

The Efficacy of Primary School Teachers with Educational Management Qualifications in the Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe. A Case of Four Clusters in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe

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Abstract: The study was designed to investigate on the effectiveness of primary school teachers with educational management qualifications in the Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe at school and cluster levels. The random sample consisted of four clusters in Bikita District of Masvingo Province. The respondents involved twenty (25%) heads of primary schools, twenty (25%) deputy heads and forty (50%) degreed teachers all from the twenty selected schools in the four clusters. The forty degreed teachers were selected from the staffing records of the District Education Office as solicited from schools by the ED46 Instrument of data collection. The study used the quantitative methodology which entails the descriptive survey design in which subjects were randomly selected as respondents of the study. Data was collected through structured questionnaires and interview guides on the utilisation of teachers in the Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe (BSPZ) at school and cluster levels. Data was presented in frequency distribution tables and analysed in percentages and discussions. The study revealed that teachers with educational management qualifications are utilized as School Resource Teachers (SRTs) and Cluster Resource Teachers (CRTs) in the Better Schools Programme, Zimbabwe. Teachers were found effective in financial management and staff development as discovered in all schools under study. In terms of promotion, all the forty degreed teachers under study were in the senior teacher grade. The study recommended for the promotion of educational management graduates into promotion posts of Deputy Head and Head of primary or secondary school so that their utilisation was commensurate with qualifications. The continued over-utilisation of educational management graduates as classroom practitioners in primary schools while holding posts of special responsibility in BSPZ compromises the provision of quality education.

Keywords: Utilisation of teachers, Educational management, Administrative duties, Primary school, Teachers, Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe, Clusters.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The teacher's teaching qualifications, teaching experience, high competence levels and outstanding professional qualities were pre-requisites of appointment to promotion posts of substantive head or deputy head of a primary school. Research studies carried out by educational planners on the performance of school heads in management functions ascertained that a certificate or diploma in teaching was insufficient to guarantee efficient and effective school administration. Instead, the possession of a degree in educational management would enhance one's ability to manage primary schools effectively towards fulfillment of government policies and programmes. This is guaranteed through the training of educational managers from universities such as the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) and University of Zimbabwe (UZ) among other universities offering educational management programmes of Bachelor of Education in Educational Management (BEDMGT) and Master of

Education in Educational Management (MEDMGT). The government through the University of Zimbabwe (UZ) expanded the Department of Educational Management to the University College of Distance Education (UCDE) in 1993 by incepting the Bachelor of Education Degree in Educational Administration, Planning and Policy Studies (BEDEAPPS) now BEDMGT. The main thrust of the programme is to staff develop educational management personnel in promotion posts through the value laden approach in the areas of school administration, planning and policy studies so that the implementation of government policy is done with diligence. It was on 1 March 1999 that the UCDE was officially launched as the Zimbabwe Open University to offer a wide range of programmes including the Master of Education Degree in Educational Administration, Planning and Policy Studies (MEAPPS) now MEDMGT designed to enrich the education sector with top-flight leadership [1].

After realising that the two programmes were demand driven, enrolment of the students was extended to qualified classroom teachers with minimum entry qualifications of '5' Ordinary Level passes including English Language and the possession of a professional teacher's qualification approved by the university. From 1993, ZOU has conferred the educational management qualifications to thousands of successful graduates and is continuously enrolling prospective students to train as educational managers. The United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) engaged the Government of Zimbabwe in July 2014, through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, to implement the Teacher Capacity Development Programme towards provision of quality education through leadership development. The BEDMGT programme of the Zimbabwe Open University has 98 educational management students in the ten Regional Campuses sponsored by the government, through UNICEF, among other selected programmes of teacher development through Open and Distance Learning (ODL). It is from this cohort of educational managers that primary school heads originate with greater responsibilities in school administration. This prompted the researcher to investigate the extent to which teachers with educational management qualifications, not in promotion posts, are effective in the functions of the Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe (BSPZ) at school and cluster levels.

Statement Of The Problem

This research aimed at investigating the effectiveness of teachers with educational management qualifications in the Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe (BSPZ) at school and cluster levels.

Purpose Of The Study

The study sought to investigate the extent to which degreed teachers not in promotion posts are utilised in the management functions of the BSPZ bearing in mind their exposure to rigorous training and development as students of educational management with various universities in Zimbabwe. The study also suggested practical solutions to the promotion and utilisation of teachers with educational management qualifications in the Better Schools Programme, Zimbabwe as School Resource Teachers (SRTs), Cluster Resource Teachers (CRTs) and District Resource Teachers (DRTs).

