

Education Standards Officers Supervision Roles of Curriculum Implementation in Choma District in Zambia: What do Teachers Think?

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Abstract

Education Standards Officers in Zambia, alongside their inspection and supervision roles, have a responsibility to give a lead in curriculum implementation by their provision of professional advice to schools. However, despite the Ministry of General Education having these officers who should offer support to teachers in various ways of curriculum implementation by offering guidance, teachers still felt Education Standards officers had a lot of shortcomings in their work of helping them. The purpose of this study was thus to analyse teacher's perceptions about how Education Standards Officers carry out their work of supervising teachers in curriculum implementation. Researchers used the qualitative approach under the descriptive design. 61 participants comprising of 50 teachers, from public secondary schools in Choma District, 5 head teachers of the sampled schools 4 Education Standards Officers from the Province and 2 Education Standards Officers from the district were purposively sampled for this study. Data was collected from head teachers and Education Standards Officers using interview schedules. From teacher's data was collected using focus group discussion schedules. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The findings revealed that some Education Standards officers were still in the old school of inspectors who concentrated on finding faults on teachers. ESOs especially at the district level lacked Subject content (SCK), Pedagogical content (PCK) and Curriculum content (CCK) knowledge when supervising teachers due to lack of subject specialisation by Education Standards Officers at that level. During their visits, ESOs did not announce their intended visits to schools which made teachers to panic whenever Education Standards Officers visited the school for teacher observations. Some Education Standards Officers concentrated on the procedures that teachers were to follow when teaching than the actual content that was to be delivered to the learners which reduced supervision to following rules than handling every situation the way it was supposed to be on the ground. One of the main recommendations that researchers made was that Education Standards Officers needed up skilling in their duties so that they have the required skills, knowledge and right attitudes for their responsibilities. It was also recommended that there was a need to increase the positions of ESOs so as to cater for all subject's specialisation for effective supervision of the curriculum.

Key Words: Curriculum supervision, Inspection, Curriculum implementation, Quality Education Standards Officers

1.0 INTRODUCTION

School inspection and supervision is widely considered as an essential instrument for quality education that can aid the nation to compete in the ever-changing world economy. It is the form of evaluation which involves the measurement, testing and judging of educational activities in school systems for the purpose of improving the standards and quality of educational programmes offered (Matthews and Smith, 1995).

The supervision of school curriculum implementation in Zambia can be traced as far back as the time of the British colonial education. Inspectors of Schools as they were referred to inspected schools to ensure that the curriculum was effectively implemented. Kapalu et al. (2020) however explained that the title of inspectors ended with the restructuring and decentralisation of the Ministry of General Education in 2000. In this year, the Inspectorate Department was renamed as the Directorate of Standards and Curriculum in which the standards section has several positions at national, provincial and district levels which were created to be in charge of social sciences subjects, mathematics, sciences, languages, practical subjects, special education, business studies, expressive arts, distance and open learning and examinations. Thus, it is clear from the creation of all these ranks of standards officers right from the national to the district levels that the Ministry of General Education (MoGE) in Zambia has attached a lot of importance to quality assurance in education to the extent that each subject area has a standards officer responsible for it.

The duty of Education Standards Officers (ESOs) is to provide guidance to schools and teachers on effective curriculum implementation and standard assessment for quality assurance to all educational learning institutions except institutions of higher learning (Mathew 2012). Education Standards Officers (ESOs) are mandated through an act of parliament to inspect schools suspected of being in operation, to inspect and audit the financial accounts of schools and advise the school administrators accordingly. Thus, ESOs visit schools to observe teachers teaching, check their professional records such as departmental documents, lesson plans and schemes of work and oversee how schools implement the curriculum. All this work that ESOs do help to inform MoGE on the state of the education and advice on the development and implementation of any national policies in education. They also participate in the development and revision of the curriculum, preparation of any syllabus and in the setting and marking of examinations and monitor the effectiveness of any testing or examination. At the end of each year they write and submit annual reports to the minister on the provision of education by educational institutions (Fisher, 2011).

Etindi (2001) thus observed that, the duties that Education Standards Officers do require that such officers have very good human resource management skills, excellent report writing knowledge and skills. Above all they should have very good pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), subject content knowledge (SCK)

and curriculum content knowledge (CCK) in the subjects of their line of duty. Such particular aspects would enable Education Standards Officers (ESOs) to have confidence and earn respect from teachers because they would need to be helpful to them. Additionally, Education Standards Officers should create friendly relationships with teachers who actually implement the whole process of teaching and learning. Teachers are a hub to achieving universal access to high quality and equitable education for all learners because they have first-hand knowledge of the learning environment, the learners and how the two relate as Mulenga and Lubasi (2019) rightly observed.

Stressing on the significance of ESOs work in schools, Kasanda (2015) observed that inspection as a mode of monitoring quality education provision, offered the following major benefits; it gives school inspectors an opportunity to observe teaching and learning, thereby establishing a better basis for discussing the development of the school with the head teachers of schools, provided an opportunity to learn about the schools, teachers, the curriculum, and the learners so as to find the way forward, it also provided a learning experience for all those involved in the running of the school and leads to a better understanding of schools and how they should be managed. Given that most studies that were reviewed mostly focused on the challenges that ESOs faced in their work and the benefits of their schools inspections with minimal focus on what teachers and head teachers thought about the inspection of ESOs researchers in this study sought to find out what impressions teachers and head teachers had about the interactions that they had with ESOs in schools.

