

## Teachers at Crossroads: Teacher Professional Development through the Performance Appraisal System at Primary School Level in the Bulawayo Metropolitan Province: An Assessment

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**ABSTRACT** Worldwide education systems have adopted performance appraisal systems as a crucial mechanism to induce desirable behaviors among teachers and as initiatives for accountability, quality assurance and professional development. A mixed methods design, located in the post-positivist paradigm was utilized to solicit information from a sample of 60 teachers, 18 school heads, three education officers and six Public Service Inspectorate Officers. The collection of data was completed through, interviews, questionnaires and focus group discussions. Data was analyzed by means of tables and themes, and these revealed that teachers were resistant to performance appraisal, as they viewed it as an imported system, which lacks universally set standards of assessment. The study found no evidence to support the existence of professional growth that was envisaged by the implementation of performance appraisal. The study therefore recommends teacher evaluation practices, that are rooted in professional development frameworks, be used to enhance quality education in primary schools.

### INTRODUCTION

The objective of the paper was to unveil how performance appraisal was used to enhance professional growth in teachers. It assesses the extent to which performance appraisal has been instrumental in developing primary school teachers professionally in Zimbabwe. The desire to position the research in primary schools is based on the fact that primary education forms the foundation and predicts the future success of any education system. Also, the success of any organization lies in the capabilities and productivity of its manpower. Although performance appraisals emanated from the industry, they are being used as accountability initiatives to assure quality education in schools and this is the case in Zimbabwe. This is because quality education has been linked to quality teaching. The

massive campaign by Zimbabwe to educate all children was achieved through the “education for all” policy. However, after achieving quantity, focus turned to quality, and hence the government of Zimbabwe adopted the appraisal system to measure quality. In view of the information above, the objective of this paper is to respond to the question: How has the performance appraisal system enhanced the quality of the teachers’ professional development in primary schools?

The importance of teacher appraisal cannot be overstressed (Monyatsi 2009), as it is pivotal in enhancing teacher professionalism (OECD 2013b). Teachers are considered key to quality education because quality education is viewed as a means to economic development. Assessment of teacher performance has, however, evolved over time in a bid to get the most suitable and effective way of measuring teacher performance and improvement of instruction (Day 2013). Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007) assert that formal teacher appraisal has long been considered important by the public, although most schools evaluated teachers in only the most superficial manner, by means of the principal’s annual brief observation of the teacher’s class-

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room performance. Literature on appraisal also reveals that teacher appraisal is considered as essential by governments worldwide, compelling them to critically evaluate the provision of education to ascertain that they are both appropriate and suitable for the nation's requirements (Steyn 2009). According to MacBeath (2012), the increasing popularity of performance appraisals has taken precedence to the studies on the effectiveness of schools by acknowledging the difference that teachers make, and the research attention has curved towards effectiveness of teachers. Performance measures, evaluation and appraisal, therefore are terms that have gained prominence in modern society and governments worldwide have embraced them. Generally, these terms are used interchangeably.

During the course of their careers, teachers are progressively tangled in activities of professional development that target assorted teaching areas taken in different forms. In recent times, emphasis has been on encouraging development and support for teachers to grow professionally (Figazzolo 2013). The need for the quality of teaching to be adopted as influential means of improving student achievement puts emphasis on comprehensive performance and professional development frameworks (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 2012). Thus, Daley (2005) identifies three key purposes of performance appraisal as knowledge development and agency control, goal alignment, and behavioral change. As an organizational tool, assessment informs about staff performance and enables the evaluator to offer proper feedback (Kellough 2012; Kim 2011; Horsoo 2010). In essence, the crucial factor in teacher appraisal system is its connection to professional development and improvement that correlates with issues of teacher quality, learning and accomplishment (Darling-Hammond 2010). Darling-Hammond further associates teacher quality with a bundle of personal traits, skills, and understanding of one's capabilities.

There is considerable written work about employee performance appraisal (PA), suggesting that it a politically driven process is and yet one of its major purposes is to develop individual employees (Nurse 2005; OECD 2010). Evans (2011) acknowledges that when systematically conducted, performance management is an operative technique of making teachers accountable for the excellence of their teaching. Within

a broader process of education provision, systems of accountability have been adopted as part of a drive to assure quality education. Most of these initiatives were introduced in Zimbabwe and elsewhere, and de Waal (2007) observes that these initiatives were delimited to the performance-oriented staff appraisals. In Zimbabwe, the quality concerns coincided with market-based developments, which compelled the country to adopt change reforms such as the teacher performance appraisal, one of which focused on quality teaching strategies that would enhance the learners' academic achievement.

Several factors have been instrumental in the push towards quality education. Teacher quality is reflected in their performance in the classroom, that is, teaching quality and beyond the classroom (Maruli 2014). Over the past era, research in the USA endorses that the greatest determining factor of the quality of education is quality of the teacher (Rivkin et al. 2005; Rockoff 2004). While the concept of quality teaching remains elusive (Blanton et al. 2006; Ingvarson 2010; Kennedy 2010), teachers and their behavior in the classroom are still considered instrumental to pupil achievement and at times considered as a convenient proxy indicator of not just school quality but also education quality (OECD 2005; Darling-Hammond 2010). Since this paper focuses on performance appraisal as a determinant of professional development, the following section explains what performance appraisal is.

