

Exploring Senior Management Support in the Implementation of the Results Based Management System in Zimbabwe's Schools Sector

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ABSTRACT

This article made an analysis of the involvement of senior management in the implementation of the Results Based Management System in schools. This was amid concerns from educators that they were finding it difficult to effectively and meaningfully implement the RBM System in schools. The interpretivist/constructivist research paradigm underpinned our study, hence a qualitative research approach was employed. This was a case study of two schools. The population for the study was sixty-eight (68) schools both primary and secondary with a teacher population of nine hundred and forty-nine (949) teachers. Two schools (one primary and the other secondary) were purposefully selected to participate in the study. Thus, twenty-nine (29) teachers and the two (2) school heads became the sample for the study. Included in the sample were the District Schools Inspector and the Education Inspector in the district. Data were generated through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observation and document analysis. As such these instruments enhanced the triangulation of the data generated. Data analysis was done concurrently with data generation. Major findings were that senior management in education, starting with the school head through to Head Office personnel, were not visible in schools and the district to assess whether the RBM System was meeting its intended objectives. Of further concern to educators was senior management's failure to address issues of educators' training, availability of resources, incentives and feedback which indeed were the province of senior managers. The study recommends that senior managers engage themselves in word and in action in the implementation of RBM.

Key Words: RBM, senior managers, monitoring and evaluation, implementation, feedback, performance information, appraisal.

INTRODUCTION

The Results Based Management System (RBM) was introduced in Zimbabwe in 2005 as a performance management tool to address issues of service delivery in the public sector to which education belongs. The introduction of the system was premised on three principal types of accountability in the public sector namely; financial accountability; management accountability and programme performance accountability (Ministry of Public Service, 2009). The weight of these three types of accountability rests squarely on all management levels in the government departments. Tied to the principal types of accountability in the public sector were implementation requirements that enunciated the following key factors: total commitment and involvement at all levels of the public sector; systematic and integrated

strategic planning at all levels and systematic performance measurement, information management, and timely and accurate reporting systems (Ministry of Public Service, 2009). It was in the interest of this study to explore senior management support in the implementation of the Results Based Management System in two selected schools.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The Results Based Management (RBM) System is guided largely by the Goal Setting Theory which assumes that behavior is a result of conscious goals and intentions. Milmore (2007) advances that there are three key elements underpinning this theory; first, that clear and challenging goals lead to higher performance than less challenging ones. Second, that goals direct the performance of individuals leaving them with higher chances of succeeding. The third is that goals set must be accepted by the implementers of such goals. Implied in these elements is the notion that there should be dialogue between the manager and the supervisee in the setting up of goals in an organisation to ensure that the individual goals are in tandem with the organisational goals. This leaves the senior person (the manager) with the responsibility of overseeing the relevance of the set objectives to the development of the organisation. Basing on this theory, Beardwell and Clayton (2010) argue that goals pursued by employees can play an important part in motivating improved performance, especially when feedback is prompt and meaningful. The RBM System as a performance management tool thrives on the interlink between individual goals and organizational goals. As such, RBM demands strong senior management support for its successful implementation. Mayne (2007) avers that successful implementation of RBM rests on an array of factors that include: effective capacity building which calls for knowledge and skills for the implementers; availability and utilization of performance information; building an organisational culture (that is, addressing the values, attitudes and behaviours of members of the organization) of results; developing results frameworks; regular demand for results; availability and allocation of resources that include reference documents to be used during the implementation process; and communication about what RBM is, what it means, its value to the organization and how it should be employed. All these factors demand strong leadership support from senior management (Bester, 2012). This study therefore sought to establish how senior management supported the implementation of RBM in schools.

