

An Evaluation of the Sustenance of the Primary School Management Development Project in Botswana

G. Tsayang, P. Monyatsi, P. Bulawa and C. Mhozya

Faculty of Education, University of Botswana, Botswana

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ABSTRACT Primary School Management Development Project intended to improve management of primary schools in Botswana started in 1999 and ended in 2002. The Impact Evaluation Study (IES) conducted in 2000 found that management practices introduced by the project had improved management by most SMTs. School Management Teams and Primary School Management Advisors put in place by the Project were functioning well. Cluster and school-based in service training had a positive impact on management of primary schools. The present study wanted to find out whether the findings from the IES were sustained. A survey of 24 schools in four of the six national education regions was conducted. The main findings of the study were that the program activities and structures were sustained. The sustenance was attributed to the initial involvement of the key stakeholders in the conception of the project through the base line study where school managers identified key management areas of need. The sustenance is also attributed to political commitment by the government manifested through regularizing the project into a Ministry of Education programme properly budgeting for. One of the implications of the findings is that commitment by stakeholders should be grounded on a sound understanding and true involvement by the key players from conception to implementation of any program. It is also noted that decentralization should not be abdication of accountability by the mother body, the central government, instead, should be a strategy through which the central government works to empower the policy and programme implementers.

INTRODUCTION

Whilst Primary Education world wide is a critical entry point into the education arena and subsequently into any country's economic standing, this level did not receive the importance it deserves in Botswana before and immediately after independence. This scenario was characterised by poor resources this level of education received which were more noticeable in the staffing situation then (Republic of Botswana 1994). For instance, at independence the country had many of its primary teaching staff offering their services without any training whilst most of those who were qualified, had as their academic qualification and therefore qualification to enrol for teacher training, primary school leaving certificate. The situation as reflected in the report of the National Commission of Education of 1977 shows that even a decade subsequent to independence, as high as 81% of untrained teachers had only completed standard seven, while 56% of trained teachers had completed primary education, that is standard seven to qualify for training in teacher training colleges (Republic of Botswana 1977). Many of the members of school leadership and /or supervision were appointed with very minimal administrative skills. There was not much in-service training to assist those who

had been elevated to such critical positions of providing the leadership that was most needed by the schools in order to achieve quality education that was to be a key to national development.

The first Botswana National Commission on Education conducted in 1975, resulted in the White Paper called Education for Kagisano (Education for Social Harmony), which made some recommendations towards the improvement of the quality of primary education. For instance, during the Botswana Government National Development Plan Five, in line with the recommendations of Education for Kagisano, and as a response to one of the national principles, Education for Development, Primary Education was given the highest priority within the education sector (Republic of Botswana 1985: 126). In the same line, The Botswana National Development Plan Six also emphasised the need to raise the quality of primary education through the training of education officers and head-teachers in professional supervision of teachers (Republic of Botswana 1991).

It has to be noted however that whilst development efforts were made such as through the national budgetary processes, schools did not engage in any significant school-based staff development. They relied mostly on education

centre based workshops conducted by officers based in these education centers, as well as resource persons from teacher training colleges and the University of Botswana. In-service training activities provided during this period were therefore held at residential facilities away from schools. For most of the time, such training was easily forgotten as it was mainly conceived for the trainees independent of their own school based needs. For instance courses on management and leadership were held for school managers at centres such as the Institute of Development Management (IDM) and the Education Centres and many other venues. The critical thing here is that those for whom the courses were run had little stake in deciding what should be the content of such courses so as to relate to their own needs. The model of training could be said to have been centralised, to say the least. This model of in service could be said to have contributed then, to the poor sustenance of most of the in service courses as the reports from workshops that provided such courses would be found gathering dust on most Ministry of education office shelves because their contents would not be having much bearing on the actual problems at the schools.

The change in the in service for school managers came in the early 1990s when there was a shift from the centralised model of training to a more school-based in-service training with accountability of programmes left in the hands of school staff (Evans 1991). This implies a decentralised mode of school management in service which was seen to have the likelihood of having more impact on the performance of the instructors as it would be closest to their needs. The Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) of 1994, which was a review of the implementation of the recommendations of Education for Kagisano, recommended a need for a blend of school-based in-service training for both school managers and teachers (Republic of Botswana, 1994). The RNPE saw this as having the potential to reduce a decline in educational achievement in primary schools, hence it recommended that:

"The head as an instructional leader, together with the deputy and senior teachers, should take major responsibility for in-service training for teachers within the schools, through regular observation of teachers and organisation of workshops, to foster communication between teachers on professional matters and

to address weaknesses" (Republic of Botswana 1994: 47).