### **Performance Appraisal**

Appraisal is understood to be a process whereby scrutiny of a person's inclusive capabilities and potential are provided, so that well-versed decisions can be taken for a specific purpose (Bratton and Gold 2007: 284). Similarly, Armstrong (2006) asserts that performance appraisal is a way of attaining better results from individuals, teams and organizations, by knowing how to manage concerted efforts within an approved framework of intended goals, set standards and attributes or required competence. Furthermore, PA can be viewed as an analytic evaluation of the individual regarding his performance on the job in order to envisage his career path in terms of promotion (Gebrekidan 2011; Goddard and Emerson 1997; Halse et al. 2011). In simpler words, PA is judgment of an

employee's work, based on set criteria, to detect his/her strong points and weaknesses, in order to enhance his strengths and minimize his weaknesses. These set criteria are meant to develop the teachers professionally by bridging gaps in their knowledge so that they can perform well in their line of work. From these definitions, it seems PA is about elevating the skills of employees so that they produce quality work in line with the vision of the organization. As a result, Figazzolo (2013) contends that appraisal is a way by which people are made aware of the requirements and expectations from them, evaluating how they are performing, regularly reviewing the progress and assenting with them on what they should do next.

In educational terms, the concept is used to imply a process that enriches teachers professionally so that their performance enhances learner achievement. Appraisal may be perceived as the finale of successions of changes intended to enhance the professional development of a teacher and to precisely identify needs for their in-service training (Bollington et al. 1990; Magolis 2010). Similarly, Monyatsi claims that teacher appraisal is a process that is designed systematically to improve skills, knowledge and attitudes of teachers through collegial interaction to enhance both processes of teaching and learning (Monyatsi 2006). It is about improving the teachers' skills, knowledge and attitudes in order for the process of teaching and learning to enhance academic achievements in schools. Academic definitions acknowledge "intellectual capital" as their most valued asserts hence the performance management systems endeavor to preserve and improve the worth of their human asset base. The keystone of an appraisal system is the conviction that teachers desire to improve their own performance so as to enrich their students' achievements. When one's strengths and weaknesses are identified, the individual's performance is likely to improve, and this is the key purpose of appraisal.

From the above definitions, it seems the concept of employee performance appraisal (PA) is based on employee accountability and development, which are two well-researched precursors (Collins 2004; Rafferty et al. 2005). Additionally, the purpose of PA can be summed up as mainly to monitor and evaluate influence of every employee in the organization and give feedback on those elements that indicate strengths

and those where improvement is needed (Whitman et al. 2010; Kampkötter 2015). Although the purpose of PA is to develop teachers or employees positively, generally the system is viewed with suspicion because of the way it has been used and abused in the workplace. A number of scholars (Ovando and Ramirez 2007; Kyriakides and Demetriou 2007; Flores 2010b) among others, who have researched on performance appraisal reveal that the widespread hostile perceptions of appraising staff and assessment schemes emanate from the strain between the summative evaluation, which is culpability, and the constructive evaluation, which is the progressive purposes of appraisal and evaluation. This is because accountability in appraisal has often been used to identify incompetent teachers, to identify weaknesses in the performance of a teacher, to assess teacher performance for determinations of salary and elevation, and to provide indications for the need of any disciplinary procedures (Frederiksen et al. 2012). The contradictory approaches towards performance appraisal point to the need to assess whether PA is contributing to the growth of teachers in primary schools as envisaged by the Educational Department and the government of Zimbabwe or it is wielded as a tool to punish and root out underperforming teachers.

### **Factors Associated with Effective Performance Appraisal Systems**

Bach and Kessler (2008), Hammer (1996) and Osabiya (2014) state that an effective appraisal provides detailed assessment of an employee's productivity and quality of work and can influence the employee to perform at a higher level. This implies that a person is assessed based on how well they have carried out their duties as stipulated by their job description, and their strengths and weaknesses, with the aim of identifying ways of improving on the weaknesses so that the appraisee does not exhibit the same weaknesses in the next appraisal cycle. The identified shortcomings can be corrected through in-service training (INSET) programs. Sachs (2005) explains that a teacher has to continually self-develop throughout their career, with the objective of deepening their knowledge base and skills so as to stay abreast of developmental issues. This can be referred to as increased

professionalism, which allocates the teachers' work under a wider spectrum of educational context and systematically evaluates their work with the focus on development. PA therefore can assist the teacher and encourage him/her to be a good facilitator of learning who reflects on his/her teaching, discusses it with peers, and tries to understand it in a broader context.