2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by Fullan's curriculum implementation model. Fullan (1991) identified six premises which are necessary for effective curriculum implementation. The premises are vision building, curriculum innovations requirements, staff development, time, evaluation and flexibility.

Vision building is the way in which organizations establishes a shared intention and focus which creates the direction and plans for appropriate implementation. In his model, Fullan proposed that vision building should involve all users of the curriculum so as to create a sense of ownership, which encourages commitment and development. In this case, Education Standards Officers (ESOs) are to engage all the stakeholders such as teachers, parents and the community so that quality assurance can be realised and owned by all.

Fullan further argued that curriculum leaders must be conversant with the curriculum innovations requirement. He explained that successful schools were guided by focused administrators who are aware of what is going on in the school throughout the implementation process. Hence, ESOs should be professionals who possess the requisite academic qualification to be able to understand and share ideas of the curriculum with teachers in a very clear way. Additionally, they should

have very good pedagogical content knowledge in subjects of their specialization as well as curriculum content knowledge.

In his model Fullan's also emphasized that staff development was key to successful adjustment to practice. There is a need for both training and education before implementation and continuing professional development during the implementation process. Fullan and Pomfret (1977) further observed that effective implementation of educational change required time, personal interaction and contacts, teacher professional development and other forms of support. Therefore, there should be time allocated to allow for both workshops and interaction with teachers. Education Standards Officers (ESOs) need to promote in-service trainings aimed at facilitating better implementation of the curriculum. Evaluation is also significant for effective implementation because it provides the limitation and the suitability of new ideas during the implementation process (Fullan 1991). Through the evaluation process, Education Standards Officers can find out whether activities are being implemented as planned and if they are producing desired results.

Since a curriculum is dynamic it needs to improve over time to cater for the country's needs. In this case ESOs should be flexible and innovative to restructure their supervision practices in line with new innovations and changes. Their supervision strategies should be aimed at influencing teaching and learning for quality assurance.

3.0 BRIEF REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

3.1 Roles Played by Education Standards Officers

In Zambia, the Ministry of Education (1996) outlined the roles of ESOs as provision of professional services to support, guide, monitor, inspect, evaluation and report on the process of teaching and learning in schools and on the development and the implementation of the curriculum. As earlier explained they also offer advice on the syllabi, pedagogy, resources, and necessary modes of assessment and on the administration of schools, the assurance and auditing of quality education and standard performance in schools (MoE, 1996, Education act, 2011).

Education Standards Officers (ESOs) are also expected to provide a continuous checking, reviewing and assessing the achievements and progress of learners (Nkinyangi, 2006). Just as teaching and learning activities are the teachers' core functions, ESOs core function is to inspect schools for quality assurance as they also evaluate teachers and teaching in classrooms. Shringfield and Stufflebeam (1995) established that through evaluation teachers are judged on their quality of teaching including areas such as classroom management, planning and teaching act itself and the entire classroom atmosphere.

Since the core business of all schools is teaching and learning as also explained in the 1992 Focus on Learning educational policy document (MoE, 1992), the main area of concern of Education Standards Officers (ESOs) should be teaching and

learning and direct classroom observation in order to have a clear picture of how curriculum implementation is being done (Mathew and Smith, 1995, Chapman, 2001). As part of their work, they are entitled to check teachers' professional documents such as schemes of work, lesson planning, records of work and attendance registers to ensure syllabus coverage and effective implementation of the curriculum in schools is done. An attendance register is an important document that Education Standards Officers (ESOs) should be checking often to be sure whether the target group who are learners regularly attend school. These documents also enable teachers to decide on what teaching and learning materials to use, the methodology to adopt, the strategy to employ and the amount of time to spend on each aspect (Mulenga and Moobola 2020). However, checking of professional documents alone may not be enough but measures taken by Education Standards Officers after checking such documents is what may be of help to teachers. It is for this reason that in this study we tried to find out how the feedback was done by ESOs with regard to their visits.

3.2 Teachers' Perceptions of Education Standard Officers' School Visits

Teachers' perceptions of supervision by ESOs is of paramount importance because supervision plays a vital role in the improvement of learner's academic performance by ensuring that standards in education are adhered to. However, the way ESOs and teachers may relate during school supervision will determine how beneficial this exercise will be. For instance, lack of a cordial relationship between teachers and supervisors may lead to ineffective supervision and ultimately provision of quality of education.

Formerly, the relationship between inspectors and teachers was often uneasy, unhappy, and may occasionally be so even today making the word inspector unpopular in many countries with its implications on prying and bullying teachers (Canham, 1983). The view has been re-emphasised by many other scholars such as Blumberg (1988), Ogunsaju (1983) and Stones (1984). Chizya (2018) noted that some Education Standards Officers still used the authoritarian mode of supervision and thus creating fear and unwillingness in teachers to cooperate with them. Hence despite the change of the name from Inspectors to Education Standards officers, a lot is yet to be done to improve the relationship between ESOs and teachers.

