to which time is indeed viewed as important. I was also intrigued by the expressions of disaffection with inappropriate time management – particularly since none of our planned meetings started on time as the majority were always late! This is despite all my actors being urbanites with a fairly well developed sense of urban processes and procedures. There is also quite a high level of sophistication. It was noteworthy that several expressed a degree of struggle – indeed, frustration – with the dichotomy between the rural and urban attitudes and approaches to time management. No-one complained outwardly, nor did I comment since it would have been interpreted as a “Western” mind-set speaking.

As mentioned in Chapter One, time itself is universal and an absolute. Yet, part of the tension for many in Africa reflects, of course, the different ways of measuring time. In broad terms, we can speak of the urban/Western/commercial form of time measured most commonly by the clock. So, for some Western cultures, time is a matter of both precision and politeness. Events are expected to start and end punctually. Being “on time” is considered very important while lateness is a reproach. Time is measured, in some instances, in fractions of a second. There must be a watch on the wrist and a clock in every room. For Africa, by contrast, the measurement of time is much less specific and more arbitrary. In rural areas, for instance, the sun – rather than a watch – is the measuring tool. The notions, for example, of being “on time” or in a hurry are not considered. The unspoken question is, ‘Why?’ Even in urban areas – albeit much less so – it is not uncommon to find one without a watch. Punctuality is not typically linked to politeness or even to efficiency; it is not a recognisable mindset. Instead, it is often viewed as one of the factors of the (Western) industrial/commercial world. The more sophisticated urbanite, of course, has been influenced to understand time from a Western perspective; indeed, the business world has been his “trainer” in this regard.

But, even in societies where the measurement of time is precise, there is flexibility. Not everything is measured by the second-hand of a clock. Cultural relativity is evident. For instance, from a black perspective, white Zimbabwean culture is perceived to be “time



conscious". Yet, I can speak quite comfortably of three forms of 'now': There is "now-now" which is immediately; "now" which is immediately to very soon, and "just now" meaning anything from 10 minutes to a few hours. And, being rather vague, they can all overlap. And anyone in my cultural context would understand what was meant.

There is also relativity in periods of time. So, in English, words such as era, age, generation, day and so on can all have varied meanings, without any understood precision, depending on their context. All my co-researchers expressed similar sentiments. Time, then, is distinctly imprecise.

Given this relativity, can we say there is a connection between time and efficiency in the context of administration? Why are they linked and, if so, how? Since time is finite and cannot be altered either more or less, we have no option but to use the time that we have. Irrespective of geographical or cultural location, every human being has 24 hours in a day, seven days in a week, four weeks in the month and 12 months in the year to use. Moreover, since it is a resource, there is an element of responsibility in using it. Indeed, for the Christian, one is called to be a steward (including of time – see Rom. 14:12; 1 Pet. 4:5). Wasted time – that is time that is not used productively – reflects not just inefficiency to some degree but also irresponsibility. The issue then becomes one of defining wastage. Is waiting at the bus stop inefficiency? Perhaps. What else can one do but wait? On the other hand, is one being inefficient as well as irresponsible if they choose just to wait, instead, say of reading a book, knitting, chatting or doing something active?

The link, then, between time and efficiency must be understood both in terms of agreed notions of measurement and of how that time is utilised. When one precise form of measurement of time is indicated in a particular context (say, 9:30 a.m. for an appointment), the use of another form of measurement is likely to create misunderstanding, disappointment and even upset. Both parties must be aware of the implications of the form of measurement being used.

For example, an Ndebele pastor friend once had five weddings on one Saturday. He stressed repeatedly to the couples during the counselling and rehearsals that it was essential that they all be very precise and on time. He warned each of them that if they were late, they would have to go to the "back of the queue". As it turned out, the first couple, due at 8:00 a.m., was 45 minutes late. He told them that he could not perform the entire ceremony in a mere 15 minutes and, since the second couple were due at 9:00, they would have to wait for the others to finish first. Understandably, the couple and their families were annoyed. But the second couple then arrived for their ceremony and it quickly became apparent, with all the friends and



families gathered around, that chaos would reign if the pastor's schedule was to be ignored. Reluctantly, the first couple and their families and friends left to return later (at about 2:00 p.m.) for their wedding. The chaos and disappointment could have been averted if both parties had understood the measurement of time in the same way and had the same understanding of using time.

Likewise, the relativity of the measurement of time was evident in my interviews. Dixon made an interesting observation: "Our Africanness now is different from that of 100 years ago. We have to contextualise. Life without some of what we have would be unbearable. We need to redefine today's African culture." In other words, he understood the need for flexibility and adaptability. The others agreed.

For instance, Chris said he "had to move away from time management toward relationships, the let's-get-this-done-'on-time' thinking. "Yes, relations and time have to be balanced. [But] I get frustrated when appointments aren't kept on time." Asked why this was so, he remarked: "I've been too much into time management." But where did that influence come from? "Maybe working with people who stressed this aspect; [perhaps my training at] College." How much of a struggle has this been to shift 'back'? "It's been a challenge. I'm working with both urban and rural people. When I go to rural areas, I deliberately leave town late and I still have to wait [for people to arrive for the meeting]. But I ask, should we remain there? Every hour that's wasted is a waste of resources. So, we need to reach a compromise." Clearly for Chris, there is a worldview tension here. I did not find this surprising.

Similarly, Dixon also struggles. Having commented earlier on the importance of using resources – including time – wisely, he added later, "When you lose time, you can't regain it. But I do struggle with time." I asked him in what way? "I don't have enough time in the day. I guess it's balancing up." That implies you don't delegate enough? I prompted. "Yes, our Church has grown; we're operating on the old leadership system [i.e. top down]. We need to do an organogram. We're doing things because we've always done it that way. I'm increasingly finding that my Mondays are spent at the office instead of at home with my children. This may be because if there's a need, I tend to jump in, to rescue them. I don't allow people to fail." So, what does this say for the next time? "Yes, this is a problem I need to work on. I tend to protect people because I see they can't handle the pressure that comes from peers. For example, I like music and singing. [But] I have to tell myself I can't be in the choir; I can't play the instruments [because I have other things I need to do]."

While not admitting to having a major struggle, Barnabas nevertheless did hint at a tension: "Yes, it's important. Even if I compromise other appointments. I suppose I'm dual, Western



and African.” (Significantly, he was 45 minutes late for our first appointment. I think he was too embarrassed to apologise directly, so quickly explained that he’d lost track of time because he was talking to a parishioner and actually forgot about me. The implication, of course, was that he was helping someone in need, which justified his lateness with me.) Asked about the urban-rural dichotomy, he admitted, “Yes, I tend to be in a hurry; I’m raised in a town mode, not a rural mode. I’m looking at my watch, not the day or tomorrow.”

Like Dixon, George sees time as valuable: “It’s a resource not to be wasted at all. You have to use it effectively and efficiently.”

While Beki had a similar view, he also had a different twist. He spoke of a project he was involved in that required visiting the rural areas. There was a tight schedule and promptness was required. “So we had targets to reach but people were late and delayed us, so the targets were missed. In some cases, we had to go back a second time. This was a frustrating waste of time and resources.” Still, he confidently predicted, “As the new generation takes over and the older generation passes away, things will be different. New technology is coming into the rural areas and people are having to change their thinking.”

He obviously sees a transition in the current era. (From a demographic point of view, it is perhaps significant that the proportion of urban to rural population is increasing, having shifted from 30:70% some 20 years ago to about 35:65% up until recently. The major reason for this was dire economic stress. But this is moving back again – perhaps to 40:60% now – because of political moves such as “Operation *Murambatsvina*” [“Throw out the rubbish”] that forced many unemployed and destitute back to the rural areas. Media reports have indicated this was designed and implemented with military precision and brutality by the Central Intelligence Organisation, the Police and the Army supposedly to quell a possible urban uprising.) As the populace moves, of course, this exposes more rural-based people to different approaches and alternative worldviews.

Similarly, Dawson also sees time as precious. “Yes, it’s very important. Because time can never be redeemed. Within the confines we have, we have to do the best. It’s a commodity that comes once and then goes away.”

In a related question, I asked if they saw any purpose to time. I anticipated there being some difficulty with this, given the general lack of interest in it, but I was also alert to the responses because of the expressions of its overall value.

“Yes,” said George. “God is a God of time. He created the days; He wants things to be done. It’s all about management. How well you are organised.” But, I followed up by asking how



being organised helps us to understand the purpose of time? “Because we see there is a time to do everything.”

Dawson was of a similar view: “God never created anything for nothing. So, whatever has been given in a time frame, there has to be a purpose for it. For example, someone exists in this generation, it means there is a reason why they didn’t exist earlier; their purpose is not attached to that generation but this generation. Everyone exists for certain purposes that must be accomplished within that time frame.”

Barnabas recognised a purpose in relation to his work. “Yes. It goes back to efficiency and effectiveness. If I don’t keep time, if documents don’t go out, we’re up the creek without a paddle. Time is crucial.”

Beki, likewise, although also not putting a Christian slant on it, said: “For every event to happen, it must do so in the framework of time.” So, what are some of the implications of this? I asked. “If we don’t block out time to do certain things, they won’t be done in life. Everything has its own time and season.”

This led to the next question about whether our use of time affects other dimensions of life. Beki shared several examples. “If the first person delays you, it will affect your appointment with the next person, who will then accuse you of not being dependable and faithful and your relationship will be affected. And the next time, punctuality won’t be so good. You should explain how much time you will give so they understand. Culture sometimes robs us of time. Instead of saying, ‘I haven’t got time,’ I’ll keep quiet. But then I’ll be late for the next appointment – which means I will have a problem for the next person. Also in marriages: If I’m always delayed, I get home late, I don’t come home on time for meals, or [to have] time for the children, this will strain your marriage.”

For Dawson too, time is clearly related to other dimensions of life. “There is a lot of connection. My purpose cannot exist in a vacuum. My time must relate to others and certain things within that time frame that will accomplish my purpose. Money, people, events are all attached to time. There may be certain resources that exist at a certain time that will allow me to accomplish my purpose within that time frame.”

George quoted the Old Testament: “There’s a time for everything (Eccl. 3:1). When you misuse time, you pay heavily.” Then he went on to explain: “I should have been at College years ago, but I wasted time. Only later did I realise what I was missing. Now I’m paying for that with extra responsibilities. If I’d used my time wisely then, I could be doing other things now. I’d be more effective than I am today.”



By contrast, Chris would like to merge the two worldviews: “We need to educate people without offending them,” he said. He suggested starting with time. “Let’s divide the day into blocks; see that each is valuable. [He is referring here to the rural mind-set of seeing time not as a precise entity but in segments.] Without being too hard on them, we should help them to see that portion of the block that is not “used” was already planned for and cannot be redeemed and, as a result, the quality of relationships will be affected.” He is suggesting here that rural folk be encouraged to understand the value of using time more efficiently. When arranging a time in that context, he agrees with the ‘block’ idea and thus speaks of “around 10:00”. That gives both a degree of precision and flexibility.

In a different way, Barnabas also seeks to merge the two worldviews, giving two examples. “[With] pastoral visitation, you must make [specific] time for this. You should make appointments and ensure you keep them. If I’m going to be late for the next one, I’ll call and let them know. Even time for prayer: You need to be ruthless.” Clearly, he is aware of the dynamics of both approaches, but his relaxed attitude to time does create some tension on occasion.

On the training side, Joyce expressed flexibility saying, “We are accepting, forgiving, sympathetic, empathetic,” while Mbange said time is very important. “As a trainer, I need to be there before the participants. With people being late, we then have to decide what to do. I did struggle to begin with – especially in my preparation – and the programme was affected. [We realise that] rural and urban [people] are different. So, with urban latecomers, we punish them; we try to help them to see that time affects everyone.” They acknowledged that one’s use of time impinges on honesty and integrity. Asked how they treat the different attitudes in their trainees, Joyce and Mbange said they separate them into two groups.

In itemising the various problems their trainees have with time, Joyce said these typically relate to “[a failure to] produce on time; to deliver. So, we look at issues of character, opportunity seeking and goal-setting.” She was confirming that poor stewardship of time impacts efficiency and effectiveness. Mbange added that “[there is] need to help them see that [proper use of] time can help [their] customers.” It speaks to honesty.

We have seen, then, that belying the typical indifference to time, there are some for whom time is nevertheless very important, that they appreciate the value of it and understand the implications of poor stewardship of it. This, of course, is baffling since it begs the question: Why, then, are the benefits and values of a better stewardship of time not communicated to and expected of people more deliberately? This is particularly so in the Christian arena given the Scriptural injunction to “do all in the name of the Lord.” (Col. 3:17) Hence, rather than



answering the fundamental question, the responses have highlighted the problem. The possible reasons for this will be explored further in Chapter Six.

It is also interesting that the Western influence is very clear in these responses and that there is a genuine struggle between that and the African mind-set, the rural and urban, old and new. The issues of the impact of Western training, professionalism, and colonial education will also be explored later in an attempt to bridge the gap here.

1.2.1.3 *Planning* –

As part of the administration process, planning is rightly seen as essential. Without it, there is little direction; details will be ignored, resources wasted and small but key tasks left undone – with disastrous consequences. As the common adage has it, “failing to plan is planning to fail.”

In broad terms, planning is simply “thinking ahead”. Yet, in cultures where time is less precise or less important, this raises some intriguing questions about planning. For example, I asked my respondents about “tomorrow”: If their concept of time is largely focused on yesterday and today, how much importance is attached to tomorrow? How far ahead is it; are they afraid of it and how do they prepare for it?

Planning, of course, also involves ensuring the right resources are used rightly. Typically, these resources include people, equipment, “space”, time and money. Effective planning is about using these resources in correct balance. While many often conclude that the most important of these is money, in fact, people are the key resource. Granted, money is often required, but in many cases, it is people thinking about ideas – perhaps not requiring money at all – that provide the impetus for progress. Without people, nothing will happen, even if all the money needed is available. Yet, planning is more than just having bodies in place. That does not guarantee that things will be done well, if at all.

The old ditty about Somebody not doing something because Anybody could do it but thought Everybody would, so Nobody did is a humorous reminder of this principle. Unfortunately, the charm of this is partly because it is often true. How many decisions are made in committee meetings without someone being assigned to follow through?

