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An analysis of quality of education and its evaluation: A case of Zimbabwean primary schools

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This study sought to analyse quality of education and its evaluation in Zimbabwean primary schools. A qualitative research methodology was adopted. Thirty-five schools, 73 teachers, 15 school administrators and four Education Officials participated in the study. Data were collected through interviews and questionnaires and analysed through thematic content analysis. Findings indicate that a lot still needs to be done for quality of education to be fully realised. Overall, no meaningful school self-evaluation (SSE) of quality of education is taking place and teachers are not involved in the evaluation of quality of education in schools. Moreover, there is no standard instrument used to evaluate quality of education in schools. The study concluded that schools should engage in SSE and recommends the Ministry of Education to develop an SSE framework to be used in schools. It also recommends that teachers, as the main mediators between policy and practice, ought to be actively involved in SSE of education quality for its realisation and improvement.

Keywords: evaluation; primary schools; quality of education; school self-evaluation; school self-evaluation framework; Zimbabwe

Introduction and Background

Current debates in education are centred on quality of education, defined in this study as fit for purpose, which applies to the entire characteristics of education (inputs, processes and outputs). Education systems the world over, realised the need to widen their views of achieving universal basic education to providing good quality of education after the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) declared that quality of education was generally deteriorating in many countries (UNESCO, 2004). In order to achieve this, education systems need to continuously monitor and evaluate the quality of their educational provision. For this to be possible, there ought to be mechanisms built within each education system to ensure there is good quality of education in schools.

The introduction of school inspection in countries like Scotland, England and many others was partly intended to ascertain how good schools are in their educational provision (Office for Standards in Education [Ofsted], 2012). School inspection is an outside school evaluation process that is mainly concerned about accountability purposes (Earley, 1998). However, to lessen the pressures associated with a once-off school inspection that is normally not done on a regular basis, especially in most developing countries like Zimbabwe where resources are limited, schools ought to undertake self-evaluation of their educational provision. Unlike school inspection, which mainly focuses on school accountability, supervision is a continuous process whereby information about the performance of school staff is gathered to make a judgement about the quality of education being provided mainly for improvement purposes. This may provide them with more current information on the status of their quality of education than school inspection, which, if done irregularly, may provide only static pictures of the quality of education in schools. Therefore, if education quality is to be effectively realised and improved in schools, formative evaluation procedures should be carried out to help schools identify their strengths and weaknesses for improvement purposes.

There are basically six central concepts in school self-evaluation, which are: the *Evaluation Instrument* to be used in the evaluation process (Schildkamp, Visscher & Luyten, 2009); the *Evaluation Team* that is expected to carry out the evaluation process (MacBeath, 2006). *Portfolio of Evidence*, a collection of all work done in schools; an *Evaluation Process*, a description of how evaluation should be carried out, are also some of the central concepts. The other concepts include the *Evaluation Report*, a description of strengths and weaknesses of a school, recommendations for improvement, and a *School Improvement Plan*, a roadmap that ought to spell out changes that a school needs to make in order to improve its quality of education after school self-evaluation (MacBeath, 2006). The arguments developed by using such concepts involve the composition of each of these concepts. Details of these concepts will not be considered here, but will be reported elsewhere, as this is beyond the scope of this study.

Although much research has been done on the quality of education and substantial evidence on the poor quality of education in most Zimbabwean schools has been provided (Jenjekwa, 2013; Mazise, 2011; Riddell &

Nyagura, 1991), there is dearth of research on how to improve quality of education in schools. Extant research and literature are consistent, however, that the evaluation of education quality done by the schools themselves through School Self-Evaluation (SSE), a process whereby school communities find out about their conditions, processes and outputs, is effective for improvement purposes (Carlson, 2009; Department of Education and Skills [DoES], 2012, 2016; Estyn, 2014). Taking this into consideration, the present study aims to analyse the quality of education and its evaluation in Zimbabwean primary schools as a way towards finding effective ways to improve both the evaluation processes and quality of education in schools.

The 48th International Conference on Education held in Geneva in 2008 noted with concern that one of the challenges faced by the Zimbabwean Ministry of Education (MoE) is that of weak supervisory, evaluation and monitoring mechanisms (Ministries of Education, Sport and Culture and Higher and Tertiary Education, 2008). Although this was noted more than a decade ago, the situation may not have improved significantly. In her study on the development of an SSE framework for classroom quality in Zimbabwean primary schools, Garira (2015) found that schools are not supplied with monitoring and evaluation instruments, but school heads are expected to design their own to evaluate quality of education in schools. Considering the complexity of developing educational interventions (Plomp, 2009), not all school heads may be competent enough to develop relevant, consistent, practical and effective instruments, as advocated for by Nieveen (2009).