While the process of the appraisal of teachers in schools is as old as education itself, the nature of the process and criteria used has changed over time (Gane and Morgan 1992; Bennell and Akyeampong 2007). Today, the trend is more inclined towards recognition of the value of individual teachers within the schools and their autonomy and self-actualizing potential. Individuals have an increased desire for career progression (Poster and Poster 1997) and are willing to advance themselves professionally in order to avoid redundancy when faced with the ever-advancing technologies in education. In line with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2005), teachers who are provided with knowledgeable feedback and occasions to effectively communicate about their work are more likely to improve their performance than base their performance on a standard checklist.

PA in education provides a strategic link by auditing individual competences, identifying strengths and challenges, so as to facilitate the professional development of an educator. It is important that schools know if their human resources are able to satisfy the needs of the organization's present and future educational strategies (Stone 2008). As stated before, establishment of strengths and weaknesses leads to the identification of training needs, which is one of the crucial elements of the appraisal process, which has the potential to be a powerful aid for professional development (Whitaker 1998). In the professional conception, the appraisal process treats teachers differently according to their teaching assignments, stages of development and classroom goals. Professional evaluation then becomes clinical and practice-oriented so that appropriate strategies and decisions about staff development and training are made.

Whole school approaches of effectiveness have progressed to enable the teachers' professional extension to become self-critical, self-developing, and optimistic for change. One can argue that teachers desire to improve their per-

formance when they are critical of themselves and have desire to develop so that they have a positive attitude towards classroom practice. Grounded on the professional concern for the improvement for the school, some schools and Local Education Authorities in Britain developed appraisal schemes that suited their situation. Teachers whose performance was not of acceptable standard were to be dismissed (Bartlett 2000; Osabiya 2007). This strategy was meant to ensure teachers who wanted to survive in the profession had to improve their performance. Hence, it was critical for Zimbabwe to design an appraisal system that was appropriate to the local environment. Iwanicki (2000) suggests that because teaching and learning has progressed and changed into more multifaceted exercises, new systems of evaluating teacher demand that teachers play a more participatory role. The new methods of teacher evaluation also encourages teachers to partake in self-directed professional development, engage in staff development courses directed at specific skill sharpening by participating in action research and involving themselves in combined events or inquiry-based approaches that directly impact the achievement of students.

### **Professional Development**

One of the assumptions of performance appraisal systems is that they lead to teacher professional development. Professional development (PD) incorporates all types of supported learning opportunities, which include credentials such as academic degrees, formal coursework, conferences and informal learning opportunities placed in practice. PD can be described as an evaluative stage that is ideally intensive, collaborative and integrative (Speck and Knipe 2005). PD is progressively perceived as an organized process that takes into account the development of all individuals involved with student achievement from the administrator to the teaching assistants. It can also be well defined as a course of action bent on refining staff skills and competencies needed to yield outstanding educational achievements for students (Hassel 1999; Steyn 2009).

Designing PD initiatives should be based on documented research practices that empower educators to develop the skills that are necessary to implement what has been taught (Joyce

and Showers 2002; Marzano et al. 2001). Guskey (2000:4) asserts that persistent findings in literature indicate that without professional development, which is crucial to meeting today's educational demands, prominent improvements in education almost never take that place. Through research and experience the researchers are able to recognize that excellent quality continuing PD that expands the teachers' pedagogical skills, content knowledge and affords opportunities for practice, research, and reflection. Furthermore, concerted efforts that are job entrenched, sustained, and collaborative will help in the aim to keep on up-to-date (Sparks 2002). However, it becomes essential that a needs assessment be carried out so that specific job related skills are developed.

The role teachers play in the process of teaching and learning to increase student outcomes remains important even though there are many factors that may contribute to their success (Rivkin et al 2000; Boyd et al. 2008). The professional development of the teacher remains an essential effort to improve the schools. The objective of measuring teacher effectiveness should focus on improving the teachers' capacities and their opportunities to augment the effectiveness of the educational organizations (Darling-Hammond 2010). Measurement of quality teaching is important to ascertain the needs for the recruitment of teachers, identifying strengths and weaknesses of teachers, recognizing the effectiveness of teachers, determine appropriate professional development and support needed, certification, identify expert teachers who can be mentors, coaches, and leaders, and allocation of quality teachers in every school (Darling-Hammond 2010; Haskins and Loeb 2007; Kennedy 2008).

A list of features related to effective professional development are identified by Richardson (2003:404) who states that such programs should ideally be: "*long-term with follow-up, encourage collegiality among teachers, encourage agreement among participants on goals and visions, have an administration that is supportive; be able to access to adequate funds for materials, acknowledging that participants have existing beliefs and practices, and engage the services of an outside facilitator/staff developer.*" Kedzior and Fifield (2004) also affirm that an effective PD is one that has a protracted facade of instruction in the classroom

that is logically integrated, continuous, combining experiences, which are constant with the teachers' objectives, aligned with standards, evaluations, and other improvement initiatives. At the same time, PD is described by Elmore (2002) as a focus that is sustained over a period of time that is consistent with best practice.