As Christians called to be good stewards of what God has given us, it behoves us to consider wise use of resources. Poor planning is thus also a poor testimony. Regrettably, there seem to be many Christian events or activities that are poorly planned, with consequent wastage and, sadly, there are many Christians who do not seem to appreciate this, or even care. (See Joyce’s story in Chapter Six.) Years ago, I gave a large tent to my Church for use on camps



and outings. On the first occasion, it was lost because no-one was made accountable for it and no-one was tasked with seeing that it was packed away properly afterwards or for checking the inventory. The leadership did not seem overly concerned about the loss. I vowed I would not give anything like that to my Church again.

Planning is also concerned with details. A huge machine in a factory is kept running smoothly because oil or grease is regularly applied to tiny but strategic holes. Failure to pay attention to details leads to disaster. This aspect of administration has its own fascinating dimensions and, while it is a universal need, is again relative, not only cross-culturally but also intra-culturally. Personal experience tells me this is not a “cultural” issue so much as a personality one, since it seems there are people in every culture who are good at thinking about details and others who are not. Within any people group, some are naturally inclined to think about details.

At first glance, then, planning may be a psychological issue rather than a worldview issue *per se*. Personally, I happen to be a process person, concerned with the details. I tend to think about how something can be done best, rather than whether it should be done or not. Not everyone with my worldview thinks like that. By contrast, typically, a visionary leader is more concerned with getting where he wants to go and often does not consider the details – many times to his personal and the group’s detriment.

My (Shona) pastor – a visionary – and I make a good team. He shows me the big picture, where we need to go; I show him what details we should consider to get there. Often, he is frustrated with me when I raise them, but he appreciates the need for my input. And sometimes I am frustrated because he doesn’t always ask all the questions, yet I appreciate his “sense of direction”.

So, if planning is primarily about the future, caring for resources and thinking of details, what is efficiency in this context? All three dimensions are universal rather than relative. And again, they relate to stewardship and responsibility. What may differ from culture to culture is the approach to the future, the attitude toward resources and the ability to account for details. While these may be influenced by culture and worldview, I am aware from experience that the emphasis on the understanding and the handling of these can vary from person to person within cultures.

So, what worldview factors come into play here? What is planning from a Shona and Ndebele point of view to start with and how important is it? All my respondents said planning is important – albeit in varying degrees. They also articulated their understanding of the process and the worth of resources.



Barnabas said he enjoys it because it gives him a sense of control; he's in charge, "calling the shots" as he put it. For him, planning involves making the right appointment, setting goals and reminders; having a diary. This sounds efficient enough, but of my six co-researchers, Barnabas has proved to be the least efficient, having missed three of five group meetings (all of them confirmed beforehand) and, despite several telephoned and e-mailed requests over four months, he never submitted his task survey questionnaire. This points to the potential difference between theory and practice; between desire and actuality. What someone says they believe and what really happens may be two different things. This is not necessarily a cultural dynamic either. And it still leaves the question: *Why?*

For Chris, planning is "making arrangements about what you're going to do, when and how." He says it's important "because it ties in with management of time and stewardship; it assists in efficiency." Clearly, Chris sees planning as a crucial part of the process without which things would fall apart. Notably, too, planning is related to stewardship: it reduces, if not prevents, wastage. Overseeing 14 peri-urban and rural preaching points demonstrates that Chris not only appreciates the value of planning but also practices it as well.

Dixon understands planning as part of his leadership role. For him, it is a matter of "sitting down, looking at our vision and breaking it down into its components, the goals and objectives and how we can accomplish that. Then this has to be monitored with feedback. It's a continuous process. It's looking at the global picture. When all the components are in place, then we can move." Planning, then, is not just thinking ahead, but it is also putting the constituent parts together in the right way to accomplish something. Running a multi-ethnic church of 450 members and a similar number of adherents with what, on the surface at least, appears to be a sound degree of efficiency, shows that Dixon's philosophy matches his praxis.

Taking a different tack, George feels planning is central to our humanity: "Our purpose as human beings is to plan, but the One who makes those succeed is God. Our vision comes through planning." For him, planning is what makes him tick; it translates the vision into reality and gives life purpose and meaning. While in his late-Forties and married with four children, pastoring two congregations and overseeing 12 others cannot be done satisfactorily without planning. It should be mentioned, perhaps, that George's studies for a degree in theology suffered a set back because of all his commitments and he was forced to reduce the workload and delegate more than he had bargained for. Nevertheless, he could not do what he did without adequate attention to planning.

Although Beki sees planning as important, he clearly struggles with it. "It's very important; it gives you a guideline of what you want to do and achieve. It helps you to put things in stages.



[It allows you to] make an evaluation before going to the next stage. It makes your work easier. But, it's a discipline. I'm not an administrator. I [have to] discipline myself. I can't just dream about something being done. I have to do some work and put effort into it. For example, a mother doesn't just hope the kids will be fed lunch; she has to prepare it. I need to spend time with people; but to do that I have to plan and prepare. For some it comes naturally (for instance, [taking] minutes, [writing] reports).

Beki here, I suspect, is echoing the feelings of many pastors who silently battle with the administrative demands of their ministries. And he is right: for some, it comes naturally; for others, it is a constant struggle, a necessary evil, even. Where the discipline is not there, problems arise and others must pick up the pieces.

In another vein, some years ago someone put a notice on the board at our College at midday announcing a pastor's fellowship meeting. You might think that was good planning (and communication) – until you read the notice. The meeting started at 2:00 p.m. There was absolutely no thought whatever that one might already have another commitment at that time. Clearly the assumption was that we had nothing else to do that afternoon! Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident. It is almost as if some in ministry believe their colleagues have no responsibilities until an activity is arranged for them – and the sooner the better. While some ministry leaders shake their heads at that, there are many others, it seems, who find that approach very acceptable. Quite apart from highlighting their philosophy of planning, it also says volumes about their philosophy of ministry too.

Dawson, on other hand, is very clear about his idea of planning. It is “setting or putting in order certain things that must be done or achieved.” As the Senior Pastor, he is a visionary; but while he sees this as his primary role, he appreciates the need for planning and attention to detail. Working with him personally in several areas, I have found that he does not always think of the details, yet feels it is important to be involved in everything. He is a “hands on” manager.

The next question we discussed was the process of planning. I asked the pastors what steps they typically use to plan for a fairly large project. Barnabas, in planning to introduce the Alpha training course in his church as an example, laid out the steps as follows: “1. Pray [do we want to do it? What's the end goal?] 2. Approach trainers – give them the time, venue and place; discuss the provision of meals. 3. Remind the people (over a month) – verbal and written announcements. 4. Get details of how many people want it.” Here, he has thought through most of the key details and issues needing consideration. Obviously, for the Christian, nothing should begin without prayer. The trainers – the people-resource – are



strategic. (The assumption, of course, is that the other people-resource, the participants or trainees, will be there also. But if someone has not paid attention to the detail, for instance of communication, they probably will not be.) Communication in various forms is critical in a project like this. Interestingly, he did not say the idea needs to be “sold” to the people; they simply needed to be reminded. Perhaps his assumption was that they would be interested automatically. But that is not a valid assumption and many leaders have been disappointed that their hard work and preparation have been wasted because the attendance at an event has been less than expected. Leaders sometimes forget that followers do not always come to an exercise with the same degree of awareness, interest or passion as they do; that enthusiasm must be developed. However, Barnabas did say that getting an indication of the numbers interested is an important step in the process. In such events, this detail determines many other aspects, not least the use of resources (for example, training materials, meals and so on.)

For Chris, a fairly large project would be planning the construction of a church building. He outlined the following steps: 1. Start with the time frame – when? 2. How [will it be done]? 3. Resources – material, finances, manpower and so on. On the surface, this appears quite sound. However, these big steps need to be broken down into smaller steps. In speaking of the time frame, does he have in mind the finish date only? If he fails to account for key dates in the project before this, he could encounter problems. Then, how much detail will he go into when considering step two – the how? And, what sub-issues must be pondered in terms of resources? This, then, is where problems often occur because insufficient detail is considered. Again, from personal experience, I’m not convinced that this is a cultural dynamic but, rather, a psychological or temperamental aspect. Every culture, it seems to me, has people who think superficially or broadly, without adequate reckoning of the details. While I would classify Chris as reasonably efficient, he admits to being frustrated with this element of ministry and clearly baulks at accepting this type of responsibility; he would much prefer someone else to be in charge of something like this. However, leadership is partly about accepting overall responsibility.

Dawson, being a visionary, sees the steps of planning as: “1. [Getting the] vision – with this, there must be 2. Communication of that vision; 3. [The] put[ting] together [of] resources (for example, people) and others; 4. Time periods; 5. Gathering materials and personnel; 6. [The] time frame must be incorporated; 7 Check points [i.e. evaluation].” Naturally, after 21 years in ministry, he has learned the process well; one of his strengths is making sure his subordinates understand both the big picture and the task before them personally.



George approaches the steps by asking a series of questions: “I ask, ‘What is it that I want to achieve? What resources do I need? What help (from others) would I need?’” He then goes on to prioritise the resources: “(1) money (it answers most questions), (2) people, (3) time, and (4) environment.” Interestingly, he sees money as the primary resource, but recognises that, without people, not much can be done with it.

In planning for a fairly large project, Beki would “Take time off, get away from the busyness of life; take a vacation and spend some time processing things and come back with fresh ideas.” His ‘stepping back’ or ‘retreat’ philosophy underscores his anxiety and unease about the process. Apart from these broad preparatory steps, he would “call a meeting with the team; get feedback – where can we improve? When [can it be done]? How much time and resources will we need? Delegate where necessary.

Dixon has a different ethos. He revels in strategic planning and strategic retreats. “Each year, we meet with all key leaders. This is the major thing for our church. Two years ago, we changed the vision. I love John Piper’s books – “spreading a passion for the supremacy of God in all things.” We have to let people see our passion about Christ, about God. This is our emphasis for each ministry this year. How can we honour God in this way? What needs to change? What training is needed? What are the needs of the people? Then we have a mid-year retreat to assess. That way, we keep focused on the key result areas. For me, my main responsibility is preaching; I ask people if I’m on track, meeting their needs. Planning this is what I enjoy.” Dixon likes the big picture but is also concerned to see that the smaller parts fit together well.

“First [I] pray. God impresses things on my heart. When this happens, I share it with [my co-leaders] to get confirmation, shared values. Then we bring it to the larger leadership to ask how we accomplish it. Is it realistic? [Then we] get the Church involved (special meeting) and set up a committee, which would do the nitty gritty.” In terms of resources, he sees them in this order: Manpower, finances, material. “Manpower,” he stresses, “is our greatest asset.”

My co-researchers clearly see necessary steps in the planning process and are aware of the need to consider resources. But, again, this may not be common to everyone. Some years ago at our old campus, we used to hire our classrooms for a nominal fee. Late one afternoon at about 4:15, I was approached by a young lady asking to use the College facilities for a meeting. I asked her for how many people (to establish which room would be the best). As she was telling me and I was about to ask the next question, the thought occurred to me simultaneously that I knew the answer. But I had to ask anyway: when did she want it? Sure enough, she said, “5 o’clock.” I said, “I’m terribly sorry, but all the classrooms are booked for



today.” She became angry, objecting that she had already invited the people to come to the College for the meeting. She would have to locate them scattered all over the City to tell them not to come, but there was insufficient time to do so. I told her that the people using the rooms that day had already had the forethought and courtesy of booking the rooms the previous week. I asked why she didn’t do that and, of course, she didn’t have an answer. I also pointed out the foolishness of making arrangements when the plans are yet to be confirmed. She left, crestfallen and annoyed (both at me and with herself). It was clear that it was a hard lesson for her to learn.

My co-researchers, then, were able to confirm the importance of planning in the administrative process, to identify key resources and to describe the typical steps they take in planning. While they obviously do this with greater or lesser relish, they nevertheless understand the role of planning. Irrespective of the culture and one’s personal preferences, this suggests a wide endorsement of planning as an integral part of administration. But, again, it highlights a fundamental question: Why, then, are so many events spoiled by poor planning?

1.2.1.4 Organising –

This, essentially, is about putting in place; arranging. For the administrator, this is a fundamental corollary to the other dimensions. An administrator may plan and control, but without organising properly, leading others effectively or accomplishing much of substance will be difficult. Indeed, a disorganised administrator is an oxymoron.

Organising, in this sense, also involves such skills as classifying, co-ordinating, fixing, harmonising, instituting, methodising, ordering, regulating and systematising. These skills (either through natural talent or training) vary from person to person. And, obviously, different projects require different complexities and amounts of these elements. But what cultural dynamics come into play here, and why?

This, in turn, raises the question of whether this aspect of administration is universal and/or absolute or relative. Is it a group/culture factor or is it an individual/personality factor? It is clear that, by their very nature, projects universally need some degree of organising. Whether one is organising the day’s activities, a journey or, even, a soapstone carving, very little of substance occurs haphazardly. A meal doesn’t cook itself. A motor vehicle is not built instantly. And a village does not just materialise. Thus, organising *per se* is a universal necessity, irrespective of culture. However, within cultures, there appear to be varying levels of organisational competence. In my experience, certainly intra-culturally, there are people more predisposed to these skills, more capable and comfortable with them, while others not



only are not good with them but actually disdain them. A similar predisposition was evident with my co-researchers.

In addition, organising, like planning, can be done on both the personal and the corporate levels. Typically, an organised person is understood to be someone who manages their daily routine efficiently and effectively so that they get things done well. It is generally associated with self-discipline. At the corporate level, a good organiser is generally felt to be someone who can direct people in the right way to do what they need to so that the overall objective is achieved efficiently and effectively. It is often associated with sound leadership.

And, like planning, organising involves consideration of details. For example, Police in the small town of Shurugwi about 43 kilometres from Gweru, the provincial capital, failed to order receipt books in time and so ticketed drivers had to travel to Gweru – an 86 kilometre round trip – to pay their fines. Or, ponder the stationery clerk who only thinks of arranging a requisition for new pens after the last one has been taken – forgetting that it takes six weeks to process the order, leaving workers without the tool of their trade. Or what about the bridal couple who must interrupt the ceremony to find chairs to sit on because this was obviously not considered (or was forgotten?) during the previous night's rehearsal? Indeed, it is often the attention paid to details that makes the difference between success and failure; between mediocre and excellent. But is this culturally recognised and developed? Some of my co-researchers affirmed this; others did not.