In a study concerned with how to improve school leadership and evaluation, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development ([OECD]/UNESCO, 2016) highlighted that the challenge in Puebla and Mexico is to develop clear guidelines and practical tools for SSE. In a review of national policies for education, OECD/UNESCO (2016) found that while curriculum content is standardised in Thailand, evaluation of education quality in schools is not. In their article on developing school evaluation methods to improve education quality in China, Peng, Thomas, Yang and Jianzhong (2006) noted the difficulties for Chinese schools to engage in SSE practices, as there are no explicit government guidelines. They specified that lack of contextualised criteria and the appropriate tools are major problems for schools to carry out self-evaluation in China. Although acknowledging the presence of a School Standards and Evaluation Framework for quality evaluation in schools in India, Shaala (2015) notes that, currently, schools do not have a structured mechanism in place to systematically evaluate their performance.

The preceding discussion has highlighted certain challenges in the evaluation of education in schools. These problems may also present themselves in one way or another in other countries not identified in the literature. Therefore, there is a need to analyse quality of education and its evaluation in different education system for it to be fully realised and effectively improved in schools.

Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this study is to analyse quality of education and its evaluation in Zimbabwean primary. The research questions that guided this study were formulated as follows:

- a. What is the current status of quality of education in Zimbabwean primary schools?
- b. How do Zimbabwean primary schools currently evaluate quality of education?

Theoretical Framework

This paper was largely informed by the systems theory, which emanated from science, whose major thrust is that a set of parts of a system interact in order to achieve specified objectives (Meadows, 2008). Equally, when this theory is applied to education, the various levels of the education system (the national, provincial, district, school and the classroom) should work together in order to achieve systemic educational goals. Failure to realise these educational goals in any education system ought not to be blamed on any one of the levels. Instead, a thorough analysis of the whole education system ought to be conducted in order to ascertain exactly where the problem lies. This may help to ensure effective improvement to take place. Meadows (2008) suggests that problems in any system ought to be critically explored with all those who are affected by them if a sustainable solution is to be found. Similarly, in an education system, general solutions to educational problems do not normally work because of the uniqueness of the education systems. Without such a systemic approach to solving educational problems, improvements to education may largely be based on trial and error, which may fail to effectively address the problems.

Methodology

A qualitative interpretive research methodology was adopted in this study. Employing qualitative methods framed within an interpretive paradigm (Creswell, 2007), we were able to study the phenomenon in its natural setting attempting to make sense of it in terms of the meanings ascribed to it. A case study research design was adopted. Data were collected from four MoE officials, 35 primary schools, 89 teachers and 18 school administrators in both urban and rural schools in Masvingo and Harare, in Zimbabwe. Participants were assured of anonymity and voluntary participation during the study. Semi-structured,

researcher-designed interviews and open-ended questionnaires were used as data collection strategies. Instruments dealing with items exploring the current status of quality of education and its evaluation were used to collect data. A pilot study was undertaken in one school that was not part of the study, but which had similar characteristics with those sampled for the study so as to improve the quality of the instruments and to enhance the validity of the study. A variety of data collection methods were adopted to obtain rich data (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont, 2011). For this reason, it was thought that triangulation would produce valid data, since respondents were able to express their views through interviews, and to think through issues in responding to questionnaires. Data analysis began during the data collection period, where emerging themes were identified that formed the basis of further collection. Descriptions and quotes from the interviews and questionnaires were used during data analysis, which was conducted using descriptive analysis and a coding system. Themes and categories were generated from the data to allow a presentation, synthesis and discussion of results.

Results and Discussion of Findings

The findings are presented and discussed in relation to the following aspects: perceptions on the current quality of education in schools; measures to ensure quality of education in schools and classrooms; quality of education and its evaluation in schools and classrooms; and experiences in the evaluation of quality of education in schools.

The study found that quality of education in some schools is not up to the expected standards, mainly due to lack of resources. Teachers revealed that they are not directly involved in schools' evaluation of quality of education. On the other hand, school administrators reported that they are not supplied with instruments to monitor and evaluate quality of education in schools by the Ministry. It was also found that no meaningful SSE takes place in the schools. We will now discuss the salient findings of the study in responding to the research questions:

- a. What is the current status of the quality of education in Zimbabwean primary schools?
- b. How do Zimbabwean primary schools currently evaluate quality of education?