Examining PD programs for teachers is particularly challenging and technically demanding (Joyce and Calhoun 2010). Even as general conclusions can be drawn from research about what essentials support teacher change due to PD programs, one can still come up with reliable and valid conclusions from such a varied literature backing about what works is a more multifaceted task. Firstly, according to Guskey (2000), there are different types of PD models that have varied aims and purposes aiming at different facets of teaching and intended for teachers operating in different contexts. These programs are put in place at different periods of time in diverse political circumstances. In the case of such diversity, comparing models, determining their outcomes and making overviews is challenging. Secondly, these models exist in multifaceted systems, which comprise of individual schools, communities, districts, government departments and union structures. The research findings inform that teachers operate within a broader contextual framework described as a nested system (Saunders 2014). Emergent powerful professional development programs should be grounded on research theory and practice (Guyton 2000). It therefore becomes crucial to consider the environment and organization of these contexts and to scrutinize any model of PD that is closely related to the systems that influence it.

## METHODOLOGY

The post-positivist paradigm underpinned this paper, as it is a foundation of education and psychology evaluation (Mertens 2010), which has the potential of yielding important new knowledge about the implementation of performance appraisal so as to ensure the teachers' professional development. Post-positivism replicates a deterministic belief in which causes probably define special effects or endings (Cresswell 2015). Evaluation in education began in the post-positivist paradigm and is usually allied with the need for information for decision-making about situations (Mertens 2010). Nieu-

wenhuis (2007:65) theorizes, “Researchers that work within a post-positivist paradigm trail critical realist ontology. The core of critical realism is that all knowledge is imperfect, but not equally fallacious”. In other words, these researchers assume that there is knowledge though it certainly cannot be perfectly understood.

The mixed method, which is viewed as a type of research, which combines qualitative and quantitative research methods, techniques, conceptions or language in one study was adopted (Creswell 2015). Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) define mixed methods as a procedure that involves philosophical assumptions that entail gathering and analyzing data and the combination of qualitative and quantitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its major assumption is that in combination, quantitative and qualitative approaches provide a better understanding of research problems. In the mixed methods study, both qualitative and quantitative data that are collected concurrently or sequentially are integrated thereby making analysis and inferences at one stage or multiple stages in the process of the research (Creswell 2015; Johnson et al. 2007). Its goals and benefits may appear rather simple, as they combine the best of qualitative and quantitative methods (Bergman 2008). The triangulation strategy, which is a process of using more than one source to confirm information, was also utilized as an effort to get a true picture of the situation (Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Silverman 2010). In addition, the combination of quantitative and qualitative research designs enabled the researchers to carry out surveys among the subjects of a large sample, to establish the trends and patterns and small groups for in-depth understanding of the phenomena under study (Henning et al. 2004). Different forms of data that were collected through a variety of methods aided in the comprehensive understanding of the research question (Gorard and Taylor 2004:7).

### **The Population**

The target population in this setting comprised primary schools, teachers, school heads, education officers and public service inspectors in the Bulawayo Metropolitan Province in Zimbabwe. The population was chosen because it included program participants who could provide information that may not be available from

other sources. From this population, the researchers were able to decide who the most knowledgeable participants were (also known as informants) that could provide accurate information about the phenomenon under investigation.

### **Sample and Sampling**

The quantitative phase employed the probability sampling techniques, which involved “choosing a moderately large number of elements from a population randomly so that every member of the population may probably be included” (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003a:713; Teddlie and Yu 2007). Random selection guarantees that whatever the discovery is about the sample, it can be generalized to the population (Bernard and Ryan 2010). The researchers purposively selected 12 schools in the Reigate District in the Bulawayo Metropolitan Province because it is the only district with a mixture of categorized schools. The probability sampling technique was used to sample 12 heads and 36 teachers who responded to the distributed questionnaire.

In the qualitative phase, purposive sampling was utilized where the researchers handpicked participants based on her judgment of the caliber of respondents (Cohen et al. 2006). The purposive sampling procedure involves picking up some units or cases depending on a precise purpose instead of randomly doing so (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003a:713). Bernard and Ryan (2010:365) proclaim that “purposive sampling is an allocation sampling without a grid” where one decides on the purpose the participants will serve, and then takes what they get. Three education officers and three public service inspectors, who represent the three categories of schools, were interviewed. The researchers conducted interviews with three focus groups comprising seven teachers in each group from each category of the schools. An interview was also conducted with one school head per category of schools. Two schools were purposely sampled, as case studies where the head and one teacher identified by the head as a hard worker were respondents in each school.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

Survey questionnaires with open-ended as well as closed questions provided a general im-

pression of views and experiences held by teachers, heads, education officers and Public Service Inspectors on professionalism achieved through the performance appraisal system. The researchers collected qualitative data through semi-structured interviews that included a few structured questions and some open-ended questions, which allowed the researchers to gather rich descriptive data from the informative participants. The semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to express themselves at some length as they had room for probing and verification of issues. Through the focus groups dialogue, the researchers were able to understand the views, the feelings, perceptions and opinions of participants about the program under study. The interview schedule permitted the researchers to capture real experiences, capture verbatim people's views while observing the behavior of participants in their natural location of their daily life in which the study was bordered (Maree 2007; Neuman 2000).