For instance, Barnabas drew a distinction between planning and organising. "Organising is picking up people to do things. So, having killed the elephant [as a result of planning to do so], organising would be the skinning of the elephant. Planning and organising are intertwined. A plan is a wholistic picture of intention. Organising is achieving the objectives. For example, in teaching, I plan my lesson, but I also prepare work for the class to do to assess the success of my lesson. Organising implies that you know where you're going."

While it is true that planning and organising are linked, it would appear that the one does not necessarily guarantee the other. Barnabas, for example, had planned to bring his task questionnaire several times; indeed, he verbally and in writing promised to do so – but intention did not translate into practice for four months. For him, attention to detail may be related to self-discipline.

Chris, too, sees planning and organising as connected. "[Organising] is similar to planning. Organising is the smaller picture. It looks at what needs to be done; the nitty gritty of the whole project. It looks at details: names, items." He adds that "planning is paperwork; organising is people."



So, for him, details are important. But this is only one part of the organising dynamic. An individual can be organised without necessarily involving others at all. While being disorganised can have negative implications as far as relationships are concerned since people will be impacted negatively, being organised does not necessarily require others to be involved in the process.

Likewise, Dawson also sees a connection between people and organising: For him, the latter is, “Calling and putting people together for a purpose.” He sees it as important to work with teams, and so ensuring there is continuity in their work is vital. Yet, it is the attention to detail that can harm or hinder this continuity. Simply having people in place – on a team – does not guarantee being organised or efficient. Again, from a worldview factor, the dominance of relationships is evident.

For Dixon, being organised is about “mobilising; putting specific things in their rightful place. Again, [it’s about] human resources, specific meetings (weekly, monthly, quarterly) so that there’s synergy that builds up the accomplishment of the whole vision.”

Asked what things he typically organises, he said: “Apart from meeting the leaders to assess progress, I am the chief fund-raiser of the church. Sometimes, when funds are short, I tell my Treasurer not to pay me until he’s paid the others. So I organise resources. We have external partners. We have a full-time HIV/AIDS pastor and so I network with all these people.” For Dixon, then, organising is about generating and networking – again, with the emphasis on people.

Similarly, George sees organising as, “Putting things together. Using them for the right purpose.” Asked what ‘things’ in particular, he noted “time, money, people and other resources.” For George, then, organising is about utilising resources in an orderly way to accomplish the end goal.

Interestingly, Beki had a somewhat different insight from the others. For him, being organised has to do with the individual: “How organised are you – socially, emotionally, mentally and spiritually? [Being] organised has to do with the person first.” Would you describe yourself as an organised person? “Yes, slowly but surely. It’s a skill you develop in life.” But what sort of things do you organise? “Time, resources and people.” So, while Beki understands the personal component in being organised, together with the need for self-discipline, he also sees organisation as involving the interrelation of resources.

As we have seen, organising involves skills. When asked what skills a good organiser has, Dawson said, “You need to be able to put people together – so you must be a ‘people person’,



while George stressed the need to consider details. [Why is this important?] “So that he is prepared; he [the leader] looks at the vision and sees how to get there. He is a leader, but he’s also a specialist to do things he’s planned ahead. You have a triumvirate: the visionary, the manager and the organiser. The visionary shouldn’t be too involved in organising otherwise he’ll be bogged down by details.”

Dixon seemed to concur by saying, “The visionary leader is different from the organising leader. ‘Leadership is influence’ (quoting Maxwell 1998); so an organiser puts things together to benefit the organisation. Every leader must be visionary (but with varying degrees). He must have a good idea of the overall picture and the results of what he wants. He must be able to see what kinds of people he needs to attain. He must ask how he can empower them. A good organiser can get rid of people who don’t produce. If someone takes responsibility, there must be accountability. At the end of the day, failure is upon the delegated leader. A good organiser communicates – fires those who are not performing.” Clearly, though, Dixon sees not a two-person dichotomy as does George, but rather, the two or three skills being manifest in the same person: The leader (that is, the visionary) must also be able to manage and organise.

Once again, these observations highlight both the overlap of the three functions and the slight nuances of each. Leading, managing and organising are not fixed entities, with their own separate skills and requirements, without any connection to the others. And, while there is an emphasis on details for some, plainly this is not an ability that everyone sees equally as necessary. The focus on people, once more, is also evident. This connection with Leading then takes us to the next aspect.

1.2.1.5 *Leading* –

This is perhaps the most complex of the five components we are exploring in our five-fold profile of administration. As mentioned earlier, not only is this often used interchangeably for management and administration itself, but the skills and dynamics involved are also multifaceted and related. We could explore a wide variety of issues from leadership style (including temperament and personality), through communication, decision-making, creativity and innovation, the change factor, motivation and delegation to the dynamics of power, authority and manipulation. Moreover, leading has somewhat different dynamics in individual versus group contexts. In addition, there are official leaders (because of position and, often, natural talent and training) and unofficial leaders (by virtue of natural talent – but with no training – and group acceptance), both of whom exercise varying degrees of influence.



To what extent are these issues – their definitions and related skills – universal and absolute, or contextually relative? Obviously, leadership itself is universal, since there are leaders everywhere in every cultural group and in every sphere of life. But is there a commonly accepted, universal understanding of the basic constituents of effective leadership? Or are these perceptions relative and culturally shaped? More expressly, are there relative and culturally specific emphases on any of the constituents and their related skills? For example, are there cultural dynamics that encourage decision-making in one people-group whereas the absence of that dynamic in another hinders decision-making? Or, again, are there worldview factors that enhance creativity and innovation in one group but militate against them in another? Are power and authority understood universally as separate entities and are they used – and abused – for the same reasons and in the same ways? Are leadership styles universal or culturally shaped? Are the same styles appreciated or desired universally or does culture shape our acceptance of one over another? In short, what worldview factors come into play for each of these dynamics and what influence do they have?

To reiterate: throughout this study, I am using the terms leading, managing and administrating as distinct, yet overlapping and complementary. In my view, a leader is anyone who influences, whereas a manager (in simple terms) primarily organises people while an administrator focuses on the background needs to facilitate the manager. In brief, a manager is primarily a ‘people person’; an administrator is mainly a ‘process person’. But these designations are not rigid or exclusive. Thus, a leader may not be a good manager or administrator, nor might an administrator be a good leader or manager, but they all have to do some of each at some point. Indeed, in my experience – certainly in Christian ministry circles – it is rare to find any two elements equally strong and effective in one person. But they cannot be divorced and put in isolated boxes.

So to begin with, what does leading “look” like from a Shona or Ndebele point of view? Barnabas, for example, says the first requirement is “to be clear where you’re going yourself. [Be sure of] your own beliefs, convictions, [You] have to have vision to share and hopefully persuade people to buy into it. [It is] to be unique and distinct.” In a Christian context, he says, “It’s discerning the will of God and to rise to that call. Yes, there’ll be criticism and dissent, but there’ll also be support (not necessarily that they like you – that can be a problem.) For example, with [the *murambatsvina*] squatters [in our Church], we had two groups, one saying they should go, one that they should stay. I had to lead the congregation through that.”



(Postscript: A story was related to me about that incident. The squatters, living at a camp on the outskirts of Bulawayo had their homes summarily demolished one mid-winter Saturday afternoon in 2005 and were forcibly evicted by the Police, backed by the Army and the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO). This was part of a deliberate nationwide action, code-named *Operation Murambatsvina* = Shona for “Drive out the filth.”) Ostensibly, it was to rid the cities of vagrants and thieves. It later transpired that it was a joint military operation supposedly to crush a potential popular uprising. According to a report authored by the United Nations *Habitat* Director, Mrs Anna Tjibajjuka in June 2005, some 700 000 people had their homes and informal businesses destroyed, affecting an estimated 2,5 million people countrywide. Several Churches embarked on schemes to house and care for them while finding alternative accommodation. Some Churches in Bulawayo accommodated up to 200 people each for a month or more before the Police violently evicted them from the churches in the middle of the night, dumping them by the roadside in the rural areas. In Barnabas’ Church, an elderly parishioner had complained to him about the squatters who, he felt, were “messing up the church” and should not be there – that’s not the church’s job, he said. Barnabas told him that if the squatters were to leave, he would also leave. The parishioner was shocked and walked away in disbelief. Some time later he returned to Barnabas to apologise, expressing remorse for his attitude. For many, this humanitarian crisis brought home very graphically the role of the Church in society and the deeper meaning of the Gospel. In the process, several pastors like Barnabas were challenged on different fronts as they led their congregations through this traumatic time.)

In terms of how he relates as a leader to people, he says: “Great. We relate. We’re objective about issues. They’re free to criticise me as much as I do them. But I discourage rumours and gossip.”

For Chris, leading is about “being able to give direction; mapping a way forward, when everything else seems difficult.” This is not a contradiction of Barnabas’ view, but rather a complementary understanding; indeed, it represents a fairly typical view of the role of leading.

Asked how he relates to people as a leader, he commented: “I can’t praise myself, but in trying to marry the two – time and relationships – I think this helps me to get along. I see a problem as a challenge.” Is this a challenge to get the job done or to help the person? “To get the job done. This is more important than helping the person because in the success, the person can learn as well.”

Dawson, on the other hand, sees a strong overlap between leading, organising and supervising. He finds that, having provided (so he thought) the vision and direction, he often



has to step in and pick up the pieces as it were because those he had delegated to do the job have failed to do it properly. "... when you lead, you are part and parcel of the game. That's why you have leading by example. You are involved at a certain degree. So, leading for me is not commanding from a distance, dictating. I am directly involved." This perception of leading highlights the issue of leadership style. Dawson is a democratic/consultative leader. That is, once he has laid the groundwork by sharing the vision, he allows his colleagues some freedom to discuss issues, make plans and implement projects in their own ways. But he also has an autocratic streak and likes to "keep on top of things"; he would no doubt describe himself as a "hands-on" leader – one who is comfortable being involved, but not necessarily micro-managing. At the same time, his involvement in having to "pick up the pieces" may also be the result of a lack of adequate communication and/or training of his colleagues. Visionaries often tend to assume that, once they have shared the vision, their colleagues understand everything to the same degree and in the same way as they do. Only when "the wheels fall off" do they realise that there was a gap in the understanding! Then they must go back and explain items that they had taken for granted.

By contrast, Dixon sees leading as, "Giving direction on key areas and issues so that we maintain and accomplish the vision." Having shared the vision, he delegates responsibilities and then steps back to allow his colleagues to get on with it. In describing his approach, he says, "The appointment of leaders is my responsibility. [But] one thing that discourages me is that the leader is raised up to a level that is ungodly; it almost becomes worship of the person. Many are comfortable with this. I tell people, 'You don't carry my Bible; I have two hands and I can do it myself.' That [thinking] frightens me. So I have a simple relationship with the people. I am a partner, a friend, we need to work together. Because you touch a heart before you can hold the hand. If you don't do that, you become the boss; it's no different from the secular world. I'm concerned about their home life, their struggles, how we can come alongside them to solve their problems. I like to be very relational. But that brings problems, because everyone wants to meet you. So, I was forced to hire a secretary. We also have a pastoral care pastor."

It is significant, perhaps, that Dixon felt "forced" to hire a secretary. The workload created by 'relating to people' in a large, growing church was too much for him alone. Yet, he had not thought about doing his work differently – and more efficiently – before he reached the crisis point. Many in ministry leadership do not have the luxury of a secretary or personal assistant. Others come into a leadership role with such a person already provided. Unless they have utilised a secretary before, they must make mental and work-habit adjustments to take full advantage of this resource. My own pastor, for instance, is struggling to shift his



understanding of a newly appointed administrator from that of receptionist (the previous role) to that of his personal assistant. He often forgets to tell her where he is going, why and when he will be back; consequently, people wanting to see him are sometimes left stranded and the question of accountability arises. Of my six co-researchers, two have full-time office assistants, one has a mornings-only secretary and one shares some secretarial help with a ministry colleague. But, plainly, leadership style and one's personal approach to their work determine the real value of such assistance.

I also asked Dixon how he deals with church members who insist on seeing him (because he is the senior pastor) rather than someone else. "I ask them what they want and try to convince them that there are others who can help. It's a grey area, because they're very fragile and can even leave the Church because of this. Sometimes you have to cut short the formalities of meeting so that you can discuss their problem. Yes it's rude ...but you may not have any option."

I then followed this up by asking how he handles the cultural tendency to spend time in discussing insignificant issues and then, at the point of leaving, raising the real reason for the visit. "I try to help them see how much time I have and that I have other appointments. I try not to offend. Sometimes, people need to find the answers themselves. You can suggest Biblical responses. They have already solved their problem, but they just want to talk. Sometimes, I just have to stand up and excuse myself from them (my secretary has beeped me, so they know ... This reduces any effects of offence." But what about unscheduled visits? "I have four other pastors to help. The rural pastors often stay at my home and so we talk over supper. But always I try to let people know. I have an uncle who thinks he can come in any time. A couple of times, I have had to tell him I'm busy and can't see him. He was offended at the beginning, but now he understands."

For George, leading is also influence; it is "living as a role model; encouraging people to do the right things, the positive things, as a Christian. [It is] giving others encouragement to achieve set goals. In so doing, those who would have gone on to the 'left side' – who need disciplining – will be disciplined in love." That said, George can also be firm when needs be.

Beki, like Dixon, sees leading very much in terms of people-relationships. "Leading is setting an example. Influencing people to get somewhere. But I feel I need more time to be with the people." By nature, he is quiet and reserved. Hence, leading for him is not about standing at the front and dictating or, even, necessarily getting excited about something to persuade the people to follow. Rather, he seeks to influence gently, without fanfare. Yet, he clearly has some practical difficulties. Asked why he does not have sufficient time to be with the people,



Beki said, “I’ve been busy with other things at Church which, at times, are not a priority. When you are alone, you end up doing work you shouldn’t be doing.” That he recognises the need but has not yet rectified it reflects on issues such as delegation skills, leadership style, his personal approach to work and, ultimately, his philosophy of ministry.