Perceptions on the Current Quality of Education in Schools

Understanding of quality of education

Participants understood the concept of quality of education although this understanding was biased towards student achievement in tests and examinations. This was revealed in both interviews and questionnaires. This confirms Williams' (2001) assertion that quality of education is better understood by many in terms of its output than can

be done in any other aspect. A senior teacher at one school argued that unless good results are produced, no one can claim that quality of education has been realised. The teacher points out that, *"Quality is measured by examination results, if you do not produce good results those at the top will say you were doing nothing."* Although the school head at this school held the same view, he also acknowledged the importance of resources, as he had this to say, *"For quality of education we look at factors like examination results, resources such as textbooks, furniture, play centres for the Early Childhood Development (ECD), stationary, and other equipment for sports."* Although he acknowledged student achievement as an important indicator of quality of education, he demonstrated an understanding that it cannot be determined through academic achievement alone. Such an understanding shows a broader vision on education, for he does not narrowly focus on student academic achievement.

A teacher from another school highlighted student academic achievement as the primary indicator of education quality, irrespective of infrastructural and other resources in schools. She stated that: *"We look at academic achievement, the results. We are not worried about how a school looks like. When we hear that it got 100% pass rate, we are happy."* Similar trends emerged at other schools as indicated below:

"We check on results and analyse tests to determine quality of education" (Deputy School Head).

"The school uses pass rates to evaluate quality of education in classrooms" (Senior Teacher).

"You look at the quality of education being offered that is, the overall percentage of the school especially Grade Seven results" (Teacher-in-Charge [TIC]).

From the preceding discussion, it is evident that participants' general understanding of quality of education in schools is mostly in terms of student achievement in academic subjects. Although participants mentioned other aspects of quality, these were only viewed as necessary to achieve high levels of student academic achievement. While most conditions and processes in schools and classrooms aim at improving student achievement, this achievement should not only be thought of in terms of academic subjects. It should also be viewed in terms of students' cultural heritage, social preparation and personal development (Thijs & Van den Akker, 2009) in order to help total development of students.

Current status of education

Some participants expressed satisfaction with the current quality of education and cited improvements in public examination results as evidence of good quality. One Provincial Education Director (PED) said that, *"The quality of education*

is high. We have seen an upsurge of results for both primary and secondary level in the province.” Similar sentiments were shared by one District Education Officer (DEO) from the same province who responded that: “The quality of education has improved as shown by the results for Grade Seven, Ordinary Level (‘O’ Level) and Advanced Level (‘A’ Level). Our highest school at Grade Seven had 95.83%. The Grade Seven pass rate was 59.48%. At ‘A’ Level our pass rate was 88%, our ‘O’ Level pass rate was 21 percent.” Improvement in quality of education according to the MoE officials was solely associated with results of public examinations. Although there was an improvement in the results from the statistics given, it can be concluded that both the Grade 7 and ‘O’ level pass rates were still too low. Moreover, the ‘A’ level pass rate for the province was not all that significant considering that only those who would have excelled at ‘O’ level would be selected for ‘A’ level. The MoE officials cited several reasons that they said contributed to the improved quality of education in schools. The DEO stated that: “Most teachers who went to South Africa came back and I can say we have enough teachers.” These opinions were also shared by another PED from another province, who indicated that the United States (US) Dollar introduction in the past years had seen the return of most teachers who had previously left the country to take up their posts, which contributed to the improved quality of education. However, the US dollar has since vanished from the formal market, which is now dominated by Bond Notes and coins.

Some school practitioners also cited improvement in examination results as indicated below:

“Quality of education in this school is above average. The Grade Seven pass rate has always been high; we have always been in the top 10 out of over 200 schools in the province” (Deputy School Head).

“The current quality of education is good due to the textbooks donated by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), which help students to achieve better results” (Teacher).

“I will say currently quality of education is good partly due to dedicated hard-working teachers” (School Head).

Asked for reasons for this high quality of education in the schools, the participants indicated that schools have enough staff and enough material resources, which enable teachers to teach effectively. Some studies conducted in Zimbabwe found that enough resources, be they human or material, play a significant role in the realisation of quality of education in schools (Mazise, 2011; Riddell & Nyagura, 1991). However, merely having adequate resources on its own may not be enough for the realisation of quality of education, but also requires dedication on the part of the school staff.