### Data Analysis

Data analysis facilitated the researchers to logically search, organize, synthesize, present and convert data from questionnaires, interviews into manageable elements and helped the researchers understand the phenomena under investigation (Mouton 2002; McMillan and Schumacher 2006). Through data analysis the researchers were able to structure, bring to order, and interpret the massive data collected, which resulted in the generation of categorized patterns and emerging themes, constructs and inferences connected to the research question. The quantitative data gathered through survey questionnaires was manipulated numerically to

expose emerging patterns, trends and relationships between performance appraisal and professional development of teachers (Neuman 2000). Summarization of data was done through a frequency distribution, table and percentages that were subsequently displayed in the form of graphs. Triangulation was utilized to interpret qualitative and quantitative data once all the information had been collected, captured, and processed to produce a condensed result report.

## RESULTS

### Performance Appraisal and Teacher Professional Growth

This paper assessed whether PA has been effective in improving teacher competencies at the selected primary schools. Table 1 shows the collective aspects that the researchers sampled for competencies in which the end users of the PAS should have improved through its implementation. For the sake of anonymity and confidentiality, participants were coded as follows. Public Service Inspectors were P1, P2, P3, Education Officers as E1, E2, E3, Heads of schools as H1, H2, H3, Focus groups as FGA, FGB, FGC and schools that were used as case studies are CSA and CSB where the head is 1 and the teacher is 2.

### Identification of Educators' Strengths and Weaknesses

Information was sought to determine if through the appraisal system, strengths and weaknesses of heads and teachers were identified. Table 1 shows that the majority (66.7%) of

**Table 1: Competencies enhanced through PAS implementation**

<i>Issues of competence, skills and professionalism</i>	<i>Teachers</i>		<i>Heads</i>	
	<i>A%</i>	<i>D%</i>	<i>A%</i>	<i>D%</i>
1. Performance appraisal helps to identify strengths and weaknesses of staff/ employees	66.7	33.3	75	25
2. Performance appraisal improves my teaching skills/supervisory skills	30.6	69.4	58.3	41.7
3. Performance improves my administrative skills	N/A	N/A	58.3	41.7
4. Performance appraisal helps improve co-operation and teamwork/	41.7	58.3	50	50
5. Performance appraisal feedback improves communication and working relations	27.2	72.8	78.3	21.7
6. Performance appraisal improves work motivation	11.1	88.9	16.7	83.3
7. Performance appraisal improves pupils' academic achievement.	13.9	86.1	8.3	91.7

teacher respondents and seventy-five percent head respondents felt that performance appraisals help identify the strengths and weaknesses of staff/employees, while 33.3 percent of teacher respondents and twenty-five percent of head respondents felt that the system had not assisted in identifying their strengths and weaknesses.

Interviews with focus groups, heads, education officers and Public Service Inspectors confirmed that strengths and weaknesses can be identified through a well implemented appraisal system as P3 remarked, *“If fully and properly implemented, the system would help determine the level of the abilities of the workforce so that corrective measures can be taken to address the identified inadequacies.”* Asked the same question, P3 reiterated, *“I want to think that a well-trained and competent supervisor is able to identify the strengths and weaknesses as they relate on a day to day basis with the individuals and know each one of their strengths and weaknesses and would capture them without any hustle but that requires confidence on the part of the appraiser”.* The above statements reveal that the system has to be well implemented and supervisors should be well-trained and competent in order for them to identify the strengths and challenges of staff/employees. On the other hand, Table 1 reveals that 33.3 percent of teacher respondents and twenty-five percent of head respondents felt that the system had not assisted them in identifying their own strengths and weaknesses. As indicated earlier, when people are trained and the system is correctly implemented, strengths and weaknesses can be identified. Due to inadequate training and improper implementation of the system, it did not achieve its intended objectives.

All interviewed respondents lamented that although the system was meant to identify the gaps so that the employer may reduce them through in-service training or refresher courses, the corrective measures were never implemented. This was confirmed by interviewee H2 who pointed out, *“Since they are not carried out in the manner that is recommended by the books as you read widely about performance appraisal, they fall short in so many ways in trying to upgrade the standards of the supervisees or supervisors.”* H3 reiterated, *“As I have indicated, this system is more of paperwork than practicality, so none of the skills have been developed...”* P1 recapped, *“While the system had*

*provision for improving their skills, implementation of training was never done. So as a result where the skills gaps were identified they have remained on paper without any corrective action taken.”*

What emerges from the data presented above is that if the performance appraisal system is well executed, and the appraisers are well trained and competent, they can identify and accurately capture the strengths and weaknesses of teachers. While this was the original plan, teachers in the Zimbabwean primary schools were not afforded any form of training to address weaknesses that may have been identified. The paper further explores if PAS improved teaching and supervisory skills of educators.