In response to a question on the skills a good leader needs, Beki answered: “[You need] research skills, understanding the deeper meaning of the text (Bible) and other sources to see what other people think. [You need] communication skills, both writing and verbal and practical skills: [you] should set an example – for instance, building, carpentry, plumbing, and so on.” And what about skills like delegation? I asked. “I came to the point where I told the people that if I was doing things that interfered with my pastoral duties, they wouldn’t be done. When you ask for volunteers, no-one shows up, so you do it. But when the people are sick and you don’t visit, they criticise; so you’re caught in a dilemma. When the wheels fall off, the people say they are too busy and the pastor is the one who is employed to do it.” What about your Elders and Deacons? “The calibre of the eldership we have, they’re not ministry oriented. They’re more of people coming to meetings; [they] contribute while they’re busy with their own things. But I’ve spoken to them and they are coming up with ideas and doing things for themselves; slowly they’re beginning to see the reality.” Clearly, this has been a difficult learning experience for him and his leadership team is also being challenged with a different perspective.

Further on the issue of skills, Barnabas commented: “Sensitivity is very important. Listening. Empathy – people need someone to respect, that they can look up to. [You] mustn’t impose.” He prefers corporate or joint decisions. These factors highlight the people-relational aspect once again. They suggest that ‘quality’ leadership is directly connected to establishing and maintaining quality relationships. Interestingly, there is nothing here about the task itself. I asked if he considered himself a team player. “Yes, very much so. I achieve more that way – a better community. If I was to leave, the community would continue because it’s not one person making all the decisions. You’re secure in yourself.”

Chris was honest. “I don’t know what a good leader is! It’s difficult. If you are faced with solving a problem, a good leader needs to be able to separate the person from the problem. [You] also need to know the people you’re working with; to be able to place them in the right positions.” As a follow-on to this, I asked if he saw any worldview factors at play here. “Yes, you are never a lone ranger. In the end, you need good relationships because you’re working with a team. You also want to groom them.” So, again, the emphasis is on people and relationships.



For Dawson, there are three necessary skills: “Communication, motivation and organising.” This is similar to George, who said, “[To be a good leader is] to be a good organiser, controller, visionary, communicator (like when we used to herd cattle, there would be a leader who would come and push the others to go ...) and a planner.” Again, we see not only overlap but a cluster of skills reflected.

Related to leading is the art of delegation. Not everyone is equally competent in this area, nor do some leaders see any value in it. Part of these difficulties can be overcome through education. While the skills involved can be honed, it is clear that some leaders are less able than others.

Asked how he views it, Chris used the rural example of a chief who uses messengers to glean and disseminate information: since he cannot do everything, he delegates. “This is important: he can’t be everywhere at the same time. [Likewise, something] needs to be done, but not necessarily by me. It [also] depends on what’s to be done. In some things, I’m more particular; in other areas, it’s not important for me, so I’m more open to delegating.” So, while he acknowledges the principle, he also distinguishes between those tasks for which he is directly responsible and those for which he is not; understandably, he is more open to delegating the latter. However, this is related to leadership style, temperament and how one views others: the extent to which one is afraid of mistakes or blame, for instance, will likely be a limiting factor.

For Dawson, delegation is “The process of implementing the vision or goal. Even if the vision is mine, the sharing of it is my job. [Delegation is] the actual process of doing of the job – because any project has a multiplicity of factors. When we’ve shared and everyone knows what is expected, then we put it together according to our skills.” Here, delegation is seen not just as ‘transferring a task to someone else so I can do what I need to’ but, rather, completing the rest of the job once the leader has envisioned and communicated that vision.

While some see delegation as an abrogation of responsibility, George sees it differently. “[Yes,] it involves others doing what you are expected to do; you pass them [the tasks] on. But you are still accountable – you take the criticism or the credit.” This latter point is important: often, leaders will delegate and assume that that they have passed on the entire element of accountability as well as the task. But this is to ignore the fact that, precisely because you are still the leader, you therefore remain ultimately responsible. Asked how he feels about doing it, George commented: “It’s part of empowering; so I enjoy it. If I don’t do it, others won’t be able to do it.”



Barnabas also sees delegation positively. “[It is] 1. Recognising that someone is better equipped than me – discernment; [this is] crucial. 2. [It’s an] act of humility. I’m not a jack of all trades. I acknowledge that others have talents I don’t have. 3. Also it gives time to do other things; it’s not absconding, it’s ownership – those I delegate to have ownership of it. If I were to leave, the system would not collapse but would go on. It’s empowerment.” It seems few in Christian ministry understand delegation as an act of discipleship and empowering people to grow. Rather than being frightened about losing status (especially if a mistake is made), Barnabas sees delegation as necessary for the development of those he leads.

Closely related to both leadership and delegation is the art of motivation. A leader without followers, according to Maxwell (1998: 20) “is simply taking a walk.” Thus, without motivating people to follow – and, by inference, to do what should be done – the leader is set to fail. For any organisation to succeed in its endeavour, those involved must be sufficiently motivated to do the required work in the expected way. Indeed, any enterprise that fails here will die. For the Church, whose members are largely volunteers, motivation is critical. For most Christians, of course, the motivation for participation is partly spiritual and intrinsic: we recognise and acknowledge God’s grace in our salvation. But beyond that there is involvement in ministry itself and, while the intrinsic motivation is still essential, there is often the need or extrinsic motivation or specific tasks.

In this regard, Dawson identified motivation as, “1. Appreciating people. 2. Sharing responsibility; not overburdening people. If you give them too much, they become demotivated. Dividing burdens is an important element. 3. Showing people the objectives and goals of the vision. Showing them the finished picture (for example, I will paint a [word] picture of what the auditorium will look like when it’s finished and how we will use it and benefit from it.” Here, personal benefit is being used as extrinsic motivation to encourage people to contribute to the massive task of erecting a church building. But he also sees motivation from another angle: “Preaching: Can you imagine how a sinner would come to the Lord without any motivation?” he asks rhetorically. In this case, obviously, there is both intrinsic motivation (the work of the Holy Spirit) and extrinsic (the work of the preacher) motivation.

Dixon also sees motivation as having three perspectives: “First, being personal with people, showing you’re interested in them, not their gifts or what they can do. Second, when there is clear vision, when people know what they’re expected to do and how, that’s also great motivation. Third, [there should be] regular, consistent communication. This is important because it removes misunderstanding. Then you can come back to touch their heart.”



Interestingly, we see here a focus on genuineness and authenticity. The extrinsic motivation he provides as the leader is based on a sincere concern for people and their needs.

By contrast, George says motivation is very simple: Involve people. But how do you get them involved in the first place? I ask. “I give them the vision in the first place, and tell them the benefits of doing it.” Like Dixon, he also recognises the importance of communicating a vision. Followers need to be persuaded.

But then comes the question of how? Beki learned the hard way: “You need to approach people on a personal level, sharing your vision, aspirations; maybe inviting that person to join you. I tried to recruit from the pulpit – [it was] a total failure. You must approach people individually.” While some people are extrinsically motivated by announcements or pleas from the pulpit, a crucial element here is how that is done and the enthusiasm with which the message is presented. Often, however, there is little enthusiasm (especially if the person making the announcement is not the one appealing for help), and so, not unexpectedly, the response is often minimal. Greater enthusiasm is likely to gain a better response, but it is by no means guaranteed. Invariably with volunteers, a face-to-face approach is nearly always more successful.

Barnabas affirms this. “[You need to] recognise what the individual can do and speak to them on a one-to-one basis [to persuade them] that they can do it. Personal contact makes them feel important. They appreciate being recognised. It’s about interpersonal relationships. And giving them goals to run with. Then you have to compliment them when they’re finished.” Again, the relational emphasis is highlighted, together with personal encouragement.

By contrast, Chris finds this aspect difficult. “It [often] happens naturally. [It’s] not an easy issue. You need to understand the people you’re working with and get to know what they can and can’t do. That helps to plan how to best motivate them. Help them to see things outside their normal way; give them a vision – something to look forward to. Help them to understand how they can reach that stage; give them the reasons, the benefits.” While Chris clearly is less comfortable in this skill than Barnabas, the same elements of the personal touch and communicating purpose and value are still seen as crucial.

Because leadership is about influence, another important and related dynamic in this facet of administration is the use (and, often, abuse) of power and authority. These are linked not only to motivation and supervision but also to leadership style which, in turn, is impacted by personality, temperament and, in the Christian ministry context, one’s philosophy of ministry. And, while Christ stressed the need for servant leadership (see Matt. 20:25-28), it is not always clear how this can be practised given the propensity for followers to put their leaders



on a pedestal. Trying to be a servant is also made difficult when the world's system constantly says the leader must be 'on top'. We are taught to look up to our leaders, not down at them. Indeed, when they are doing a good job, it is hard sometimes not to idolise them. So how does one exercise appropriate authority and power while being a servant? Notably, secular management theory is now beginning to latch on to this concept as the right way to treat workers. But, when the pastor is revered as "a man of God", how does he exercise servanthood?

Power and authority also have cultural dynamics. One difficulty, however, is their similarity, which makes it awkward to clearly distinguish when each is manifest. A pointer to this difficulty is the fact that there is only one word in Ndebele – *mandla* = "power, force" – used for both concepts. In English usage, by contrast, the two are much more clearly characterized. But, conspicuously, none of my Ndebele co-researchers had this problem; for them, the two were clearly distinguishable.

Beki, for example, sees power and authority being used interchangeably. "It means knowing how much authority and power I have and how I should use them to edify the congregation. The pastor is also a member of the family of God; he still has to submit to others; he's still a Christian. Christ had all authority, but He was a people person and could come down to their level." Does that not then enhance the possibility of abuse? "Abuse has to do with your character; your understanding of what it means to be a leader or to be in ministry. For some, it's an advantage over other people. If you understand your authority, you will use it within the stipulated parameters. A lack of self confidence can make you abuse power. A lack of understanding of what it means to be a Christian leader; of servant leadership are also problems."

Beki here touches on several key issues. He speaks of knowing how much power and authority a leader has and of using them to edify. Abuse is more likely to occur when this understanding and appreciation is not fully present. If a leader does not know why such power and authority has been given in the first place, there is less likelihood of knowing how to use them wisely. They are not given for the sake of the leader but, as Beki rightly says, to edify others. Significantly, too, Beki sees the Christian leader as under authority himself. This is not only despite, but more importantly because of, his position. In my experience, sadly, there are some leaders who do not rightly appreciate this element and use their position not only to abuse their power and authority but, even, to excuse their abuse of it. And they misuse David's statement about Saul (1 Sam. 24:6; 26:9; 1 Chron. 1:22) in defence. "I am



only accountable to God,” they say. Yet, is not a servant also accountable to those he serves?

For Barnabas, too, there is a marked distinction between power and authority. “There are very clear differences. Power is manipulating. [It’s] a sense of control; of being in charge, of being felt. [For the most part] it’s negative. Authority is the office I hold as a priest; being given a licence from the Bishop to do the work in the parish. Authority is balanced by having the Church Council, the Wardens, a corporate authority [to whom I am accountable]. I don’t make all the decisions. Power is exerted when I make all the decisions. That’s not my character.”

Although he tends to see power mainly in negative terms, Barnabas rightly distinguishes the two elements. Authority is what you have; power is what you do with that. Power abused rejects accountability; authority accepted protects. Nevertheless, a wise leader can use power positively. Barnabas also sees the use and abuse of power as a character issue. As Beki noted, one who lacks self-confidence (for whatever reason) is more likely to abuse power to make up for the sense of loss.

Chris also sees a distinction, but in a slightly different way. “They are not the same. Authority comes with respect. Power comes with control. You need to be careful how you delegate. If you do it to help the person to realise what he’s doing, that will command respect.” I asked him if he struggles in this area. “It depends. Sometimes, one must take control, at other times you don’t have to. I do struggle with control because I like things done a certain way. When I delegate, I’ve had to work hard on this and not follow behind them. I don’t want to kill the person’s potential.” So, the motive for exercising power is part of the equation.

Interestingly, Dawson said the two aspects are the same, but then went on to show how they differ. “They are more or less the same,” he said, continuing, “Power is force; authority is the legal aspect of that power; the position I occupy.” So how do you use that? I ventured. “By virtue of my presence, people tend to do some things because I’m there; I use my physical presence a lot with people. For example, I was on the building site [for the new church] and so the workers worked hard. Presence makes people, compels people, to do things to their best. That also brings another aspect of relationship: My presence must be a father-figure so that they don’t feel threatened.”

But, unfortunately, fathers can also abuse! Moreover, it seems a very strong temptation, and difficult to resist, when, by virtue of your position, you are “given” power by the people beyond your ability to resist. I know a Zimbabwean Bishop of a large denomination with churches all



over the world who is chauffeured in a Mercedes Benz and whose chauffeur carries the Bishop's briefcase to the pulpit and even opens the Bible for him!

Following on from his 'father-figure' comment, I asked Dawson why this is. "Because people are relational. I've discovered something about people. I relate well to people but I have found some of my leaders don't. This affects the way they discharge their duties. One may ask someone to do it, but there's resentment because there's no relationship. But if I ask them to do it, there's no resistance because of our relationship. It compels people to do it much more effectively than without that relationship." So you would use your authority (position) as part of the motivational process? "Yes, but I don't push people." Here is a classic case of using a worldview dynamic in a potentially negative situation to produce a positive result.

Dixon articulated the difficulty with power and authority well. "There's a fine dividing line here. Power has to be used. There are different levels: coercive and non-coercive. Power is good, but it depends on which type. If you are a leader, you will have to exercise power. You can't have power without authority. It's tricky. When you're in authority as a leader, you have power. They are tied very closely. Power can be oppressive; that demotivates. Team ministry goes down. They're afraid of you; things go quiet when you walk into the room. [Former South African President Nelson] Mandela is a good example. His authority is controlled; therefore the people give him the power. Our president is dictatorial; he forces his power on the people. When there's a biblical balance, you earn the respect; if not, they actually hate you."

By contrast, George had a different perspective. "Power and authority are [about] self-satisfaction. They are being able to command others to do things at your will. It's not a priority; my job is to empower." He seems to view the use of power and authority as separate from empowering; yet to do the one you must use the others. He sees both power and authority as having to do with ego and self – and by implication, bound to be abused. He may well be right in the negative sense; but neither needs automatically to be abused.

