INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISION AND PERFORMANCE LAG ADDRESS PROGRAM (PLAP): A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FORMER GROUP A (SI) AND FORMER GROUP B (S2) SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MUTARE URBAN. ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to determine instructional supervision of Performance Lag Address Program (PLAP) at secondary school level. Two schools participated in the study (one from former group A (S1) and the other from former group B (S2) schools). A total of 100 volunteer teachers (fifty from each school type) participated. A questionnaire with closed and open questions was used. Data was analyzed using a chi-square for independence while open ended questions showing similar themes were grouped together. The results show significant differences by school type on vision, curriculum modifications, staff development classroom supervision by HODs and head-teachers. Teacher comments indicate that head-teachers do not supervise classes and there is little staff development. No differences were found in collaborative work and resources but teacher comments indicated that there are no teacher teams in same subject areas or different subjects. Recommendations on PLAP are suggested.

KEYWORDS: COLLABORATION, TEACHER, PERFORMANCE LAG PROGRAM, CURRICULUM MODIFICATION

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the study is to determine instructional supervision of performance Lag Address Program (PLAP) at secondary school level. Teachers' perceptions on PLAP at former group A (S1) and former group B (S2) will be compared. Former group A (S1) secondary schools are located in former European affluent suburbs and were attended by whites, Indians and colored students only and schools were superior in terms of resources and trained staff. Former group B (S2) secondary schools were located in urban African residential areas (similar to inner-city areas in USA) and were inferior in terms of resources and trained teachers (Nkoma and Mapfumo, 2013)

 The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe launched the Performance Lag address Program (PLAP) in October 2012 in Manicaland Province after realizing 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., 2012; Herald, 10Aug 2013). The crisis had considerable impact on several aspects of the education system particularly related to financing, the teacher force, participation, equity and learning outcomes (MOESAC, 2013). Performance Lag Address Program (PLAP) is a result of deep-stick evaluation which entails assessing the teacher-learning process, teacher-pupil records, resources provision, and monitoring and evaluation programs. In order to close the achievement gaps a manual for primary and secondary school teachers was written to specifically address the problems of underachievement (Muzawazi and Nkoma, 2011 cited by Nkoma, 2014). The PLAP program aims to improve the achievement of primary and secondary students by re-visiting the syllabus and targeting concepts that have proven persistently difficult for pupils to catch up on with the overall aim of teaching from the last point of success. This implies curriculum modification which Comfort (1990) defines as "the adapting or interpreting of a school's formal curriculum by teachers into learning objectives and units of learning activities judged most reasonable for an individual learner or particular group of learners" (p. 397). When school curriculum is

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viewed as a framework for guiding teachers it entails modified contents, instructions, and/or learning outcomes for diverse student needs (King-Sears, 2001). Hence, the goal of modifying the curriculum is to make individuals compensate for intellectual challenges by creating learning environments which allow an individual to utilize existing skill repertoires while promoting the acquisition of new skills and knowledge (Switlick, 1997 p.236).

The Performance Lag Address Program emphasizes frequent and flexible within class ability grouping. Students who change groups are exposed to different peer contexts, instructional content and pedagogy. The researcher has been an educational psychologist in the Ministry of Education and has observed that this in-class ability grouping is mostly found at primary school level while the organization at secondary schools is mostly based on friendship pairs.

The causes of underachievement in schools are complex and may be difficult to determine (Nkoma, 2014). For example studies in Zimbabwe have shown that the quality of instruction is affected by high teacher-pupil ratio, inadequate remuneration, inadequate supervision and poor incentives (Chivedza et al, 2012; Chakanyuka et al, 2009; Makopa, 2011; Nkoma et al, 2013). Incentives were introduced in 2009 to motivate teachers due to poor remuneration but only tended to cater for urban schools only and resulted in clashes between head-teachers and teachers for non-payment were scrapped in August, 2014 (Chronicle, 30 August 2014). The present study will focus on secondary schools as most studies on Performance Lag Address Program focused on primary schools (for example, Nkoma, 2013; 2014). Organizational differences between secondary and primary schools (for example subject specialization and indirect supervision) make it necessary to know how PLAP is being implemented at secondary level. Instructional leadership should be viewed as an important component of PLAP as its functions are directly related to supporting classroom teaching and learning (Murphy, 1988) while its indirect workings have a statistical significance effect on student achievement (Louis et al., 2010). For PLAP to be effective the school vision needs to have high expectations for all (teachers and students) which raises the overall achievement of all students (Porter et al 2008). Thus instructional leaders need to value a blend of supervision, staff development and curriculum development (Southworth, 2002) while implementing PLAP.