Flint (2003) argues that the RBM jargon needs to be clarified to implementers to enhance effective implementation. This is the responsibility of senior management to define key terms and concepts to minimize misunderstandings. Perrin (2002) emphasizes the issue of accountability in RBM; that accountability for results asks if one will have done everything possible with authorities and resources to effect the achievement of results. It is within the mandate of senior management therefore to ensure that results are achieved hence the need for them to support the implementation of RBM. The success of RBM is also dependent on the alignment of systems within the organization. The alignment of systems in RBM reflects the interface between the components of RBM towards the attainment of organizational results. Ortiz, Kuyama, Munch and Tang (2004) note that there should be coherence between all the facets of RBM in an organization as all of them contribute to the achievement of organizational goals. Thus, there have to be linkages between planning and budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, management of information systems and connectivity. Downey (1998) in Mayne (2007) asserts that the success or failure of the implementation of RBM rests squarely on the extent to which RBM systems are connected to the business plan and budgetary process. This activity is purely in the jurisdiction of senior management. Arguably, exploring the nature and extent of senior management support in the implementation of RBM adds the Zimbabwe-specific evidence to existing literature and ongoing scholarly policy discourse on RBM.

Furthermore, findings should form a basis for further studies on implementation of RBM of a wider scope.

THE PROBLEM

Since the introduction of the RBM System in Zimbabwe's education sector in 2005, there have been problems regarding its effective and efficient implemented in schools amid concerns over its relevance and impact in the schools sector. Though the system appears to be fraught with many challenges, our study sought to interrogate senior management's involvement and support in the implementation of RBM in schools.

METHODOLOGY

The interpretivist/constructivist research paradigm undergirded this study, consequently adopting the qualitative research approach (Cresswell, 2014) since implementers experiences formed the basis from which to capture senior management support in the implementation of RBM in schools. Because we sought to explore and understand, in depth, the nature and extent of senior management support in the implementation of RBM, we adopted a qualitative research approach wherein we employed a case study design with its promise of in-depth understanding through studying the particular (Yin, 2004; Merriam, 2001). The population of this study comprised of forty-nine primary schools with a teacher population of six hundred and sixty-two teachers, nineteen secondary schools with two hundred and eighty-seven teachers, forty nine primary school heads and nineteen secondary school heads. The District Schools' Inspector and the Education Inspector were added to the teachers and school heads who were the population of the study. Out of this population a sample of two schools (one primary and the other secondary) twenty-nine teachers, two school heads the District Schools' Inspector and the Education Inspector were purposively sampled as information rich sites and participants respectively for the study. Notably, we went outside the physical boundaries of the cases (two schools studied) to gather data about the case (RBM implementation) in line with advice from Spindler and Hammond (2000). In-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observation and document analysis were used to generate data for this study. The instruments/methods thus employed in the study provided triangulation of the data generated, thus enhancing trustworthiness of the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Data solicited from teachers through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions reflected that teachers did not get much assistance from school heads who were their immediate supervisors to help them to effectively implement the RBM System. A perusal of minute books and school log books affirmed that school heads had done very little in terms of equipping teachers with the requisite skills to implement RBM at school level.

Teachers expressed that it was their expectation to have continuous school-based-in service courses that would help them to address issues in the RBM System. Teachers anticipated that school-based-in service courses would tackle such issues as interpreting the Departmental Integrated Performance Plan (DIPA) as well as drawing plans from the DIPA. The complex RBM jargon was also expected to be clarified in such meetings. Much to the teachers' dismay, as few as one workshop since the inception of RBM was conducted at both school and district levels. Teachers were questioning why the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education went ahead to ask for ratings in the month of September every year even when the DIPA would have been received in schools as late as July or August of the same year. Educators also expected other stakeholders at senior management level like the district officers, the provincial officers the Public Service Commission and even the Office of President and Cabinet to be coming into the schools to have a feel of how RBM was being implemented. Teachers highlighted the

inadequacy of resources as another area where senior management did not sufficiently address resulting in ripple effects of; inadequate and no training at all, lack of incentives to motivate staff, insufficient teaching and learning materials to support teaching and learning in schools. The following are excerpts of the responses from educators;

T4: "It appears top management does not appreciate RBM. This is because documents to support its implementation are not produced on time. This year's (2015) DIPA was received in this school at the end of July. Actual planning then was supposed to start in August but as early as the first week of September ratings were being called for at the district office. This demonstrated how trivial the RBM System was being taken by senior managers. So to the managers planning and reviewing was to be done in less than a month. More so there was no supervision either internal or external to guide the implementation process."