This recommendation suggests that school managers had to assume the role of curriculum leaders, whose primary purpose is to assist others to shape the purposes and meanings that they use to make sense of, and to justify their contribution to educational development at the operational level, the school level (Day et al. 1993). Dunham (1995) suggests that, the well-being of all the members of the school community and even the survival of the school itself are dependent on the decision-making skills of senior and middle managers at school level.

Teachers would perform best when there is collegial and supportive environment offered by a school manager that respects their autonomy and builds upon their experience rather than basing on what they learnt from externally conceived workshops. The RNPE of 1994 also emphasised school management as a critical force to foster change and quality in schools. Further to that, the Botswana National Development Plan 8 (NDP 8) also emphasize through one of its objectives, the need to improve the quality and effectiveness of Primary Education through strengthening school management (Republic of Botswana 1997a).

As a response to the above, the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Department for International Development (DFID) launched the Primary School Management Development Project (PSMDP) in 1999. The main goal of the Primary School Management Development Project was to improve the quality of primary education in Botswana by providing effective management training and support to school management teams (Republic of Botswana 2002). The overall aim of the project was therefore to establish a sustainable primary school management system, hence improve the quality of primary education in Botswana. This partnership between DFID and the Government of Botswana was to develop management and instructional leadership skills in primary school heads so as to make them more effective in their jobs (Ministry of Education 2000).

It is worth noting that the PSMDP process during the life span of the project was mainly Botswana Government and donor agency driven. This collaboration was also extended to the impact evaluation survey (IES) at the end of the project as it was also carried out by DFID United

Kingdom based consultants and the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education 2002).

STUDY FOCUS

At the end of the Primary School Management Development Project in the year 2002, an Impact Evaluation Study (IES) was conducted. The following skills areas used in the baseline survey which lead to the inception of the project (PSMDP) were also used in the IES as indicators of effectiveness: *motivating, planning, staff development, monitoring, staff appraisal, developing community relations, delegation, teacher management, parental involvement and team building* (Ministry of Education 2000). The overall findings of the IES showed that:

- management practices introduced by the project had improved amongst the majority of School Management Teams (SMTs).
- management structures such as School Management Teams and Primary School Management Advisors put in place by the Project were functioning very well.
- in service training decentralized to schools and took the cluster and school-based form was having an impact in improving management of primary schools.

The study notes that the PSMDP started as a project jointly funded by the Ministry of Education (MoE) of Botswana and the Department for International Development (DFID) for four years (1999 to 2002) after which the project was handed over to the Government of Botswana as one of the regular MoE programmes and solely funded by the Government of Botswana.

Therefore this study was undertaken to evaluate the extent to which this regular MoE programme, the Primary School Management Development Programme (PSMDP) now, has been sustained. In particular, the study intended assessing the extent to which SMTs, teachers and Primary School Management Advisors (PSMAs) perceive the sustainability of the management practices as identified by the IES.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- To what extent are the management practices introduced by the project perceived as still being maintained by the programme?
- To what extent are the management structures

such as School Management Teams and Primary School Management Advisors put in place by the Project still functioning in the Programme?

- To what extent is the decentralization of in-service to schools still being functional and having a positive impact in improving management of primary schools?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey research design. As pointed out by McBurney (1990: 60) "the purpose of a survey is simply to determine how people feel about a particular issue"; a view also shared by Fink (1995) who believes that perceptions which influence how people ultimately feel about a particular issue and how they react towards it are also determined through a survey. Therefore, how teachers, SMTs and PSMAs perceive the PSMD programme would influence how they feel about and react towards it. These feelings and perceptions were therefore obtained through a survey with a combination of questionnaires, observations, interviews and focus group interactions used in data collection.

