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Why Educational Practitioners Resist Staff Development Programmes: Evidence from Binga and Hwange Districts, Zimbabwe

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Why Educational Practitioners Resist Staff Development Programmes: Evidence from Binga and Hwange Districts, Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

This paper sought to explore the reasons why teachers and support staff resist staff development programs in the Binga District of Zimbabwe. Multiple case-studies were used. Questionnaires, Face-to-face interviews and secondary sources provided the required data. The sample of 25 primary school heads; 13secondary and High School Heads and 72 school teachers and 15 support staff revealed very interesting information. Findings pointed to disruption of school activities, unavailability of experts in some areas, lack of or poorly stocked libraries to support teachers' research, pressure from Public Service head-counts(personnel audits), lack of consultation of subordinates before the implementation of programs, passive roles of subordinates during staff development workshops, poor timing and lack of reviews of those staff development programmes. However, teachers generally agreed that staff development workshops somehow added to their knowledge and enhanced their skills, despite the negative attitudes towards them. The study mode recommendations are to boost the role, function and effectiveness of the staff development programs.

Key Words: Staff Development; Programme; Profession; Consultation; Needs Analysis; Change, Effectiveness, Preparedness, Adaptability.

ACRONYMS

ZIMTA- Zimbabwe Teachers' Association.
PTUZ – Progressive Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe.
NASH – National Association of Secondary Heads.
NAPH – National Association of Primary Heads.
BSPZ – Better Schools Program of Zimbabwe.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Teaching is a profession for which many years of training are required. The training starts with theory of education(T.O.E) followed by on-the-job training, in the form of teaching practice (TP). Education is dynamic and has to consistently respond to change(s) in the political, technological and socio-economic environment. Having undergone the rigorous training with strict documentation of schemes of work, lesson plans, mark-schedules and filing systems, teachers do not want to be "bothered after qualifying". They want a breather from the stifling and demanding requirements of their professional development. This kind of stance negatively affects service delivery as staff development initiatives were half-heartedly attended by teachers and regarded as a waste of resources.

Some educational practitioners even questioned the preparedness of School Heads, Heads of Department(s) (who filled the positions of resource persons). They argued that nobody was competent or suitably qualified to develop the teachers because the staff- developers needed to be trained first! Chung, (1988:32) summarizes the argument by saying, "Investment into human resources development pays handsomely both in

terms of improved efficiency and better staff morale". The Government of Zimbabwe is committed to the use of staff development programs as a way of enhancing performance. The introduction of the Better Schools Programme of Zimbabwe (BSPZ) in 1993 is evidence of the Ministry of Education in improving performance of schools. BSPZ is a Ministry of Education's support structure which facilitates the collaboration of school heads in their administrative and supervisory tasks. It cannot be denied that all organisations thrive on training and development of employees and this recognition motivated the researchers to explore the factors which contribute to the negative attitude and subsequent resistance of staff development.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Whenever results of public examinations are released, all concerned people want to know why candidates performed so dismally. Parents/ guardians are quick to blame the school heads, who in turn blame the instructional leaders. Instructional leaders turn around and blame parents for not playing their role and blame the school head for not being supportive towards their needs. Staff development sessions could bring an end to this game of finger pointing. However, teachers resent the school-based staff development programmes which are meant to enhance their performance.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- To explore the perspectives/perceptions of teachers and school heads towards school-based staff development.
- To find out the attitudes of subordinates towards their Heads of Department and School-Heads.
- To examine what methods (if any) were used for needs analysis before implementation of staff development programmes.
- To assess teacher-input(s) before, during and after the staff development programmes.
- To evaluate the timing of staff development and its convenience to all stakeholders.
- To establish the extent to which school-based staff development programme facilitators were effective running the workshops.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The paper was meant to unveil the factors that negatively affect staff development programmes in both, primary, secondary and high schools in Binga and Hwange Districts. It was also bent on establishing if any needs analyses were ever conducted to ensure that only the appropriate and relevant training was offered. Findings of the study would specifically assist Educational Managers in planning and implementing the training and development programmes for instructional leaders. It was also envisaged that if teachers improve their performance, then pupils stand a better chance of doing well in their examinations. The knowledge base of all stake holders would be consolidated and service delivery would be enhanced.