### **Improvement of Teaching and Supervisory Skills**

Improving the skills of teachers was one of the Zimbabwean government's aspirations when it introduced the PAS in education. This paper sought to find out if PAS have been instrumental in improving the teachers' teaching and supervisory skills. It appeared in Table 1 that 69.4 percent of teacher respondents felt that performance appraisals had not improved their teaching skills. Similar sentiments were expressed in focus groups as FGA1 stated, *“I don't think this appraisal has had any positive effect on my teaching”*, while the rest of the group nodded their heads in support of their colleague. The interviewed respondents expressed similar sentiments with comments such as, *“I will not say performance appraisal is able to make a person very competent per se but a person is competent because he or she has the desire to work”* (H1). *“Instead of competency and what: what, I have always thought it has brought a lot of conflict, it is expensive, and we don't understand it and it has actually demotivated teachers...”* (E2). *“In my view, I don't think so. Instead the appraisal system has caused an injury on the achievement of set targets because it wasted a lot of teacher's time and it is not really being done frankly”* (E3). These comments seem to suggest that performance appraisal has not rendered much positive improvement in terms of skills development. They also confirm the opinions of the teachers who were of the belief that performance appraisal was an expensive and



time consuming exercise that brought more conflict that improve teacher competence.

In contrast, Table 1 reveals that 30.6 percent of teachers attested that their skills in teaching had improved through the implementation of the PAS. The number of teachers who assumed they had improved their skills through PA seems to correspond with the number of teacher respondents (30.6% in Table 1) who had 11 to 20 years of experience in the service. These teachers are probably in the age range of 30-49 years. With or without the appraisal system they probably would have improved their skills through the years of practice in the service.

While the majority (69.4%) of teachers in Table 1 disputed the fact that the appraisal system had improved their teaching skills, 58.3 percent of head respondents in the survey indicated that the PAs had improved the teachers' teaching skills. There is a variance of opinions between teachers and heads and this could be that the heads see the improvement in some teachers that individuals are not able to see in themselves. But still, the same table shows that 41.7 percent of the heads believed that the PAs had not improved the teachers' teaching skills.

This study found that there was a split-in-half response from the heads that expressed different views from the teachers. These conflicting views could be that the heads want to defend the system or because of the closed nature of the question they opted for a safer option that was defending the system. Collected data nonetheless gives conclusive evidence that teachers do not believe their teaching skills improved through the implementation of the appraisal system but through experience gained over years, which has actually improved their teaching skills.

#### **Improvement of Head's Administrative Skills**

The study further sought to find out if through the PAS heads had improved their administrative skills. The majority of the surveyed heads (58.3%) indicated that they had improved their supervisory and administrative skills while 41.7 percent indicated otherwise. However, a closer look at their professional qualifications, indicated that 66.8 percent of the head respondents from the survey and all interviewed head respondents had a Bachelors or Master's degree in Educational Administration, meaning that the

supervisory and administrative skills could have been as a result of their advanced learning.

As a follow-up on the skills improvement, the study pursued the issue of whether the training needs of the appraisees had been identified. From the open-ended questions in the survey, all respondents confirmed that their training needs had been identified during the appraisal process. All respondents expressed the same sentiments that although their training needs had been identified, the employer to address these skills deficiencies provided no training. H1 commented,

*"The government has not offered any training on these identified needs. I suppose this is due to lack of finance or lack of skilled manpower to give necessary training that would suit the identified needs of the appraiser or appraisee. This is my assumption and observation."*

Elaborating on this point P1 said, "...it was lack of funds and proper organization to actually assess the training needs and actually carry out the courses." It emerged that 95.7 percent respondents felt that PAS had been a fruitless exercise that was time consuming and frustrating. This study unearthed that while training needs had been identified yearly, that information had remained in paper records with no corrective measures taken, suggesting that skills deficiencies had not been addressed. These findings support what most teachers said.

#### **Improvement of Cooperation and Teamwork**

The study sought to find if the appraisal system had improved cooperation and teamwork among teachers and heads. Table 1 showed that 41.7 percent of teacher respondents and fifty percent head respondents indicated that cooperation and teamwork had improved while 58.3 percent of teacher respondents and fifty percent of head respondents disputed that cooperation and teamwork had improved. This study found out that there was a near tie in the teachers' responses and a neck to neck response from heads concerning the improvement of cooperation and teamwork, suggesting that, it all depends on the school's culture and tone. Schools that had good teamwork spirit before the introduction of the PAs could have maintained the status quo of working in teams or the nature of closed questions could not give them chance to explore and know exactly what the question demanded.

The interviewed heads suggested that teamwork had not improved as alleged by H1, *“In terms of teamwork, performance appraisal breaks the teamwork spirit as it tends to concentrate on ‘one man for himself and God for us all’ it makes people compete for the final rating hence there is more competition than collaborating.”* From the information above, it seems that teamwork has not improved probably due to the fact that at the end of the appraisal process there is individual rating.