T6: It appears the hierarchical thread where communication in RBM has to be top-down and vice-versa is lacking. Top leadership cascades documents and asks for ratings but nothing is taken from bottom up save for the ratings. If monitoring was being done, top management could have realized that RBM is not being done to the expected standards. For example, a flip through our work plans would show that it is only one work plan that is being duplicated throughout the school. Such an observation would raise a flag to say the system was not being implemented judiciously. This then would suggest the need for corrective measures to be taken to improve the implementation process. I am still looking forward to that.

*T7: There seems to be a serious conflict between top management and those at the shop floor who happen to be teachers at school level. Directors at all levels in the Ministry assume RBM has **been** institutionalized and every teacher is now implementing it. As a teacher I view the opposite. I have had no adequate support from my manager at the top to help me implement RBM. I have never seen any external supervisor coming into the school to see how we get on in implementing RBM. As such our school head pays little attention to it. The only time he talks of RBM is when we do the planning, reviewing and rating all at once and in one day sometime in September. This suggests that work at school is just being done the normal or usual way where we scheme, plan, teach and then test our pupils. RBM then is only a paper filling exercise to satisfy the expectations of senior managers. One other observation I have made is that not any one of our senior managers has ever been in this school not even at some other schools to supervise or monitor this programme. They seem to be contented with the annual ratings which indeed are not a true reflection of what is going on in the schools about RBM. Senior managers should be showing some keen interest but alas! They really work on assumptions that once introduced then the system must be working. The issue of resources to support the system as well as continuous training is the responsibility of senior management yet little or no attention is being given to them. Senior managers therefore have to play their role if RBM has to be successfully implemented in schools.*

Responses from focus group discussions also underscored lack of adequate support from top management in the implementation of RBM in the two schools that were research sites. Below are extracts of responses from focus group discussions:

Fgm: My observation is that top leadership has not created an atmosphere conducive to the implementation of RBM. Training has not been continuously done to help understand better the implementation process. The implementation of RBM seems to be done in trial and error since its inception in 2005. Our leaders from the school

head up to the Provincial Education Director only talk of RBM in September when they demand ratings. They are not concerned about what happens between January and September with regards to RBM. This is an indicator that top managers in our education system are not committed to RBM.

Fgm: In addition to that there is no feedback from senior staff/top managers. For example, Section 3 of the appraisal form/individual work plan demands information on performance gaps. Although I have always indicated my wish to be re-trained in implementing RBM nothing has been done. This reflects lack of commitment in supporting RBM in schools by top management.

Fgm: I have not been equipped with the requisite skills to implement RBM. I have just joined the service and I am in dire need of these skills. Since I joined the service I complete the RBM form as a requirement and not as something to assist me in my service delivery. It is also very surprising that despite the fact that my school head did not train me on RBM he expects me to complete the RBM form just like the other senior teachers in the school. To me this demonstrates that the school head is not committed to the programme. I also expected the education personnel at the district to conduct some training on RBM but surprisingly we get training in other programmes and not in RBM.

School heads shared the same sentiments with teachers that the implementation of RBM at school level suffered as a result of the absence of support from senior management. The following are responses from the two school heads that were interviewed.

Mr. Smith: Senior management has not been able to establish a culture for results through implementing RBM. There has not been continuous learning so that the programme could be mastered by teachers who are the implementers at school level. I am not fully conversant on the programme either and it becomes difficult for me to monitor it. There has not been any feedback on the teachers' ratings that we submit to Head Office. This absence of feedback from Head Office does not give us confidence as to whether what we are doing is correct.

Mr. Jack: There has been little support from senior management with regards to the implementation of RBM. I expected more workshops and visits from senior management. Whenever personnel at the district visited this school, they would not ask for our performance appraisal forms to check progress. All they would ask for was the check-in-check-out register. So, senior management has never shown the zeal to assist us (school heads) on how to effectively monitor RBM.

Through in-depth interviews officers at the district concurred that their senior managers as well did not offer the anticipated assistance to promote the implementation of RBM in schools. This is what the district officers interviewed expressed.

