



A STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PERFORMANCE LAG ADDRESS PROGRAMME (PLAP) IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF SHONA AT ORDINARY LEVEL IN CHEGUTU/MHONDORO CLUSTER

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ABSTRACT

The study set out to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of PLAP in the teaching and learning of Shona language in selected rural secondary schools. PLAP is a remediation strategy meant to narrow the gap in learner performance. Practice and theory have reported no significant improvement in performance even after implementation of PLAP. The study therefore sought to find out factors affecting the effectiveness of PLAP. Quantitative and qualitative methodologies were employed using a descriptive research design. Stratified and purposive sampling were used for the study. Participants were 40 learners, 16 educators, 4 heads of departments and 4 school heads. Results showed that lack of training, inadequate resources and negative attitudes were some of the factors that led to the low effectiveness of PLAP. The study concluded that the success of any reform or new programme depended on thorough preparation of implementers. The study recommends that educators be prepared for the implementation and that adequate resources be made available to equip and motivate implementers. Further research is required to identify knowledge and strategies needed for successful implementation of PLAP and effectiveness of PLAP in other subjects such as English.

Key Words: PLAP, performance, effectiveness, implementation, language, Shona, remediation, quantitative, resources, motivation.

Introduction

There was a period in Zimbabwe when teaching and learning was undermined by economic problems that the country endured for more than a decade, 2000 – 2010. During this period teaching and learning was compromised in most schools as teachers were on industrial action or absent from duty as a protest against poor remuneration by the government. Since promotion from one level to the next up to Ordinary level in Zimbabwe is automatic, some learners got affected in performance in terms of grasping concepts and achievement in learning at their current levels of education.

It is captured in The Chronicle of June 7, 2013 online that, Mr Dan Moyo the Bulawayo Provincial Education Director revealed that shocking results came out after pupils from thirty primary schools and thirty secondary schools in the province were tested in a survey in Mathematics, reading and spellings. He said that, of the 21 845 pupils tested at secondary school, 19 861 were performing below expected levels, while 527 were performing at the expected level and 1 457 performed above expected levels.

It is such alarming statistics that invoked the generation of the idea of Performance Lag Address Program (PLAP). Despite revealing the worrisome results, it is however, noted that Mr Moyo was optimistic that PLAP would tremendously improve the pupils' performance and was expecting heads of schools, teachers and parents to take PLAP seriously so does The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education who expressed that, "PLAP had proved that it could boost the academic achievement of learners in all subjects" (The Chronicle 7 June 2013 online). Its implementation in all schools is being advocated as a remediation strategy.

The study is therefore, a deliberate assessment of the challenges associated with implementation of the PLAP and suggestions of possible solutions to these. This chapter embodies the study's proposal that contain the background of the study, the problem statement, aims and objectives of the study, delimitation and limitations, and the research questions for the study.

Background of the Study

Zimbabwe has faced socio-economic challenges that have had a negative impact on the teaching and learning process. A decade of economic meltdown grossly eroded standards of education in general in the country to such an extent that learners were made to proceed into next levels of learning without undergoing procedures such as completion of syllabi, standard assessment procedures amongst other anomalies. It is a fact that we still have such inadequately taught and performance assessed pupils in the system, some who are now in secondary school and others are still in primary schools. Performance Lag Address Program (PLAP) is being introduced by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in the system as a way of bridging the gaps in the learners' performance in all their academic subjects. In Chegutu District Mashonaland West Province, the program has been introduced in a few schools as a pilot program. The higher offices of Education in the District – District Education Officer and Provincial Education Director are now calling for its wholesome implementation in all schools in the District. However, it seems largely to be to no avail due to a number of reasons that the current project seeks to explore. Whilst some of the pilot schools have reported that they found the programme useful and helpful to learners, not all schools have implemented the programme to date and no serious follow up has been made to monitor and supervise its implementation.

Table 1: ‘O’ Level results analyses for Shona-School A

Year Of Examination	Percentage Pass Rate In Shona
2009	2.3
2010	6.1
2011	14.4
2012	8.7
2013	5.0
2014	2.0

The results analysis in the table for the Shona O’ Level examination at school A under study show consistently low pass rates with an average of 6.4 % for 6 consecutive years from 2009 to 2014. A 2% pass rate as realised in 2014 is a signal that genuinely call for interventional programmes such as PLAP that aim at bridging knowledge gaps. This might improve the school’s pass rates in the subject – Shona given the fact it is the most pupils’ first language that they can easily understand and perform well in examinations. This means that PLAP could be the direction to follow as a way to improve performance of learners in Shona and it needs serious consideration.