For example, if some form 2 students are found to be achieving at sixth grade level in English language…does his/her English teacher collaborate with a history or Divinity teacher? The departmentalization at secondary schools warrants a study on instructional supervision. The definition opted in this article is by Murphy (1988) who views instructional leadership as a class of leadership functions directly related to supporting classroom teaching and student learning. This definition is necessary for PLAP as it views head-teachers as responsible for developing a community of professional learners in which teachers work collaboratively and in establishing expectations for quality student work and quality teaching. Mctlife (2003) indicates that head-teachers are responsible for motivating teachers and students, ensuring a safe and secure environment, communicating to parents and other administrative responsibilities. Deputy head-teachers and heads of departments are the instructional leaders for their departments because they attend to the details of curriculum delivery in their subjects (Siskin, 1994) while head-teachers focus on broad types of leadership which entails creating the conditions for optimal teaching and learning by ensuring that school policies, routines, resourcing and other management decisions support and require high-quality learning.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The researcher was a lead researcher in the design of PLAP and has heard negative comments about it at secondary school level by some teachers. The comments centered mostly on too much work due to academic diversity of students, inability to teach primary level material and the requirements of both schemes which are done during school holidays and group plans which are done soon after schools open after students are assessed to determine level of ability. Various stakeholders have widened their expectations from head-teachers demanding higher academic results and performance standards (Weindling and Dimmock, 2006). In Zimbabwe, Chireshe (2011) found that curriculum as indicated by teachers is examinations oriented and hence teachers focus on preparing learners for examinations to achieve high pass rates and gain recognition while Mpofu (2000) indicated that African education systems tend to emphasize competition rather than cooperation amongst learners. However, studies have shown that instructional supervision improves classroom practices thus contributing to students' success through professional growth and improvement of teachers (Blasé & Blasé, 1998; and Sullivan, 1991). Thus the study will look at the basic elements of instructional supervision with respect to PLAP: defining the school mission, managing the curriculum and instruction, supervising teaching, monitoring learner progress (Van Deventer and Kruger, 2003). The head-teacher as an instructional leader of PLAP needs to provide direction, resources and support teachers thus he/she has an effect on teacher attitudes towards teaching with an ultimate goal of improving achievement of all learners.

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It is important to determine secondary teachers' views on performance lag address program as it entails teaching academically diverse students. A manual for both primary and secondary school teachers' (Nuzawazi and Nkoma cited by Nkoma, 2014) did not take into cognizance the organizational differences (for example indirect supervision) between secondary and primary schools. Studies have shown that some secondary school children are achieving at primary school level while others are achieving at or above their current from levels (Nkoma et al 2012; MOESAC, 2013) hence it is important to determine how secondary school teachers' plan and teach diverse classrooms considering the limited resources in schools. For PLAP to be effective these secondary school teachers have to start instruction from the student's last point of success which might be at primary school level hence the need to collaborate with primary school teachers. The schemes are done during school holidays hence assuming students of average ability which might result in planning and instruction tailored for these students only. It is important to determine how teacher teams from different subject areas collaborate (for example if some form two students (grade nine equivalent) are achieving at sixth grade in English, does this English teacher collaborate with history teacher on teaching strategies and planning?).