Certain factors contributed to the stressful situation in spite of the good intention behind school inspection. To begin with inspection involves evaluation of teachers' performance in class which in a way may make teachers uneasy. To cope with this Kinayia (2010) reported that in Kenya some teachers mostly create physical and social distance between them and ESOs. Additionally, in a study conducted by Nkinyangi (2006) in Burundi, Eriterea, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda, it was revealed that some teachers avoided going to school once they knew that ESOs would be visiting. If ESOs found them in school teachers found ways of running away or notifying each other when there was a visit by Education Standards

Officers (ESOs). Negative arguments have also been reported between Education Standards Officers (ESOs) and teachers as it was reported in a Kenyan study by Okumbe (2007). Some studies such as those done by Olembo, Kasanda (2015) and by Ajuoga, Indoshi and Agak (2010) noted that ESOs inspections are external to the school and thus some teachers tend to receive them with mixed feelings. They believed Education Standards Officers were not familiar enough with their pupils and so could not be of much help. Some teachers also felt that some Education Standards Officers had little knowledge about most subjects taught in schools for they may not be experts in certain subjects and consequently they did not advise teachers adequately (Wanga, 1988).

In the studies by Okumbe (2007), Mathew (2012) and Nkinyangi (2006) teachers reported that ESOs did not provide productive feedback and follow-up initiatives that were related to inspection, lack of opportunities for follow-ups regarding recommendations based on inspection, such as the need for in-service training of teachers, were vivid. Mathew (2012) noted that the situation was worse in Nigeria, where most inspection reports were kept away from teachers and school administrators and even when submitted, were kept in files without action taken on them. It was therefore concluded that, there does not seem to be a sure mechanism for ensuring that improvement initiatives would be undertaken, and because of lack of follow-up, there was no way of ensuring that inspection contributed to school development in curriculum standards and quality assurance. With all these revelations in some countries in Africa, researchers in this study wanted to find out what the situation could be in Zambia regarding teachers' views and perceptions about the work of ESOs particularly in Choma district.

3.4 Training of Education Standards Officers

Training of Education Standards Officers (ESOs) is essential as a means of providing them with the necessary skills unique to supervise and facilitate understanding of appropriate modern teaching methods and learning and the tone of inspection. Education Standards Officers (ESOs) thus, needed to be trained in all aspects of schools administration, supervision and in the area of inspection (Chizya, 2018). They also need to be well-informed about the modern pedagogical content knowledge skills (PCK) in their disciplines, training in effective communication is also imperative for them to discharge their duties carefully (Mathew, 2012).

However, in the Zambian education system there was no specific or special education for preparing Education Standards Officers (ESOs) in the colleges of education or universities in Zambia at the time of the study. Instead, Education Standards Officers are appointed from among classroom teachers, heads of departments, head teachers and deputy head Teachers. Such appointees would normally have undergone through primary or secondary teachers education without specific training and education as Education Standards Officers (ESOs). The length of experience in actual teaching is mostly their strength but their weakness

would be in the lack of the broad understanding of supervision skills, curriculum content knowledge and school management matters that further training would provide. Programmes that are offered at various institutions of higher learning in educational management are not suitable for Education Standards Officers (ESOs) for they are specifically designed for managing educational institutions. Their programme should be tailored towards specific needs focusing on the school curriculum, teaching methods and school management in the Zambian context (MoE 1992, 1996). As this study was being conducted researchers had all this at the back of their minds.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research methodological approach and specifically the descriptive design was employed in this study to enable the researchers to carry out the study in its natural environment. This design was seen suitable based on its relevance to the nature of the study and for its flexibility and allowing researchers to interact with participants (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). It allowed researchers to get in-depth data from teachers, head teachers and Education Standards Officers (ESOs) in Choma district since qualitative research is concerned with what goes on in social settings in understanding social phenomenon (Mulenga 2015). Qualitative methods mostly deal principally with verbal data which in this case helped the researchers in understanding the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives, thereby developing a deeper understanding as there was room to probe further in order to get more insights of the subject. Thus the qualitative method was adopted specifically for this study as it allowed for a detailed and intensive analysis of the nature and complexity of the subject matter. The sample of this study comprised of 61 respondents as follows, 50 teachers from 5 public secondary schools, 5 head teachers of the schools that were selected, 4 Senior Education Standards Officers (SESOs) at the provincial level and 2 Education Standards Officers at the district level who were purposively sampled. The researchers considered this sample adequate as it was composed of a sample population considered to have rich information for the study. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data.

5.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Frequency of Visits to Schools by Education Standards Officers

The frequency of Education Standards Officers visits to schools is very important for them to make an impact in improving the quality of education. The data obtained through focus group discussions with teachers and interview schedules with head teachers strongly indicated that the number of visits by Education Standards Officers were not enough to make an impact in fostering quality education. For example, when asked about how frequent Education Standards Officers visited the school the Head teacher from one school expressed dissatisfaction as he shared

that Education Standards Officers rarely observed teachers but concentrated on checking compliance of non-academic programmes. He commented that;

ESOs visits were not frequent we don't know their schedule like this year they have not come they just passed through to check on COVID-19 compliance or if there are examinations being conducted but for teacher observation, they have not come the whole of this year.

Similarly, the head teacher from school 4 also said the same thing when he commented that:

They do not visit the school regularly they only visit once per term sometimes they don't even come the whole year.