Problem Statement

PLAP refers to Performance Lag Address Program. It is a form of special remediation aimed at improving learners’ performance particularly for those who show challenges in their learning process. The program was introduced in Manicaland Province as a pilot. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education has decided to spread it to other provinces in the country. However, this noble idea comes with certain challenges that range from human, time, financial and material resources to have it fully and effectively implemented in all schools generally in Zimbabwe. The current project seeks to assess the challenges affecting the implementation of PLAP in the teaching and learning of Shona.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess the challenges that hinder the successful implementation of the Performance Lag Address Programme in improving the teaching and learning of Shona in secondary schools in Chegutu District, Mashonaland West Province in Zimbabwe.

The study is undertaken to address the following objectives:

- a) To identify the factors affecting the effective implementation of PLAP in secondary schools in general.
- b) To explain challenges the implementation of PLAP in the teaching and learning of Shona in secondary schools.

c) To recommend strategies to improve the practice of PLAP in the teaching and learning of Shona in secondary schools.

d) To influence strategic approach to PLAP implementation and stimulate further research on the topic.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions;

- What factors affect the implementation of PLAP in the teaching and learning in secondary schools in Zimbabwe?
- What are the challenges faced in the implementation of PLAP in the teaching and learning of Shona language as a subject?
- What are the strategies can be implemented to make PLAP more effective?
- **What recommendations can be made for effective implementation of PLAP?**

Importance of the Study

The idea of PLAP sounds noble in the education system of Zimbabwe given the background of a “Decade of Crisis”- 2000-2010 as highlighted in the foregoing section. Its success depends on our commitment as teachers and stakeholders to have more insight into it through research such as this one. Particularly the current project aims to expose the reasons that make it difficult to implement PLAP effectively. The results will project possible solutions and the way forward to circumvent them, hence, its successful programming and implementation. The project shall not only state problems but also suggest solutions. Research on the subject of PLAP is also pertinent given the fact that many researchers in the field of education have focused on other subjects such as difficulties faced by learners in various curriculum subjects in general. Research on PLAP is still fairly a virgin ground that requires us as educational stakeholders to do deliberate research such that its benefits at the end are fully realised. The study is important because it helps educational planners and teachers to reflect on their methodologies and the necessary requirements to have a successful implementation of the programme that will ultimately benefit learners in as far as improving in performance is concerned.

Limitations of the Study

However, the four selected schools considered for the study will not compromise the credibility of the study as the selection will allow the phenomena of assessing challenges in the implementation of PLAP to be explored in depth.

Delimitation of the Study

The conceptual delimitation of this study is quite detailed. Mainly, the challenges that affect the successful and effective implementation of the newly adopted PLAP as a remediation strategy in schools are at the heart of this study. It assesses the challenges in line with factors that influence the successful implementation of educational policies; these include teaching and learning resources, stakeholders such as teachers and pupils' attitudes, time and human resources. Possible solutions to the exposed challenges and problems in the application of PLAP in the teaching and learning of Shona in secondary schools are also in the scope of this study.

PLAP is a program that is calling for implementation in schools nationwide, hence an exhaustive study would have covered schools of all types such as urban, rural, peri-urban and satellite schools selected from all provinces of the country. However, due to the capacity of the study and inadequacy of resources, only schools in the rural set up of Mhondoro, Chegutu District in Mashonaland West province shall be considered for the study. Also to consider is the fact that PLAP is to be implemented covering the wider spectrum of the secondary schools' curriculum subjects that include English, Maths, Geography, History, Accounts just to mention but a few. The study shall focus on implementation of PLAP in Shona language as a subject for it to be manageable. It is not covering implementation of PLAP in all curriculum subjects.

DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions will apply to the terms selected as key to the study.

Performance Lag Address Program refers to a system whereby teachers identify a learners' level of achievement in the process of learning and that provision of remediation in a certain subject to the learner in question until the gaps in terms of learning achievement have been covered.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to unpack related literature to this study. According to Confucius (cited in Hofstee, 2006: 9) "a man who reviews the old so as to find the new is qualified to teach others." This submission testifies the importance of reviewing literature. It is therefore the thrust

of this chapter to provide an account of the related literature researched on the challenges facing the implementation of educational policies. This review is organised around the research questions in order to conceptualise and situate the study in its context by exposing the knowledge gaps that warranted the need for this study as well as increasing its credibility.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of Performance Lag Address emanates from the need to address individual learning needs. It is a remedial strategy aimed at improving learner performance by covering identifiable knowledge gaps. Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Dr. Lazarus Dokora in The Herald of August 10 2013 contended that, “PLAP is a remedial programme which submits pupils to a diagnostic examination... it is used to establish their challenges which then provide strategies to help them catch up to where they should be.” The concept concerns assisting pupils to get to a level of learning achievement they should be at taking into cognisance the principles of cognitive learning theory which proposes the development of the human cognition in stages.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the principles proposed in the Cognitive Learning Theory by scholars such as Ausubel , Bruner and Neisser. The main tenets of the theory state that learning is examined in terms of the processes within the person. Cognitivists recognise that the person’s observable performance is a useful clue to the individual’s internal organisation and use of knowledge. The theory is also based on the premises that acquisition of information is based on the assimilation of new knowledge into existing knowledge structures and changes in old knowledge structures through accommodation to new knowledge. Many ideas of the theory have also been borrowed from the extensive work of Piaget on the development of logical thinking in children which happens in stages that are; The Sensorimotor stage – birth to 2 years, Preoperational stage - 2 years to 7 years, Concrete operational stage – 7 to 12 years and the Formal operational stage 12 years and upwards. (Zindi and Makotore 2000).