D1: Our immediate supervisors have not been forth coming to help us boost the implementation of RBM. Documents to support the implementation process have never been cascaded on time. There have not been any workshops conducted to equip us with the relevant skills and knowledge to support the implementation of RBM. There hasn't been any monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

E1: The implementation of RBM has suffered from serious neglect by top management. There has been no meaningful training for teachers; there hasn't been continued interaction between those at the top and teachers, school heads and personnel at the

district. Even personnel from the Public Service Commission (PSC) who are the custodians of the programme have never come down to assist.

Featuring in the responses from teachers, school heads and officers at the district was the absence of monitoring and evaluation of the RBM System by senior management in the two schools under study. The issue of inadequate resources to support implementation was also highlighted as the responsibility of senior management which they did not own up to. The idea that this programme was meant to help improve service delivery in schools should have prompted top managers to keep a close eye on its implementation to establish if the programme was meeting its intended objectives. This weak approach to the implementation of RBM by senior managers could have induced lack of commitment in teachers thus, taking RBM not as seriously as expected, hence such responses from teachers as, “*I do RBM as a job requirement.*”

If RBM was going to influence any change in teacher performance so as to achieve the desired outcomes, then top leadership should have strongly supported the implementation of RBM. Platz et al. (1997), cited in Mayne (2007) argue that the successful implementation of any programme demands total commitment from senior leadership. Epstein and Olsen, (1996) cited in Mayne (2007) affirm that without the support of senior management there is no impetus to change.

Reports from OECD countries cited in Perrin (2002) concur that the support of senior management is critical in promoting the success of RBM. Denmark in Perrin (2002) observed that there was need for effective leadership in the implementation of RBM. Such leadership, according to Denmark, would provide guidance, stimulation and motivation to implementers of RBM. In the same report by Perrin (2002), Norway noted the need for commitment and involvement from top management within the government level as a pre-requisite to the success of a results-focused approach. Spain also noted that when people see that top management is taking a results oriented focus in what it is doing itself, then the importance of this approach is most likely to permeate throughout the organisation. This is what lacked in the Zimbabwean experience of implementing RBM according to the responses from educators.

Further research by Binnendijk (2001) and Ortiz et al. (2004) revealed that top management needed to demonstrate their commitment to the implementation of RBM through deliberate actions. For example, persisting and not giving up too early when there were implementation problems, setting reasonable yet challenging expectations for staff and providing or lobbying for resources for RBM. Mayne (2007) underscored the importance of leadership support by asserting that senior managers should visibly, regularly and consistently lead and support RBM through their words and actions. Educators who participated in this research study bemoaned the invisibility of senior management in the two schools that were research sites so they would offer guidance to the implementers.

Mulikita (2007) also concurred that for RBM to be successfully introduced and implemented as a tool for administrative modernisation in Africa; top management has to be committed to it. Mulikita (2007) further warned that senior management should not be preoccupied with other issues other than the implementation of RBM. Madhekeni (2012) affirmed that senior level leadership commitment was necessary for successful implementation of RBM since their support, commitment and active participation often set the tone for the entire organisation.

The studies cited above put emphasis on the need for senior management support in the implementation of RBM. This was the cry from educators who participated in this study that

top management fully and actively participate in the implementation of RBM as this was lacking. The responses from the educators indicated that they (educators) had received inadequate training in RBM. Furthermore, the educators had had no continuous staff development to help them develop skills in implementing RBM.

Educators also highlighted the issue of inadequate resources as an obstacle in the implementation of RBM. Educators also raised the absence of monitoring and evaluation of the programme. All these factors were issues to do with senior management. With all these flaws highlighted one can infer that the implementation of RBM in these two schools under study was in apathy. This was why educators complained about the sort of “stand-alone” attitude demonstrated by senior management in the implementation of RBM. Musingafi (2007); Madhekeni (2012), Mavhiki et al. (2013) and Mahapa et al. (2015) concur that senior management did not fully support the implementation of RBM in the public sector in Zimbabwe. Gutuza (2016) summed up this observation by highlighting that most heads of schools did not provide the fundamental support to teachers in RBM. Heads were engaged in other chores associated with their offices at the total exclusion of issues to do with RBM.