Another aspect of leading linked to delegation, motivation, power and authority is that of supervision. Since the leader cannot – and is not expected to – do everything alone, working with others is a given. Indeed, a key ethos for the Church is that of body life: after all, the giving of spiritual gifts shows God's expectation that everyone is to be involved in His kingdom work. This is reflected in the New Testament concept of the priesthood of all believers. So, apart from the leader delegating tasks, there must also be supervision, since the leader remains ultimately accountable.



Again, there are different assumptions about this that translate into various approaches. There are two extremes. One is the “hands-off altogether” approach: just delegate, motivate ... and let the person get on with it until they’re finished (hopefully). The opposite is the “hands-on” approach where, having delegated the task, there is no responsibility given with it and, instead, there is a constant ‘looking-over-the-shoulder-to-check-up-on-you mentality’. Neither of these, of course, is recommended. They reflect a number of dynamics from ignorance about leading, delegating and supervising through unwise assumptions about people to suspicion, a lack of self-confidence and downright fear. So, a critical question is, ‘How much supervision is enough?’

For George, this depends on the person. “If I’m dealing with a new person, the supervision is more constant. As I become more confident [with the person], I reduce the supervision.”

Likewise, Beki says that, having explained to an individual the task that needs to be done, and maybe giving him the tools to do the job, “then I check on him once in a while to see if he’s on track or needs help. It’s not looking over his shoulder – that kills initiative, creativity and motivation.”

Barnabas, speaking about the parish staff, is more conversational and relaxed, but also sees another important dimension behind supervision: “[It is] relating to people; not talking down [to them], but having a conversation with them. I’m not the boss, but I still retain my authority.” In other words, supervision is an on-going exercise, maintaining relationships and ensuring the work is done to expectation. But, significantly, he also sees it as an opportunity to minister into the workers’ lives. It is more than just ‘checking up on your work’. This is, perhaps, a dynamic of leadership in the Christian context that could be emphasised more.

Chris, on the other hand – and rather tongue in cheek – suggested that supervision is not so much how often but just how? Said he: “[It’s] carrying a whip and making everyone jump! [It’s] following up and making sure things are being done.” For him, then, supervision is about confirmation; ensuring that delegated tasks and responsibilities are carried out properly. Similarly, Dawson sees supervision very simply as “monitoring and managing” – without regard to how often. And, as part of managing, it is a people-oriented task.

While Dixon also sees supervision in terms of monitoring, he views it more comprehensively. “Monitoring is the processes you set in planning. It gives continued leadership and makes sure objectives are accomplished. You can do this in partnership, linking with others. I look at our second [leader’s planning] retreat as supervising the initial process.” Here, supervision is not about frequency but on-going value and purpose.



Although supervision can be linked to the controlling factor of administration as a facet of evaluation, I have chosen to include it as a facet of leading because I feel that most supervision is usually meant to be understood positively as facilitating rather than negatively as monitoring. However, I recognise this is probably a moot point. Still, I have presented it last under this section as a natural precursor into the next.

As we have seen, the leading component is complex and involves several sub-components that impinge on the assumptions behind and praxis of administration. It has been interesting to discover that much of this element is tied to personality and temperament and that leadership is governed less by cultural dynamics than personality. Nevertheless, there are some worldview factors that do influence how one leads and why. Chief among these, as expected, is that of relationships and its concomitant of community.

1.2.1.6 *Controlling* –

No-one in a position of responsibility wants to do a bad job. No-one likes being criticised (especially unjustifiably.) But because the nature of responsibility and accountability requires it, there is need for evaluation and measurement.

Administration, as noted, also involves the issue of policies and procedures. Where these are not followed, crisis or disaster may occur. Thus, there is need for control mechanisms to prevent inappropriate or unwise actions as much as possible. Yet, even when these are in place, there is no guarantee that the work will be done correctly. A recent newspaper article (*Zimbabwe Independent*, Ap. 7-13, 2006: p. 1A) will illustrate:

Government accountant general Judith Madzorere has expressed reservations in the way the state is managing its finances. In a special report by the Public Accounts Committee on Financial Management in the Public Sector, the committee quoted the accountant general as saying there was a lack of discipline in the way ministries handle their books, resulting in government failing to account for billions of dollars. Some ministries have not been submitting financial statement for three years. ... She said government was losing billions of dollars because there were no adequate internal checks and balances. [No less than 11 ministries, including the President's Office and the Ministry of Finance itself were named as having violated the laws.]

Quite apart from the obvious question of the missing funds, this raises important questions about the lack of administration: Assuming the policies and procedures were in place from previous years, and assuming the checks and balances were adequate (as evidenced from the past), why were they ignored and not followed now? Alternatively, if these were all absent, why were they removed (assuming they were in place previously)? What does this say –



administratively – about those responsible for supervising, monitoring, evaluating and measuring? And, if there was any monitoring, what standards were used and why were they ignored? Presumably, there was no monitoring or standards – why not?

Moreover, no human endeavour can ever be perfect; there are bound to be mistakes somewhere at some time. And, even if a job is done very well, there is always room for improvement. We have also mentioned several skills associated with administration in particular, as well as with leadership and management. Obviously, where skills are involved, there is room for either high or poor performance. These are evaluated, in some cases formally but in many cases, informally.

Hence, within this fifth component of administration – Controlling – we include the twin elements of evaluating and measuring. And, within these, as additional sub-categories, we must also speak to the dual facets of correction and discipline. After all, the positive intent of all evaluation is improvement. Then, before one can criticise justifiably and prior to any corrective action or discipline, it is necessary to set standards – which is yet another factor.

But, as with anything requiring measurement, what are the criteria? How do we measure and on what basis? While it is clear from the above that evaluation and measurement are universal entities, what is open to debate is whether the methodologies are culturally relative or not. This we hope to explore further. Are their worldview factors for the Shona and Ndebele that determine how evaluation is done, communicated and received? What measuring tools are considered appropriate given the respective worldviews? Why? How is discipline effected in the light of these worldview factors? And, lastly, in the Christian ministry context, what do Scriptural procedures for discipline say here? (This last question will be considered in more detail under the section on “Theology” and in Chapter Seven.)

The nature of evaluation is such that it can be viewed both positively and negatively. In daily life, we are constantly evaluating both ourselves and others in many small, informal ways. For instance, I might look in the mirror and notice a small tear in my shirt; I will evaluate the situation and determine whether I can continue to wear the shirt or not. Or I might comment to a work colleague that they do not look too well and ask how they are feeling. Or I might watch a programme on television and decide it is not worth continuing and either change channels or switch off altogether. Or I might glance at the front cover of a book and read the blurb on the back before deciding whether or not to read it. These types of evaluation tend to be non-threatening and, therefore, we are not typically anxious about them. But where evaluation does become threatening – and especially where criticism may be hurtful – the sense of anxiety increases. This is most often seen in formal evaluations by superiors of their junior



workers in annual reviews; it is commonly a nerve-wracking time. Yet, in order to receive valid criticism from others, we must first be ready to critique ourselves – difficult as this may be.

In this regard, Barnabas says he listens to what people are saying. “That tells me where I’m going wrong. I listen to my Council and Wardens – that’s crucial. I have a monthly meeting with the Wardens and Treasurer, the sub-deacons and lay workers for the sick. Another area is responses to sermons.” While this provides some sound platforms for evaluation and correction, however, being willing to actually receive such criticism is a different matter. But is the way one responds to criticism culturally determined or part of one’s personality?

In describing his evaluation procedure, Chris commented: “For example, for an event or project, having planned and organised, you’d want to sit down now that it’s over. Has it been accomplished? Why not? How? How did I perform? Could I have done it better? I also struggle with failure; it’s a weakness. I always like to do something well.” I asked him whether this has come from socialisation – school – or from his worldview. “Pressure from parents to do things well. Also, I’m a doer, an action person. I enjoy looking back at what I’ve done. I need to prepare better for next time.” So, Chris not only understands evaluation, he wants to do it. But the drive for that seems to be from within, not the result of worldview.

For Dawson, evaluation is both difficult psychologically and straightforward in terms of style. “This is always difficult. I tend to forget this. I measure whether the goals are achieved or not. If they’re accomplished, that’s a good sign for evaluation.” Are you suggesting then, I asked, that quality is not important, only results? “No, as you check, the process is also evaluated.” In this case, it is fairly simple it seems: if the goal has been achieved, you have evaluated and the effort has succeeded. However, this says nothing about the quality of that achievement. You could have a building project and take 25 years to complete it instead of 25 months; the mere fact of finishing it says nothing about its quality or the extra expense because of the time delays. Hence, we see that evaluation and measurement must include elements of quality assessment, not just whether a task has been completed or not.

Dixon has a somewhat similar approach, but more substantial. “I work with an executive team. I’m constantly asking [questions]. Often I see in them reluctance. I don’t know whether that’s because they’re afraid of me or what. I realise they have a lot of grace when they speak. But I stress that I need to hear both the good and the bad.” Do you have a problem with them going to others about the weakness? “This is a sore point. We had an example of that recently. So I called the person in; I was concerned that they couldn’t come to me direct. But sometimes, I have found out about things myself by listening to general criticisms of things I’ve put into the project (not attacking me directly).”



George did not specify any criteria. “I’m also a man under authority. I have set parameters with what I do, so I have to check with my superiors.” In other words, he defers self-criticism to others, which he is willing to accept because they are in authority over him. But this, surely, does not apply to every evaluation – that would be too pedantic.

Beki is obviously more personal and concrete in his evaluation: “I set goals for myself (annually/monthly) and try to achieve them. At the end of the time period, I ask what I’ve achieved. What did I fail to achieve? Why? How can I avoid these failures in the future? Maybe what I wanted was too much, so I challenge myself to come up with things that are measurable within a given time period. Sometimes we compare ourselves with others, but we’re all different in terms of skills and abilities.”

From personal evaluation, we then moved on to considering others.

Beki reckons such evaluation is easy: “It is, if you’ve sat down with them and explained what you want and how; where you have succeeded and failed. If they don’t know what is expected, then you can’t evaluate.” He went on: “There is constructive and destructive criticism. [With] constructive criticism, you’re working on the basis of what you’ve told him. Destructive criticism comes hard on the person without giving them direction.” For Beki, then, appraisal clearly has a positive, purposeful side to it, but he recognises that it must be done in a way that builds up rather than tears down.

Likewise, George has two dimensions to evaluation: “(1) [You need to] set parameters and (2) [You need to] look at whether goals are being achieved.” While this is true, assessment is more than simply defining limits and accomplishing goals. It seems he did not consider the issues of standards and quality. Thresholds may be set and goals achieved, but how efficiently and effectively was this done? That said, George also sees evaluation as positive. “Evaluation is putting value to a thing; seeing that the goals are met. [You] need to know whether you’re on the right direction or not.” So, a fundamental purpose of evaluation seems to be more the completion of the task than the enhancement of the person doing it.

For Dixon, it is critical that expectations are communicated and understood well. “I make sure that the end result is clearly known and they understand the description of the work they’re supposed to be doing. What do you want to achieve? What do you want to learn from the person? What deviations are there – you need to explain that. You need to understand the project. You need to understand the right questions. Evaluations can be used for the future and to know weaknesses and strengths so they can improve.”



Here we see several interesting dynamics. The importance of knowing the end result and of understanding expectations is plain. Another critical factor in the process is stating what discrepancies are allowed – that is, what leeway in terms of standards or, even, ‘mistakes’ is permissible. Sometimes, we delegate a task expecting the person to do it exactly the same way we would and are then surprised (upset, perhaps?) when it is done differently. But he also sees a two-way street: both parties can learn from each other – an element that is often not appreciated in this context. Frequently, criticism is given “top down” without any expectation of input from the ‘junior’. Yet, if evaluation is seen as a component of the whole project and approached as discipleship, there may well be benefits for both parties. Also, Dixon points to the future – again, this is not a common feature in many cases, although formal evaluation is often done to avoid a repetition of mistakes in the future.

Dawson uses the same criteria – the accomplishment of goals – for others as he does for himself. Patently, though, this can be simplistic and superficial. How effectively have the goals been accomplished; what qualitative factors are involved here and what do we need to avoid for the future? If we were to do it again, would we change anything? These questions may be implied but, presumably, in not articulating them, he does not consider them that important. Significantly, however, he is upbeat about the positive benefits of evaluation. “[I see it as a] very positive thing. Otherwise we may not do very much. As we read Scripture, [we see] Jesus saying, ‘I’ve finished My work ...’ [Jn. 19:30]. That is good evaluation. Paul [2 Tim. 4:7] says, ‘I’ve finished the race.’ [Again] that is evaluation. And David served God’s purpose [Acts 13:36], which shows there was evaluation.”

Chris sees two aspects, one seemingly negative and one positive: “I go back to planning. What was the original [intention]; what went wrong?” The assumption here, apparently, is that evaluation is mainly to check on mistakes and failure. However, from a positive point of view, he would “also look at the people involved – [their] skills, abilities, calibre.” In other words, are these the best people for the job? In this sense, then, a key factor in the evaluation process is checking that delegation was done correctly in the first place. Hopefully, too, there is the element here of correction for the future – otherwise, why ask these types of questions? And the process can be beneficial. “[You] may crack your heads [but] if you have the tools, if you’ve done the planning and organising, [then] you have a point of reference and are not operating in a vacuum.” In other words, depending on how you have prepared the whole administrative process, evaluation at the end can profit all round.

Barnabas was honest: “I tend to be judgemental. [I evaluate] on the basis of the completed job. If they haven’t put their best foot forward [I’ll let them know]. I expect a lot from people.”



But what is that; what is, at least, the basic minimum? “I expect the work to be done to the minimum acceptable standard. (I don’t expect the floor to be shining, but I expect it to be clean, not dusty.) I ask what I would expect of myself; that’s what I expect of others.” This approach also has its strengths and weaknesses. Yes, there are standards on the one hand, and it is good to communicate high expectations, otherwise mediocrity sets in. Yet, on the other hand, these standards may not be well articulated. And, if you happen to be a perfectionist, those standards may be too high! Does he see evaluation as positive or negative? “Positive. It’s good to be criticised. I prefer objective criticism. You should build the person.” Whereas, criticism is often given – and received – with a negative frame of mind, Barnabas sees it as a tool for affirming, building and shaping. Indeed, this is part of discipleship.