The implication of the Cognitive learning Theory as proposed by its named proponents is that learning which is generally defined as the permanent change of behaviour in an individual through interaction with the environment exposed to him or her, should take place in stages depending on the individual’s level of cognitive development and ability to assimilate and accommodate information which transforms into knowledge. Relating the concept with performance lagging, it is inherent that in learning, an individual may lag behind in knowledge acquisition because of two possible reasons which are; slow development of the individual’s cognition or failure to be exposed to the appropriate environment and information for the individual to learn. Performance Lag Address Programme is therefore a programme in which, “teachers detect the biggest challenges which students are facing and devise strategies to help the students so that they can be on the same level with other students.” (Dokora: 2013).

In relation to the assumption above, it is also a fact to consider that the human cognitive development differs from one individual to another. Generally some are fast learners whilst others are slow learners and their ability to acquire knowledge is also different. In the classroom of mixed ability context, it becomes imperative for the teacher to identify the learners' challenges at an individual level and offer remediation. Apart from the variance in cognitive development, it has become commonplace knowledge that from 2000 to 2010 in Zimbabwe, the education system was undermined by the economic drawbacks experienced during the period and the "classroom" was no longer a conducive environment for adequate learning because either the teacher was not there or the teaching and learning materials such as textbooks were nowhere to be found. Hence, the Performance Lag Address Programme was a welcome programme perceived by many educational stakeholders as a panacea to the referred conundrum. The current study seeks to assess the challenges that make it difficult to realise the full benefits of PLAP.

Policy Implementation

Chakanyuka et al (2010) assert that to ensure uniformity and to regulate actions of employees, managers depend heavily on formal organisational rules. This means that policy, rules, regulations and statutory instruments are provisions made to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in organisations. While noble provisions such as PLAP are crafted, they tend to remain on paper and implementation sometimes fails because of limited resources. (Mavhundutse, 2014).

Gusha (2013) worked on a study that sought to determine the factors affecting the successful implementation of Early Childhood Development Education (ECD) in Warren Park/Malbereign District. His findings were that there were factors impeding the success of the ECD programmes which include lack of qualified teachers and poor remuneration packages which were discouraging. He also established that most ECD centres did not have enough resources. The research recommends that the government should come up with binding policies effecting smooth running of the ECD programmes for the country to enhance successful implementation of ECD. He also suggested that the policies should address teacher training programmes in ECD education, community participation, government funding and resource allocation to pre-school centres. It also recommended further research to be undertaken in order to establish how best to implement the ECD education.

The research carried out by Gusha (2013) is crucial to the current study in that it outlines some of the challenges encountered in educational policies implementation in Zimbabwe, hence, shall draw some ideas from it because it also seeks to assess the factors that affect the successful implementation of another educational policy PLAP. The two studies will differ in that whilst Gusha focuses on the implementation of ECD programmes, the current study pays particular attention to the recently crafted PLAP.

Muzviona (2014) conducted a study to assess the implementation of subject specialisation in primary schools in Makoni Education District in Zimbabwe and discovered that there is no policy document or circular that governs primary schools in the implementation of subject specialisation. The major recommendation that she makes is that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should formulate a policy or circular that authorises subject specialisation at primary schools in order to ensure uniformity of standards. The research is also of significance in that it points out some important aspects that may be overlooked by Educational policy makers such as procedural regularisation paper work that matters if any policy is to be effectively implemented in the education system, though the research does not directly commit itself to looking into PLAP implementation which is virtually a recent program in its infancy which the current study is looking into.

Dururu (2014) assessed the implementation of curriculum on Practical subjects at primary school level in Mbare – Hatfield of Harare. The study's main findings were that teachers were not motivated to teach practical subjects, preference is given to academic subjects; allocated time for practical subjects is not enough, non-specialist teachers have challenges in teaching practical subjects. She concludes that the implementation of practical subjects at primary school was not done due to a multiple of challenges such as lack of motivation, non-examination of practical subjects, expertise and inadequate time among others. Therefore the study recommended that practical subjects be examined, more time be availed for practical subjects, use of specialist teachers and provision of adequate resources for the teaching of practical subjects among others. The study is important to the current study in that it unravels some of the challenges that characterise policy implementation in education in Zimbabwe and by inference ideas that concern challenges making it difficult to implement PLAP are also exposed. The same is also true with what recommendations have to be made such that the programme is not aborted at infancy stage but would rather be immunised for it to fully grow.

