

Challenges to the Implementation of PLAP in Primary Schools: Perceptions of ZOU Bachelor of Educational Management Students

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Abstract

The study explored the challenges that impact on the implementation of PLAP in the Primary schools. The research was conducted with teachers who study towards the BEd Management degree with Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) in the Midlands Region. The study used a qualitative research approach and collected data through open ended questionnaires and interviews. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants for this study. Data were thematically analysed in line with the qualitative research approaches. The study explored and found out that work over load, lack of resources, diagnosis of learner problems and implementation of continuous assessment are challenges that militate against implementation of PLAP. These factors contributed to lack of motivation of teachers to effectively implement PLAP at classroom level. This calls for the government and stakeholders in education to seriously look into factors that are de-motivating teachers to implement government education programmes effectively.

Keywords: Performance Lag Address Programme (PLAP), challenges, continuous assessment, primary schools.

1 Background of the study

Zimbabwe had once experienced a vibrant economy and once the best country in Africa with the best education system delivery. The advent of independence in 1980 met with several education reforms to battle out the illiteracy rate that had deliberately been created by the former colonial master. To fulfil one of its goals the Zimbabwean government provided education to the masses. Towards the end of 2006 the economic environment in Zimbabwe hit across all sectors and the worst affected were also the primary and secondary schools. The impact of the crisis left the child in the centre of the problem and teachers could not remain committed in the classrooms.

The outcome of the 2007 to 2008 pass rate results in primary schools was disastrous. The system was fragile and many teachers abandoned their teaching profession in search for better forms of employment for survival. This brain drain culminated in poor service delivery thereby affecting the learning and teaching processes (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, 2012) MoPSE. Zero pass rates were recorded in certain schools as a result of the exodus of the teaching personnel. To this effect the Ministry of Education Sport, Arts and Culture in Zimbabwe launched the Performance Lag Address Programme (PLAP) in October 2012 in Manicaland Province after realising the under-achievement of students at both primary and secondary schools which was caused by the socio-economic meltdown from 2006 to 2008. (Nkoma. et al. 2013; Herald 10 August, 2013).

The full definition of (PLAP) is Performance Lag Address Programme. This is a programme aimed at helping the learners achieve better pass rate from the effects of the worst economic meltdown of 2008. PLAP and normal remediation are different. Firstly the usual remediation procedure works on the students' "weaknesses within the students" level of study. As for PLAP students' weaknesses are believed to have cropped up from concepts missed at lower levels thus affecting their present performance, (Mukoko and Mdlongwa, 2014). This intervention strategy was pilot tested in Manicaland province of Zimbabwe and cascaded to all regions in order to alleviate the adverse effects of "learning gaps" in learners. In spite of the teachers returning to rejoin the education sector poor pass rates remained a setback to pupils' achievement. The number of schools recording zero percent pass rate continued to increase significantly for example, from 2011 and 2012, a total of 288 and 295 schools recorded 0% pass rate respectively (MoPSE Grade 7 Analysis 2011,2012). The situation created gaps of learning and could be remediated by the implementation of PLAP. Research findings by Miske et al (1998) indicate that higher rates of attendance tend to give greater learner gains while irregular attendance may lead to low achievements in school.

The major objective of (PLAP) was to improve the national examination pass rate in schools by first compensating the lost teaching and learning time. The development of PLAP was meant to complement the existing efforts of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in improving the Grade 7 National examination pass rate (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, 2013). PLAP is meant to appraise the performance learning gap so as to sustain the learner's ability to perform better under conditions and