Objectives Of The Study

- To assess the utilisation of primary school teachers with educational management qualifications in the Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe (BSPZ) at school and cluster levels.
- To identify challenges faced by teachers with educational management qualifications in the way they are utilised in the Better Schools Programme

Zimbabwe (BSPZ) so that amicable solutions are proffered.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following questions:

- How are primary school teachers with educational management qualifications utilised in the Better School Programme, Zimbabwe?
- What are the challenges faced by primary school teachers with educational management qualifications in the execution of duties in the Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe (BSPZ)?

Assumptions Of The Study

This study is based on the following assumptions:

- There are primary school teachers with educational management qualifications who are not in promotion posts.
- Primary school teachers with educational management qualifications are utilised in The Better Schools Programme, Zimbabwe.
- Primary school teachers with educational management qualifications are faced with challenges in the execution of BSPZ duties.
- Teachers with educational management qualifications and heads of schools in The Better Schools Programme, Zimbabwe have knowledge to answer research questions truthfully.

Significance Of The Study

The study is important to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and the Public Service Commission since the findings are recommending for the appointment of educational management graduates into promotion posts through a regulatory framework on the recruitment and placement of educational managers. The enactment of a clear national promotion policy of primary school heads from a resource base of qualified educational managers will instill a sense of belonging and ownership among teachers as aspiring school administrators and heads of schools thus addressing some of the challenges faced in the use of degreed teachers in BSPZ. The ultimate goal would be high output/outcome of the teaching and learning process all influenced by the correct mobilisation, placement and utilisation of human and material resources towards goal achievement.

Delimitations Of The Study

The study was confined to twenty randomly selected primary schools from four clusters in Bikita District of Masvingo Province. These included sixteen rural council primary schools, two church run primary schools and two government schools. The respondents from such schools comprise twenty heads of schools, twenty deputy heads of schools and forty degreed teachers. The study focused on the utilisation of

graduate teachers, not in promotion posts, with educational management qualifications from state universities into the Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe at school and cluster levels.

Limitations Of The Study

This study had limitations beyond the researcher's control. The time in which the study was carried out was so limited that the researcher could not cover all primary schools in the four clusters in Bikita District that are staffed with educational management graduates not in promotion posts. Since the schools under study were geographically scattered, the researcher did not have full access to each respondent to administer questionnaires and conduct face-to-face interviews. Some questionnaires to distant schools that were hand delivered were not returned thus posing a challenge on data presentation, analysis and the making of valid generalisations. Data collected may not have been as accurate as expected due to the nature and understanding of some heads of schools and deputy heads, without educational management qualifications, whose responses were meant to impress the researcher rather than indicate the reality in their respective schools. Even if the majority of respondents attempted all questions in the questionnaire, some items were left unanswered posing a challenge on data consolidation and summarisation. The adoption of the interview guide in data collection proved worth in clarifying issues.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework: Background to the Utilisation of Primary School Teachers in the Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe (BSPZ).

The Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe (BSPZ) came into effect through the then Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture in 1993 as one of the several government initiatives to meet the high demand for education by the majority of the people and the need to shift from quantity to quality in the provision of education in schools. According to Module A of the BSPZ [2] the first phase launched in 1993 saw the introduction of the Head Teacher Training and Professional Support (HTTPS) programme that was mainly focused on the professional development of the school head towards effective and efficient school administration. This programme was effected by producing seven modules covering the major areas of school administration bearing in mind that school heads were not qualified educational managers but were experienced teachers elevated into promotion posts. The second stage (Phase Two) was launched in 1996 when the Government of Zimbabwe and the Netherlands Government signed a memorandum of agreement for funding BSPZ programme activities from national to district levels. Funding was directed at the establishment of the organisation structure, purchasing and installation of computers, payment of staff salaries,