The study was conducted in four (4) out of six (6) primary education regions namely the Central North, Francistown, Southern and South Central. One inspectorial area was selected from each of the four regions making four inspectorial areas for the study. The population of the study comprised of school management team members (SMTs), teachers, PSMDP coordinators from the MoE and PSMAs. Though the research team had aimed at using forty schools selected through systematic random sampling, this was made difficult by limited funding and time to reach all the anticipated schools. A total of twenty-four (24) government primary schools which are a focus of the PSMDP program were therefore used in the study. A list of schools was supplied by the MoE from which list a convenience sampling technique was used to select these 24 schools.

The convenience sampling was in relation to easy accessibility of the schools. The convenience sampling was also used when teacher respondents who were available at the time of visits were used to provide the information required. This was contrary to the initial plan that from each conveniently chosen school, a simple random sampling procedure would be used to pick two teachers from each stream, (that is

Standards 1-7) who would respond to the questionnaires. The change in course was mandated by the limited funding to visit the schools again and again in the event that those earmarked for the study were not available. The schools were also far removed from one another. The entire sample comprised of 29 Primary School Management Advisors (PSMAs) who provided data through a focus group discussion, 206 teachers issued with a questionnaire with only 125 returning them filled in, fifty-five SMTs who filled in a semi structured questionnaire out of which fifteen of them were also randomly selected for individual interviews. It has to be noted that the instruments used for data collection were adopted from those used in the impact evaluation study except for the focus group discussion.

Negotiating Access: Permission to carry out this research was requested from and granted by the Director of Primary Education in the Ministry of Education. A letter requesting for permission was written well in advance of data collection so as to give those below the Director the opportunity to receive their own letters from the Director and hence be ready for the researchers. The early bird request for permission took cognisance of the fact that *"arrival on the scene with a research permission slip from the central office is likely to ruffle feathers unless you do the necessary work first to court... potential subjects"* (Bogdan and Biklen 1998:75). Letters were therefore written to relevant education officers to negotiate access into individual schools and about the detailed modalities of conducting the research such as the dates and times of visits to various sites. Data collection was done by the researchers who found each school and officers informed about the impending research visits as well as the context of the research itself.

Data Collection Procedures: Data was collected through interviews, questionnaires and an observation schedule. The instruments mentioned above were pre tested with respondents from schools in Gaborone to check for any ambiguities and then correct them. The focus group discussion with PSMAs was used as an exploratory needs assessment of what their experiences working with SMTs were (Baker 1999). This focus group discussion was deliberately used to validate or disconfirm questionnaire, interview and observational data because as pointed out by Miles and Huberman (1994) it is useful to triangulate information when

one needs to explain and illuminate or interpret quantitative data. Qualitative interviews which in this case took the form of a focus group discussion can also be used to obtain in-depth information about participants' thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, reasoning, motivations and feelings about the implementation of any programme as they lived and practiced it (Leedy and Ormrod 2005).

The survey therefore helped respondents reveal the nature of the PSMDP practice in their various capacities, that is, the processes involved, the resultant relationships and their own responses to it. The focus group discussion further allowed the researchers to enter into the inner world of the PSMAs and to gain an understanding of their perspective (Johnson and Christensen 2004). Fifty-five SMTs filled in a semi-structured questionnaire out of which 15 of them were also interviewed. The interview was intended to gather qualitative data from their own words so that the researchers could develop insights on how these SMTs interpreted the implementation processes and the impact of the PSMDP (Bogdan and Biklen 1998). These descriptive data were to complement or be triangulated with data from other data collection procedures.

To a large extent the questionnaires were pre-coded. The remaining questions were coded after data collection. All data from questionnaires was scored and imputing it into the computer was done followed by analysis through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program. After conducting focus group discussions with PSMAs, the researchers immediately developed a case record. The themes emerging from the data were then identified. The indicators of effectiveness and sustainability from the IES were used as the major themes. Coding of the case records was then conducted. This involved *"identifying text segments, placing a bracket around them and assigning a code word or phrase that accurately describes the meaning of the text segment"* (Creswell 2005: 238). Content analysis was then done with data from questionnaires, focus group discussions and interviews. As alluded to by some authors (Cresswell 2002; Baker 1999), content analysis is often used where studies seek to understand values and social perspectives on issues. Content analysis was therefore appropriate in analyzing data from interviews and questionnaires as the study sought to establish perspectives of various

subjects on this social programme, the PSMDP. This involved establishing the frequency with which the established programme effectiveness indicators occurred in various data codes from various sources (Bell 2003) and establishing whether the content represented the concept of effectiveness of the programme as defined by the indicators of the PSMDP (Cresswell 2005). All data from interviews, focus group discussions, observations and questionnaires was triangulated and interpreted.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The main research question which guided the study wanted to establish the extent to which the management practices introduced by the project were being maintained by the programme. Respondents were asked to give their experiences and views regarding the sustainability of the management practices as established by the IES of 2002.