Focus groups discussions also revealed that teaching is about teamwork. Where there are more classes per grade, teachers need to coordinate in content coverage so that when tests are given to the children, no class is disadvantaged because certain concepts have not been covered. Evidence from this study revealed a mixed response to cooperation and teamwork. A further inquiry into cooperation and teamwork was revealed through case studies. CSA1 was of the opinion that, *“...The whole thing has to hinge on convincing that the teacher has to look at the welfare of the child not the paper. We have amicably agreed to disregard the PAS and concentrate on the child not the paper.”* This kind of working relationship was confirmed by the Grade Seven results in this particular school that maintained a pass rate ranging between 91.3 percent and 99.3 percent from year 2000 to year 2009.

The response above shows that the school does not attribute its good performance to the appraisal system but more to their cooperation and commitment to teaching. CSB1 remarked similarly to CSA1 when she stated, *“Here we work in teams and more so we have to cooperate in sharing meager resources. We only go back to the appraisal forms to meet the deadlines for submission to make them valid.”* A further look into their track record in terms of results revealed that although not as impressive as case study A, case study B maintained a good pass rate with a drop in the years 2006, 2008 and 2009. The heads reported that the poor results were a result of the severe economic meltdown, shortage of instructional materials and industrial action by civil servants. The researchers were left without any evidence that PAS improved cooperation and teamwork.

### **PAS and Improved Communication**

Public servants were alleged to be arrogant, insensitive, were poor communicators and were

prone to favoritism by the PSRC (1989). The study sought to find out if PAS helped improve communication between teachers, heads, colleagues and the public. It turned out that 37.2 percent of teacher respondents indicated that PAS improved their communication skills and working relations while the majority (68.8%) of them refuted this assumption. The majority (68.3%) of head respondents also indicated that PAS helped improve communication and working relations while 31.7 percent of head respondents indicated otherwise.

A difference of opinions in the view of improved communication and working relations emerged during research, with the majority (78.3%) of heads believing that PAS improved their communication and working relations, while the majority of teacher respondents disagreed. This could be caused by the nature of the heads' duties, which demands that they communicate with a wider community more than the teachers do. The other contributing factor could be that one of the prerequisite skills for one to be a leader is to have good communication skills.

The general consensus from focus groups A and C was that communication had not improved, because appraisers often imposed their opinions on appraisees in terms of the Key Result Areas and final ratings. However, focus group B could not dispute or agree that communication had improved because they specified that they have always maintained good working relations with their head with or without appraisals. This was a group made up of teachers from P1.4 and CSA, where the academic performance at Grade Seven has been maintained.

### **The Development of Targeted Skills**

In the endeavor to address the above research objectives, the researchers listed some goals of the PAs and respondents chose their response from not achieved, partly achieved and fully achieved. Table 2 presents these responses.

### **Extent of Goal Achievement**

When teachers join the service, they have theoretical experience that needs to be matched with practical job execution. The appraisal system is designed to improve their teaching skills so that learners gain maximally in terms of academic improvement. As a follow-up on the issue

of professional development, the study sought to find out if the teachers' targeted skills had been developed through the implementation of the PAs.

It emerged from Table 2 that the majority (83.4%) of teacher respondents and 66.6 percent of head respondents were of the view that the goal of improving the teachers' skills had not been achieved, while 13.9 percent and 33.4 percent of these surveyed teachers and heads respectively assumed that the goal had been partly achieved. A similar trend also came from Table 1 where 69.4 percent teacher respondents specified that their teaching skills had not improved due to the implementation of PAS. The responses given by the heads are in accordance with the teachers in that the goal of developing the teachers' skills had not been achieved.

All focus group participants indicated that the PAs had not helped them improve their teaching or added any skills relevant to their work. Substantiating this view is FGA6 who remarked, "I may have improved to some extent through experience but not due to the appraisal system." FGB4 added, "The system is very judgmental so much that we don't think of any improvement in our skills but aim to score marks so that we are rewarded." FGC respondents also pointed out that the development of teachers' skills had not come about due to PAS or performance related pay (PRP), but through experience and close cooperation between new and experienced teachers. Some of FGC members gave the following comments. "The morale is low, teachers are not giving off their best performance, and so it is difficult to say skills have developed" (1). "Since I joined this school, we have not held any staff development so I still have my deficiencies" (3). "Even though I have

indicated that I wish to be computer literate in my appraisal form, we have not been offered the training. I have also stated that I want to be trained in teaching composition writing but no help has been forthcoming, so I cannot say my skills have developed" (5).

Focus group respondents corroborate with interviewed respondents in that the teachers' targeted skills had not been developed. It emerged that none of the surveyed heads thought this goal of improving skills had been achieved at all. Similarly, all interviewed heads indicated that the goal of skills development for teachers had not been achieved. Confirming this line of thinking was CSA1, who commented, "I am not sure, but I believe that if ever an appraisee is to be an outstanding performer it is not about the appraisal system but personal conviction."

All interviewed respondents, EOs and PSIs also reiterated the same sentiments that while the training needs had been identified, training to correct the identified deficiencies had not been effected, and hence the teachers' skills had remained unimproved. Consequently, Professional Development that focuses on the needs of individual teachers did not materialize in the sampled schools. It may have been the government's aspiration to improve the teachers' skills but due to prevailing economic and political mayhem, the goal could not be achieved. This failure to train people on identified gaps may have rendered the system a futile exercise.