Teachers also shared their concerns that Education Standards Officers rarely visited schools for teacher observation for example one teacher from the focus group discussion from school 5 commented that:

They rarely visit schools maybe it could be because of transport challenges or funding.

Another teacher from the same focus group discussion made this view stronger when he explained that;

Education standards Officers schedule of visit is not known but from my observation they visit our school once in a while mostly when we are opening in term one.

When further asked a follow up question whether the number of visits were enough for Education Standards Officers to make an impact in helping teachers improve their teaching skills and quality of education in the district. Respondents expressed dissatisfaction. One head teacher from school 1 commented that:

No, they lazy around, I am talking about Education Standards Officers for both the district and provincial level. They tie their visits to the availability of funding but their positions are established so they can still do their work. They have key result areas that they are supposed to follow by visiting schools.

In a separate interview the head teacher from school 4 emphasised on the observation made by his fellow head teachers stressing that external supervision was very important to schools to ensure adherence to curriculum standards by schools and teachers. He explained that:

The numbers of visits were not enough because external inspection is very important to enhance adherence to curriculum standards so the visits are not enough.

Considering the responses that were given by research participants it is clear that teachers had a perception that the number of visits by Education Standards Officers were not enough. Understandably Education Standards Officers carry out various roles when inspecting schools which include institutional, teaching and learning inspection, recommending application of schools for examination centers, general inspection as regards quality management of human resources (MoGE, 2015). All these should aim at the learner getting the best and quality education. Therefore, school inspection should always aim at ensuring that there is quality delivery of education. However, ESOs focusing on other aspects in schools at the expense of the actual teaching and learning may not be so beneficial to the learner and the teachers. The finding is in line with Mobegi (2010) in his study on Secondary school head teachers, QAS and challenges in Gucha District in Kenya whose findings showed that, over 80 percent of public secondary schools in Gucha district were irregularly visited by school inspectors.

As can be noted from the findings of this study, the number of visits were not enough although external inspection plays a pivotal role in ensuring that teachers were on the right path when implementing the curriculum as Kapalu et al, (2020) rightly observed. The challenge with not having regular visits is that it would be difficult for ESOs to have a good record of the progress that would be made in schools regarding curriculum implementation.

5.2 Impromptu School and Teacher Inspection by Education Standards Officers

Making regular field visits to schools to check on how teachers are teaching is very important when under taking school supervision visits as well as making pre-arrangements before visiting schools. Making prior arrangements for the visit is vital so as to prepare teacher's minds considering the fact that Education Standards Officers are not found in schools but just go there for school inspection once in a while. Therefore, it is inevitable for them to inform the teachers whose teaching they wanted to observe. The researcher sought to find out from Education Standards Officers, teachers and head teachers whether there were pre-arrangements made by ESOs before visiting schools. When asked whether ESOs informed schools about their intended inspection visits, the head teacher from school five explained that;

No, they have never announced like in our case they just come abruptly. The people who announce are internal monitors.

In stressing the same point, the teacher from school 5 stated that:

They don't announce sir we just see the vehicle parking in the school yard then straight away they either demand for teachers teaching files or they go into classes for teacher observation.

A similar view was shared by the teacher from school 3 who also confirmed the observation shared by other respondents as she explained that:

No, they don't announce their coming they just come if you are luck, they would inform you before they enter the classroom to observe you. But in most cases, they just come without announcing sometimes we are told by the head the someday that Standards Officers will be coming. Maybe they do that to see whether teachers are doing their job because if they inform every time teachers may be alert so it is good as well so that they see if teaching and learning is taking place.

Education Standards Officers were asked the same question and their responses showed that they did not announce to teachers about their visits to schools. In some instances, they informed DEBS office and head teachers may be informed but no prior discussions were done with individual teachers before the actual observation. In confirming the statement a Senior Education Standards Officer (SESO) commented that:

We write to the DEBs of a particular district that we want to visit informing them that we will be in the district from this time to this time. We inform them of our purpose of visit it is up to the DEBs to inform those schools because that is their district. He may inform the head teachers and head teachers inform teachers. Sometimes we just inform DEBs we will be in your district then we don't inform schools because we want to find the information as it is in the normal setting not where people are trying to prepare for our coming.

In emphasising the same point SESO 3 and SESO 4 shared similar concerns like those shared by SESO 2 when they stated that:

We don't make any arrangement with teachers because we expect the teacher to do the right thing all the time. So, we don't warn them because if we warn them, we would find all the records are in place all the teachers will be teaching with lesson plans and we don't expect teachers to do that when they know that someone will be coming. So, we just arrive at the school without making pre-arrangement we want to find them in their natural environment.

In responding to the same question ESO 4 emphasised the point that:

For actual visits we do we are not obliged to inform them we just pounce on them we call it on spot monitoring.

Prior discussion with teachers before they are observed is important in order to create that enabling environment for both the teacher and Education Standards Officers. The teacher should at least be informed about the purpose of the visit and expectations of the visit. When asked a follow up question whether individual teachers are talked to before they are observed SESO 1 explained that:

The gate keepers there are head teachers we tell the head teacher the purpose of our visit but teachers will be informed there and then that Standards Officers are in, prepare they want to observe you.