Findings from SMTs

In particular, SMTs were to assess their own performance and that of their colleagues in management as far as whether or not they experienced difficulties in the different management performance areas. It is from these assessments that sustenance would be inferred. The performance management areas were addressed as follows:

Administration: A total of nine respondents felt they were having difficulties performing their administrative duties. The remaining 31 indicated that they did not have any problems performing these duties. On being asked to give their perceptions of how they see their colleagues performing their administrative duties, a total of 34 respondents, 21 of which were females, 5 males while eight were not identified by gender, indicated that they perceived their colleagues to be performing their administrative duties without any difficulties. Only six thought their fellow SMTs had administrative performance problems.

Planning and Delegation: Respondents were asked about their perception with regards their own ability to plan in their organisation as well as their ability to appropriately delegate duties. A total of 4 respondents indicated that they experienced problems in both planning and delegation of duties while two indicated they only

had difficulties in delegation and not in planning. A total of 26 respondents on the other hand indicated that they did not experience any difficulties in executing both their delegation and planning duties. Eight of those who indicated that they had problems with planning intimated that they were comfortable with delegating duties.

Overall it can be concluded that the majority of respondents indicated having no difficulties with both planning and delegation of duties.

Communication and Consultation: As the ability to communicate is one of the indicators of effective management, the respondents were asked to indicate their perception of how they communicate. Thirty respondents out of a total of 40 indicated that they perceive themselves as not having difficulties communicating with their co-workers and other stakeholders. Twenty-six of these respondents also perceived other SMTs as not having any difficulties with communication.

Consultation was yet another indicator of ability to lead and manage. So the respondents were asked whether or not they had any difficulties consulting others. They were also asked to indicate how they see their fellow SMTs engaging in consultations. Thirty-seven respondents perceived themselves as people who have no problem consulting with others. Assessing their fellow SMTs with regards consultation, 33 of the respondents felt their colleagues did not have any problems. It might be concluded that the respondents are generally happy about the way they both communicate with and consult others as well as how their colleagues communicate with and consult others on issues relating to managing the schools.

Interpersonal Relations and Discipline: Interpersonal skills and discipline are yet another set of components of effective school management. Therefore the respondents were asked to assess themselves and their colleagues with regards to their own perception of their interpersonal skills. Five respondents felt that they had difficulties regarding interpersonal skills. The same respondents also felt that their fellow SMTs also had difficulties regarding their interpersonal skills. A total of 26 respondents however indicated that as far as they are concerned, they did not have any problems regarding the interpersonal skills. They also assessed other SMTs as not having any difficulties regarding interpersonal skills.

Related to the interpersonal skills was the

question of discipline. Four respondents who intimated that they had difficulties with interpersonal skills also indicated that other SMTs had discipline problems. The majority of respondents (27) indicated that others did not have any problems with discipline issues while 13 indicated that others have difficulty with discipline issues.

Monitoring and Motivation: Respondents were asked to assess themselves regarding their performance in monitoring and motivating their subordinates. It is noted that three members indicated having difficulties in both monitoring and assessing their staff whilst thirty four indicated that they did not have any problems motivating and monitoring their staff.

The same respondents were asked to assess their fellow SMT in terms of how they perceive their performance in monitoring and assessing their subordinates. Out of a total of 40 respondents, only two indicated that other SMTs have difficulty motivating and monitoring their staff. Nine were perceived to have difficulties with only motivating staff. The rest (27) were perceived as not having any difficulties with both monitoring and motivating their staff members.

Developing Good School Community Relations: Partnership in education is one of the important considerations for effective management of education in Botswana. Therefore effective managers are expected to be able to develop and sustain good school community relations. This was therefore one of the performance indicators that SMTs were asked to assess themselves and others on.

As far as self assessment and assessment of others of the ability to develop and sustain school community relations was concerned, 4 SMTs felt that both they and others are having difficulties developing good school community relations while five assessed themselves as doing very well while others were having difficulties. A total of thirty respondents assessed themselves and others as doing well in the development and sustenance of school community relations.