These observations on the fifth element of administration – controlling – while not exhaustive (other factors will be explored in more depth in the focus group interviews), nevertheless identify the core aspects of evaluation, measurement, standards, correction and discipline. Interestingly, the main focus seems to be on the extent to which the goal or task has been achieved, rather than on the person involved. At the same time, encouragingly, there was some insight that evaluation should be seen positively rather than negatively. However, there was a lack of clarity on measurement and standards – and very little was said about correction. (Discipline will be examined from a Christian perspective in somewhat more detail in the next section and again in Chapter Seven.)

1.2.1.7 *Theology* –

Since Chapter Seven will focus specifically on the development of a theology of administration, I will only make some preliminary comments here in the light of the introductory questions at this stage in the process. Somewhat more detail will be given in the focus group section later.

In including this topic in the individual interviews, I wanted to establish the degree to which there was any insight about administration from a Scriptural point of view and, more particularly, to ascertain whether any of my co-researchers had given any thought to this issue theologically. It was apparent, as I suspected, that virtually all of the pastors had difficulty articulating a theology of administration. They all attempted it, in varying degrees, but it was obvious that most have given this little, if any, prior thought at all. In one sense, this is not surprising since the Church, typically, does not challenge us to consider the topic. Nor, it seems, do Bible schools. Yet, as is becoming all too plain, administration, like the tentacles of a spider web, is inextricably linked to every facet of an enterprise’s operations. This suggests



that, where the Church has not clearly articulated a theology of administration, she has inadvertently hamstrung herself. My co-researchers' comments are insightful in this respect. I began this segment of the enquiry by asking if they saw God being interested in administration in any way.

Barnabas strongly affirmed this: "Yes. In the Old Testament, we see how the angel gave precise measurements for the temple [1 Kings 6:1-38]. The detail [is phenomenal]. The same with Noah's Ark [Gen 6:14-21]. [Then there were] the seven years of drought with Joseph [who served Egypt] as the chief administrator." [Gen. 47:13-26] As an afterthought, he added: "And God doesn't like laziness."

We see two insights here. First, there is recognition of God's attention to detail which, as we have already noted, is a requirement of effective administration. Second, there is the interesting insight of laziness. I do not think Barnabas was suggesting here that all those who are not administrators are lazy, or that God was setting this as a unique standard for administrators. Rather, he was merely affirming that God's expectation is for diligence, responsibility and sound stewardship – all hallmarks of solid leadership, management and administration.

Likewise, Chris agreed that administration is evident in Scripture. "I think it's there. In the Old Testament, [we have] Moses and Jethro [e.g. Ex. 18:13-26]. In the New Testament, some brethren felt they were left out in the [food] distribution, but the Church appointed people to be responsible (Acts 6:1-6)."

Dawson, while also agreeing, took a different tack: "When God created the universe, the way in which the process of creation [is outlined in Genesis 1], it sounds like God showed us that administration is very important. [In fact], the system and process He set up to operate is described as very good. When He put man in the Garden and instructed him to do things, it sounds as if He is very keen [for proper order and systems]." In other words, he says, God's acts of Creation demonstrate purpose, method and orderliness – all the hallmarks of an administrative mind-set.

Similarly, Dixon concurred: "Yes, it's stewardship. God is interested in this. Paul tells Timothy [1 Tim. 5:17] that those who are working hard are worth double honour. The Scriptures talk about laziness (e.g. Proverbs) and the sluggard. [We are called to] learn from the ants [Prov. 6:6]. David led Israel with skill and integrity (Ps. 78:72). He was a skilful leader in organising his soldiers. [And we] see Jethro with Moses."



George, equally, sees such a mind-set in Scripture: “[We see this] in Genesis: in Creation, God created man to administer what He had already created. Why did He choose Abraham? [One reason was] because He had seen the administration skills in him – [and that] he would pass on the message to all his children.” I am not sure that we naturally tend to see Abraham as an administrator, but the fact that he became very wealthy reflects not only Yahweh’s blessing upon him but also the requisite skills to develop and maintain what, in those days, would have been a very large agro-industry operation (see for example, Gen. 13:2; 24:35; 26:12-14).

And Beki, too, affirmed the general idea: “Yes, God is interested in administration, especially the idea of planning. When God was speaking to Noah about the ark, this needed planning in terms of measurements and resources. [There was also] the building of the tabernacle: Moses had to go to the people for these items [Ex. 26:1-37]. God is an administrator. Even Creation shows how good God is in planning: He does things in order, not haphazardly – the first day, the second day, and so on. And Paul talks about doing things in an orderly way [1 Cor. 14:40; Col. 2:5].”

Patently, then, there is the realisation here of God having an administrative mind-set, even though this may not be commonly articulated as such. Although this will be explored in more detail in Chapter Seven, this is a crucial acknowledgement at this point for, if God were not interested in administration, there would be no need, nor would it be possible, to develop a theology of administration – and, consequently, the Church would have few direct guidelines on how to function; chaos and confusion would reign supreme. (Perhaps it could be argued that part of the – at least functional – weakness of the Church is somewhat due to the lack of a well articulated theology of administration and that, if this were adequately expressed, there would be much improved functionality with a resultantly better testimony!)

But, the fact that God’s administrative mind-set has been acknowledged must lead us further. As we then next delved briefly into the main components, my co-researchers became more animated about the idea. We spoke first about the concept of time as the basis for all God’s acts within which man must also operate. I asked them if God is interested in time.

“Yes, because it’s part of His purpose,” said Barnabas. “To overcome chaos, time must be set aside for each phase. Whatever we do in the parish reflects a God of order. Gen 1 – creation – it didn’t just happen. We’re called to that by God; to use our time efficiently because God hates wastage.”

Chris also agreed that God is interested in time, saying, “[Scripture] talks about 40 years, seven days Yes [God is interested in time]. Because, look at Creation, for example.



Things are done in a certain period, then there's a time for resting; things didn't just happen. [There is] sunset and sunrise. Jesus says, 'Let's get the work done while it's still day time.' [see Jn. 9:4] I see us coming from somewhere and going somewhere. [Gen. 1:1 says,] 'In the beginning ...'." However, while readily acknowledging the concept of time in Scripture (which, incidentally, is a theological study in its own right), that does not necessarily indicate the extent of God's supposed interest in time.

But Dixon made a better job of answering the question. He began by quoting Eccl. 3:1 saying, "There's time to do specific things, and when we miss out on this (*chronos*) we can't re-collect it once we lose it. God wants us to make use of our time. So our worldview of time has to change. I'm always fighting my rural pastors. You should have a plan for each day. You don't need an office. As a preacher, I make notes and I can look and see what doctrinal areas I've covered and what not. We tend to ride on experience because we've been a bad steward of our time. Jesus only had three years to do his ministry. He told us that 'the time is coming when ...' [see, e.g. Jn. 16:25, 32] Here we are alerted to the idea of stewardship and to the possibility that our worldview of time and what we do with it may have to change. Why? Because there is a theological reason for time. (This will be explored further in Chapter Seven.)

The theological question that arises out of this, however, is whether God sees a link between, and has a reason for, earthly time (that is, history) and eternity. In other words, if God's Kingdom is working toward eternity, why bother to have history (time)? Is there a connection, and if so, what is it?

Dawson suggests there is a link. "I think so. In my opinion, I am not sure if at the beginning of Creation, God was concerned about time. When Adam and Eve were created, He gave them the leeway to eat of the tree of life. This should have given them eternity. But God tells them they will die if they eat the fruit. If Adam hadn't eaten that, he wouldn't have died. So, God only bound himself to time or He only operated in time after the Fall of Man. That's when the "probation of man" (from birth to death) comes in; outside of this, there doesn't seem to be any point to time. Time only appears from when man sinned and ends when God ends this order. Therefore, time only relates to our lifespan on earth and nothing else. When Adam fell, God said, 'We should drive man out unless he lives forever.' This is the cutting point from eternity. If Adam had eaten of the fruit of life, he would have been in eternity. But God has to give us a period to be reconciled to him. Sin necessitated time so that we can reconcile to God; then we're ushered into eternity. God has put Himself in to our time in order for Him to accomplish



certain purposes through us because we're operating in time, although he himself operates in a different way."

This raises some interesting thoughts. While it would appear that the offer to Adam of eternity implied a non-value of time, such that time only became valuable after the Fall, the question arises as to why God introduced time as the outcome of His first act of Creation ("Let there be light ... and He separated the light from the darkness. God called the light 'day' and the darkness He called 'night'. And there was evening and there was morning – the first day." – Gen. 1:3-5)? Was there no purpose of time before the Fall? Second, it is incorrect, as the above reference indicates, that time only appeared when man sinned (Gen. 3). Third, he says sin necessitated time so that we can be reconciled to God. But that suggests that there was, indeed, no purpose of time before the Fall and, therefore, no reason for God to initiate it as early as He did. While it is true that reconciliation takes time – and perhaps the greater the rebellion, the more time is needed – that in itself does not satisfy.

Dixon, by contrast reverses the rationale, "We can only understand time in eternity if we understand time now. The Scriptures talk about 1000 years being just a day from the Lord's perspective [2 Pet. 3:8]. Unless we understand time as now, we may fail to see the urgency of the task of the church to reach out, to be salt and light to people. Eternity, in the natural mind, just baffles us. God already knows about tomorrow; it's too profound. But it's also a call to be serious: the people of Issachar understood the times they lived in [1 Chron. 12:32]. If we understand time now, we can preach seriously. We won't waste time telling stories. People need to honour God; when we have this perspective, everything changes."

Yes, it is true that there is an urgency to preach and teach. But that does not on its own, in my view, provide a strong enough *theological* reason for the purpose of time. Again, this is demonstrated by the existence of time before the Fall.

George has a similar view to Dixon: "History shows where we came from. We now check on the right and wrong of the past for the better. God made time so that we become better." So I asked him why we can't become better in eternity. "Because we'll be making up for all the mistakes of the past." But there's no past in eternity. "Time helps us to know that we're moving toward eternity. It's a governor, a controller. So that we know we're not stagnant. Jesus said the fig tree blooming shows that the rains are about to come [Matt. 24:32]."

So, for George, time serves the dual purpose of sinners "becoming better" and as an aid to help us understand that eternity is coming. But, again, I'm not convinced that either of these are sound *theological* reasons for time.



Beki suggests the theological purpose of history “Has to do with showing how the earthly kingdom functions and what the heavenly kingdom is like; the difference between the two. The earthly kingdom has a start and an end, but the heavenly kingdom has no beginning and no end; it is perfect.” This implies that time exists to better define or interpret eternity. Since eternity is a difficult concept for finite man to grasp and understand, that seems fairly reasonable – but I’m still not convinced that it’s the only, or main, reason for time.

Barnabas, again, was honest: “I hadn’t thought about it.” Then, after a pause, he offered, “[With] Adam and Eve, the implication [is that] before the deed was done [there] is eternity. God didn’t want decay, but a sense of foreverness. But this can’t be in our present state; we have to die because of our sinful nature. There has to be a stop to the rottenness.” In other words, Barnabas sees God’s purpose for time as being to take care of, to deal with, sin. I would concur and add that time allows man – within a finite existence – to appreciate, on the one hand, the enormity, the terribleness and the tragedy of sin while, at the same time, having the opportunity of seeing something of God’s holiness, purity and glory through Creation and learning of the goodness of good on the other.

We then moved to the second component, planning. I asked my co-researchers if they felt God is a planner and interested in planning.

“Yes,” said Chris, pointing to the fourth Commandment: “For six days you shall work, and on the seventh, you must rest.” [Ex. 20:8]. Without elaborating, the implication is that God had arranged the process of Creation and planned a break at the end of it all.

Dixon said God expects us to plan. He referred to Prov. 16:3 saying, “When we commit our plans into the Lord’s hand, He will direct our footsteps. God wants us to plan. He wants us to prepare messages. Some even misinterpret Scripture ([that] the Holy Spirit will remind you is totally out of context) – it has nothing to do with writing exams, planning or preparation. It’s not about inspiration. John Maxwell says, ‘Failure to plan is planning to fail.’ When we commit our plans to the Lord, He will cause us to succeed. As we hear from Him, we adjust our intentions. He is a planner Himself – look at Creation.”

The observation here is that, since God evidently expects us to plan – as demonstrated in wanting us to do things for Him – He must have a planning mind-set. Moreover, that He promises to make what we commit to Him succeed also implies some degree of planning on our part. Creation, says Dixon, shows that God is a planner.

Similarly, George used the principle in Proverbs and the example of Creation as pointers: “Planning is for us, to think about the future. But the one who makes those plans succeed is



God. In the Creation process, He didn't do everything in one go – which shows He had a plan. There was a sequence. The stages all fit together.”

In the same vein, we discussed God as an organiser. I asked whether Scripture reveals anything about this.

Beki responded, “The Old Testament genealogies show that God knows His people. [In] Numbers we see various censuses, with the people being organised into clans and tribes. In the New Testament, we see Jesus organising His disciples (for example, the 72 sent out in twos [Lk. 10:1]; the calling of the 12 [Mk. 1:14-20]); the feeding of the people (He told them to sit in groups and told disciples not to throw away the leftovers [Matt. 14:13-21 and 15:29-39].)”

Barnabas had a similar idea: “Yes [God is interested in organising]. For example, the disciples feeding the 5000 – [they were] put into groups. Afterwards, they collected the food – don't litter the neighbourhood! You can't do this without planning and organising. The 72 being sent out: there was a format, [they were] given instructions and they came back. If they'd broken the instructions, they'd have been in trouble. How do you lead people for 40 years in the desert? See the 12 tribes. Look at the Judges period. Aaron was made Moses' speaker. All that shows organisation. [You have the] elders of the nation of Israel; the disciples to look after the widows while the apostles did the preaching. [There's the] raising of funds for preaching (Paul [2 Cor. 8:1-15; 9:1-15]). [And there's] being community. In the corporate world you have individualism but in Scripture we see community; everyone benefits.”

Chris, too, sees the organising component: “Helping the brethren with distribution [Acts 6:1-5] points to structure and method.”

Stating the fundamental principle, Dawson affirms, “Order only comes from organising. God is a God of order, so there must be organising. Paul speaks of spiritual gifts and orderliness [Rom. 12: 4-8; 1 Cor. 12:27-31; 14:26-35,40].” As noted previously, one aspect of sound administration is structure, method or order. This cannot properly be achieved without a disciplined, orderly mind-set.

