



GLOBAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH
(Scholarly Peer Review Publishing System)

THE IMPACT OF THE SCHOOL HEAD IN SUPERVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTRES IN MUTARE URBAN DISTRICT SCHOOLS

Regis Fanuel Gutuza & Thembinkosi Tshabalala

Zimbabwe Open University,
National Centre Box 1119 Harare,
Faculty of Arts and Education,
Zimbabwe

ABSTRACT

The aim of this present study was to examine the role of the head of school in supervision of Early Childhood Development (ECD) in Zimbabwean primary schools with special reference to Mutare Urban in Manicaland Province. The population comprised of all the 350 ECD teachers within the district. The respondents were selected using a random sampling technique and were made up of 90 teachers and 9 heads. The study adopted the descriptive survey design and the questionnaire was used as the only instrument for collecting data and contained both close-ended and open-ended questions. The study established that most heads did not have adequate knowledge about early childhood education to effectively supervise early childhood centres. Heads did not commit adequate time towards supervision of ECD classes. Most teachers also indicated that heads did not prioritise allocation of resources to the ECD classes. The study recommends that there must be a well-planned programme of supervision of instruction for the ECD classes in order to guide teachers in their delivery of lessons. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should organize staff development sessions for heads on ECD supervision.

Key Words: Early childhood development, school head, supervision, district and role.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The phenomenon of early childhood education is a new concept in the Zimbabwean primary schools having been introduced in all schools in 2004 (Maponga, 2014). The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education directed that all primary schools had to attach at least two ECD classes for the children in the 3 – 5 year age group. As Chikutuma and Mapolisa (2012) state, this new policy emanated from the Nziramasanga Commission of 1999 which stated that proper learning should begin at an earlier stage and should happen under the auspices of the schools. It is argued that ECD



education is a vital means of providing children with an essential background to formal learning Nziramasanga (1999). It prepares children's minds for more orderly and structured pattern of learning and makes them alert and sharpens their minds for further learning (Maponda, 2014). One major reason that motivated the Ministry of Education to bring ECD centres under the control of schools was the poor quality of learning that the private ECD centres provided to the children (Madziyire, 2010). As Chikore (2012) argues, the supervision is these ECD centres (private) were entrusted to bogus personnel without relevant skills and whose motive was to earn money and profit making. It was, therefore, hoped that bringing these centres under schools would improve the quality of learning, attention to the pupils as well as the supervision by the heads of schools. It is on account of the above information that this study set out to examine the way how heads were paying attention to the supervisory needs of the ECD centres now that they fall directly under primary schools.

Statement of the problem

Early childhood development centres are not adequately supervised due to the fact that heads of primary schools have a host of roles that consume most of their time. What then is the impact of the supervision of ECD centres by school heads?

Purpose of the study

The study sought to examine the role of the primary school head in the supervision of ECD centres in order to expose the challenges and dilemmas faced by school heads so as to come up with practical suggestions for improving the status quo.

Research questions

In order to address the main question, the following sub-questions will be answered: -

1. Are heads aware of the ECD curriculum?
2. To what extent are school heads performing their supervisory roles?
3. How best can the head's supervisory role of ECD centres be performed in order to improve teaching and learning activities in these centres?

Significance of the study

The study's importance stemmed from the fact that it seeks to expose the challenges faced by school heads in their attempts to perform their supervisory roles and come up with practical suggestions to mitigate the dilemmas that heads experience in trying to balance their administrative and supervisory chores.

Limitations of study

The study is limited to the role of the primary school head in supervision of ECD centres using the descriptive method which according to Anderson (2011), provides information that indicate norms not standards and the investigator learns what is being done and not what could be done or should be done. The researcher using the descriptive survey, determines usual practices, rather than causes, reasons, meanings or possibilities (Kumar, 2008). In view of the small sample and sub-samples used, the findings of the study therefore, will have limited generalisability.



Delimitation of the study

The study was carried out in Mutare urban district in Manicaland Province in Eastern Zimbabwe using a sample of 99 respondents of which 90 were teachers and 9 heads of primary schools. Views from other stakeholders like education officers, parents, school development committee members were outside the purview of this study.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Early childhood is a crucial stage of life in terms of a child's physical, intellectual, emotional and social development (Pence, 2004). Growth of mental and physical abilities progress at an astounding rate and a very high proportion of learning takes place from birth to age six (Maponga, 2014). It is a time when children particularly need high quality personal care and learning experience. As Morrison (2009) postulates, education begins from the moment the child is brought home from the hospital and continues on when the child starts to attend playgroups and kindergartens. The learning capabilities of humans continue for the rest of their lives but not at the intensity that is demonstrated in the preschool years (Morrison, 2009). With this in mind, babies and toddlers need positive early learning experiences to help their intellectual, social and emotional development and this lays the foundation for later school success (Madziyire, 2010).