Negative views on the current quality of education mentioned by the participants included the following: “The current quality of education is not convincing. Looking at results a lot still needs to be done” (Senior Teacher). The teacher understands his obligation to deliver quality education to students. However, there appears to be a gap between this requirement and what happens on the ground. Probed for reasons for his dissatisfaction with the current quality of education, he stated that: “Zimbabwe was once affected by what I can call a national education disaster. My current Grade Seven students did not have textbooks at their early stages of learning. Reading as a major skill was not developed. Now to teach them to read at the same time preparing them for examinations, looking at the teacher-pupil ratio of 1:40 in Zimbabwe is a problem.” This observation implies that those students who are unable to read might not perform well in their examinations, which may affect quality of education in the school. This was also observed by Commeyras and Inyenga in their 2007 study on an integrative review of teaching reading in Kenyan primary schools. A school head from the same school concurred with these views, and for him, a lack of resources constituted a major hindrance to achieving good quality of education. He pointed out, “We have not yet achieved high quality of education due to factors like lack of resources in the school such as textbooks.” Although he acknowledged having received textbooks donated by UNICEF, he said that the books were only for the core subjects, that is, Mathematics, English, and ChiShona/IsiNdebele. Parents were expected to buy books for the other subjects, which, he said, most parents in his school could not afford. Since textbooks are one of the most important instructional materials in many schools, particularly in developing countries (Mohammad & Kumari, 2007), their provision in schools is crucial to enhance quality of education. A study conducted in Zimbabwe found student achievement to be higher in schools, with more textbooks and a higher percentage of trained teachers (Riddell & Nyagura, 1991). Consequently, for schools to be effective, they should have adequate teaching and learning resources, which ought to be gainfully utilised by competent teachers for the benefit of all students.

Evaluation of Quality of Education in Schools

Ministry of Education officials indicated that they use supervision to evaluate quality of education in schools. One PED indicated that they go out to see teachers teach with the view to taking corrective measures. The same sentiments were shared by one of the DEOs, who said that: “We have supervisors who go out and observe teachers teach.” Although MoE officials indicated that they do supervision when they go to evaluate quality of education in

schools, they will be doing school inspection, an outside school evaluation process mainly concerned with school accountability (Plowright, 2007). All school administrators indicated that they evaluate quality through supervision of teachers as well as records checking as indicated below:

"We do this through supervision. We observe lessons and make recommendations. We also look at students' work to see whether there is any progress made" (School Head).

"We have supervisions which take place; we also do exercise book and teachers' record books inspection" (TIC).

A deputy school head from another school indicated that they do not have a specific tool to evaluate quality, but they do supervision of teachers and check on their records and students' exercise books. It was indicated that these supervisions are essential, for they aim at identifying teachers' strengths and weaknesses for the purposes of improvement. However, the quality of these supervisions is dependent on school administrators' vision and mission on education which should not only be biased towards academic subjects, but also on other aspects of social and personal development of students (Thijs & Van den Akker, 2009).

Teachers from all the schools cited tests as their main indicator of education quality in their classrooms. A teacher from one school indicated that if there is a high pass rate in these tests, this will be an indication of good quality of education. A teacher from another school specified that, *"I find out about quality in my classroom through tests and daily exercises. If they perform well in these, then I know it will be high."* Another teacher said she gives students daily exercises, weekly and fortnightly tests, homework, as well as morning work to determine quality of education. An analysis of questionnaire data also revealed similar trends.

From the findings, testing is the main method used to evaluate quality of education in schools and classrooms. This is perhaps not surprising, as seen in earlier discussions revealing that examination results are the most commonly used evidence to determine quality of education in schools. Therefore, achievement in tests is the main reason for many who may want to assess the effectiveness of schools. This is also evident in most international studies on quality of education, such as the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). They target student achievement in reading Literacy, Mathematics, and Science, respectively, in order to determine quality of education of different participating countries. Therefore, tests should be of good quality for them to effectively serve the purpose of evaluating education quality in schools.

Policies and practices to ensure quality of education in schools

Asked about the policies and practices in place to ensure quality of education in schools, MoE officials indicated that there is a national policy that stipulates the quantity and quality of work to be given to students. One PED indicated that: *"We have a national policy on the quality and amount of work to be given to both primary and secondary school students as minimum work. School heads are mandated to supervise teachers and to run staff development workshops."* One DEO said that the policy also states that teachers should have staff development workshops where gaps in methods of teaching and learning would be identified for improvement purposes. Therefore, there is a need to constantly check whether these policies are being implemented so as to provide policy makers with feedback on the effectiveness of the policies. It may also allow policy makers to constantly review the policies, which may help to improve quality of education in schools.