## DISCUSSION

### Professional Growth of Teachers

While professional development of a teacher is a critical component of educational improvement, this study found no evidence to support

**Table 2: Extent of goal achievement**

Goals	1. Not achieved				2. Partly achieved				3. Fully achieved							
	Teachers								Heads							
	1		2		3		1		2		3					
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%				
Enable to improve pupils performance	21	58.4	13	36.1	2	5.5	8	66.6	3	25	1	8.4				
Ensure motivation of teachers	29	80.6	6	16.7	1	2.7	10	83.3	2	16.7	0	0				
Enable to develop teachers' skills	30	83.4	5	13.9	1	2.7	8	66.6	4	33.4	0	0				
Improve the quality of education	24	66.7	10	27.8	2	5.5	9	75	2	16.6	1	8.4				

the existence of in-service or some form of professional growth that was promoted by the implementation of PAS. Although teachers confirmed that strengths and weaknesses can be identified through the PAS and that their training needs to be geared for professional growth had been identified, training or staff development were not initiated to enhance this anticipated growth. It is possible that lack of such training led to teachers finding it difficult to embrace the appraisal system to their advantage. Similar sentiments were expressed by Elmore (2002), who stated that most heads inclusive of their teachers in various schools did not possess the essential knowledge and skills to adequately implement reforms in education. From the above argument, the researchers deem it necessary for both heads and teachers in primary schools in Zimbabwe to undergo continuous in-service training through attending staff development programs in order to enhance their professional effectiveness in schools.

A study conducted by Rasheed et al. (2010) found a convergence of opinions where the chairman of the board contended that counseling and training was extended to teachers as a result of poor performance. An assistant professor vehemently disputed this assertion saying the performance evaluation technique of teachers have not been helpful in developing teachers citing that in his 29 years' experience he never come across teachers who has been provided with training as result of poor performance. The assistant professor's assertion corroborates the findings of the current study where heads and teachers have not received any form of continuous professional development. Although training needs were identified, available opportunities for teachers to enhance their skills through corrective measures in terms of training to reduce the gap were pathetically limited. The findings expose that the requirements of the PAS were not adhered to by not engaging teachers in some kind of professional development, by so doing Zimbabwe reduced its chances of retaining highly skilled and motivated teachers thereby diminishing its quality education vision. The findings in this setting confirm the observation by Kamener (2012) that there was little evidence signifying that the quality of teaching is enhanced through the process of appraisal or that employees develop professionally.

The implementation of the PAS was an endeavor by the government to improve cooperation and teamwork among teachers though this could not materialize due to the nature of the system that seemed to promote competition due to the rewards attached to the system in Zimbabwe. So each teacher made every effort to attain marks more than the fellow teacher. Attaching rewards caused a lot of controversy around the appraisal as a system of evaluating teaching processes (Kennedy 2010), and hence the system has been found to be meaningless and a waste of time (Elliot 2015).

Whilst studies carried out in countries as far as Bangladesh, Guatemala and Pakistan as well as those close such as Botswana and Namibia have shown similar findings that continuing professional development in the early years after initial training and then ongoing throughout their career, significantly contribute to student learning and retention (Kraft et al. 1998), the current study did not establish any professional growth through PA but rather through length of service experience. A study by Dugan (2009) also revealed that the system of appraisal was grossly inadequate to develop teachers professionally. However, the results from the current study collaborate with other researches on these programs that have presented indication of the failure of earlier concepts of educator learning as something that is done to them (Clarke and Hollingsworth 2002; Richardson and Placier 2001). In consequence, researchers emphasize upon continuing and lasting professional learning that is entrenched in the schools as a natural and anticipated component of teachers' professional activities and a vital component of improving the school (Putnam and Borko 2000; Slegers et al. 2005).

## CONCLUSION

Without the provision in-service support for teachers, the Zimbabwean government was as good as disregarding a possibly powerful means of solidification of teaching skills, developing their professional identity, and improving the morale of teacher. Teachers are of the view that in order to afford quality education, they have to be actively involved in initiating their own professional development programs. The above discourse indicates that although the PAs were implemented and professional development

needs were not properly addressed in a beneficial way, there were pockets of good practice where teachers worked hard to exceed their set targets so as to be rewarded.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper focused on how the implemented performance appraisal system contributed to the professional development of teachers. Based on the findings, the paper presents recommendations for deliberation by policy architects, the Ministry of Education and the academics undertaking research in the field of performance appraisal.

- ♦ The study recommends that there be concentrated teacher evaluation practices, embedded with professional development, which will in turn improve teacher retention.
- ♦ Developing teachers in areas such as counseling, teaching special needs and gifted children, would extensively boost the teachers' morale especially when they look forward to the advancements of their career.
- ♦ There is need to offer in-service training that addresses the weaknesses identified during the appraisal process and to keep up to date with the technological changes in the education sector.

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