In Zimbabwe, after all ECD centres were placed under primary schools it meant that heads of schools took charge of the supervision of activities taking place in these centres (Maponga, 2014). This implies that heads have to monitor and supervise what goes on in the ECD centres as they are now part of their schools (Madziyire, 2010). The head is expected to supervise all activities taking place in the ECD centre within his / her school. As Steen (2004) states, basically, the main purpose of supervision is to improve classroom instruction and to promote professional growth and development of teachers. As Chick (2010) adds, the role of supervision is to protect the best interests of the client (children). According to Musaazi (2012), the central purpose of supervision in an organization like an ECD centre, is for the achievement of the centre's goals.

The primary school head should evaluate ECD staff through supervision during teaching and play of ECD children to improve quality of services offered to the ECD children (Madziyire, 2010). As Kadushin (2003) posits, supervision is comprised of three basic tasks; administrative, educational and supportive, with the supervisor having responsibility to deliver all three components to the supervisee in the content of the supervisory relationship. Kapfunde (2008) states that supervision of ECD centres' physical resources such as school buildings, equipment, furniture, vehicles, textbooks and school grounds revolve around usage, procedures periodic inspections and stock taking, all of which often fall under the internal audit.

According to Morrison (2009), the supervisor of the play centre must remember that there are certain basic needs that children require in common. Children need protection, warmth, shelter, clothing, nutritious food, and exercise through play, sleep and rest. They also need to feel secure, cared for, loved and liked by their parents, peers and other members of their community (Morrison, 2009). The supervisor has to stimulate the active process of learning and development by providing materials that are essential for play and discovery, offer opportunities for children to try things as well as give children freedom to explore and figure out things for themselves (Jeffries, 2003). Garfat (2011) advises that supervisory interactions should be an opportunity to learn about doing work through experiencing a similar process in the relationship with their supervisor. It is assumed that supervision is a participatory process with an on-going dialogue between the head and teachers to find improved methods for the delivery of instruction (Garfat, 2011).



As Currie (2001) postulates, heads of schools support the improvement of instruction by observing teaching as well as by giving suggestions, coaching or demonstrating a teaching skill or an alternative teaching method and by also providing resources such as videotapes for a particular skill, staff development activities to individuals or small groups of teachers and appropriate instructional materials that enhance the delivery of instruction inside and outside the classroom. The ECD teacher has an obligation to work with the school head or teacher-in-charge in laying a solid foundation that provides a model of better future for young children (Chick, 2010). Faber (2008) states that unless supervision benefits the staff of that organization, there are little point in embarking on the scheme. Staff must feel that they are deriving some benefit from the process, rather than seeing it as mere paperwork or as a superficial exercise.

According to Wiles and Lovell (2005) teachers seem to be in line with the aims and objectives of supervision which are to develop and guide the performance of teachers; and not to control them. It is not that teachers reject the idea of being controlled: what they dislike is rather the attitude of the “controllers” (Rosenblatt and Mayer, 2009). The two most frequent complaints raised by teachers are that some supervisors are authoritarian, fault-finding and bureaucratic and above all biased, subjective and arbitrary (Wiles and Lovell 2005). Bitter complaints about supervisors work also include irregular and bad planning of visits, not adequate time spent by the supervisor in the classroom and sometimes irrelevant advice (Pence, 2004).

There is also evidence that most ECD teachers are supervised by heads who do not have relevant qualifications to effectively guide the teaching and learning process in the ECD centres (Madziyire, 2010). Most school heads and teachers-in-charge (TICs) have no formal qualification in ECD and ye they are expected to understand all that goes on in ECD centres (Maponga, 2014). The teachers-in-charge of the ECD departments supervise ECD A and B as well as infant classes (Grades 1 – 3) and yet they were only trained to teach infant classes and thus may not be familiar with the learning styles of three to six year olds; and these are also expected to assist heads with information regarding supervision of ECD centres (Pence, 2004).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed the quantitative methodology which was found useful because of reliance on statistics and therefore, can provide a lot of information (Whyte, 2005). As Anderson (2011) advises, quantitative research can be conducted on a large scale and give a lot more information as far as value is concerned. The study settled for the survey research design which enabled the researchers to gather widespread views of the respondents on studied phenomenon (Kumar, 2008). The study employed random sampling to arrive at a sample of 90 teachers and 9 school heads because it permitted every teacher and head to have an equal opportunity to participate in the study (Cohen and Manion, 2011). The questionnaire was used for collecting data from the respondents. Both close-ended and open-ended questions were used to solicit data from the respondents. The researchers sought permission from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to conduct the study and were granted before questionnaires were distributed. Respondents were assured of anonymity by the researcher. Questionnaires were collected after a month by the researcher which maximized the rate of return. Data is presented in tables and thereafter discussed.