HYPOTHESES

1. Ho: There is no difference between school visions on PLAP by school type

2. Ho: There is no relationship between teaching resources by school type

3. Ho: There is no relationship between curriculum modifications by school type.

4. Ho: There is no association between classroom supervisory practices by HODs or Deputy heads by school type.

5. Ho: There is no difference between staff development practices by school type.

6. Ho: There is no difference between instructional supervision by head-teacher by school type.

RESEARCH METHOD AND DATA ANALYSIS

RESEARCH DESIGN

A survey research design will be useful in this study as it takes into cognizance self-reported beliefs and opinions of participants (David and Sutton, 2004)

SAMPLE

The district of study is Mutare urban were the PLAP program started in Zimbabwe. One secondary school from each school type (former group A (S1) and former group B (S2)) will be randomly selected for the study. A total number of 100 volunteer teachers (50 from each school type will be selected).

INSTRUMENTS

The questionnaire was designed using information from the literature and structured into seven parts with a total of 33 open and closed questions. These are divided into PLAP vision with three questions; curriculum modification (4 questions); classroom supervision by heads of department/deputy heads (4 questions); staff development (9 questions); classroom supervision by head-teacher (4 questions); teaching resources (3 questions) and collaborative work (6 questions). The instrument was content analyzed by four school inspectors and three faculty of Education lecturers in Mutare and was piloted at one secondary school and found to be suitable for use in this study.

PROCEDURE

Authority to carry the study in Mutare was sort from the Deputy Provincial Education Director, Ministry o fPrimary and Secondary Education. When the authority is granted appointments with Heads-teachers were done. Teachers who volunteered to participate in the study were briefed about the purpose of the study and were given two days to answer the questions at their own pace.

DATA ANALYSIS

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Data was analyzed using a chi-square for independence while qualitative responses from open ended questions showing similar themes were grouped together.

RESULTS

General observations of classroom seating arrangements has shown that students seat in pairs in overcrowded classrooms while teachers' record books have shown whole class planning in different subject areas.

The first hypothesis states that there is no difference between school visions on PLAP by school type

Table 1: Observed and expected frequencies (expected in parenthesis) on teachers' views about PLAP   Vision by school type.

School type	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total	
Group A	45 (38)	2(4.5)	3(7.5)	50	
Group B	31 (38)	7 (4.5)	12 (7.5)	50	
Total	76	9	15	100	

Chi-square (χ^2) = 10.76, $p < 0.01$ df = 2 (significant)

Table 1indicates a significant difference by school type on visions about PLAP. Group A school agreed more on school vision than group B school. Most teachers agreed that the school has a PLAP vision but group B school could not state what it entails.

The second hypothesis states that there is no relationship between school type and teaching resources

Table 2: Observed and expected frequencies (expected in parenthesis) on teachers' views on teaching resources by school type.

	Group A	Group B	Total
Agree	31 (32)	33 (32)	64
Neutral	4 (4.5)	5 (4.)	9
Disagree	15 (13.5)	15 (13.5)	27
Total	50	50	100

Chi-square (χ^2) = 0.52, $p > 0.05$ df = 2 (insignificant)

The results indicate no difference in teaching resources indicating that resources are equally distributed. However, most teachers' in both school types indicated lack of primary school teaching resources to effectively teach those achieving below grade 7 levels. They also commented lack of classrooms for special classes of slow learners.

 The third hypothesis states that there is no relationship between curriculum modifications by school type.

Table 3: Observed and expected frequencies (expected in parenthesis) on teachers' views about curriculum modification by school type.

	Group A	Group B	Total
Agree	31 (25)	19 (25)	50
Neutral	4 (4.5)	5 (4.5)	9
Disagree	15 (20.5)	26 (20.5)	41
Total	50	50	100

Chi-square (χ^2) = 5.96 $p < 0.05$ df = 2 (significant)

The results show differences in curriculum modifications by school type with higher frequencies of agreement occurring in group A while most teachers in group B disagreed. Teachers indicated that the high teacher-pupil ratio and overcrowding in

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classrooms impact negatively on the quality of teaching. Most teachers in group B school commented that they do not know how to modify the curriculum and instruction for diverse students.

The fourth hypothesis states that there is no association between classroom supervisory practices by HODs or Deputy heads by school type.

Table 4: Observed and expected frequencies (expected in parenthesis) on teachers' views about supervision by HODs/ deputy head teachers by school type.