This idea seemed to have been supported by another SESO who confirmed the view that no prior discussions were made with teachers as teachers might be teaching by the time Education Standards Officers arrive at the school as SESO 2 contended that;

We don't have prior discussion with teachers because we find teachers already in the process of teaching so the head teacher will direct us into classes and usually, they know those who need guidance may be due to some reasons they are weak in the way they present their lessons or maybe they have challenges in preparing for lessons so that we have an opportunity to talk to them.

Findings of this study all indicated that ESOs visited schools without teachers knowing of their coming. Although ESOs have their valid reasons that they would like to find things as they may naturally be in schools, this action in itself may be viewed as faulty finding because the supervisor would want to find out who could be prepared and who was not. This seems to contradict the thinking by Fullan (1991) who emphasized on vision building among all curriculum implementers and users so as to create a sense of ownership of the curriculum. Once that happens then teachers would not have problems implementing the curriculum because it would be their own. Moreover, the interest of Education Standards Officers should not be concentrating on teacher's preparation of teaching of a particular lesson but checking of working documents as a whole to assess the syllabus coverage and whether teachers had been employing appropriate teaching and learning methods as the teacher cannot be judged based on the lesson preparation of a single day. This finding contradicts the results of other studies such as the one done by Daresh and Playko (1992) on the impact of supervision on curriculum implementation in Boston whose findings revealed that supervision done in areas of checking on

lesson plans, schemes of work, and class registers among other professional records had a significant impact on performance of students in their final examinations.

Education Standards Officers also alluded to the fact that they did not fall under any obligation to inform anyone about their supervision visits to schools, but in as much as they were not obliged to inform anyone, it was imperative that they create an atmosphere where the supervisee would not feel ambushed but should have that sense of being valued as an equal partner in curriculum implementation. Moreover, if it is noticed that a practice such as the ones Standards Officers in Choma were using is not helping in any way then it is just logical and proper that it is not followed.

Findings further revealed that no prior discussion were done with teachers before lesson observation by Education Standards Officers instead head teachers were the gate keepers who would usher Education Standards Officers in classrooms where teachers were teaching. Prior discussion with teachers before they are observed is important in order to create an enabling environment for both the teacher and Education Standards Officers to freely interact and to prepare the minds of the teachers to be observed. The teacher must be informed about the purpose of the visit and expectations of the observation process. This practice contradict Fullan (1991) recommendation who advocated for personal interaction in the process of curriculum implementation.

5.3 Visits by Education Standards Officers as Faulty Finding on Teacher?

As earlier stated, frequent school visits by education standards officers to schools for inspection cannot be over emphasized. But the visits should be done in a manner that makes both teachers and ESOs have a productive interaction in order to achieve the intended purpose of curriculum supervision. Researchers in this section were interested in soliciting information from participants as to whether school visits by ESOs were fault finding. ESO 2 explained that;

It is not faulty finding in fact it is building because if you tell a teacher that I will be coming to observe you and that's when a teacher is writing a lesson plan then you will not be able to advise because you will find that a teacher has a lesson plan when it might be for that day only.

The response was somehow worrisome because when Education Standards Officers visit schools, they should not just concentrate on lesson plans for the particular day or lesson but the whole teaching preparation file to check whether teachers have been consistent in preparing for their lessons so as to trace the syllabus coverage by learners. Another view was shared by another SESO 4 who explained that:

Well yes to some extent you may say it is fault finding. There is a very thin line between inspection and standards checking that is why it is important to talk to the teacher before you observe a lesson to build the confidence in that teacher.

Teachers and head teachers were also asked the same question and the following were the responses. On teacher responded that;

They don't victimize teachers they would just come do their snap checks and leave. They just point out where there are improvements whether teachers are logging in and so on.

The view was made stronger when the teachers from the same focus group discussion expressed her thoughts that:

They don't come to victimize anyone they just come to see how the curriculum is being implemented then point out where they see weaknesses or improvements.

Another teacher from school 1 affirmed this view when he shared that;

It is not fault finding because a teacher should always be ready in terms of preparation hence, he should not fear when he sees Standards Officers coming. In fact, it is a good way of doing it because if they were to announce their coming no one will fail as everyone can prepare.

On the contrary when asked the same question the head teacher from school 1 explained that;

They do both because when you inspect you want to find where you are faulty others will come and say you are supposed to do this and that. Others even commenting in the log book that your log book is almost full that is part of faulty finding. Some of them are still in the old school of inspectors' because the inspector always faulty finds he is policing but a Standards Officer would advise this level you are complaint this level you are not complaint.

The head teacher from school 3 when asked the same question in a separate interview explained that;

That is the challenge that we continually witness when teachers see Education Standards Officers, they see them as if they have come to do witch-hunting, they don't look at them as people who have come to complement their efforts and also give guidance to them on how best they can work. I think there is need to do a lot of sensitization

and also for the mind set to change the attitude because teachers think that when Standards Officers come to school, they have come to find faults not to compliment and counsel help where there are grey areas. I think normally that's how they look at them so there is need to work around that attitude behavioural change of both teachers and Education Standards Officers.