Availability of Resources

Coombs (1990) cited in Dururu (2014:21) argues that any programme needs efficient utilisation of resources for it to be effective in achieving its goals. Resources enable the education system to function properly. The resources in question are time, financial, material and human resources. There are many academics who have also committed themselves to researching about resources in relation to teaching and learning as well as policy implementation.

Material Resources for Teaching and Learning

Nuffield – Chelsea Curriculum (2010) carried out a research to find out the importance of the availability of learning resources in the teaching of Home Economics. Questionnaires were distributed to teachers in schools which were randomly selected. The findings of the research were that the learning environment and atmosphere were of considerable importance for the

teaching and learning of practical subjects. The research recommended that enough working room, equipment and materials had to be provided so that pupils learn practically.

Time

Oliver et al. (2011) contends that efficient use of time is an important variable in helping students achieve learning goals and making the classroom a pleasant place for teachers and students. Unfortunately, how time is spent at school is all too often determined by the state or District mandates, school policy and rigid daily schedules. The time that the teacher has in essence, is for him or her to meet already set targets which are binding such as rushing to complete the syllabus and is never enough. This factor renders time an important resource to consider if any programme is to be implemented successfully.

Human Resources

Human resource is also a factor to consider when planning implementing a programme or policy. There are researches that have been conducted to assess the significance of human resources in policy implementation. It is a factor that also determines successful policy implementation. Mandiudza et al. (2013) carried out a research on vocationalisation of secondary schools. The study used interviews and observations to collect data to find out whether the non-implementation of the policy directives in most secondary schools was due to the lack of infrastructure, human resources and equipment. The findings were that teachers had prestige in teaching academic subjects. The teachers who taught technical subjects were looked down upon just as the subjects they taught so practical teachers developed an inferiority complex. The study recommended a re-education of the whole nation on the value of vocational and technical subjects. Whilst their study looked at how human resources were worthy to be considered in implementing vocationalisation in secondary schools, the current study shall allude to how the inadequacy of human resources may make it difficult to implement PLAP and make recommendations appropriate to addressing the challenges inherent.

Research Methodology and Design

The research adopted the quantitative and qualitative research approaches, and descriptive survey research design. Qualitative paradigm enables detailed description of feelings and experiences of participants in the implementation of PLAP. On the other hand the quantitative would provide objective data which enabled generalisations of the findings to inform practice of PLAP. The Descriptive Survey was adopted and defined as above because it enabled the administration of questionnaires to a large sample and was quick to gather information on the challenges faced in the implementation of PLAP. Tables and pie charts were used to present quantitative data for objectivity.

Population

In this study the population consisted of eighty Ordinary level Shona learners from the four selected secondary schools in the Chegutu – Mhondoro District, four Shona educators, four Heads of Departments and four Heads of schools. This gave a total of ninety-two potential respondents. The researcher regarded the identified population as the relevant group about whom generalisations could be made.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was used in this study to select Shona educators. Purposive sampling was used because it ensured the judgment of the researcher to select Shona educators without selecting non-Shona educators. All the heads, heads of departments in the four schools participated in the study as managers of the curriculum. The same sampling procedure was used to select the learners who had registered to sit the O Level Shona Examination in November, 2015. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the learners from the population and hence each learner had an equal chance to take part in this study. Pupils were selected randomly from the sample where the researcher used **Yes** or **No** cards and put them in a hat where pupils who picked a **Yes** cards participated in the study. Forty learners were sampled, ten from each of the four selected schools and given questionnaires to complete out of the eighty learners. This was 50% of the total population of Ordinary level Shona learners who were due to sit for the November 2015 examinations.

Data Collection Instruments

Questionnaires and interviews were used in this research to obtain data.

Questionnaire

In this study the researcher used structured and non-structured questionnaires in order to enhance the validity and reliability of the research. Structured questionnaires were used in the study because the respondents supplied their own answers without being constrained by pre-determined answers. The Questionnaire was preferred for this study because it generated quantifiable data ready for statistical analysis and every respondent was required to read and answer identical questions thereby ensuring consistency in the demands. It also generated standardised data which made the processing of responses easier and enhanced validity and reliability of the research and generalisation of results.

The respondents were given the whole day to respond to the questionnaire while the researcher was away. The researcher administer open ended questions in order to capture in depth responses from respondents.

Questionnaires were used for the learners at the time agreed upon. In this study the questionnaire was used in conjunction with interviews to crosscheck the data obtained through questionnaires.