This study established that teachers in the two schools were not comfortable with the absence of top management’s responses to performance information generated in the teachers’ efforts to implement RBM. After stating performance gaps in section three of the appraisal form and even after performance ratings had been forwarded to senior management, no feedback was received by the teachers to advise or commend them on the implementation process. It was only those schools that would have performed poorly that were invited to the provincial office not to be given any form of assistance but to be warned of the poor performance. Performance information from any programme is critical in that it communicates to stakeholders the status of the programme in terms of usability and sustainability. As such, senior management had the obligation to utilise such information to establish gaps that would need to be addressed and reported back to the teachers who are the implementers of the programme. Perrin (2002) affirms that people always complain that they never hear back on the information that they submit. In many cases they put significant effort into the preparation of their submission but receive no feedback on this information. They consequently do not know if what they have done is what was expected.

Bester (2012) adds that lack of feedback on reports is a major disincentive to the implementation of RBM, and also to building a culture of results. Sweden in Perrin (2002), reiterated that without at least some form of feedback, people eventually start to question if there is any value to the performance measurement system and why they should bother to put any effort. Such was the scenario amongst teachers in the two schools that participated in this research study. The absence of feedback left teachers with more questions than answers as to the usability and sustainability of the RBM in a school situation.

If top management had taken their time to scrutinise the teachers’ work plans, they could have established gaps that needed interventions, and that probably could have improved the implementation process. Mayne (2008) pointed out that there was need to use performance information to facilitate decision-making. It could be inferred that feedback from performance information could have rendered the system acceptable and trustworthy among the teachers at the two schools in the research study.

The fact that senior management never visited schools to monitor the implementation of RBM as indicated by teachers and also through observations that I made, was an indication that performance information was not effectively and efficiently used by top management in the

education system. This could have been good ground enough for teachers to view the programme with suspicion. Newcomer and Downey (1997, p.39), cited in Mayne (2007), assert that, "when top management use performance information for decision-making purposes others are more likely to follow their example."

This study revealed that top management demonstrated some kind of laissez-faire attitude towards RBM, which in turn permeated to teachers. Epstein and Olsen (1996, p.43) in Mayne (2008) purport that "if performance information is being used by managers for decision-making, this will encourage staff to accept and participate in the new performance measurement system". Such lack of utilisation performance information to facilitate the implementation of RBM in schools became a serious hurdle to the adoption and implementation of RBM in the two schools under study.

It was disturbing to note that while senior management in education were supposed to act as catalysts in the implementation of RBM in schools, they kind of retreated and left the implementation of RBM to chance. This was contrary to observations by Poate (1997, p.57) in Mayne (2008) who postulates that, "if performance information is not readily used, the credibility of the entire activity will be questioned." No wonder why educators in this study felt betrayed by top management in the implementation process of RBM in that they were not afforded the most needed support. OECD (1997, p.29) cited in Mayne (2008) concur with Gibson and Boisvert (1997) that performance information collected has to be useful. Gibson and Boisvert (1997), further argue that the role of performance information increases and produces real benefits as this boosts confidence in individual practitioners. If top management had remained the anchor of the RBM System in schools, they could have gathered the shortfalls of the process. This could have hastened the need to revisit the system and come up with ways of improving it.

Teachers in the study also cited the absence of results based evaluation of the RBM System by top management as a source of conflict between managers and teachers as implementers of the programme. Results Based Evaluation is an assessment planned, continuous or completed intervention to determine relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the RBM System. The intent is to incorporate lessons learnt into the decision-making process (OPC Zimbabwe, 2016). The essence for the Results Based Evaluation was also bolstered by Poate (1997, p.56) cited in Mayne (2007) who asserted that, "performance information alone does not provide the whole picture. It is evaluation that completes the performance picture by providing the depth of analysis needed to explain why targets were not met or why they were not exceeded." This was the very argument proffered by teachers at the two schools studied when they pointed out that top management had not rendered adequate support in the implementation of RBM as they did not evaluate the programme. Wholey and Newcomer in Mayne (2007) concur with Poate (1997) also cited in Mayne (2007) that identifying and communicating the reasons why programmes do not perform at expected levels is also clearly the province of programme evaluation. Performance measurement alone will typically not provide the data that programme managers need to understand why performance is below expectation. It was not enough for top managers in Zimbabwe's education sector to push for the implementation of RBM in schools then fail to evaluate it.