In all the schools, it was acknowledged, through interviews and questionnaires, that certain policies and practices were also being implemented to enhance quality of education. One school head reported that: *"We have sat down as a team to formulate policies regarding lateness, absence from duty, amount and quality of work, working habits, discipline, examinations, tests, homework, morning work and class observation to ensure quality of education."* At another school, the deputy school head indicated that they have standing policies that encourage students to work hard. She pointed out that they have policies regarding homework, punctuality, and morning work. She indicated that parents are also involved in their children's learning through homework, which they must monitor and sign every day. She also bragged that they have an effective reading programme policy, and reported that by the time students reach Grade Seven, they will all be able to read. With failure to read having been identified as one of the major factors for student low academic attainment (Commeyras & Inyenga, 2007), this situation is likely to have a positive effect on the quality of education in the school. This was confirmed by the school's pass rate in the 2016 Grade Seven public examinations in which it attained a 100% pass rate, making it the best performing school, not only in the province, but also nationally.

All teachers acknowledged having policies and practices in their classrooms to enhance quality of education as indicated below:

"We have such things as morning work and license home where you are given a problem to tackle before you go home focusing on learnt concepts as reinforcement. Homework is also given daily to consolidate that" (Teacher).

"I encourage my students to come early to do

morning work and it acts as a motivator to students. We have discipline and homework policies and I group students in such a way that slow learners may benefit from fast learners.”
(Senior Teacher)

From the preceding discussion, there are several policies and practices in place at the national, school, and classroom levels, to ensure quality of education in schools.

Instrument used to evaluate quality of education in schools

Ministry of Education officials said there are several instruments to evaluate quality of education in schools. One of the PEDs indicated that, *“If it is an evaluation of the teacher, there is an instrument for that, if there is need to evaluate the school head, there is an instrument for that.”* Similar views were echoed by one of the DEOs who said, *“There are a number of instruments we use to evaluate. We have one to evaluate the head’s effectiveness and one to evaluate teachers.”*

One of the school administrators indicated that: *“We have the Grade Seven analysis and the mark schedules; these records can reflect the performance of the school, the performance of the teachers.”* Asked whether there is a common instrument to evaluate quality of education in schools, he indicated that, *“At present in Zimbabwe, there is no such instrument; it’s up to the head to design one”* (School Head). This was also echoed by other school administrators who indicated that:

“We do not have a specific tool, but we check on the aspects we have discussed before like teaching and learning, record keeping, written work, homework and morning work. The MoE does not prescribe the nature of the form but simply expects administrators to make the assessment in one way or another.” (Deputy School Head)

“There is no standardised instrument for use in evaluating quality of education in schools” (School Head).

All teachers expressed total ignorance of the existence of a tool used to evaluate quality of education in schools as indicated below:

“I think school administrators have one which they use to evaluate quality because they write reports after class observations” (Senior Teacher).

“I don’t know maybe our administrators have their own specific way to evaluate, but generally they evaluate quality using teachers’ records” (Senior Teacher).

“I think the administrators have got it when they come for supervision” (Teacher).

From the preceding discussion, it is evident from the school administrators that there is no standard instrument used to evaluate quality of education in schools. Although MoE officials indicated that they have various instruments that they use to evaluate quality of education, they later admitted that there was a need for a single package of an instrument for such use. They indicated during the interviews

as well as in questionnaires that such an instrument would help to make evaluation easier than evaluating a single aspect at a time. They said it would guide the evaluators and keep them focused on items they should look for during the evaluation process. This is in line with literature, which highlights the importance of using a single framework, that is, an SSE framework, in the evaluation of quality of education in schools (DoES, 2016; European Council of National Associations of Independent Schools, 2015). Moreover, using different tools may produce incoherent results, which may depict a disjointed picture of quality of education in schools. Such information may not help effective improvement to take place. The MoE should, therefore, develop an SSE framework to be given to schools for use in evaluating education quality considering that no such framework is currently in place as indicated earlier. This is particularly important, instead of schools designing their own instruments, considering the complexity of developing educational interventions (Plomp, 2009). In their study on the effects of the use of a school self-evaluation instrument, Schildkamp et al. (2009) found that most schools find it difficult to use SSE results conceptually on their own. This suggests that there is a need to develop strategies in training school staff in using an SSE framework, especially in Zimbabwe, where the concept is still new, and how they may use the information gathered to improve quality of education.