Presentation of data

Table 1: Composition of sample by sex (N=99)

Category	Heads		Teachers		Totals	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Male	4	45	38	42	47	47
Female	5	55	52	58	52	53
Total	9	100	90	100	99	100

Table 1 above shows that there were more female heads and teachers than males (female: 53%; males: 47%).

Table 2: Composition of respondents by professional qualifications (N=99)

Category	Heads		Teachers		Totals	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
ECD qualifications	0	0	14	27	14	14
Certificate in Education	2	20	23	25	25	26
Diploma in Education	1	18	29	33	30	30
Bachelors in Education	6	62	24	15	30	30
Total	9	100	90	100	99	100

The information on table 2 above shows that not a single head had a qualification on ECD. Of the sample teachers 27% had an ECD qualification. Most heads had a degree qualification. The majority of the respondents had a relevant professional qualification.

Table 3: Responses to the question: “Is the head aware of the curriculum for ECD children (N=99)

Category	Heads		Teachers		Totals	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Strongly agree	3	33	4	4	7	7
Agree	1	11	3	3	4	4
Disagree	4	45	13	15	17	17
Strongly disagree	1	11	68	76	69	70
Not sure	0	0	2	2	2	2
Total	9	100	90	100	99	100

The information on table 3 above shows that there is congruence in the responses of heads and teachers regarding the head's awareness of the ECD curriculum, with both categories of respondents stating that heads are not aware of the curriculum for ECD (heads: 56%; teachers: 91%). On the other hand, those who indicated that heads were aware of the curriculum were 44% from the heads side and 7% from the teachers.



Table 4: Responses to the question: The head effectively carries out supervision for ECD classes (N=99).

Category	Heads		Teachers		Totals	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Strongly agree	1	11	1	1	2	2
Agree	1	11	4	4	5	5
Disagree	3	33	19	21	22	22
Strongly disagree	4	45	65	72	69	70
Not sure	0	0	1	2	1	1
Total	9	100	90	100	99	100

Table 4 above reveals that both heads and teachers are in disagreement with the statement that heads effectively carry out their supervision of ECD classes (heads: 78%; teachers: 93%). A paltry 22% of the heads agreed and 5% of the teachers also agreed.

The questionnaire had two open-ended questions which complemented data from close-ended questions. The first question sought to find out from both teachers and heads what they thought were the major challenges that heads as far as supervision of ECD centres is concerned. The general comment was that heads had little time to allocate to the supervision of ECD centres due to the number of duties that are not aware of the expectations of ECD centres will not find it easy to supervise teachers.

Data also reveal that heads were not effective in carrying out supervision of ECD centres. As Madziyire (2010) argues, the primary school head should evaluate ECD staff through supervision during teaching and play of ECD children to improve the quality of services offered to the ECD children. Kapfunde (2005) adds that supervision of ECD centres' physical resources such as school buildings equipment, furniture, vehicles, textbooks and school grounds revolve around usage, procedures, periodic inspections and stock taking.

The information from the study further reveals that heads had little time to allocate to the supervision of ECD centres due to the head's overloaded work schedule. When they do eventually come, they hurriedly go through the supervision process; in the process harassing teachers due to the fast track nature of the exercise. As Wiles and Lovell (2005) discovered in their study of the nature of supervision conducted by heads on ECD that the most frequent they do which include office administration, personnel management, accounting, public relations and discipline of both teachers and pupils. Some respondents stated that most of the heads relied on teacher-in-charge of infant classes for the supervision of ECD centres and therefore, kept a distance themselves. The second question wanted respondents to suggest strategies that can be employed to improve the head's supervision of ECD centres. The most common responses from both heads and teachers were: all heads should be staff developed on the ECD curriculum, heads should spend more time on supervision of learning and teaching instead of concentrating on non-academic business like supervision of building of school structures; heads should not over delegate their supervisory roles of ECD centres to teachers-in-charge of infant classes.