Team Building: Managers should work as a team among themselves as well as with their subordinates if they have to successfully achieve their results. Therefore, team building was seen as yet another pertinent management performance indicator. Five respondents out of 40 thought they had difficulties building teams themselves and also thought other SMTs also had similar difficulties. Yet another five thought they did not

have any difficulties building teams but thought others had difficulties. The rest of the respondents, (28) pointed out that neither they nor other SMTs had any difficulties in building management teams as well as staff teams.

Staff Appraisal: The ability to appraise staff is important for a manager to be able to assist as appropriate or to recommend for promotion. Therefore the SMTs' ability to appraise their staff was used yet as another indicator of effective management. Six SMTs assessed themselves and others as having difficulties in appraising their staff while two assessed themselves as doing well and others as having difficulties. The rest, (29) assessed themselves and other SMTs as doing well in appraising staff.

The majority of SMT respondents thought that the above mentioned indicators were well sustained in terms of their effectiveness. For instance over 60% of respondents expressed that both themselves as individuals and their colleagues in management did not have difficulties performing their administrative duties, planning and delegating, communicating and consulting their staff on issues of management of their schools. Over 60% of respondents also expressed as having no difficulties in monitoring and motivating their staff, building teams, developing good school community relations as well as appraising their staff. It can be concluded that it appears from the point of view of SMTs that management practices put in place by the PSMDP were sustained.

Findings from Teachers

Teachers were asked to give their perception of the way they are managed. A total of thirteen statements were given, to which they were supposed to respond either negatively, positively or not sure. The same statements were used during the Impact Evaluation study. As part of their findings, teachers noted that there are sustained in-service workshops activities both at school and cluster levels for their professional development. On being asked to assess their work place in general, the teachers overwhelmingly provided positive responses relating to a number of indicators of effective management practices as indicated in table 1.

Table 1 is a reflection of teachers' assessment of their schools in relation to the management activities undertaken. The exercise was intended to give teachers an opportunity to take an

Table 1: Assessment of school activities by teachers

S. No.	Statement	Agree	Not sure	Disagree
1.	Teachers support each other at the work place	70 (56%)	8 (6%)	46 (38%)
2.	Subject panels function well in schools.	56 (45%)	9 (8%)	59 (47%)
3.	There are good relations between SMT & teachers	73 (58%)	15 (12%)	36 (29%)
4.	SMTs consult teachers when making decisions.	71 (57%)	9 (7%)	45 (36%)
5.	We are fully involved in developing school action plan	83 (66%)	8 (6%)	34 (27%)
6.	School action plans are well implemented.	60 (48%)	18 (14%)	33 (26%)
7.	Teachers are involved in drawing up staff meeting agendas	62 (50%)	8 (6%)	55 (44%)
8.	The management of materials in the school is well done.	75 (60%)	17 (14%)	32 (26%)
9.	Teachers are involved in selecting materials for the school to order	92 (74%)	7 (6%)	26 (20%)
10.	There is proper record-keeping of items issued	98 (78%)	14 (11%)	13 (10%)
11.	There are enough classrooms	39 (31%)	1 (1%)	85 (68%)
12.	We work in a clean environment	81 (65%)	3 (2%)	41 (33%)
13.	Teachers are fully involved in maintenance of the school ground	66 (53%)	12 (10%)	46 (37%)
14.	The school is well maintained	54 (43%)	9 (7%)	62 (50%)
15.	We are fully involved in running the school through committees	90 (72%)	12 (10%)	23 (18%)
16.	SMTs use teachers' ideas well.	71 (57%)	14 (11%)	40 (32%)
17.	We all have a chance to chair meetings.	81 (65%)	7 (6%)	37 (30%)
18.	Parents and teachers work well together	59 (47%)	17 (14%)	50 (40%)
19.	SMTs regularly observe classes	83 (66%)	6 (5%)	36 (29%)
20.	SMTs give teachers helpful feedback after assessment	69 (55%)	11 (9%)	44 (35%)
21.	School-based workshops address our needs	90 (72%)	14 (11%)	19 (15%)
22.	Teachers have equal chances to attend outside workshops.	40 (32%)	16 (13%)	69 (55%)
23.	Staff meetings are held at least 3 times a year	95 (76%)	10 (8%)	20 (16%)
24.	Administrative matters are dealt with efficiently	55 (44%)	26 (21%)	44 (35%)
25.	Teachers who misbehave are disciplined effectively	53 (42%)	38 (30%)	34 (27%)
26.	Teachers are satisfied with annual performance appraisal	39 (31%)	53 (42%)	33 (26%)
27.	New teachers regularly display good teacher performance	45 (36%)	55 (44%)	25 (20%)
28.	SMTs regularly appraise good teacher performance	55 (44%)	17 (14%)	55 (42%)
29.	SMTs encourage team building	80 (64%)	10 (8%)	35 (28%)
30.	SMTs provide in service training to teachers as appropriate	56 (45%)	22 (18%)	46 (37%)
31.	SMTs lead by example	55 (44%)	10 (8%)	68 (48%)
32.	SMTs encourage teachers to upgrade their qualifications	68 (54%)	24 (19%)	34 (27%)
33.	SMTs deal with teachers' personal problems well.	52 (42%)	21 (17%)	51 (41%)