Dixon looks to natural revelation to illustrate his point: “The scientists didn't discover that the world is round. The Scriptures already told us it was: Is. 40:12 says, ‘Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand?’ while v. 22 states, ‘He sits enthroned upon the circle of the earth ...’ We can see this with satellites today. The Matopos [a large rocky area of granite



hills and *kopjies* outside Bulawayo] will never topple over. It's all planned and organised. [In fact,] you can't do anything without planning and organising.”

George, by contrast, struggled with this question. “Not off hand. David was a good organiser of his army. Solomon. Paul [without offering any illustrations for either].” Evidently, this is not an area that he had contemplated.

We next moved to the issue of leading. This ought to be obvious, given God's dealings with His people through the aeons. But considering whether God *is* leading – as opposed to the people following merely because He is God – may be a little more difficult to ascertain. We should be mindful, of course, that God's dealings with His people and, indeed, the characters portrayed in Scripture, have provided us with solid examples of both good and bad leadership. Many scholars and popular authors have written about leadership principles because of this wealth of material. However, all that subsumes that God already has the mind-set to lead. That may be a logical step, but the question must still be asked all the same. Bear in mind, too, that as we work toward a theology of administration, we must address the theological question of the purpose of leading to begin with.

I asked Dawson if there is a Godly way to lead. “Yes,” he confirmed confidently. First, Jesus taught servant leadership [Matt. 20:25-28]. [He] always [had] a servant approach. Second, we don't want to dominate. Godly leadership is by example. We have to emulate and be emulated. We don't tell people to do what we're not willing to do ourselves. Third, love. When you love people, you can sacrifice. Sacrifice is not in the world. When you serve, you sacrifice; you can do outrageous things. I've seen how wonderful it is when you do things because you love people.”

While these may be sound leadership principles, they do not necessarily address the finer question of whether God is actually leading because that is who He is. However, we can say that Jesus would not have enjoined His disciples to do something He was not willing to do or did not see as important Himself. Hence, in pointing to the principle of servant leadership, we can confidently infer that is what God thinks about leading. Indeed, the fact that Jesus did that as well as taught it as an expectation shows us this is the case. Likewise, that God was prepared to sacrifice His only Son – and that Jesus was prepared to be sacrificed – also show clearly the manifestation of this trait and mind-set. No-one can willingly go through the agony of the Cross if there is no emotional acceptance of the notion.

Dixon also pointed to Jesus' example of servant leadership: “Jesus is the greatest Leader. He has taught us what it is to lead. It is ‘the towel before the title.’ This is the ultimate. This is the



perfect way of spiritual leadership. Jesus is the epitome of leadership. There is a paradox in servant leadership. He has power and authority, but at the same time He was a servant.”

Similarly, George used the same example, albeit with a slightly different explanation: “Yes [there is a godly way to lead]. Not from the front, but from the back, not from the top, but the bottom. [That’s] servant leadership. This is when you are their leader; you don’t pull them by the nose. That’s why I am concerned about influence, not power. Secular leaders use power, while Christian leaders should use influence.”

Again, this is looking more at the how rather than the why. Nevertheless, we can consider the issue of power versus influence at this juncture. God, being all-powerful, could simply use His might to accomplish all He wants. But that would not square with His grace and mercy; nor would it illicit a genuine love from His “followers”. No, God needs to demonstrate His power so that we learn to respect Him, but He must also encourage intrinsic motivation for His people to follow obediently. While no-one on the team explicitly upheld this, I think it would be safe to aver that they would agree.

Beki implied this the most when he said, “Scripture gives us the criteria about leading. It’s all in the Bible. It has to do with God and our relationship with Him; obeying what God says in His Word. Godly leadership revolves around Him and glorifying Him, not ourselves.” In other words, ultimately, it is the glory of God at stake. If He does not lead properly and if His people do not learn to lead properly, He will not get the glory He deserves. In the end, respect, awe and glory are earned; if you do things the wrong way, they will not be reflected.

Equally, Barnabas commented “Yes. [This is] leading in a different mind set – you’re exposing a different ethos, attitudes. [You’re] looking at discipline, principled people, having a moral standard.” So what about servant leadership? I asked. “Yes, but you’re still clear as to where you’re going. The servant articulates a goal while being humble. For example, Mahatma Gandhi knew where India should go. Martin Luther King, Jr. [understood] freedom of the neighbour, but he was leading the American people. Servanthood is not to be submissive in a blind way. But it is to exercise authority from your baptism. We renounce the devil, we lead the world.”

Likewise, Chris said much the same, albeit from a varied angle. He highlighted the distinction between secular and Godly leadership. “When I compare secular leadership and the Christian way, there is a difference. For example, I see the secular approach emphasising results versus the Christian that also looks at results but emphasises the people too. The world wants the best, regardless of the “cost” to people. The Christian way says people are important.”



All these insights point up at least one strategic factor: God leads – and expects His people to lead – differently from that of the secular world. This should not surprise us since God is who He is and is not of this world anyway. His whole mission is to bring glory to His righteous Self. Thus, we conclude that God does indeed have a mind-set to lead, not only because He shows us a model through His Son but also because, if He did not, there would not be the desired followership or the results that should come from that.

As we come to the final sub-topic in this stage of the interview process, we briefly examine what theological basis there may be for evaluation. I asked my co-researchers if there is a typical way that God evaluates.

Dixon understood the question from the human perspective and so responded: “One must be faithful to Scripture and the Word of God. God cannot compromise in the way He evaluates. Either we’re living according to His way, or we’re not. This is obedience or disobedience (Josh. 1:8). Deut. 6:6 and 11:19 exhort us to “Teach these laws ...” True leadership is done God’s way. There are many doing things today in a worldly way. There seems to be growth, but in the end it’s destruction. If you’re not doing it God’s way, it will catch up with you. Many are only interested in materialism (Kenneth Hagin and others); this is arrogance. God will judge our leadership by His Word.”

George commented: “We are under evaluation every day.” How? “He uses other people. We are under God’s authority; so there are people above us who will be checking up on us. He would raise prophets to remind Israel they are going astray. If they refused, He would send pagans to mete out His judgement over them.” Why does He do it this way? “Because He’s God; you can’t question Him. He created everything. Being a Christian is the grace of God, so He can use anyone to mete out His judgement.

By contrast, Beki considered a key theological factor: “The Judgement is the final evaluation. God has told us what He expects of us and the kind of life he wants. In the end, He will evaluate each person according to what he has done [Jer. 17:10; Matt. 16:27; 1 Pet. 4:5; Rev. 20:13].” Why does He do it this way? “He’s the God of the second chance, a God of grace and a God who says: ‘Son, you have fallen, but you can do it.’ In the Old Testament, we see a God with grace, but this is more so in the New Testament. Within His judgement there is also grace.”

Referring to other Scriptures, Barnabas said, “See the churches in Revelation 2 and 3. Look at Jesus and the fig tree [Matt, 24:32] – you see judgement. Then there are God’s expectations: for instance, the parables of the talents or the ten virgins. God deals more harshly with us as pastors because we’ve entered a domain that others have not entered. He



will deal more harshly with us than the ordinary people (Jms. 3:1).” Here he highlights the issue of responsibility, especially those in leadership or positions of influence.

Chris took the same line: “The Scriptures give us a blueprint of what He expects of us. We can’t avoid this or checking whether we’ve done what He wanted. We’re also waiting for the Day of Judgement.” Again, the essence of responsibility is there, but we are also reminded that God has already set the standard; therefore, there must be an evaluation: have we lived accordingly?

Thinking about this question, Dawson reflected that, “Revelation talks about books and a Book [20:12]; it sounds as if life is only recorded in one book, that is, eternal life or salvation. The other activities that make up our lives are recorded elsewhere. God searches the intents of our hearts to see how we are doing [1 Chron. 28:9]; this helps me to evaluate myself.” The idea here, of course, is that God would not record our deeds and promise judgement if there was going to be no evaluation in the end. Hence, God must have a sense of measurement. Indeed, He cannot speak of obedience and disobedience without such a concept in mind.

My final question in this section was an attempt to encapsulate a broad theology of administration. For some, this was difficult to articulate, especially considering that they had not been given any prior warning to prepare for this question. But that would have defeated the object of this particular exercise at this point anyway. It was important that I record their *ad hoc* responses, since that would be a true indication of their reflection on the subject.

Dawson, like a couple of others, admitted: “I’m not sure. I am sure, from a Biblical perspective, that obviously my administration is Biblically sound. But I would also think my administration exists to articulate the vision and purpose of God to my subordinates and congregation to the degree that our purpose and calling as a local assembly and ministry at large will be fulfilled and accomplished in our generation.” This is a broad, sweeping statement with Biblical allusions, but can it legitimately be considered a theology of administration?

Chris, thinking on his feet, suggested: “[It is] stewardship, assisting in accomplishing what God has planned for the Church to do.” But what is this in broad, simple terms? “To transform mankind into His image (a process requiring administration with resources – gifts, talents, people, and so on.)

Barnabas was up front and honest: “[I’ve] never thought about it.” [He had difficulty articulating the idea.] “I view my vocation, my ministry, whatever I’m doing [as] reflect[ing] the will of God and what He’s called me to do. If I’m speaking to someone on the phone, I must



be distinct from others. The way I speak should be different. They are made in the image of God. It's all intertwined. When someone I know approaches me for help at the door, the way they do it is different from someone else (compared to a [secular] company). [The] relationship is different. At school, I'm a teacher, but they have different expectations of me: I'm supposed to be accommodating, kind and so on. I'm probably too tolerant (but that's the nature of being a pastor) and I forgive easily." Clearly, the emphasis here is on being unworldly, distinct. That is true, but does it really express a philosophy of order, details, methods and suchlike?

Similarly, Beki pointed to motive: "I'm doing this for God in God's time, for God's purpose. If it is done outside of God, not glorifying Him, it's just a mere human achievement. So, I can have all the administrative skills but if I don't have a relationship with God, if I'm not doing it for His glory, it's useless. Sometimes, in our planning, it's not an end; it's a means to an end – to glorify God, to do His purposes, to fulfil His will. Good administration does not entail a successful ministry. You can be good in this area, but still not feel God's heartbeat. So God should be at the centre of everything." Again, true; but that is not the whole sum; it speaks to a solid foundation, but what of the rest of the 'building'?

For George, "God is the great Administrator and so, as His child, I follow suit and do the best I can. I'm far away from doing the best, but I'm doing the best I can and I'm still open to learning new techniques about administration." Why is He the great Administrator? "He doesn't have to learn from anyone, but we have to learn from Him and others He has revealed it to." Here, likewise, there is an underlying appreciation of the foundation, but not much of the superstructure.

Dixon seemed to come a little more closely to the idea: "[It is] a shared responsibility, encompassing teamwork [and] consultation. [It] involves invitation from others outside our zone to bring input. It's training. It's no longer a one-man thing. [It's] teamwork. This comes from Jesus: He realised that the only way the world would change is through a team. His whole ministry revolved around this. He taught them, then sent them out. They came back and said, 'Hey it works!' When they were afraid – when He was going to His Father – He encouraged them and empowered them. So, when He was no longer there, the disciples could do much more than what He did."

1.2.2 Section Summary:

In broad terms, three points emerge from the above dialogues. First, it is clear that there is indeed a connection between administrative praxis and one's worldview. Second, these individual interviews further highlighted the parallel fact that administrative praxis is also



shaped by one's personality and temperament. And, third, in the Christian ministry context, as it should be, there is the dimension of one's theology and philosophy of ministry, together with the awareness and use of spiritual gifts.

Since there is further elucidation of these issues in the focus group conversations as reflected below, and since Chapter Six will explore the factors that shape worldview while Chapter Seven will seek to develop a theology of administration, I will limit myself here to brief comments on the individual understanding of and approach to administration.

Regarding the framework used, my co-researchers were satisfied with the five-fold structure of Time, Planning, Organising, Leading and Controlling. They were also comfortable with the questions in general and did not feel a sense of imposition or of irrelevance. Indeed, as I suspected originally, the discussion introduced several dynamics about administration which they had either not thought very much about previously or were intrigued with as we explored them.

Two interesting factors emerged from the discussion on Time. On the one hand, there is a perceived need to be good stewards of this resource and yet an apparent apathetic acceptance of the problems caused by a laxity of this stewardship. On the other hand, there is an identifiable tension between the desire for good stewardship as reflected in the Western approach to its use and the more casual African approach. So, we look for a bridge of explanation.

For the Planning component, while my co-researchers acknowledged its importance, together with that of identifying the necessary and available resources, there was no immediate answer to the seemingly endemic problem of poor planning as evidenced in many events being spoiled by this lack. So, again, we search for a bridge of explanation.

The discussions on Organising highlighted the interconnectedness between this, leading and managing, with the recognition that several skills are involved and overlap. It seems that one aspect of this component – the ability to focus on details – appears to be a personality/temperament issue rather than a worldview topic. Interestingly, there is a stress on organising people rather than things. But the ability to do this well is seen as a function of leading – which not everyone can do as effectively as others.

Significantly, the Leading component pointed strongly to the elements of personality and temperament being more influential than worldview factors. I suspect this may well be because of the complexity of it with its range of sub-issues and the related skills involved.



The discussions on Controlling brought an interesting dynamic to the fore: There appears to be an emphasis on the achievement of goals and tasks, rather than on the people accomplishing them. While evaluation tends to be seen positively rather than negatively, there was little insight on measurement. The issue of discipline – linked as it is in the Christian ministry context to theology – will be considered in more detail later.

Lastly, we looked at personal theologies of administration. Although, understandably, there was a wide range of ideas on this, as I suspected, the articulation of this proved less than satisfactory, pointing to a need for a more deliberate consideration of this by the Church. Nevertheless, there was common acknowledgement that God has demonstrated an identifiable interest in administration. It remains now to flesh out the specifics in Chapter Seven (but see further comments from the focus group sessions below.)

1.2.3 *Reflections on the Dialogue* –

Having travelled down the road called “Exploring How Administration and Culture Mix”, it is time now to look back and reflect. Where have we come from? What are some of the obstacles we encountered along the way? What were some of the low points in our journey? What were some of the highlights so far? What have we noticed and learned?