From the responses that were obtained we can clearly conclude that teachers perceived Education Standards Officers as people who helped them but not finding faults. Teacher's responses further indicated that it is important for Education Standards Officers to visit schools without announcing their visit as this may give them an opportunity to observe the situation in its neutrality. On the other hand, head teachers looked at Education Standards Officers as officers who do both faulty finding and advising teachers. They clearly pointed out that some Education Standards Officers were still in the old school of inspectors who behaved as police officers in the system.

It was further established that Education Standards Officers did not inform teachers about the supervision visit because if they did that then they would find all the necessary documents in place because teachers would prepare for their coming. This action in itself implied faulty finding because the supervisor wanted to find out who was prepared and who was not. This again contradicted Fullan (1991) who emphasized on vision building among all curriculum implementers and users so as to create a sense of ownership of the curriculum. Once that happens then teachers would not have problems implementing the curriculum because it would be their own, just as other studies like the ones done by Zulu and Mulenga (2019) and Banja and Mulenga (2019) clearly noted. Moreover, the interest of Education Standards Officers should not be concentrating on teacher's preparation of teaching of a particular lesson but checking of working documents as a whole to assess the syllabus coverage and whether teachers had been employing appropriate teaching and learning methods as the teacher cannot be judged based on the lesson preparation of a single day.

5.4 Knowledge of Education Standards Officers in Relation to Their Work

Knowledge of Education Standards Officers in relation to their areas of specialization, pedagogy and curriculum matters is very cardinal in order for them to properly guide teachers on the implementation of the curriculum. Researchers sought to find out from teachers and head teachers on the knowledge that Education Standards Officers exhibited when supervising teachers and the quality of advice that they gave to teachers. The head teacher from school 1 responded that:

I would say some yes exhibit knowledge of their area while others don't exhibit that deep knowledge while others only look at the

aspects of procedure not the actual content. I have a lot of doubt for some of them.

Responding to the same question a teacher from school 5 also shared a similar view that some Education Standards Officers exhibited the knowledge in their areas of specialisation while others made a lot of mistakes. He commented that:

Yes, in their areas of specialization they are good, but there are situations where by like me a teacher of mathematics I was observed by Standards Officer who was specialized in literacy and language. So, she expected me to teach mathematics in a language way and we disagreed. I told her that this is the way we teach mathematics. When they observe lessons in the areas of their specialization, they show expertise knowledge but once they observe a lesson in the field, they are not specialists they make a lot of mistakes.

Similarly, the head teacher from school 3 expressed dissatisfaction on District Education Standards Officers saying they lacked the balance in subjects of which they may not guide teachers well. He stated that:

It depends on the team that has come if it is from the district normally the balance is not adequate because specialization also affects teacher observation so when you are dealing with the provincial team, we have the balanced specialization who zero into their departments and that way guidance is actually accurate and reliable.

Teachers were also asked regarding the knowledge Education Standards Officers exhibited when observing teachers. The following were their response. A teacher from school 4 explained that;

Yes, Education Standards Officers exhibited knowledge in their area of specialization like I remember when I was observed by one standards officer, I learnt something from there he made me to think, the better way of teaching and the way of behaving and the way of delivering the content to the learners.

The response showed that teachers benefited from the supervision activities of Education Standards Officer. Asked further how they had benefited from the work of Education Standards Officers one teacher from school 2 explained that:

They point out some of the weakness on how you have delivered the lesson, the methodology you used and the order in class they tend to look at those areas and advice you to improve in those areas, they also point out some strengths.

The view was supported by the teacher from school 5 who shared that he benefited from their supervision though the number of visits were not enough as she said that:

Though they rarely visit schools I have benefited in many areas one being observation part they help me to be up to date in terms of my work so it is really encouraging because they will advise and guide where am very weak because they use inspection instruments and when they go defiantly you will have to improve.

Supervisors should be well vested in the knowledge and skills of the subject they are in charge of together with curriculum content knowledge as such would put them in the right position to supervise the curriculum and advice teachers appropriately. They also need to be well-informed about the modern pedagogical content knowledge skills (PCK) in their subject disciplines, good and effective communication is thus imperative for them to discharge their duties carefully (Mathew, 2012). Findings from this study revealed that teachers doubted some of the Education Standards Officers' knowledge because some concentrated more on the procedure and not the actual content that was to be taught to the learners. Procedure or following the inspection tool may not bring about the desired results in the teaching and learning process because teaching cannot have a single way of doing it. The situation sometimes may determine the path that teaching and learning may take. This may call for flexibility by the supervisor to accommodate some innovations and initiatives by teachers in order to meet the objective of implementing the curriculum. Moreover, some of the procedures and inspection tools Education Standards Officers may be using when observing teachers may have been developed a long time ago without revisiting it and thus may be outdated. Therefore, there is need that Education Standard Officers should be vested with content knowledge and how it should be taught to the learners. This finding was supported by Kapalu et al (2020) who also noted;

That the instruments used to monitor teachers for special education were too general and did not help special education teachers to benefit from observations by inspectors (standards officers). Although this study did not review the observation tool used by education standards officers however, this finding provides a reflection on whether teacher observation is beneficial to teachers or not, especially that the tools used did not apply or help the teacher develop professionally.