4. DISCUSSION

The information from the study reveals that all the heads have no relevant qualifications in ECD and thus they lack expertise in this area. They are not clear about the kind of knowledge and skills that children in the ECD should learn. This tallies with observations by Madziyire (2010) who stated heads who complaints raised by teachers are that some supervisors are authoritarian, fault-finding and bureaucratic and above all, biased, subjective and arbitrary. Pence (2004) states that, bitter complaints about supervisors' work also include irregular and bad planning of visits, inadequate time spent by the supervisor in the classroom and sometimes irrelevant advice.



Data also reveal that there is need for heads to be staff developed on the ECD curriculum and that heads should concentrate more on supervision of learning and teaching instead of the current trend where they prioritise non academic chores like meetings outside the school as well as being supervisors of builders. This then leaves teachers-in-charge with the task of supervising ECD centres who themselves may not have the requisite qualifications for this task. As Faber (2008) postulates, there is need to equip heads of schools with the relevant curriculum for ECD centres so that they have full understanding of what is expected of them as well as the teachers.

5. CONCLUSIONS

From the findings above, it is quite evident that a lot needs to be done in order to promote the supervision by heads of ECD centres. First of all, all the heads do not possess any relevant qualifications to professionally deal with ECD matters confidently. This is because ECD was introduced in teacher training colleges fairly recently long after all the heads had done their teacher training. This then, means that heads are not effectively carrying out their supervisory roles. It is also apparent from the findings that like in the other departments of the primary school, heads have very little time for ECD centres supervision due to a number of competing duties; some which can be offloaded to other players within the primary school leadership structure.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings of this study the researchers would therefore, like to put forward, the following recommendations:

- The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should intensively train heads on ECD curriculum so that they provide effective guidance to teachers.
- Heads of schools should prioritise their operations so that the bulk of their time is devoted to supervision of teaching and learning, which are the core business of schools. ECD centres deal with children who are at a very tender and sensitive stage of development and the head's visibility in that area would go a longway in promoting effecting learning and teaching; thus the need for the head to attend to the supervision of the centres on a sustained, rather than sporadic basis.
- Teachers-in-charge of infant classes should also be staff developed so that they may complement the supervision of heads in the ECD centres.

7. REFERENCES

- [1] Anderspn, L. (2011). Research in education. Sydney, Allen Unwin.
- [2] Chikore, B. (2012). Supervision in the infants department in Zimbabwe. Harare, College Press.
- [3] Chikutuma, T. and Mapolisa, T. (2012). An investigation into the rationale, clarity of policies and timeliness of the inclusion of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes in Gweru Urban and Peri-Urban schools in Zimbabwe. Greener Journal of Educational Research, 3(2): 59-63.
- [4] Chick, P. (2010). Administration of schools for young children. New York, Delma.
- [5] Cohen, L. and Manion, L. (2011). Research methods in education. London, Routledge.
- [6] Currie, J. (2001). Early childhood programme. The Journal of Economic Perspectives, 15(2): 213-218.
- [7] Faber, R. (2008). Early childhood teaching: Study guide. Pretoria, UNISA.



GLOBAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH
(Scholarly Peer Review Publishing System)

- [8] Garfat, T. (2011). A framework in supervision in child and youth care. *The Child and Youth Care Administrator*, 4(1): 2-13.
- [9] Harris, B. M. (1985). *Supervision behaviours in education*. New Jersey, Prentice Hall.
- [10] Kadushin, A. (1985). *Supervision in social work*. New York, Columbia University Press.
- [11] Kapfunde, C. L. (2008). *Introduction to educational management*. Harare, Zimbabwe Open University.
- [12] Kumar, F. S. (2008). *Research in educational settings*. London, University of London.
- [13] Madziyire, N. C. (2010). *Supervision of educational personnel*. Harare, Zimbabwe Open University.
- [14] Maponga, S. (2014). *Early childhood development centres in Zimbabwe*. Harare, ZPH.
- [15] Morrison, G. S. (2009). *Early childhood education today*. London, Merrill.
- [16] Nziramasanga, C. (1999). *The inquiry into education in Zimbabwe*. Harare, Government Printers.
- [17] Pence, A. (2004). *Early childhood policy implementation in Africa*. Paris, UNESCO.
- [18] Roseblatt, A. and Mayer, J. (2009). Objectionable styles of supervision. *Journal of Counselling*, 39(5): 258-265.
- [19] Wiles, K. and Lovell, J. (2005). *Supervision for better schools*. Washington, DC, Prentice guide: Intuthuko.