Senior management in education therefore, were supposed to have evaluated the RBM programme to establish its:

1. relevance that is whether it continued to meet the needs it had been established to address;
2. effectiveness, which is the extent to which it was achieving the intended results; and

3. efficiency, which is finding out the achieved results if any versus the costs.

Although Results Based Monitoring and Evaluation was a key component of the Results Based Management System, teachers at the two schools under study indicated that it was non-existent on the ground. Thus, by failing to evaluate or cause the evaluation of RBM in schools, senior management compromised the essence of introducing RBM in schools.

The Central Government Terminal Evaluation Report (2006) cited in Madhekeni, (2012) noted that whilst the overall RBM programme was launched by the country's Vice President in 2005, buy-in from top management levels such as Ministers, Parliamentarians and Commissioners was still very weak. The report further enunciated that this group still needed to be trained in RBM concepts so that they would understand and appreciate what managing for results was all about. This corroborates what was observed by teachers at the two schools in this study when they underlined lack of support from senior management, which impacted negatively on the implementation of RBM at these two schools. Hence, such responses from teachers that RBM was 'a form filling exercise' that offered no improvement at all to service delivery in the school system.

Musingafi (2007) underscored the need for total commitment from top management by noting that, for any change process to survive resistance, top leadership commitment is a prerequisite. For top leadership to be committed to the change process, they must understand what it is all about and agree with its objectives. Yet the teachers indicated that top management remained disengaged from the implementation of RBM at the 'shop floor,' which happens to be the schools. Bolgun in Mandishona (2007, p.18) laments that "such an attitude from top management is the surest way to failure". Teachers also highlighted weak senior leadership support in their failure to supply key documents to facilitate the implementation of RBM. According to UNDP (2004), leaders have an important task of producing key documents which are used as references by those on the shop floor.

It can, thus, be argued that weak commitment from senior management contributed to the ineffective implementation of the Results Based Management System at the two schools under study. Some of the teachers also responded that they were not comfortable with the Results Based Management System because it had been imposed on them. Perrin (2002) notes that Korea argued that one must take extreme caution not to impose; a performance oriented approach must be accepted and used voluntarily. Mayne (2007) concurs with the observation made in Korea by underlining that stakeholder involvement helps increase their commitment and a sense of ownership, both of which provide needed support for the performance measurement system.

Gutuza (2016) affirms that one of the challenges highlighted by teachers about RBM has to do with lack of involvement of teachers during the formulation of the RBM policy. If teachers had been engaged earlier before implementation, this would have helped to explain the main objectives of the system. It can be argued that non-involvement of teachers at the nascent stages of RBM could have had a negative impact on the adoption and implementation of RBM. Perrin (2002) affirms that people are inclined to reject any approach imposed on them, but if they are actively involved in its development then it becomes their own. Ownership and commitment then follow. This suggests that there was need to involve teachers at the initial stages of adopting the RBM System so that they would develop ownership of the programme.

Common (2011) cited in Mutambatuwisi et al. (2016), points out that RBM has been enforced onto the public through such slogans as "RBM is here to stay." This same slogan was said by

Ndlukula (2005) when RBM was introduced in Zimbabwe. However, literature on performance management has it that people resist policies and programmes imposed on them (Bourne, 2000). Such was the situation expressed by teachers in this research study that they were finding it difficult to implement a programme that was imposed on them by top management. Another school of thought indicated that the top-down approach emerged not to have had an effect on the implementation of RBM in Zimbabwe (Mavhiki et al., 2013). Mavhiki et al. (2013) maintain that the top-down approach in implementing RBM was viewed as enabling good working relationships as senior managers' performance was dependent on the performance of those at the shop floor.