Other findings however revealed that a few Education Standards Officers were well vested in knowledge in areas of their specialization but when they observed teachers in other subjects, they lacked that knowledge instead they insisted on teachers teaching the way subjects of their specialization were taught. The finding may put teachers on a disadvantage considering the way subjects are grouped in

the Zambian education system where one Standards Officer is put in charge of more than one subject. Subjects may be similar in the way they are delivered but there would still be biases towards one's actual subject of specialization making other subjects suffer by not receiving adequate attention and worthwhile guidance from the Education Standards Officers in charge of such a subject grouping. This finding matched with the findings of Ajuoga et al, (2010) study on Perception of quality assurance and standards officers about their competence in Nairobi who argued that Quality Assurance and Standards Officers' competence was average in areas such as human relations, knowledge of subjects, supervisory approach, and report writing. Further findings established that Education Standards Officers from the district lacked balanced subject supervision because of lack of specialization at that level. According to the Zambian Ministry of General Education establishment at district level there are four Education Standards Officers (MESVTEE, 2015) against eight subject groupings. This as the findings indicated is a challenge in providing a balanced and specialized curriculum supervision that teachers may need. It would be vital that the numbers of ESOs at the district level are increased to cater for all subject groupings that are taught in schools in order to have a specialized supervision as well as guidance. On the other hand, Education Standards Officers from the province displayed understanding of their subject areas because there is specialization at that level that can zero into departments to offer guidance to teachers. Findings from focus discussions with teachers revealed that Education Standards Officers displayed knowledge of their subjects of specialization as they helped teachers in guiding them on how to go about teaching and learning. But the challenge of irregular visits created a huge gap between teachers and supervisors. ESOs affirmed that one or two years would elapse without visiting some schools for supervision.

The implementation of the curriculum can greatly improve if all Education Standards Officers had thorough and coherent knowledge of the subject matter for them to be able to develop appropriate pedagogical skills which may be shared with teachers (Mulenga, 2015). Fisher (2011) argued that teachers play one of the most important roles in meeting the many challenges of providing quality education in any country. To this effect, as documented in the Zambian National Education Policy of 1996, 'Educating our Future', the importance of employing well-qualified and competent Education Standards Officers to ensure that quality and effective implementation of the curriculum and education system, which largely depends on the quality of its teachers and supervisors is significant.

5.5 Education Standards Officers' Teacher Working Relationship

A sound relationship between Education Standards Officers and teachers is vital in order to work effectively the two should relate as partners with a shared vision in curriculum implementation (Fullan 1991). Researchers wanted to find out the type of relationship that existed between teachers and Education Standards

Officers. Responses indicated that the working relationship was not very good as all the teachers expressed displeasure on how the two related with each other. For example, a teacher from school 1 commented that;

When they come, they should not forget that we live with learners here. So, when they talk to us harshly, we will be frustrated and learners will suffer. So, when they visit teachers, they should not forget that they were teachers before of which they should take us as colleagues not behaving as if they know it all. They should also take time to learn from teachers because learning is a process even if they are Standards Officers there are things they may not know about teaching and learning. So, they should give us respect we learn from them and they learn from us that way we can have a good system.

This observation was supported by another teacher from school 5 who explained that:

They should work hand in hand with teachers that is to say if they happen to come at the school because teachers are also human beings. It frustrates teachers if they come and speak the language that they do speak because I have been here and am talking from experience if they do come, they speak as if they are speaking to young kids so that is not motivating teachers, they should realize that these are the people on the ground who can help learners.

Another teacher from school 5 when asked about the same matter confirmed that:

When they visit schools, they like victimizing teachers, but they should not just comment they should do what we call learning by doing where if the teacher fails that so called Standards Officer should be able to demonstrate to the teacher on how to handle certain lessons. I have never seen any one of them demonstrating a lesson. But they are full of advice which they have never shown to us in practice.

Another teacher from school 2 stressed the same point when she remarked that:

They should not just come for teacher observation sometimes they should be coming to schools to familiarize themselves with teachers and learn from us some challenges that we have and find a way on how they can help us with those challenges.

The head teacher from school 5 when interviewed on the same issue re-emphasised on the issue of unpalatable language that Education Standards officer use to

teachers when he explained that:

They should avoid harsh language, what I mean is that teachers are shouted at because maybe the teacher didn't prepare the lesson plan. Yes we have teachers who may not be good at lesson preparation but good at teaching and learners have been passing. Such teachers should be guided well than shouting at them we have seen situations where Standards Officers have used a word such as bush shit. That was not good because someone who has not done well should be guided in a sober way failure to which you may not be able to see that change you want from that teacher.

Views and experiences from teachers and head teachers indicate that although some Education Standards Officers used friendly language, but sometimes they showed arrogance and belittled teachers and the head teachers. These findings capture the suggestions given by Leeuw (2002) and Ehren and Visscher (2008) who shared a common thinking that there should be a positive relationship and respect between teachers and the supervisors so as to have productive dialogue. Thus, the reciprocity relationship as shared by Leeuw (2002) on a balance of “give and take” and “you too- me too” applies with special weight in this context. To Ehren and Visscher (2008), a good relationship between Education Standards Officers and teachers would probably have more impact on teaching and learning as teachers would be more open to accept suggestions with regard to their strengths and weaknesses.