These individual discussions sought to explore definitions, motives, philosophical understanding and personal application in the praxis of administration. Specific questions were asked utilising the five-fold grid. In the process, we also attempted an initial identification of some worldview factors that might impinge on the praxis of administration.

Hence, my questions were intended to serve three purposes: (1) To alert my co-researchers to some of the issues – both social and personal – behind the identification and practice of administration; (2) To further prompt reflection on cultural dynamics and (3) To provide the basis for further in-depth discussion. As mentioned previously, the respondents were satisfied with the basic five-fold framework and, indeed, as with the data questionnaire, found it helpful in putting some shape to the nature of administration, identifying some of the key issues involved and reflecting on the related problems. In our conversations, they often affirmed that questions touched on important issues, some of which they had not previously considered.

The conversations were individualised because I first needed to follow up on factors brought out in the task survey in terms of their own approach to and understanding of administration. I did not feel a group approach at this point would be helpful as I suspected that, where issues had not been thought through, there may be undue influence from others without adequate personal reflection. I wanted to establish individual definitions and identify specific problem areas that, I hoped, would highlight pertinent worldview factors which would then be explored



further. I believe the questions at this stage did prompt reflection on key issues behind administration and allowed the participants to share their own insights and frustrations. There was some consideration of cultural dynamics, but not as much as I anticipated. The responses in this part of the dialogue were insightful and set the tone for the group discussions later. Respondents were motivated to think of administration at deeper levels, why they do what they do the way they do it and what cultural dynamics drive that. There was also some consideration of cross-cultural dynamics and a few difficulties in that area.

On the negative side, there were two main weaknesses of this approach. One centred on the difficulty of minimising undue influence on responses through both the nature and form of the questions. I was constantly aware of the probability of “putting ideas in their heads”. I attempted to reduce this by keeping my questions open and general, asking for their definitions, opinions and insights. I sought wherever possible to get their explanations, rather than simply affirming my assumptions. Nevertheless, the questions were based on my prior experiences and resultant consideration of issues and I recognise that these may well be different from my co-researchers.

The other main weakness of the individual discussions is the flip side of this: From previous informal discussion, I already knew that the lack of reflection on what constitutes administration is reasonably widespread. I did not expect my co-researchers to be any different. Indeed, they were not. But this presented me with a constant problem: How could I get them to substantively discuss pertinent issues about administration if they had not thought about them beforehand? Thus, my questioning sought to prompt them to such consideration. I feel it was significant that, in asking them to reflect on the validity of my questions – particularly from a cultural point of view – they all affirmed that they had not thought about such issues and were very satisfied that I had identified factors for enquiry.

Positively, the individual conversations brought a raft of issues to the forefront and it was clear from the discussions that these provided several worthwhile talking points. In the process, it also prompted the participants to reflect on their attitudes and approaches to administration: by focusing on issues, we were able to identify problem areas, weaknesses and gaps, all of which provided reflection for improvement in their own ministry contexts. This, of course, enhanced motivation, interest and involvement in the project. I was pleasantly surprised at the level of commitment once the final team had been selected.

By the time I had settled on my final group of co-researchers, I had interviewed three other people and these ‘pilots’ allowed me to adjust the questions and to add or subtract from my



initial list. I found, too, that even as we progressed further in the journey, the nature and number of the questions changed.

The dimension of Time reflected some interesting dynamics and worldview factors. Despite the pervasive indifference to time, there are some for whom time is nevertheless very important; it is appreciated, valued and the implications of poor stewardship are understood. This, of course, begs the question: Why, then, are the benefits and values of a better stewardship of time not communicated to and expected of people more deliberately? This is particularly so in the Christian arena given the Scriptural injunction to “do all in the name of the Lord.” (Col. 3:17) Hence, rather than answering the fundamental question, the responses have highlighted the problem. The possible reasons for this will be explored further in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. It is also interesting that the Western influence on time management is very clear and there is a genuine struggle with that and the African mind-set, the rural and urban, old and new.

On the Planning front, there was the recognition that, while resources may be accessible, they need to be strategically prepared and positioned to gain maximum advantage. Inherent in these observations, however, is the tacit admission that this is not generally done adequately. These particular conversations highlighted the interesting disparity between what is understood as good planning (and, perhaps, even what is wanted) and reality, where planning is done poorly or not at all. There was no concrete suggestion to overcome the apparent widespread disinclination to plan in general. At the same time, it was noted that these particular actors are principal leaders who have had to learn to plan if their enterprises are to succeed. Hence, there was recognition of both general and strategic planning.

My co-researchers, then, confirmed the importance of planning in the administrative process and recognised the need to identify key resources. While they obviously do this with greater or lesser relish, they nevertheless understand the role of planning. Irrespective of the culture and one’s personal preferences, this suggests a wide endorsement of planning as an integral part of administration. But, again, this disparity highlights another fundamental question: Why, then, are so many events spoiled by poor planning?

With Organising, the observations highlighted both the overlap of the three functions of managing, leading and organising, as well as the slight nuances of each. (This was confirmed further in the group discussions.) It became clear that leading, managing and organising are not fixed entities, with their own separate skills and requirements, without any connection to the others. This blurs their identification and praxis. And, while Organising involves an



emphasis on details for some, plainly this is not an ability that everyone equally sees as necessary. The focus on people, once more, was also evident.

When it came to Leading, the interconnected dynamics of leadership style, communications, creativity and innovation, decision making, change, delegation and motivation, power and authority and supervision were briefly touched on to assess individual approaches and underlying assumptions. These were explored later in the group context, where further insights were derived.

Although the complexity of the Leading component and its several sub-components demonstrated the interaction of multiple worldview dynamics, we also discovered that many aspects here are tied to personality and temperament. It seems that leadership is governed less directly, perhaps, by cultural dynamics than personality. It was also evident that the Biblical concept of servant leadership – as expected with those involved in Christian ministry – plays a part in the praxis here. While this allows for the worldview factor of dignity, the emphasis on people in general was very evident in these discourses.

Regarding Control, the core aspects of evaluation, measurement, standards, correction and discipline were touched upon. Interestingly, the main focus was on the extent to which the goal or task has been achieved, rather than on the people involved. It was recognised that evaluation should be seen positively rather than negatively. However, there was a lack of clarity on measurement and standards, while very little was said about correction. Rather than conclude that these issues are not important, it may be fair to say that the responses were more a reflection on my questioning rather than a lack of appreciation of or interest in these factors. Indeed, this issue was explored more extensively in the group conversations as I felt the joint interaction on this particular area of administration would be more insightful. In summary, there clearly was a mixture of both the individual's approach (that is, personality and temperament rather than worldview *per se*) and the usual emphasis on people.

Our journey in this chapter has taken the seven of us through some background issues on the five-fold grid of administration and its praxis to some brief comments (developed further in Chapter Seven) on a theology of administration. Included in this was the conversation on training. All of this was on an individual basis, to explore personal views, insights, assumptions, expectations and concerns. In the process, we also identified some interesting cultural and worldview dynamics that shape the praxis of administration in the Shona and Ndebele contexts. These will be explored further in Chapter Six.

But for now, we continue our journey by bringing the travellers together as a group. This not only broadens the individual exposure but also encourages consideration of alternatives. This



was especially enlightening given the variation in cultural backgrounds between the Shona and Ndebele and with the different church backgrounds. In general, this aspect provided great stimulation to the discussion and positive motivation for participation in the enterprise.



Appendix 2: Interview Questions

The following are the respective sets of questions put to the pastors and trainers in their respective interviews:

1. Pastoral

INTERVIEW (Individual)

1. What is “administration” for you?
2. What administration elements can you identify in the work you do?
3. What problems areas do you associate with administration? Why?
4. Are there any elements of administration that you enjoy? Why?
5. What is efficiency for you?
6. How would you define effectiveness?
7. How do you view time? Is it important, unimportant?
8. Do you think there’s any purpose to time?
9. Do you see a connection between time and other dimensions of life, e.g. relationships?
10. What do you understand by planning? (Church/ordinary)
11. Do you think planning is important? How so?
12. Would you say you enjoy planning?
13. How do you approach the task of planning (fairly large project)?
14. What resources do you consider when planning? Is there any priority to them?
15. What proportion of your time do you spend in planning?
16. What skills would you associate with planning?
17. What do you understand by the term “organising”?
18. What sorts of things do you typically organise?
19. Would you say you enjoy it? Why?
20. “Leading” – What do you think about?
21. Describe the relationship between yourself and the people you lead
22. What skills do you think a good leader needs?
23. What do you understand by delegation?
24. Do you see any value in it?
25. How do you feel about doing it?
26. What, for you, is a good way to motivate?
27. Do you see any benefit in it?
28. How do you view and use power and authority? Are they the same?
29. “Supervision” – What comes to mind?
30. What skills does the effective supervisor need?
31. How do you typically evaluate yourself (in your work)?
32. What criteria do you usually use in evaluating others? What primary expectations do you have of them?
33. What measuring tools do you normally use to evaluate?
34. How do you usually view evaluation – positive/negative?
35. Do you think there’s any indication in Scripture that God is concerned about administration?
36. Is God interested in time? Why?
37. Have you ever thought about God having a reason for the difference between earthly time (history) and eternity?
38. Does God have anything to say to us about planning?
39. Do you think Scripture reveals anything about organising?
40. Is there a “Christian” or a Godly way to lead?



41. In your view, is there a way that God typically evaluates?
42. If so, why does He do it this way?
43. Would you be able to describe your theology of administration?

2. Trainer

Questions for Business/Management Trainers

1. What is “administration” for you? Is this different from “management”? How?
2. How do you think your Western training has impacted your understanding of administration?
3. What aspects of “colonial administration” can you identify as different from “African”?
4. What problems areas do you associate with administration? Why? Are these based on the Western concepts you have or are there problems even from an African viewpoint? How so?
5. What is efficiency for you?
6. How would you define effectiveness?
7. Are there any factors of *Ubuntu/unhu* that may play a part in how one might approach administration? If so, what are they and how do you see them interacting?
8. Do you think the negative effects of colonialism have impacted your view and approach to administration? If so, how?
9. How do you personally try to minimise these effects and how do you help your trainees?
10. Do you think levels of sophistication (i.e. rural vs. urban) impact how you need to put across administration concepts? Can you give some examples?
11. Are there elements of an African worldview that make administration easy?
12. As an administration trainer, how do you view time? Is it important, unimportant?
13. How do you put across these concepts of time to your trainees?
14. What problems do your trainees typically have with time? How do you tend to deal with them?
15. What do you understand by planning?
16. Do you see this as a Western concept that you have had to accept, or was it already part of your African mindset? If the former, have you had to make any mental adjustments? If the latter, has this helped in doing it any better?
17. Do you think planning is important? Explain
18. How do you approach the task of planning (fairly large project)? [i.e. Do you identify any steps, procedures or factors needing consideration?]
19. What resources do you consider when planning? Is there any priority to them? Why?
20. What skills would you associate with planning?
21. What problems do you typically encounter with your trainees regarding planning?
22. How do you typically attempt to overcome these?
23. What do you understand by the term “organising”?
24. How much of this comes from your African worldview and how much from your Western training?
25. Are there any conflicts at this point? How do you deal with them?
26. Do your trainees typically struggle with these too? How do you help them?
27. What skills do you think a good leader needs? Why?



28. In Western thinking, there is the idea of leadership style. Do you also identify this in an African perspective? If so, how?
29. Do you convey any sense of leadership style to your trainees?
30. When it comes to decision-making, what issues do you typically struggle to get across to your trainees? Why do you think this is so?
31. What role do innovation and creativity skills play here?
32. Do you perceive any specific socialisation processes within the African worldview that (a) instill and (b) limit creativity and innovation?
33. How do you typically encourage creativity in your trainees? Are these ideas borrowed from the West (because of your Western training) and, if so, have you had to adapt them at all?
34. How do you typically help your trainees to overcome barriers to creativity?
35. Do you encourage your trainees to wrestle with problems? Why?
36. Are there typical approaches you use for problem-solving? Why?
37. In the African worldview, what are the struggles with change? Why?
38. Many view improvement for the sake of it as strange? Do you agree? Why?
39. How do you feel about uniqueness? Do you encourage your trainees to think uniquely? Why?
40. What is logic for you? How do you typically measure something as “logical”?
41. How far do you see this differing from Western logic?
42. Do you find yourself clashing with “Western” logic? How so?
43. Are you aware of male and female differences in this area and how do you typically deal with them?
44. Are there elements in administration that frustrate you because they don't seem “logical”?
45. What aspects of logic do your trainees typically struggle with? How do you help them?
46. What do you understand by delegation?
47. Is this typically easy to get across to your trainees or do you encounter common problems with this?
48. How do you help your trainees with these problems?
49. What is satisfaction? How do you help your trainees identify it?
50. What, for you, is a good way to motivate?
51. From an African perspective, what would be good intrinsic motivation? Does *Ubuntu/unhu* play a role here?
52. Are there African worldview elements that drive achievement? If so, what are they?
53. How do you typically approach risk? How do you help your trainees accept it and use it?
54. How do you view and use power and authority? Are they the same?
55. Do you have problems conveying these concepts adequately to your trainees? If so, how?
56. How do you attempt to help your trainees deal with the negative elements of these factors? (E.g. abuse, coercion, patronage, etc.)
57. Is there such a thing as “supervising in an African way”?
58. Are there any elements of this concept with which you struggle? If so, why and how?
59. What skills does the effective supervisor need?
60. Do your trainees struggle with the same problems you do? How do you help them?
61. What measuring tools do you normally use to evaluate people?
62. Do these have any basis in your African thinking/worldview? How?



63. On what basis do you determine quality? How is this shaped by your African worldview?
64. Is there any conflict here with Western views? How so?
65. How do you typically help your trainees deal with conflict? Which resolution techniques are you most comfortable with? Why?
66. Africa has missed out on the Industrial Revolution with its necessary emphasis on design and precision. Do you think this may have a bearing on the African approach to administration?
67. Mathematics and measurement teach accuracy. Do you think the absence of these concepts in an agrarian setting have hindered the process of development and its administration in any way? If so, how?
68. Given your understanding of modern management and administration, what aspects and values of the rural African worldview might constitute a weakness for today's needs?
69. Are there African worldview components you typically encourage your trainees to consider developing? Why? Is this conscious or unconscious on your part?