1.5 Delimitations

Only Hwange and Binga Districts of Matebeleland, North Province were the focus of this study. Results would be generalized to other largely rural districts in Zimbabwe. Teachers and support staff in the sample provided the required sample. The study also included staff-development programmes sponsored by other ministries and Non-Governmental Organisations too.

1.6 Limitations

The researchers were limited by the poor return of questionnaires and bias in the face-to-face interviews. To combat these limitations, the researchers engaged some research assistants to carry out most of the interviews, which had to be increased in the number to make up for the unreturned questionnaires.

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Understanding What Staff Development Means

Staff Development, according to Day et al.(1990) is the process through which the school heads ensure that his / her

teachers are informed and fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. Musaazi(1982:196) says, "The staff development of a teacher means that provisions should be made by the education authorities to improve the performance of teachers from resumption of employment to retirement. Put simply, staff development can be taken to refer to any professional development activity which a teacher undertakes after receiving his/ her teaching certificate or diploma and after assuming duty as an educational practitioner. Staff development therefore becomes a means to an end, the end being the improvement of the quality of student learning experience". Musaazi(ibid) goes on to list various relevant activities to be included in staff development programmes. In line with these activities, Beach and Reinhart (1998) and Chivore (1995) have strongly supported staff development, clearly showing the incumbent benefits.

Unfortunately, all the good aspects are blocked when school heads boast about how knowledgeable or experienced they are. Chung(1998) is vehemently opposed to such nuances as they make school heads secretive and selfish. This is because they want to guard against being joined by their subordinates in their domain of knowledge and experience. The researchers found that through clinical supervision, learning took place as knowledge and modern developments were freely shared. The emphasis was found to be on the ethics and benefits of professionalism.

2.2 Staff Development More Effective

Owens (1998), Yorke (1997) have proffered ways that can make staff development programmes work. Musaazi (1982) and Sergiovanni and Starrant say school - based staff development programmes can be successful if teachers are allowed to contribute(data & feelings) in planning for the workshops and solving problems. Ozigi (1994:20) says, "The Head should encourage staff participation in some of the decision making processes". Goldhammer (1993), emphasizes the significance of people(workers) knowing why the workshops are held and why this will increase their interest in attending. A spirit of collegial ship, community and enterprise is cultivated and sustained.

As hinted earlier, needs identification is an imperative and necessary stage in staff development(Chung 1988); Robbins (1993) and Hansen (1991). This is in agreement with Elton Moyo's (1930) Human Relations Theory. Smit and Crongle (1999) strongly support teamwork. Teamwork utilizes effective communication and about this Koont*** et.al (1980:61) says, "Communication flows several ways: from the top of the organization down to individual members: from the bottom towards the top of the organization hierarchy, and even across from department to department whenever necessary. Group needs could be checked using descriptive methods, through brainstorming and surveys, Hansen (1991) and UNICEF(1996). The researchers sought to find out from the selected employees, the strategies used in staff development programmes.

2.3 Forms of Staff Development

Piper and Glatter (1991) as quoted in Bell and Day (1997) say "Staff development is a systematic attempt to harmonize individuals' interests and wishes and their carefully assessed requirements for furthering their careers with the forthcoming requirements of the organisations within which they are expected to work."Yorke(1997) has the shop-floor model in which staff members could identify their short comings in teaching and then help each other to overcome them. Yorke (1997) also identifies the partnership model which aims at reconciling staff needs with school (organizational) needs. Staff development hence appears to cater for individual needs and organisational needs as well. If benefits are two- fold why then are the staff development programmes not welcome?

Halliday (1993) says staff development is a planned process during which the effectiveness of staff collectively and individually is enhanced through becoming responsive to changes in knowledge, circumstances and technology. This type of process results in quality education for the learners. Chivore (1995) refers to only two types of staff development courses in schools i.e. short term courses and long term courses. The major distinction between these two is that short term concentrates on specific aspects of the curriculum while long-term courses lead to certification. Chivore (ibid)further categorizes staff development programmes into orientation, new curriculum, courses for untrained teachers and formal long-term courses. Beach and Reinhartz(1985) and Stoner & Freeman(1989) show that orientation addresses the needs of new employees. Research has shown that even the experienced and trained employees need staff development. The study attempted to establish why these staff development forms were resisted despite the fact that their objective was to improve the image of schools in the two Districts.