Questionnaires were distributed to selected learners in the selected secondary schools. The respondents answered the questionnaires in the absence of the researcher and their educators. This removed pressure to complete on the learners though there was a danger that some would not return the questionnaires. Questions relating to how useful they found PLAP to be were asked. The researcher collected the questionnaires at the end of the day.

Interviews

The researcher interviewed four Shona educators, four heads, four Heads of Departments and five learners doing O level Shona in the selected secondary schools. Both girls and boys were selected to ensure gender balance.

The researcher tried to gain participants' trust by assuring them that all the information gathered would be treated with the strictest of confidentiality. The researcher used pseudonyms to conceal the interviewees' identity when the results are reported. Face to face interviews were used in order to clarify burning issues about the implementation of PLAP in schools particularly in Shona as a subject. Respondents were allowed to respond in either Shona or English. This helped to put the participants at ease especially those not very fluent in English.

The interview questions focused on the acceptability of PLAP in the schools under study in terms of attitude of both educators and learners, availability of the teaching and learning resources that enabled the effective application of PLAP, the challenges impeding the successful implementation of PLAP and suggestions of possible solutions to the challenges. Questions relating to challenges affecting the application of PLAP in the teaching and learning of Shona were asked. Each interview lasted less than ten minutes.

Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected from schools in Chegutu – Mhondoro District from the 10th of September to 15th of September 2015. Data was collected from four secondary schools. Self-administered questionnaires were given to four learners, Shona educators and H.O.Ds as well as Heads of the selected schools. Respondents were given questionnaires to complete in their own time. Structured face-to-face interviews were also conducted with the learners, educators, H.O.Ds and school Heads to record their perceptions on the applicability of PLAP in schools, particularly, in the teaching and learning of Shona and what could be the solutions to the challenges encountered in the PLAP implementation process for it to be a song of success in future.

The researcher first made appointments with the School Heads to come to their schools for the research. The interviews were conducted and questionnaires were distributed and arrangements made to collect them later.

Data Analysis Procedures

Respondents' questionnaires were coded and entered into tables to generate frequencies and percentages. Cross tabulations were also performed to see if there were any relationships between variables regarding factors that determined the success of PLAP as an educational policy. Responses on face-to-face interview were summarised and presented in table forms. Data was compared to research questions to see if they answered the research questions. Questionnaire data was presented in tables and pie charts.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

Results of the data gathered at selected secondary schools in Mhondoro-Chegutu District that reflect numerous factors that affect the implementation of the Performance Lag Address Programme are analysed. The report outlines the findings gathered in terms of attitude of educators and learners towards PLAP in Shona, constraints in resources such as time, material, financial and human. The researcher's interpretation of results was based on qualitative and quantitative research data to answer research questions: (a) What factors affect the implementation of PLAP in the teaching and learning in secondary schools in Zimbabwe?

- What are the challenges faced in the implementation of PLAP in the teaching and learning of Shona language as a subject?
- What are the strategies can be implemented to make PLAP more effective?

The researcher used processes such as data reduction, data displays, results and conclusions. Every diagram has been interpreted with detailed explanations for readers to understand.

Attitude of Pupils Towards Performance Lag Address Programme (Plap)

Responses to questionnaire and interview guide questions exploring educators' and learners' attitudes towards PLAP in Shona show that 70% of pupils suggested that the programme be implemented at primary school. (See Table 1). They expressed a negative attitude towards PLAP citing factors such as, learners felt ashamed that they were underachieving in Shona and were to go for remedial lessons for a level below their current level. They resented being labelled as slow learners. One of the pupils had this to say in response to an interview question regarding perception towards PLAP in Shona:

“Zvinonyadzisa kuitiswa ma ba be bi bo bu nezviperego zvekuprimary vamwe vachipiwa basa refomu 3 zvinobva zvaita kuti unzi uri dofo saka hazvinakidze. Ini hangu handizvifarire” (It makes one feel ashamed to be taught shona sound combinations (phonetics) and spellings that

are learnt at primary school level whilst others are given Form 3 work, it makes one get labelled as a slow learner and it is disgusting. I personally dislike it.)

The other factor is that the pupils have a negative attitude towards the subject (Shona). They simply dislike it as it is a subject normally looked down upon by many because it is an indigenous language. Mparutsa et al (1990) argue that the value of Shona and students' achievement in the subject is being down played by the high status associated with English Language. Many people view English language as superior compared to local languages such as Shona and Ndebele.

On the other hand, 80% of Shona Language teachers in response to the questionnaire and interview questions revealed a negative attitude towards implementing PLAP in the subject because of the commitment it requires. Implementation of PLAP is perceived as a burden compounding their already heavy loads. They expressed that the programme is time consuming and involves a lot of paperwork and is therefore too demanding. The educators cited the fact that the idea was noble on paper. However, its practicality in the current educational set up in schools is questionable. Saiddud in (2003) reported that, attitudes are dynamic and based on the understanding of communication styles that may be verbal or non-verbal. This implies that what a person expresses in speech or writing may clearly indicate his or her perceptions.