establishment of resource centres and financing management meetings and workshops. It is through the second phase of the BSPZ that emphasis was placed on greater involvement of the teacher in the management, coordination and facilitation of district, cluster and school activities towards quality provision of education. According to the Module on the Guidelines for Cluster Resource Teachers [3], District Resource Teachers (DRTs) are appointed to operate at district level, Cluster Resource Teachers (CRTs) operate at cluster level while School Resource Teachers (SRTs) operate at school level in collaboration with the School/Staff Development Committees as specified in the organisation structure of BSPZ. All these appointments of classroom practitioners into posts of responsibilities were made out of the realisation that quality education cannot be achieved if teachers were not incorporated into the mainstream of educational management. However, teachers' involvement in the BSPZ is limited to planning, coordination and reporting with no emphasis on authority. The DRT is a member of the District Management Committee comprising Education Officers in the district and reports to the District Education Officer (DEO) as the Chairperson of the District Management Committee. At Cluster level, the CRT is a member of the Cluster Coordinating Committee comprising school heads and SDC chairpersons from primary and secondary schools in the cluster and reports to the District Resource Teacher. The School Resource Teacher has a dual reporting system to the school head and to the Cluster Resource Teacher on staff development issues that require attention at cluster level. All these structures have mandatory obligations that have to be carried out towards the provision of better education in developed schools so that high quality products are released in society for socio-economic transformation.

The achievement of positive results in educational institutions depends on re-sharpening of the workers competencies so as to keep them abreast to an ever changing and growing education system. Teachers' competencies are constantly re-sharpened through staff development or In-service Education and Training (INSET) [4]. The two terms are used interchangeably to mean staff growth and development. Staff development looks at improving the teachers' capabilities during instruction only while INSET caters for both teachers' individual needs and the needs for the school system. Bolam [5] Thus, Oldroyd and Hall [6] view staff development as "a planned process of development which enhances the quality of pupil learning by identifying, clarifying and meeting the individual needs of staff with the context of the school as a whole." This means that staff development is a systematic process of assessing the needs of classroom teachers and how the needs are met so that learners can benefit from a transformed teacher. No matter adequate college training is, research must continuously expose

classroom teachers to new dimensions of human interaction in the teaching and learning processes. Sergiovanni and Starrat [7] point out that a teacher who has studied Science for the last five years becomes obsolete if his/her competencies in the subject are not periodically reviewed and re-oriented. Staff development is basically what the teacher does for himself/herself and not what the school does for the teacher. This means teachers must identify discrepancies in themselves so that corrective action is taken through staff development. In-service education and training can be understood through related concepts of professional education, professional training and professional support. According to Oldroyd and Hall [6], professional education entails long term in-service courses for teachers which may take years to complete and results in the award of a degree. By encouraging teachers to undertake further academic and professional studies, the school head will be aiming at improving the total quality of his/her staff as they prepare for greater and challenging responsibilities of planning, organising, facilitating and evaluating staff development workshops at school and cluster levels. Professional training is the development of teachers' knowledge and skills relating to their daily teaching through workshops or short courses that may take up to hours or one day depending on the workshop content. These workshops concentrate on specific aspects of the curriculum, feedback papers, policy circulars or new curriculum subject syllabus to be introduced. In some cases residential sessions are conducted for five days and workshop participants and beneficiaries are presented with attendance certificates [8]. Professional support activities are carried out in schools and clusters to develop on-the-job experience and performance and these include job descriptions, peer coaching, collaborative action research, sharing teacher expertise in the teaching of curriculum subjects and setting of cluster or zonal mock tests for Grade Seven candidates before they sit for public examinations from Zimbabwe Schools Examinations Council (ZIMSEC). The successful implementation of staff development and in-service education and training programmes requires moral, financial and material support and a positive involvement of people with a stake in cluster and school activities and the coordination and facilitation of support programmes by teachers of high integrity and credentials.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study dealt with the views and perceptions of primary school heads, deputy heads and teachers on the utilisation of educational management graduates in the Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe. The researcher employed the descriptive survey research design in quantitative research because of its appropriateness in gathering data from the respondents already in the system under study. The descriptive survey research is sometimes called the normative survey research since it is employed to process data that

is collected through observation, presented and analysed to make inferences. According to Leedy [9], "the word survey has a basic connotation of looking over and beyond and has nothing to do with casual or purposeless observation." This shows that the survey carried out had to examine the utilisation of degreed teachers in the BSPZ and attach value to the processes undertaken. Data in descriptive survey is sometimes susceptible to distortion if it is exposed to bias in the research design. Bias in research is unavoidable but must be guarded against penetrating into research findings. Leedy [9] indicates that one's failure to acknowledge the presence of biased data into research is either scholarly hypocrisy or inexcusable ignorance. Although the descriptive survey relies heavily on observation for the acquisition of data, those data must be organised and presented systematically so that valid and accurate conclusions are drawn from them. Thus, Selltitz, Wrightman and Cook [10], states that "observation is a scientific tool which serves a formulated research purpose which is planned systematically and is subject to checks and controls of validity and reliability."