In most cases teachers have to be staff - developed so that they cope with changes in the curriculum. At the time of conducting this study, there was the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education Curriculum blueprint covering the period 2015 to 2022. The Curriculum framework was developed for Infant (including Early Childhood Development), Junior and Secondary school levels. The decision to develop the framework was made in the context

of the government's focus on preparing Zimbabwean learners for the needs of the twenty- first century, growing concerns among policy makers and key stakeholders regarding the relevance of the education system of Zimbabwe.

About new curriculum, Chivore(1995:30) says "courses on new curricula aim at correcting certain deficiencies within the system". For instance, when subjects like Political Economy were introduced, it became necessary to train teachers (through staff development programmes) and make them ready to teach the new subjects. Curricular changes call staff development programmes which develop skills and consolidate knowledge needed to cope with change.

Formal long-term courses take the form of further education as trained teachers enroll with institutions of higher learning for Open and Distance Learning or Block Release Programmes. The study carried out by Nyaruwata (2010) shows that educational managers have become more effective at their jobs due to the programme (Bachelor of Education-Educational Administration, Planning and Policy Studies). This programme prepared personnel for posts of Headship and sharpened skills of those who were already School Heads.If staff development can result in such benefits, why then is it still resisted by educational practitioners? Sergiovanni and Starrat (1983) emphasize that the crucial factor of staff development programme is the supervisory system. They go on to distinguish among traditional, intermediate and informal approach.

2.4 Evaluation of Staff Development Programmes

The need for measuring actual performance of any programme can never be over-emphasized. Heres(1989:242) posts that "evaluation has to be systematic and this involves selecting, defining and specifying valuable criteria for specific measurable events....." Methods of evaluation include criterion-based evaluation, formative evaluation and summative evaluation. The Common Wealth Secretariat Module Six (1993:16) states that:"through summative evaluation, we learn where additional and better resources (human, material and financial) are required. Future staff development programmes could benefit from such exercises. No explicit research has concerned itself with evaluating and documenting reports about the progress, problems and prospects of staff development sessions in the selected districts. This is what made the researchers keen to pursue this research to its logical conclusion.

2.5 Limitations of Staff Development Workshops

In an evaluation of staff development programmes conducted between 1991 and 1994,funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), Ota (1995: 16) notes:

"Courage has been limited, delivery has been sporadic, training has lacked definition, sustainability as a whole has been poor, staff motivation has been declining and there has been little or no focus on the classroom teacher"

In other words, there was no planning and no dedication by those responsible for staff development courses. Without focus on the classroom teacher, chances of achieving any positive results were close to nil. Teachers are the people who have more interaction with learners than educational management. They are the drivers of the actual learning which goes on in the classrooms. Their role and function make them very important people who should take centre stage positions during staff development workshops. Sergiovani et al (1979) argues that the teacher should be involved in contributing data, information or feelings in solving problems. The researchers became interested in how school heads handle their school- based staff development programmes. Did they make use of Cogan's 1973 partnership approach? It became imperative to find out from them how they valued staff development.

According to Ota (1995), the effectiveness of staff development courses is often marred by the fact that those programmes are clearly meant to meet specific needs of target- groups as well as those of the system that is served by that group. Unfortunately, he notes that the target group is almost always not involved in the identification of needs. Failure to or negligence of the target- group needs is bound to lead to resistance. Educational practitioners, like any other professional are not ready to accept programmes which are imposed on them. At times the courses are not even relevant to the execution of their duties. The needs of the teachers can be best articulated by teachers themselves. Bill and Day(1991) emphasize the importance of consultation in order to make staff development relevant to the needs of teachers. School heads and other educational managers like District Education Officers (DEOs) who identify needs on behalf of classroom practitioners could actually be creating problems, instead of solving them.