Table 2: Pupils' Attitude Towards PLAP in Shona

Pupils' Attitude towards PLAP	Count	Percentage%
Positive	28	30
Negative	52	70
TOTAL	80	100

One of the pupils interviewed said that;-

“Ini handifariri Chishona nemhaka yekuti handioni kukosha kwacho sezvo chisina kwachinobvunzwa panotsvaga munhu basa. Kuitiswa maextra lessons (PLAP remediation strategies) kutopedza nguva nekuti zviru nani kutopedza simba kuzvidzidzo zvakaite sesvomhu zvinodiwa pakutsvaga basa”. (I dislike the Shona subject because I do not see its use on the job market. Undergoing PLAP in Shona is a waste of time and it is better that I concentrate on useful subjects like mathematics).

Negative attitude affects the morale of pupils to commit themselves to serious consideration and study of the subject, devalue the subject thus cause pupils to underachieve in the subject. This also applies to their readiness to accept remediation as implicit in the response quoted above.

The 70% negative attitude exhibited in pupils' responses through questionnaire and interviews means that many pupils are not prepared to take part in PLAP activities and this becomes a challenge to the success of the programme. Learning itself is a process that requires an individual to commit to accepting instruction given. It facilitates practice for change of behaviour to take place as purported in the cognitive and behavioural learning theories. Pupils form part of the key stakeholders in the education system hence programmes such as PLAP designed to improve teaching and learning processes should take into cognisance their motivational needs as they will not in any case be passive consumers of such ideas and processes.

Table 3: Teachers' Attitudes Towards PLAP

Teachers' Attitude towards PLAP	Count	Percentage%
Positive	1	25
Negative	3	75
TOTAL	4	100

The interview results with Shona teachers indicate that most of them have reservations about the effectiveness of the PLAP programme in Shona. Generally they have a negative perception of the programme. One of the teachers interviewed lamented that,

“The programme (PLAP) is burdensome, time consuming and involves a lot of paperwork. It is impossible to give individual attention to more than five pupils of different levels of learning achievement in the same class at the same time.”

Teachers who have a negative attitude towards the practice of PLAP in the teaching and learning of Shona are 75% of the total who responded to the questionnaire and interview questions. The response has negative implications on the successful implementation of the programme as alluded to in the foregoing paragraph. Teachers are viewed as key stakeholders in the implementation of educational policies; therefore, their commitment is imperative. Results such as signalled in the above table may testify the fact that the teacher as a human resource becomes a challenge if he or she assumes a negative position. This is what Dururu (2014) also observed as she concluded in her study that, the implementation of practical subjects in primary schools in Mbare – Hatfield District was largely not done because of challenges such as negative attitudes and lack of motivation amongst teachers.

Table 4: School Heads and Heads of Departments

HEADS' Attitudes towards PLAP	Count	Percentage%
Positive	2	50
Negative	2	50
TOTAL	4	100

Table 5: School Heads and Heads of Departments

H.O.Ds Attitudes towards PLAP	Count	Percentage%
Positive	2	50
Negative	2	50
TOTAL	4	100

The responses by the school heads and H.O.Ds on how they perceived PLAP in Shona reflected that 50% of them welcomed the PLAP and its wholesome implementation in order to improve pass rates in their respective schools and departments. The other 50% expressed concern over inconsistency on the part of the educational policy makers who sometimes fail to fulfil their obligations to ensure the smooth implementation and running of the programme. Inadequacy of resources in general was also cited as one of the major drawbacks that affect the success of the programme.

The balance in the number of school heads and heads of departments who perceive PLAP in the teaching and learning of Shona positively and negatively implies that, the programme is a noble and welcome idea as the study has highlighted in its first chapter. School heads and Heads of departments are authorities in schools who are also accountable for overall school pass rates and departmental pass rates persistently drop, therefore, they may get more worried when such a programme as PLAP flops as it seeks to bridge knowledge gaps in learners and consequentially improve their performance and pass rates. The school heads and heads of departments pessimistic about PLAP worried more about limited resources such as time, human and teaching and learning resources, a factor which they expressed as adverse to the successful application of PLAP in their respective schools.

Availability of Teaching and Learning Resources in Schools.

Teaching and learning resources play a pivotal role to ensure that a programme such as PLAP is effectively implemented without which failure becomes definite. These include syllabi, textbooks and projected media just to mention but a few. These ensure that teachers use and vary their teaching methods and remediation strategies crucial in carrying out PLAP. The table below shows the number of schools with and without adequate important teaching and learning resources.