introspection of themselves, reflection on their SMT, resources, and other school activities. These indicators included among others, supportive relations among teachers, between the teachers and SMTs, teachers' involvement in decision making and consultations. The overwhelming positive responses tended to indicate that even with the winding up of the donor agency support, the Ministry of Education through SMTs and PSMDs is able to sustain what was set by the project as management practices which could give the programme a new leaf.

The continued existence of the SMTs and PSMDs as well as their acknowledged functioning as established by the PSMD project is also an indication of sustained management structures put in place by the Project.

Over and above the statements given in table 1, teachers had open-ended questions which were adopted from the IES. As responses to some of these open ended questionnaires there were expressions by an insignificant number of teacher

though, that some SMTs bring their own personal and social problems to school contexts, thus adversely affecting the chances of good leadership. Yet another significant concern, though expressed by a minority of teachers is that some deserving teachers were not recommended for promotion and this acted as a de-motivator for the hard workers as they watch the poor performers being elevated to higher positions. In some very few cases, SMTs were also found by teachers not to work harmoniously amongst themselves, thus setting a bad team work example for the rest of the staff.

A majority of teachers also expressed, through questionnaires, concern that some SMTs were not doing enough to secure teaching and learning materials in time. In particular, materials relating to the new syllabus were reported to be in short supply. They also expressed that lack of technology compounded by lack of electricity in a number of schools especially in the rural areas as problematic.

Findings from Primary School Management Advisors (PSMAs)

The PSMAs role in the PSMDP is to provide continuous support for the SMTs. This includes training them on the job on various managerial skills in particular, for those SMT members who would have been newly appointed. One of the roles of the PSMAs is to provide training on management modules. The process involves bringing SMTs together by clusters and work-shopping them on various management modules and/or various skills areas. The SMTs are then given a series of assignments per module to do and submit for assessment. These assignments are basically action-research oriented as they must deal with management challenges as experienced by SMTs. The assessment culminates in the award of a certificate should one have performed to the accepted level.

It has to be noted that from the project, the PSMAs had a mandate to support and provide staff development for SMTs. Therefore they operate at the grass roots level, the school level, as education officers who must provide this support and staff development for SMTs in any ways that could be productive and developmental.

The research team had an opportunity to attend one PSMA marking session. At the session, all the country's 29 PSMAs were present. A focus group discussion took place at the end of the marking session. The following key findings emerged:

- that some of the strategies used by the PSMAs to in-service the SMTs include among others: portfolio development by SMTs on assigned management areas
- having the portfolios externally examined by professionals from universities for quality assurance
- supervising and monitoring action research by SMTs on challenges and success in their respective school management areas
- assessing assignments given to SMTs by them
- MoE awarding attainment certificates for those who would have met the requirements of the management modules hence providing some motivation for others.

From this focus group discussion it was evident that there are a number of management skills that are used, and prominent among them were team work where they worked in teams of five,

communication where they reported back to the larger group, planning where activities were orderly and logical, and conceptualization and sharing as in brainstorming. There is also concern for quality through external examination of the SMTs' work. There was also observed evidence of enthusiasm on the part of participants as everybody was actively involved. These findings indicate sustenance of the management practices as well as structures established by the project.