	Group A	Group B	Total
Agree	35 (30)	25 (30)	60
Neutral	6 (5)	4 (5)	10
Disagree	9 (15)	21 (15)	30
Total	50	50	100

Chi-square (χ^2) = 7.46 p < 0.05 df = 2 (significant)

The results show a significant difference in supervision by school type. Teachers' comments in group B indicate that supervision is always scheduled and liked by them while that in group A was mostly unscheduled but infrequent but makes them work harder. Most teachers in both school types indicated that these supervisions were formal and long. The fifth hypothesis states that there is no difference between staff development by school type.

Table 5: Observed and expected frequencies (expected in parenthesis) on teachers' views about staff development by school type.

	Group A	Group B	Total
Agree	32 (25.5)	19 (25.5)	60
Neutral	6 (9)	12 (9)	10
Disagree	12 (15.5)	19 (15.5)	30
Total	50	50	100

Chi-square (χ^2) = 6.90 p < 0.05 df = 2 (significant)

There are differences in staff development by school type with higher frequencies on staff development occurring in group A school. Comments from teachers in group A school indicated that they once invited school psychological personnel to give them in-service training on PLAP. Most teachers in group B indicated that they are rare in-service workshops on PLAP and are not sure on how it is implemented. However, both school types indicated that are not involved in action research to solve teaching and learning problems in their schools.

The sixth hypothesis states that there is no difference between school type and instructional supervision by head-teacher.

Table 6: Observed and expected frequencies (expected in parenthesis) on teachers' views about supervision by head-teacher by school type.

	Group A	Group B	Total
Agree	33 (19.5)	26 (19.5)	59
Neutral	12 (11)	10 (11)	22
Disagree	5 (9.5)	14 (9.5)	19
Total	50	50	100

Chi-square (χ^2) = 15.96 p < 0.05 df = 2 (significant)

The results show a significant difference in instructional supervision by school type. Most teachers in group A school indicated that the head-teacher is sets academic standards for all teachers while that at group B only encourages teachers to perform better and is evaluative. Teachers' comments indicate that the head-teacher of group A follows up the academic

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performance of students by looking at their class tests and inviting them to the office for counseling and encouragement. Comments from teachers at both school types indicate that the head-teachers do not do any classroom supervision.

The fifth hypothesis states that there are no significant differences in collaborative work by school type.

Table 5: Observed and expected frequencies (expected in parenthesis) on teachers' views about collaborative work by school type.

	Group A	Group B	Total
Agree	36 (31.5)	27 (31.5)	63
Neutral	1 (3)	5 (3)	6
Disagree	13 (15.5)	18 (15.5)	31
Total	50	50	100

Chi-square (χ^2) = 4.74 p > 0.05 df = 2 (insignificant)

The above table 5 shows no differences in collaborative work by school type. Teachers' comments from both school types indicate that there are no teacher teams from same subject and different subject areas to discuss teaching approaches.

DISCUSSION

Results indicate significant differences by school type on school vision, curriculum modification supervision by HODs, staff development and supervision by head-teacher while they are no differences in resources and collaborative work by school type. Teachers agreed that all students can learn implying that given the right environment all students can achieve to the best of the ability.

The PLAP vision in school type B was not clearly stated by the head-teacher as the teachers failed to state it. Hallinger (2003) posits that mission building activities on the part of head-teachers are the most influential set of leadership practices. These should be clear to teachers and agreed upon. Research on school vision show that high expectations for all including public standards raises the overall achievement of all students (Porter et al 2008).

Comments from teachers in group A school indicated that they once invited school psychological personnel to give them in-service training on PLAP. Most teachers in group B indicated that they are rare in-service workshops on PLAP and are not sure on how it is implemented. The results concur with Nyagura and Reece (1999) who found that head-teachers in Zimbabwe put little effort on staff development activities for teachers. However both school types indicated that are not involved in action research to solve teaching and learning problems in their schools. Professional development as an out-come of supervision should be parallel to teacher needs (Johnsson, 1993), as teachers have different backgrounds and experiences, different abilities in abstract thinking, and different levels of concern for others (Beach & Reinhartz, 2000; Glickman et al., 1998; Wiles & Bondi, 1996). Hence, a more purposeful professional development targeted for individual teachers is needed. This increases the motivation and commitment of teachers and ultimately resulting in higher achievement of students. Inquiry-based supervision or action research (Tracy, 1998) is important for PLAP as it focuses on solving real-life problems in the school through staff development.