Sample and sampling procedure

In using the descriptive survey method the researcher used a sample of twenty primary schools in four clusters in Bikita District of Masvingo Province. Twenty school heads, twenty deputy heads and forty degreed teachers at the schools were the respondents in the study. The sample was randomly selected in terms of its accessibility and convenience to the researcher. According to Leedy [9], a sample is a subset of the population under study and should display all characteristics of the larger population from which it was selected. Thus, the sample representative of the population was large enough to allow the researcher to make valid generalisations.

Data collection methods

Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires and interviews. The data collection methods gave the respondents the opportunity to express themselves freely on how degreed teachers are utilised in staff development, financial management, supervision and in clusters of the BSPZ. The collection of data through a variety of techniques was to allow complementation of responses as shortfalls of each method could easily be overcome by the strength of the other. Face-to-face interviews allowed the respondents to freely account for their experiences, feelings and thoughts allowing the researcher to probe beyond questionnaires.

Data analysis procedures

According to Marshall and Rossman [11] data analysis in research focuses on the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time-consuming,

creative, and fascinating process. It does not proceed in a linear fashion and it is not neat. The research generated some quantitative data which was presented and analysed to determine the validity and reliability of the study. The data collected through questionnaires and face-to-face interviews was analysed based on the responses from teachers with administrative qualifications, deputy heads and heads of schools about the utilisation of degree primary school teachers in the functions of the Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe.

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

The data collected during the study was merged, presented and quantitatively analysed under sub-themes as discussed below:

Findings on Qualifications and Experience of Heads of Schools, Deputy Heads and teachers at Primary Schools

The study revealed that eighteen (90%) heads of schools were males while two (10%) heads were female. In terms of highest professional qualifications, four (20%) heads of schools had Bachelor of Education in Educational Management degree from the Zimbabwe Open University, ten (50%) school heads had Certificate in Education, Primary (CE) obtained from various teachers colleges in Zimbabwe while six (30%) school heads had a Teachers Certificate (T3) obtained in the pre-independence era before the implementation of the teacher education reforms. Data on the distribution of school heads by length of service revealed that thirteen (65%) school heads had a headship experience of more than ten years while seven (35%) had a headship experience of more than five years but less than ten years. Eight (40%) heads of school held substantive posts by promotion while twelve (60%) of these were in an acting capacity as substantive Deputy Heads. The long teaching experience on the part of school heads was an indication that each had the craft competency to implement the BSPZ policy with due diligence. However, the scenario that sixteen (80%) heads of schools did not have educational management qualifications does not augur well with an education system carefully designed to transform the learner through the BSPZ policy initiative. In terms of gender of teachers with educational management qualifications, twenty eight (70%) were males while twelve (30%) were females in the middle age range of 30- 49 years. Fourteen (35%) teachers had a teaching experience of 10 years while twenty six (65%) teachers had a teaching experience of above 15 years denoting high levels of experience in teaching. In terms of professional qualifications of Deputy Heads, eight (40%) had Certificate in Education (Primary) while twelve (60%) were undergraduate degree holders obtained from other universities but not related to educational management. It is worth to note that twelve (60%) Deputy Heads were in promotion posts while eight (40%) were in an

acting capacity. All the forty degreed teachers were not into promotion posts of deputy head or head of school but some had posts of special responsibility in the BSPZ as CRTs and SRTs. This demonstrates inconsistencies in the promotion policy as most office bearers in promotion posts did not possess the requisite qualifications to occupy leadership positions.

Findings on the Utilisation of Teachers with Educational Management Qualifications in the Better Schools Programme, Zimbabwe

The researcher sought information on the utilisation of teachers with educational management qualifications in the Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe. Heads of primary schools, deputy heads and degreed teachers in the study all agreed to the utilisation of teachers in the Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe as School Resource Teachers, Cluster Resource Teachers and District Resource Teachers. The functions of teachers in BSPZ are in line with regulations on the duties and responsibilities of the SRT as a member of the School/Staff Development Committee, the CRT as a member of the Cluster Coordinating Committee and the DRT as a member of the District Management Committee. Primary school heads and deputy heads interviewed expressed satisfaction on the performance of CRTs in staff development and financial management at cluster level. The four (10%) CRTs indicated that they were signatories to the cluster account that is managed by the Cluster Finance Committee, a sub-committee of the Cluster Management Committee. Fourteen (35%) School Resource Teachers with BEDMGT degree indicated that they were not involved in the financial matters of the schools. This clearly shows that teacher participation in financial management was more pronounced in clusters than in individual schools even if the BSPZ policy expects teacher participation in financial to begin at school level. All the forty (100%)degreed teachers indicated that CRTs and SRTs were full time classroom teachers in their original schools of deployment such that their appointment to posts of responsibilities in the BSPZ compromises the attainment of high quality teaching and learning.