The PSMAs' involvement in school and cluster based in service workshops with the action oriented assignments is yet another indication of sustenance of decentralised in service workshops.

Findings from School Tours

Observation was used as yet another instrument of data collection. An observation guide which was adopted from the IES one was prepared and guided the school tour. As one of the ways of finding out the impact of PSMDP, schools were toured by the research team in the company of the SMTs. The intention was to do an observation of the general outlook with regards the state of the buildings, tidiness of the classrooms, evidence of recent wall displays, state of the head teacher's office, tidiness of the school grounds, tidiness of the storerooms, conditions of the toilets and any other indicator that could be observed. A sample of 12 schools was observed and the following are the results of the observation.

With regards the state of school buildings, eight out of twelve schools had buildings in good condition. There were no broken windows in the eight schools, the floors were intact and kept clean. The kitchens, staff rooms, administration offices and storerooms were kept clean. In some old schools, there were observed some renovations going on. Schools in very remote villages in particular had adequate and well kept classrooms. It must be noted that these schools (remote) had low enrolments. On the other hand, the urban schools and those in big villages had big classes and one school had some morning and afternoon shifts to cater for a large number of pupils. This particular school did not have well kept and up to date displays.

The remaining four schools had some broken windows and the pit latrines were not in very good condition even though they were still being used by pupils. The toilets for teachers were clean and kept under lock and key. In two of such

schools, the water system toilets were under-construction.

DISCUSSION

The discussions of the findings are guided by the theoretical frame work proposed by Riitta Sappenan-Jarvela for the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health Helsinki, Finland (RiittaSappenan-Jarvela 2005). The theoretical framework argues that the purpose of evaluation is to establish whether or not there is enhanced shared understanding of a program, increased participants engagement, support and reinforcement of the program through intervention-oriented evaluation and for program development. If the purpose of evaluation as outlined in the above theoretical framework is achieved, then by inference, there is sustenance of the programme under evaluation.

The evaluation of the PSMDP was therefore to find out whether its intentions, aims or objectives were sustained even after it was transformed into a regular Ministry of Education programme at the end of the donor funding and solely financed by the Ministry. If the programme is found to be sustained, then this might be a reflection of enhanced shared understanding of the purposes and processes of the PSMDP, increased participants engagement as more people are carried on board and reinforcements of the programme through school based workshops. The sustenance of similar programmes which also intended to improve school management has been illustrated in the cases of Kenya Primary School Management Project (PRISM) in Kenya, Qatar School Support Organisation (QSSO) in Qatar, and Guyana Education Access Project (GEAP) in Guyana to mention but a few. The Primary Education Improvement Project (PEIP) in Botswana is case in point to support a need for a strong political commitment and leadership as a requisite for sustenance of programmes. PEIP was transformed from a project into a regular University of Botswana programme. However there are other cases where sustenance was not possible such as in the case of the Secondary School Management Development Project (SSMDP) in Botswana.

From the findings of this current study, it is apparent that the focus and the objectives of the PSMDP have been realised and sustained five years after the termination of the sponsorship by the donor agency in 2002. Research has indicated that sustenance of any programme depends on a

number of factors amongst which are, for instance, when power to conceive and implement a programme is divested to the grassroots and this grassroots are given the authority and the responsibility. For instance whilst there may be valid reasons for decentralising services to local districts by the central governments, this process always requires strong political support and committed leadership for such decentralisation to succeed in achieving its intentions.

It can be argued that the SMTs, PSMAAs and teachers who translate into grassroots internalised the programme and therefore carried it onwards because they were involved in the baseline study which led to the inception of the programme, the PSMDP. It can be argued therefore that involvement of those who are affected by a programme right from its inception is a key to its sustainability. Further more, such involvement needs to be supported by a strong political support as appears to have been the case with the introduction and the processes of PSMDP in Botswana during and after the donor funding period.