One of the responses from the teachers indicated that RBM had not been adapted to suit the Zimbabwean experience. This was yet another hurdle cited as challenging the implementation of RBM at the two schools studied. Mayne (2007) warns that it may be tempting to adopt the RBM System because it would have been successful in some jurisdiction. This practice has been proven to be ineffective. Mayne (2007) maintains that it is important that the system be developed according to the needs and situation of the users. Bester, (2012) argues that the approach to the implementation of RBM should not be a "one-size-fits-all".

Evidence in study revealed that while RBM had been successful in Malaysia, whose consultant, Doctor Rassapan, was hired to introduce RBM in Zimbabwe, it was highly unlikely to transfer the successes from Malaysia to Zimbabwe. Saldanha (2002) argues that each country has its own internal challenges that might militate against the introduction of RBM such as restraining political environment and inadequate resources. Yet, this was not often considered by external consultants. Amjad (2003) warned developing countries from adopting models from developed countries. This argument proved appropriate for Zimbabwe since the country had its own challenges, most of which research participants cited, and these were not taken heed of by senior management before introducing RBM in schools. As Madhekeni (2012) affirms, when RBM was introduced in Zimbabwe, the country had its own fair share of challenges of a poor economy and a political situation which could not support the implementation of RBM. Senior management therefore, were supposed to have considered such factors before taking RBM on board in the Zimbabwean Civil Service in the same fashion as it had been done in Malaysia. Mandishona (2007) notes that there was need to consider the general environment within which the programme was going to be implemented to avoid failure. This was a serious omission by senior management in the Government of Zimbabwe that despite the hyperinflation which had its peak in 2007 to 2008 the government went on to enforce the implementation of RBM. It was, thus, necessary to adapt the programme to the prevailing socio-political and economic situation to enhance successful implementation of the programme.

Evidence from teachers in this research study also reflected that they lacked the requisite skills for driving the RBM programme. This gap in skills resulted in teachers failing to craft work plans competently, with most of them confessing that they were copying work plans from colleagues. Teachers confessed that they could not interpret the DIPA, which should be the reference document in preparing their work plans. The appraisal form itself had terms that teachers found difficult to follow let alone the statistical calculations that demanded proficiency in statistics. These issues were supposed to have been addressed by senior management to assist teachers to articulate their plans according to the RBM principles. Thus the work plans prepared by the teachers had numerous gaps rendering information from the plans not a reliable basis for making decisions. Hence, the argument by teachers that the Results Based Management System was an unreliable tool, that could not be employed to measure their productivity in schools.

Mayne (2008) views lack of experience and expertise on the part of implementers as a serious hurdle that interfered with the implementation of the Results Based Management System. Mayne (2008) further argues that successful implementation of the Results Based Management System can only be possible when staff have the relevant skills and knowledge to develop and use RBM in their institutions. It was the prerogative of senior management to equip educators with the requisite skills. It could be lack of skills and knowledge that resulted in RBM being poorly implemented leading to reduced effectiveness. For example, some of the forms observed had no information at all on Section 2 save for ratings. This created serious misinformation in that there were no plans or targets carried out yet the very teacher was given a rating. So one may question as to what the rating was based on.

Bester (2012) points out that RBM has been viewed as a complex and demanding system that required competent skills to enhance its usability in institutions. Perrin (2002) affirms that RBM was complex and required competent personnel to assist in interpreting the process. Siddique (2010) concurs with the realisation that the implementation of RBM requires skilled personnel to promote and support its implementation. Gabbler (2007) in Mutambatuwisi et al. (2016) emphasises the need for highly skilled personnel to translate RBM into effectiveness in jurisdictions. More research has it that the concept of RBM has not been understood in many countries due to lack of skills and competences (Fryer, et al. 2009). Flint (2003) summarises the challenge in implementing RBM by arguing that "it is easier said than done". It was the responsibility of senior managers to help to develop a culture in schools that would support the implementation of RBM.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that senior management from the school heads up to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education offered very little support to the implementation of RBM in schools. Senior management were found not supportive in such areas as: offering continuous learning opportunities in RBM; monitoring and evaluation and failing to make use of performance information reflected on teachers' work plans. Such inadequacies in the implementation process challenged the efficient and effective implementation of RBM in the schools under study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that senior management at all levels be actively involved in the implementation of RBM in schools particularly paying attention to the tenets of RBM.

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