Reynolds and Cuttance (1982: 33) state, "substantial staff development time must be provided preferably during the regular teacher's work-day" The researchers sought to establish if at all teachers look to other teachers as role models for positive change on the professional arena. Of particular interest in this study were the ways in which

teachers were benefitting from support structures like Better Schools Programme of Zimbabwe (BSPZ), Zimbabwe Teachers' Association. (ZIMTA), PTUZ, NASH and NAPH. Answers could be found in labor relations issues like lack of incentives or in furthering one's education. It is an open secret that school teachers in Zimbabwe are poorly remunerated and so how many would be sincerely interested in deepening knowledge and gaining more skills in a profession which is despised? In a study conducted by Maposa in 2013, it was found that in most schools, parents/guardians had to chip in to top- up teachers' salaries. This paper went all out to check the position in schools which fall under different responsible authorities.

Oldroyd and Hall suggest some ways that can be used to identify needs at individual level, at group or at team level and at whole school level. The table below summarizes the methods used.

Table 1: Methods Used to Identify Staff Needs at Different Levels

At individual level	At group / team level	At whole school level
1. Self-review through a check list or set objectives. 2. Job analysis 3. Informal discussion with the School Head or Principal. 4. Questionnaire about needs. 5. Individual appraisal interview. 6. Observation as teacher / Head.	1. Departmental review. 2. Structured group discussion such as brain storming. 3. Team self-review against check list or set objectives.	1. School development plan/ annual general meeting. 2. Full staff meeting in which teachers are not mere listeners

Source: Adapted From Oldroyd and Hall (1991:72)

Dadely and Harber (1991) suggest that the approaches engaged in some staff development workshops could attribute to resistance too. They cite questions over the qualifications, experience and expertise of the people in charge of staff development sessions. Their findings might be pointing to a need to train the trainers. There are several approaches to staff development and the educational managers have to use whichever is appropriate, without straining interpersonal relations or compromising the quality of education. Since change is permanent, programmes also have to be a permanent aspect of the teaching profession.

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Multiple case studies were used to survey the schools in the sample. Case studies allowed deep probing relating to the variable among members of staff. Best (1970) says a case study embraces all that is significant in the history or development of the case. In this study, it focused on all significant issues relating to reasons for negative attitudes towards staff development by the majority of educational practitioners. Tools for data collection were questionnaires, interviews, documentary analyses and observations. These tools were chosen for their validity and reliability (Best and Khan (1993) and Sidhu (1984)). Schools' periodical reports, statutory instruments from the Public Service Commission and Policy Circulars were carefully examined to establish how supportive they were of staff development in schools.

Stratified random sampling (Van Dalen 1979) was used to come up with findings that could be applicable to the whole Province of Matebeleland North. The researchers made use of district zonal systems to maximize coverage of the whole district. Attempts were made to include all school sizes in the sample (i.e. Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3 schools). A total of 125 participants made up the sample. Chikoko and Mhloyi (1995) say a sample is a portion of the elements of a population. The researchers aimed at working on a balanced assessment of the reasons why staff development programs were resented. The following section presents some data on qualifications of participating school heads. The researchers did not find any relevance in biographical data and so that section was deliberately ignored. It was interesting to note that most school heads were not only highly qualified but they were

busy working on acquiring even higher qualifications through various forms of Open and Distance Learning. These included the all-time ODL by the Zimbabwe Open University and the Block release programs by Great Zimbabwe University, Solusi University, Lupane State University and Midlands State University. The researchers wondered where the resistance emanated from when there were such highly educated and experienced educational managers in charge of institutions of teaching and learning.

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION

Table 2: Qualifications of School Heads

Academic Qualification	Females	Percentage %	Males	Percentage %
Grade 11	4	25%	5	22,7%
`O` Level	7	43,7%	11	50%
`A` Level	5	31,3%	6	27,3%
	16	100%	22	100%

Academically and professionally, the majority of school heads had adequate qualifications to enable them conduct effective school development programmes. They were also suitably experienced. The attitudinal problems could be attributed to the fact that the subordinates held the same qualifications and some were even more qualified.

Table 3: Professional Qualifications of School Heads

Qualification	Number	Percentage
P.T.L.	0	0%
P.T.H.	0	0%
CE	9	24%
Diploma In Education	14	37%
B.ED	11	28%
MED	4	11%
Total	38	100%

The qualifications for teachers, School Heads and support staff were considered high and relevant enough for the smooth conduct of staff development programmes. Fortunately, most of them had qualifications that readily tallied with emerging trends in education. For instance, educational managers who did the Bachelor of Educational degree had a further advantage in the sense that the degree programme included Staff Development as a core-course. They faced challenges in implementing what they had learnt. Resources were inadequate and their colleagues were showing a lot of apathy towards staff development.