Literature has pointed to failure by other good intentioned programmes such as the secondary school management development project (Monyatsi 2006) and the Junior Secondary School Partnership Policy (Tsayang 1998). The failures could be attributed to initial lack of involvement by those directly affected. The above cases point to a lack of commitment by the Botswana Government as a cause of the collapse of these programmes. The difference between the two programmes just mentioned above and the PSMDP is that the latter was translated into a Ministry of Education regular programme and fully budgeted for to compensate for the departed donor as well as having involved the critical stakeholders and/or participants not only in its implementation but also its conception. This involvement in turn led to the general shared understanding by most key stakeholders about the appropriate contemporary management practices for primary schools. For instance, teachers are generally satisfied on the way they are managed, school community relations are rated as being cordial and sustained, and there are some interventions in the form of government financed school based workshops that are in place to help in the realization of effective school management. Findings of the study indicate that teachers also believe that they are involved in decision making processes in the schools which to some extent democratized the management of primary schools which had

hitherto been authoritative. Communication in the schools is also reported as having greatly improved as manifested through participation in planning, committees, regular staff meetings and other forums that have come into existence as a result of the programme. All these were principles that also drove projects such as PRISM, GEAP and the SSMDP. The driving force is strong political commitment and involvement of all stakeholders in the management of education, a phenomenon referred to by Monyatsi (2005) as “transforming schools into democratic institutions”.

The sustenance of the PSMDP is also illustrated through the existence of management structures which were established during the project era. Some of these structures include school-based workshops, cluster-based workshops, establishment of School Management Teams, Primary School Management Advisors and teacher involvement in management issues.

School-based workshops are central to the sustenance of the programme as they are a forum for continuing professional development for all stakeholders in schools. For instance, 90% of the teachers agreed that school-based workshops address their professional needs. Research on school-based workshops (Irvin and Tombale 1996; Monyatsi 1977, 2006a) has revealed that they offer several advantages such as being contextual as they are based on the needs from the schools identified by the teachers themselves; cost effective as there are no accommodation and travel expenses; and managed by teachers in the schools thus ownership and commitment enhancement.

The existence of PSMAAs in the regions also served purposes of decentralization of officers to be close to the schools. Furthermore, they organized schools into clusters which helped more interaction and thus participation at a closer level. As noted by Wily (2002), decentralisation improves transparency, efficiency, accountability and responsiveness to service provision and therefore sustenance of programmes.

The introduction of portfolios by this cadre of officers, the PSMAAs, is also a good intervention as the old models of verbal evaluations proved not very effective. The portfolios are permanent evidence of what transpired and are able to give an idea of the level of programme impact. Continued school based workshops and management monitoring by the PSMAAs who are a clearly recognised part of the MoE structure have given the programme a distinct approach

from the past experiences. The clustering of schools also plays a very critical role in inculcating the spirit of collaboration, unity and collegiality in a system that has been characterized by isolationism and competition. The spirit of collaboration, transparency and collegiality are indeed a manifestation of the very human and national principles that are reflected in the Botswana National Vision, Vision 2016 (Republic of Botswana 1997b) as well as the Botswana National Principles which emphasise among others, democracy, transparency, humane, unity and development (Republic of Botswana 1977). These are also an important component of the world wide human rights.

Although the PSMDP effectiveness is viewed as being sustained, it can be argued that there is room for further improvement still. From the research findings, there are still some “pockets of resistance” as some respondents were not satisfied with the programme. For instance, there were reports of cases where some school heads still practised favouritism over expertise, where some schools heads encouraged factionalism rather than team work and where there were indications of laxity in securing teaching and learning materials. It has to be noted, however, that in any programme, no matter how good it could be there will always be problematic individuals who would continuously need to be helped.

Therefore, an evaluation of any project should be part and parcel of the continuing implementation processes. Specifically, any social process should never be treated as an end in itself because human beings are thinking beings with their own interpretive minds, varied views of the world and therefore conflict ridden. In fact, where individuals still resist change, it has to be acknowledged that such people would not have been convinced by the resource persons. Therefore, rather than castigate such people as counter productive, they need to be helped either through changing approaches of in servicing them to suit their calibre. Varied views are indeed inevitable in any social organisation and have to be treated as a plus because it is only through them that change can be brought about and indeed change for the better.

CONCLUSIONS

The implications of the findings of the evaluation of the sustenance of the PSMDP five years after the donor agency left are therefore that

In any social programme like the PSMDP, conflict is inevitable and it has to be treated as a catalyst for awakening critical thinking and therefore an agent for change. As contexts change, which is also inevitable, there is need to respond accordingly and this can happen if there is critical analysis leading to constructive conflict and therefore sustenance of any programme. Differences must therefore be accepted as processes of change.

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