Ehren and Visscher (2008) viewed Education Standards Officers as a critical friends and colleagues whose visit to schools should lead to improvement in teaching and learning. What is important here is that the Education Standards Officers should always strive to make all possible ways of improving the work of the teacher. Sometimes teachers may be faced with challenges, frustrations especially those who work in difficult environments. Education Standards Officers should employ more wisdom so that one can easily understand the personalities involved and especially the perceived difficulties of the teachers in the given circumstances.

This finding actually reveals that there are some Education Standards Officers who still consider themselves as superiors over teachers yet this in turn may affect teacher's productivity and efficiency. For quality education to be achieved, Education Standards Officers need to work with teachers as partners. This finding was supported by Ehren and Visscher (2008), who shared a common understanding that, there should be a positive relationship and respect between teachers and school inspectors in order to have a productive dialogue.

The atmosphere in the school that teachers display may have a great impact on the outcome of the teacher observation. Therefore, researchers also wanted to find out from education standards officers on the behaviour of teachers when Education

Standards Officers visited the school for teacher observation. The researcher sought information on how teachers behaved when Education Standards Officers visited schools for supervision. The following were the responses. Education Standards Officers 1 explained that;

They understand us as Standards Officers and not inspectors so if they are not prepared, they will tell you I am not ready then you give them time to prepare. There are of course teachers who don't prepare for lessons those would be jittery they would run away it has happened.

When asked the same question in a separate interview SESO 2 observed that there was panic among teacher whenever Education Standards Officer visited schools for teacher observation as he explained that;

In most cases there is panic especially those who are not prepared. But those who prepare there is no panic you find they are settled they are at easy ready to present. Normally we will tell them not to panic but it is something that may be has become traditional people think Standards officers are there to find faults and they think there is always a problem for standards officers to visit a school when in fact we go there as coaches, mentors after teacher observation we always find time to talk to them.

SESO 3 shared her observations by stating that;

It depends but I am happy to report that in some schools there will be that jittery when you visit the school. But as they teach, they feel at easy after teaching you advise they appreciate some would even say I have never heard about this. In some cases, some have run away immediately they see a GRZ vehicle they run away, you go to the head the head will tell you there is a teacher in that class you go there the teacher is not there the head will try to call them but their phones are off they have gone but once you have an opportunity to meet such a teacher you ask them why they run away they would open up that I did not prepare.

This observation was made stronger by ESO 4 when asked the same question in a separate interview he shared that it depends on what one finds on the ground some teachers who are performance driven have no problem while those that may not be prepared show jittery. He explained that;

Those who are competent and performance driven are very happy to see us there because they expect confirmation, promotion or approval of transfer of their papers they are happy to showcase

their work. Others will panic especially when they are ill prepared because they will interpret us as officers who mean to expose them but ethically that's not what we do. There are also a number of teachers who are new those no not Panic it's just that they don't know what to do.

SESO (6) confirmed the assertion and explained that;

Because of the hangover of the inspector's teachers are normally jittery the moment they see GRZ vehicles even before they know the reason of your visit because it not always teacher observation so they would be jittery due to lack of or inadequate preparation so it is the job of you now as a Standards Officers to calm them down that we are friends we are not here to victimize anyone and even after the lesson you go dipper to support them.

Responses from this section highly indicated that the relationship between Education Standards Officers was still worrisome. Teachers still found challenges to meet Education Standards Officers in schools by exhibiting jittery behaviour and in some cases run away from ESOs especially those who may not have prepared for teaching. Supervision in the modern times should be friendly for quality supervision cannot be judged on the supervisor that is feared but the two should co-exist with mutual understanding and respect so as to score the goal.

6.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the research findings of this study a conclusion can be drawn that teachers viewed Education Standards Officers as people who helped them improve their teaching skill and teaching document management through their supervision activities though the visits were not enough for them to make an impact. In view of the finding researchers are recommending that Education Standards Officers should consider finding ways of increasing the number of visits that they make to schools for curriculum supervision to effectively help teachers. However, some Education Standards Officers were still in the old school of inspectors who behaved as superiors who had nothing to learn from teachers. Some used bad language and concentrated on faulty finding on teachers which made teachers panic whenever Education Standards Officers visited the schools. Therefore, it is being recommended that the Ministry of General Education should introduce training for ESOs to equip them with necessary skills and knowledge tailored towards curriculum supervision in schools. Findings also revealed that at times Education Standards Officers just concentrated on checking teaching files for teachers without the actual teacher observation in the classroom to get into the actual learning environment for them to be better placed to supervise teachers. Teachers had a negative perception of Education Standards Officers whom they

perceived as outsiders instead of colleagues who visited with the view to work with teachers in improving the teaching and learning process.

Due to lack of specialization by Education Standards Officers especially at the district level lacked subject, curriculum and pedagogical content knowledge that was needed for them to effectively supervise the curriculum implementation process. Based on the findings it is recommended that the Ministry of General Education should consider increasing the number of ESOs at the district to cater for all subject groupings to offer the balanced guidance to teachers. Some Education Standards Officers concentrated on the procedure which teachers were to follow when observing them than the actual content that should be delivered to the learners. This created a clear mismatch between what teachers expected from the ESOs in terms of teaching, supervision and quality assurance and what ESOs actually provided during their visits an indication that there was a need to bridge this expectation gap which in fact is what the ESOs missed in their work.

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