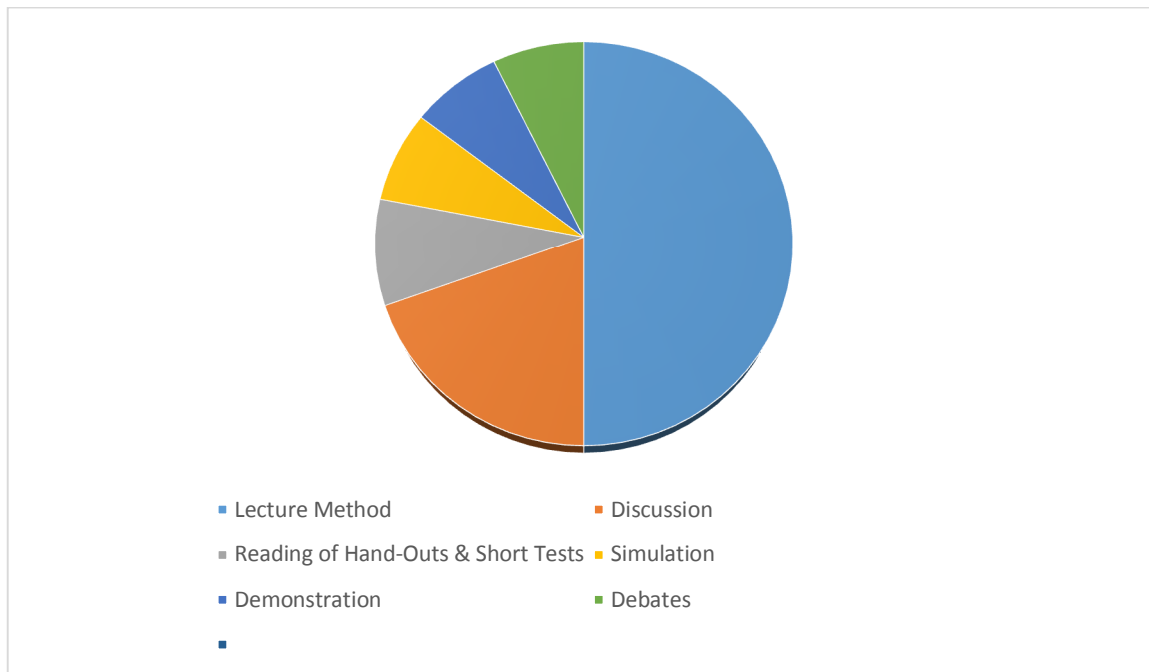


Fig 1: Strategies Used During Staff Development Workshops

In agreement with Oldroyd and Hall(1991) and Davies(1981), it was found that schools made use of several delivery modes. The most popular as shown by the pie-chart in Fig1, was found to be the lecture method. To this method, subordinates openly expressed their disapproval because it kept their participation at a very low ebb. Discussions and debates which have a great deal of involvement and interaction were seldom used as school Heads said they were time consuming while 90% of the respondents spoke in support of discussions and debates and they did not see how these two modes could in any way demean their bosses. Simulation(s) allowed the participants to act out incidents rather than just read about them or listen to people speaking about them.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers discovered that the benefits of staff were known and well understood. However, there were outstanding barriers against making it acceptable to educators. Most teachers felt that if held during term-time, staff development programs were found to be disrupting their plans to teach whatever they would have schemed to cover within a given time frame. They felt that they were being dragged into such programs from which they did not benefit anything. Their disgruntlement against their bosses who claimed to 'know it all' served to put them off totally. Staff development programs could be perceived more positively if schools shift from autocratic to democratic way of managing such programs. The schools should utilize more individualized and varied strategies in determining staff development needs. Schools can make use of clusters to pool their resources and resource persons and ensure they use experts whenever they deal with aspects of the teaching profession. Fundraising activities could ease the dearth of financial resources which are so much needed to run these workshops. Appeals could be sent to Old Students' Associations, Local leaders and the Private Sector for financial support. Another way out would be through thorough induction of new teachers and effective supervisory practices.

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