Table 6: Availability of resources by school

School	Textbooks	Classrooms	Stationery	Furniture	Electricity	Computers	Models for teaching Shona
A	•	•	•	•	•	x	x
B	X	x	x	x	•	x	x
C	X	x	x	x	x	x	x
D	X	•	x	x	•	x	x

KEY

- Available/adequate
- x unavailable/inadequate

The graphical representation of schools' statuses on the availability of some basic teaching and learning materials spells doubt on prospects of a successful implementation of educational programmes such as PLAP. School A which happens to be a mission boarding school is the only one that seems to have the capacity to carry out PLAP effectively. It has the capacity to purchase the necessary and required resources making it easier for teachers to employ various strategies of remediation. However, the school represents only 25% of the schools under study, 75% represents schools incapacitated to effectively carry out the programme.

It was also noted by the researcher that some pupils showing learning challenges because of their knowledge gaps require PLAP as an interventional strategy. Their last levels of learning achievement are traceable back to Grade five and some even below in terms of reading and writing Shona. It means that the teacher assisting such children require material for use that corresponds with the pupils' level – Grade five. On this note three heads of schools interviewed noted that such material for use in carrying out PLAP was available in primary schools whose Heads they could liaise with. They can borrow for short term or whenever they wished to use and return them. However, one Head of school expressed concern on that note because their feeding primary schools were located at least four kilometres away in all directions from their secondary school. The issue of lack of teaching and learning resources becomes an impediment in the successful implementation of PLAP. Coombs (1990) contends that any programme needs efficient utilisation of resources for it to be effective in achieving its desired goals.

In essence, the inadequacy of teaching and learning resources in schools as presented in the table 5 may mean a challenge that also works conversely in the process of implementing PLAP in teaching and learning to improve performance in Shona language. It is also here that we consider that many schools in a rural set up such as Chegutu – Mhondoro district are limited and restricted to acquire resources because of insufficient funding that comes from low fees paid by parents. To such schools PLAP may remain a noble idea and strategy on paper for which results may take long to realise until adequate teaching and learning resources are availed to them.

Time as a Resource

According to Oliver et al. (2011) the efficient use of time is an important variable in helping students achieve learning goals and making the classroom a pleasant place for teachers and students. This explains time as valuable without which policy implementation may be hindered. It is worrisome however; that all the respondents to the study's questionnaires and interview questions expressed concern over the inadequacy of time to carry out remedial work. Teachers complained that no time table adjustments were made to accommodate PLAP activities in lessons. Teachers from school A interviewed lamented;

“It is virtually impossible to attend more than ten pupils of different levels of achievement in one class yet we are under pressure to complete the syllabus because the same pupils and all others still have to write examinations at the end of the course”.

The Shona language educators complained that it was even more difficult in their case as most of their lessons do not exceed thirty-five minutes on the time table. This coerces them to work extra hours if they are to do any PLAP with the learners. It is either the teachers' workload is too cumbersome or the pupils' timetable is full to capacity to accommodate extra learning activities such as PLAP. This means that time inadequacy is also a limiting factor hence a challenge in the successful implementation of PLAP in schools in general and in the classrooms for the teaching and learning of Shona in particular.

Human Resources

The Oxfam Education Report by Watkins (2000) sites that motivated teachers is one of the key elements associated with quality education. Motivation is explained by Nyagura and Chivore (1997:5) as an internal or external state of an organism that impels it into action. It is a person's reason for doing something. On probing about whether the same teachers in the schools selected for the study were motivated, the results reveal that most teachers had no motivation of any sort to commit themselves in PLAP activities in their respective schools. One of the teachers had this to say responding to an interview question;

“We teachers already are demotivated with the ever tightening supervision and follow ups by the ministry officials. Consider the current and ongoing audits by the PSC officials and job cut

threats, of late leaves such as the manpower development leave (MDL) with pay has been suspended yet the call for us to advance in studies by the same authorities has become rhetoric.”

The environment in terms of human resources upon which the PLAP programme has to be implemented effectively is doubtful given a background of teachers whose morale is suppressed. Thus, demotivated teachers also become a challenge in implementing PLAP.

The pie chart below is indicative of the situation of teacher motivation in representation of schools under study.

Figure 1: Educator Motivation

Key 80% - Demotivated
15% - Motivated
5% - Indifferent

Dururu (2014:11) in her study assessing the implementation of curriculum on practical subjects at primary school observed that, motivated teachers are crucial to quality education whilst failure to consult the teachers or their representatives at any planning stage contributed to demoralisation, alienation and passive resistance. It is implicit in this assessment that the successful implementation of PLAP also depends on the extent to which teachers as the key stakeholders in the education system are prepared to commit themselves to applying the strategies the programme recommends. Motivation becomes an important factor to consider without which a challenge also arises to hinder the success of the programme in question.