Experiences in the Evaluation of Quality of Education in Schools

Ministry of Education officials acknowledged experiencing changes at different times when evaluating quality of education in schools. One PED asserted that,

“Education system experiences change in terms of provision of resources; at a certain time, there was a shortage of resources and we had a high teacher-pupil ratio and it affected our quality.”

Lack of resources may affect both the evaluation process and the quality of education in schools. Schools may not have adequate materials for use in the teaching and learning processes. On the other hand, it may take the evaluators, for example, school inspectors, too long before visiting schools in order to evaluate them, as observed by one of the DEOs: *“At a certain point we were running short of resources; in a school everyone was acting, it was difficult to maintain quality and we had a shortage of supervisors and transport to go to schools to evaluate quality.”* These observations are consistent with literature and research, which indicate that lack of resources, be they human or material, may affect quality of education in schools (Oertel, 2005; Riddell & Nyagura, 1991).

From both interviews and questionnaires, lack of resources emerged as a major challenge in the

evaluation of quality of education for school administrators as indicated below:

“Normally teachers tend to give reasons that they do not have enough resources” (Deputy School Head).

“The staff you may have during a particular time may not be suitable to teach Grade One or Grade Seven. Also, the shortage of resources in the school hampers teachers from delivering quality education to students” (School Head).

On the other hand, a TIC from one school believed that teachers' different views on the evaluation outcomes were some of the challenges she experiences. She asserted that: *“It's a bit difficult with the young teachers; they are more concerned with money than offering services. Some teachers cite favouritism, especially with those teachers whom you think are hard-working.”* All the teachers interviewed said they were not involved in the evaluation of education quality in schools except for evaluating their classes. They did, however, indicate that they should also be involved if quality of education is to be realised and improved, as some stated:

“We are not involved in the evaluation of education quality. I think teachers should also be part of the evaluation team” (Senior Teacher).

“Teachers should also be involved since they are the implementers of all education policies” (Teacher).

This observation is consistent with literature, which indicates that teachers should be involved in SSE of education quality (MacBeath, 2006). Some teachers indicated that parents should be involved in the process while others felt otherwise. Although parents are not directly involved in classroom processes, they may have such knowledge through information they get from their children. Moreover, they are an important stakeholder in education, who should also be involved in the evaluation process, helping to supply some resources needed in schools and monitoring their children's homework.

Literature suggests that schools should do SSE and the process should involve school administrators, teachers and other stakeholders in education (DoES, 2016). Therefore, if quality of education is to be effectively realised and improved, schools ought to be supplied with SSE frameworks and engage in SSE, which should involve various stakeholders. Involving teachers, who are the mediators between policy and practice in SSE of quality of education, is essential for its realisation and improvement.

Conclusion

The study found that although participants had varied views on the current quality of education in Zimbabwean primary schools, a great deal still needs to be done for it to be fully realised. Although all indicated an understanding of quality of education, this was, however, limited to student

academic achievement. It was found that there is no standardised instrument used to evaluate quality of education in schools. The study revealed that teachers are not involved in the evaluation process and that no meaningful SSE of education quality is taking place. In view of the above conclusions, it is recommended that all stakeholders in education should work towards the realisation and improvement of quality of education. It is also recommended that the MoE design and develop an SSE framework to be given to schools for use in evaluating education quality. Furthermore, it is recommended that teachers, as the main mediators between policy and practice, ought to actively be involved in SSE of quality of education for its realisation and improvement thereof.

Despite being relevant to the Zimbabwean context where this study was carried out, information presented here may also be relevant to other education systems, especially in some developing countries where effective means of evaluating education quality may not be available. Therefore, this information can be innovatively applied to other education systems in their quest to understand and effectively evaluate quality of education in schools. Although the contexts may be different from where the study was undertaken, the way in which the challenges of understanding and evaluating quality of education present themselves in various education systems may be the same. The way in which these challenges can be addressed may be similar in nature.

Authors' Contributions

Elizabeth Garira designed the study, wrote the manuscript and reviewed the final manuscript, Sarah Howie designed the study and reviewed the final manuscript, Tjeerd Plomp designed the study and reviewed the final manuscript.

Notes

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