Data on the utilisation of teachers in staff development at school and cluster levels was presented and analysed. The twenty (100%) heads of schools strongly agreed to the utilisation of teachers with educational management qualifications in staff development programmes at school and cluster levels as presenters and facilitators. On the roles played by teachers in chairing subject panels in schools, eighteen (90%) heads of schools supported the inclusion of teachers while two (10%) heads strongly disagreed to the use of degreed teachers as subject panel chairpersons since such appointments were viewed as conflicting with the heads' responsibilities. The involvement of degreed teachers in carrying out needs

assessment for other teachers created mixed responses among heads and deputy heads. Fifteen (75%) school heads and eleven (55%) deputy heads felt that teachers' needs are best identified and addressed by school heads regardless of teachers having knowledge of their needs. In terms of posts of responsibilities for teachers with educational management qualifications in the four clusters under study, four (10%) were Cluster Resource Teachers (CRTs) while fourteen (35%) were School Resource Teachers (SRTs). However, the other twenty two (55%) degreed teachers were classroom practitioners with no posts of responsibility in the BSPZ. While teachers are empowered to conduct staff development programmes and INSET workshops at school and cluster levels, the utilisation policy is not clear on the placement and promotion of other degreed teachers without posts of special responsibilities. This scenario triggers teacher exodus to greener pastures if it is left unchecked.

Challenges in the Utilisation of Teachers with Educational Management Qualifications in the Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe at School and Cluster Levels.

The twenty schools in the four clusters under study were making frantic efforts to implement the government's BSPZ policy with diligence despite the challenges encountered in the use of teachers with educational management qualifications in schools and clusters. Some of the challenges encountered are:

- Over-utilisation of teachers by holding posts of special responsibilities in the BSPZ as CRTs and SRTs while teaching a full class in the respective schools.
- Non-payment of special responsibility allowances by the employer to SRTs and CRTs resulting in de-motivation and under-performance.
- Lack of clarity on the policy governing the recruitment, utilisation and remuneration of educational management graduates appointed as CRTs and SRTs.
- Lack of transparency and accountability of school heads in the management of school and cluster funds.
- Continuous freezing of vacant posts of promotion by the Public Service Commission (PSC) resulting in brain drain.
- Creation of multi-grade classes by accommodating classes left unattended by SRTs and CRTs as they attend to BSPZ responsibilities besides teaching.

CONCLUSIONS

The study came up with the following conclusions:

- Heads of schools utilise teachers with educational management qualifications in staff development and financial management in the Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe.

- Teachers with educational management qualifications in primary schools are utilised as School Resource Teachers and Cluster Resource Teachers in the Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe.
- The utilisation of degreed teachers in primary schools does not match qualifications with the job currently held. Teachers holding posts of special responsibility in the BSPZ are not receiving remuneration commensurate with qualifications and job description.
- Teachers with educational management qualifications are over-utilised in the BSPZ and in primary schools as full time teachers and holders of posts of special responsibility.
- Teachers, school heads and deputy heads of primary and secondary schools in BSPZ clusters are experiencing hardships in the use of degreed teachers and these are working against the effective implementation of government policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the conclusions indicated above, the study made the following recommendations for adoption:

- The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and the Public Service Commission must appoint qualified educational managers to head primary schools. This approach will reduce the high rate of personnel in acting posts.
- The government and responsible authorities should focus attention on the reviewing of policies on recruitment, appointment and utilisation of educational management graduates.
- All vacant posts of Deputy Heads and Heads of primary schools in Zimbabwe must be unfrozen, declared and filled by holders of educational management qualifications.
- Heads of primary schools must be non-teaching office bearers who have to commit themselves to effective school administration and the realisation of high quality education.
- Teachers in the BSPZ as School Resource Teachers and Cluster Resource Teachers must be accorded promotion status and be exempted from classroom teaching for total quality management. This will address the problem of multi-grade classes.
- There is need for the creation of a substantive post of Teacher-in-Charge of Infants and Head of Departments in primary schools so that educational management graduate teachers are correctly positioned in leadership roles before they are promoted into managerial positions of primary schools head or deputy head. This will create a multi-dimensional approach in leadership where the school head views the deputy head, T.I.C and H.O.D in promotion posts as partners in school management and not subordinates.

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