Teacher Training and Information on PLAP

Information gathered on this aspect is indicative of the fact that some teachers and pupils interviewed are not fully equipped and knowledgeable about PLAP. 50% of the respondents (teachers and H.O.Ds) interviewed revealed that they had not attended any workshop nor received any form of training on how to apply PLAP in the classrooms, save for the feedback meetings in their respective schools in which either the Heads of the schools or some teachers reported back on what would have been said in meetings/workshops. One of the teachers at school **B** giving a response to an interview question said,

“I have never attended any workshop nor received any form of training about PLAP, I have only heard about it in the feedback meetings by the Head of the school in which we are commanded to implement it (PLAP) without delay”.

Table 7: Educators’ Training and Information about PLAP.

Teachers/H.O.Ds who have attended PLAP Training/workshop(s)	Count	Percentage%
Attended	4	50
Not Attended	4	50
TOTAL	8	100

Educators who have not yet received training and information to implement PLAP still hope and wish to receive one in the near future so that they could start implementing as demanded by those in authority in the education system. This study contends that, pupils who have knowledge gaps will continue lagging behind. Declining Shona results in one of the schools under study is enough evidence of the failure of PLAP. Policy makers concerned should take serious measures about the implementation of PLAP in schools.

It is essential to equip the teachers with the basics about PLAP which is a remediation strategy that requires them to apply psychological techniques. Pupils write tests (Psychometric) and these require specialists.

Not all educators and school heads are fully informed and knowledgeable about PLAP. This is a worrying indication and a challenge to the success of PLAP implementation. Teachers should be on the driving seat of the whole PLAP process. Knowledge and understanding of the objectives and goals of PLAP and the specialised know how of carrying it out for the benefit of the learners in the classroom are crucial. In relation to this observation Dururu (2014) in her study that also assessed implementation of an educational policy – curriculum of practical subjects at primary school level proposes that policy makers should make teachers full partners in education reforms and that their participation in design, implementation, adaptation and evaluation of policy and project initiatives is an essential ingredient for success.

SUMMARY

The main aim of the study was to assess the factors contributing to the apparent failure of PLAP implementation with specific reference to the teaching and learning of Shona in secondary schools. PLAP as a remediation strategy designed to bridge learning gaps in pupils and prospected by many stakeholders in the education system as a panacea to learning challenges in pupils because of its compensatory dimension and approach, is still in its infancy and yet to fully manifest and reveal results since its inception in 2013. Questionnaires and interview instruments were used to gather information from the respondents in the visited secondary schools selected for the study in Mhondoro – Chegutu district. The research revealed that factors contributing to the difficulty in PLAP implementation range from attitude of pupils and teachers alike to the unavailability of material resources, time and human resources.

CONCLUSIONS

The main research question was; what are the factors that make it difficult to implement PLAP effectively in the teaching and learning of Shona in secondary schools?

The study found out that most learners and educators have negative attitude towards the programme (PLAP) claiming that it is cumbersome involving a lot of paperwork and time consuming.

It was discovered that in schools selected for the study, material resources for teaching and learning such as textbooks and other technological facilities that enhance teaching and learning such as computers and can make remediation workable are lacking. This inadequacy of resources downplays the successful and effective implementation of PLAP.

Time as a resource has also been noted as crucial to the application of PLAP in the classroom and in the teaching and learning of Shona. Remediation strategies embodied in PLAP are time demanding – far more than the 30 – 35 minutes long lessons and four to five lessons of Shona per week allotted on timetables.

The study observed that most of the educators were not motivated to commit themselves to carrying out extra duties such as attending to pupils under remediation programme who are at different levels of learning and require individual attention. Tight supervision and follow ups and increased paper work make teachers focus more on updating paper work and records for job security rather than pay individual attention to learners facing challenges. There is neither material nor monetary incentives given to teachers to motivate them even if it means extra-work to apply PLAP in the classroom.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that;

The policy makers in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should seek adequate funding to equip schools with necessary material resources such as classrooms, furniture, textbooks and computers that facilitate the smooth running of noble educational programmes such as PLAP before implementation.

The schools through the Ministry of primary and secondary should devise suitable time tables separate from main timetables for learning that do not burden teachers and pupils, these should enable the practice of PLAP. Time is a crucial resource to consider and sometimes very expensive.

The research also recommends the government to motivate teachers as key stakeholders in the education system and implementers of various educational programmes. Such motivation may not be monetary but improved conditions of service for example, re-introducing paid Manpower Development Leave (MDL). Nyagura and Chivore (1997: 5) purport that, motivated employees try better ways of solving problems at the work places. This is done to improve quality and productivity.

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should make sure that the educators who to take part in the implementation of PLAP receive adequate information and attend workshops or undergo necessary training to be fully equipped and knowledgeable about the programme.

Further research has to be done on the concept of PLAP particularly on the strategies of applying it in the classroom such that learners benefit from it. This emanates from the conception that continued research, action research in particular helps educators to improve their practice – teaching to enhance learning.

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