The results indicate no differences in collaborative approaches by school type. However, teacher comments indicate that there are no teacher teams in same subject areas or different subject areas. Fink and Rescink (2001) posits that the head-teacher needs to develop a community of professional learners in which teachers trust, depend on and learn from one another. Peer coaching as an approach to collaborative supervision (Showers and Joyce, 1996) involves team work asking questions that clarify their own perceptions about instruction and learning (PLAP) which provides opportunities to refine teaching skills through immediate feedback and through experimentation with alternative strategies as a result of informal evaluation (Brown and McComick, 2000). Team work is important for PLAP as teachers provide daily support and encouragement to each other and thus realize their interdependence as part of the whole school system. Peer coaching increases collaboration among teachers and reduces the time burden on head-teachers on regular and collaborative work (Ebmeier and Nicklaus, 1999). Collaborative work is based on the process of a 'critical friend' (Costa and Kallick, 1993), where in teachers in groups ask questions to clarify their perceptions of teaching and supervision. This trusted person provides data to be examined through another lens and offers critique of a friend's work. This results in self-analysis, self-evaluation and self-monitoring which Garmston et al (1993) call cognitive coaching.

The results show a significant difference in supervision by school type. Teachers' comments in group B indicate that supervision is always scheduled and liked by them while that in group A was mostly unscheduled but infrequent but makes them work harder. Most teachers in both school types indicated that these supervisions were formal and long. Luis et al (2010) found that frequent, short and spontaneous classroom visits which were followed up by immediate feedback to teachers were found in high achieving schools while low achieving schools had scheduled instructional observation and feedback was rarely provided.

The results show a significant difference in instructional supervision by school type. Comments from teachers at both school types indicate that the head-teachers do not do any classroom supervision. Classroom visitation by the head-teacher makes him or her aware of what is going on in the classroom (Durotolu, 1999) despite having little knowledge about the subject. The supervision might help the head-teacher discover something that might help the teacher improve instruction or learn something that might help him be a better head-teacher. Wood (1979) opined classroom supervision enables the head-teacher to better understand the educational program, teachers and their methods of teaching, the students and their learning abilities or disabilities and to observe the teaching-learning process. Thus, every head-teacher must keep in touch with what is being taught and how much is being learned.

Schemes when done during the holiday assume students of average ability hence teachers' plans did not show learner diversity in their classrooms. Instruction needs to be tailored to the students' ability and interests. The plan books do not indicate teaching plans for high performing or low performing students. If instruction is tailored for the average child then the above average and below average students will be frustrated.

CONCLUSION

Results indicate that not much effort is being put on Performance Lag Address program in terms of instructional supervision at secondary school level. This is highly noticeable on staff development and supervision by head-teachers. Teachers do not group students according to ability as reflected by their record books.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Collaborative effort of all participants involved in the supervisory process is important. The route taken in professional development should parallel teacher needs (Jonasson, 1993). Bondi and Wales (1980) cited by Nyagura and Reece (1990) indicate effective school based programs should have differentiated training experiences for different teachers and where teachers take an active role as planners of in-service activities. Therefore, peer coaching, wherein teachers work collaboratively in small teams to improve instruction (Beach and Reinhartz, 2000) is recommended. Such teams ask questions that clarify their perceptions of instruction and learning (PLAP) and provide opportunities to refine teaching skills. Peer coaching thus increase collaboration among teachers.

The head-teacher as a visionary of the school needs to know what is happening in the classrooms. Short unannounced visits in classrooms are recommended. These might help head-teacher discover something that might help the teacher improve instruction or learn something that might help him be a better head-teacher. The head-teach comes to understand different subjects in the school and the how students learn.

The purpose of assessing students is to know their strengths and weaknesses and hence instruction should be tailored toward those goals.

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