



INFLUENCE OF IN-SERVICE EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES ON SECONDARY SCHOOL HEAD TEACHERS' CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP COMPETENCE IN THE LUBOMBO REGION OF ESWATINI

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate the influence of In-Service Education and Training programmes on secondary school head teachers' curriculum leadership competence in the Lubombo region of Eswatini. Using both quantitative and qualitative approaches thirty-five (n=35; female=15; male=20) head teacher participants were sampled from 51 conveniently selected secondary schools in the Lubombo region. Data were collected through five Likert scale questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Quantitative data were analysed using percentages and frequencies, and thematic analysis was used for qualitative data. Findings indicated that INSET programmes pertaining to curriculum leadership competence only had influence in the following areas: enabling head teachers to benchmark their schools with other schools and developing head teachers' skills of instructional observation. On the other hand, the study found that INSET programmes had no influence on head teachers' curriculum leadership in the following areas: provision of teaching and learning materials and in encouraging teachers to cater for learners with different learning needs. It was therefore concluded that the influence of In-Service Education and Training programmes was only limited to head teachers' leadership competence in benchmarking their schools with other schools and in developing head teachers' skills of instructional observation. Therefore, it was recommended that the In-Service Education and Training department should consider overhauling its training programmes for secondary school head teachers by considering involving head teachers in needs assessment, setting programme duration, setting convenience and being mindful of the quality of trainers.

KEYWORDS: Influence, In-Service Education and Training programmes, Head teacher, Curriculum leadership competence.

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INTRODUCTION

In Eswatini no formal educational management qualifications are required for a school headship position. This vacuum is filled by the In-Service Education and Training which trains and upgrades head teachers with various leadership competencies (EDSEC, 2018). The Government of Eswatini through the Ministry of Education and Training established the INSET programmes to continually upgrade the core competencies, knowledge and skills of head teachers (Khumalo, 2013). Despite the effort to equip head teachers with curriculum leadership competence, the prevailing situation in most schools is far from the Eswatini's Ministry of Education and Training's expectations of excellence in the way schools in the Lubombo region perform academically (Dlamini, 2012). It is against this background that the study investigated the influence of In-Service Education and Training programme on secondary school head teachers' curriculum leadership competences. Thus, the objective of this study was to investigate the influence of In-Service Education and Training programmes on head teachers' curriculum leadership competence.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Influence of In-Service Education and Training programmes on head teachers have been broadly deliberated in leadership literature (Bitamazire & Showers, 2015). However, Onyuka, (2019) and Erasmus (2013) advance differing views on the influence of In-Service Education and Training programmes on head teachers' curriculum leadership competence. Nevertheless, an outstanding correspondence in the authors' views is that there is a need for In-Service Education and Training programmes to improve head teachers' curriculum leadership competence because head teachers are often only appointed on the basis of having a successful teaching record and without any prior leadership training (Bitamazire & Showers, 2015).

Authors on leadership competencies (Jones, 2016; Lezotte, 2013) stress the importance of In-Service Education and Training programmes for equipping head teachers with various leadership competencies but argue that despite the training they receive through INSET programmes, their curriculum leadership competence was still not improving. This was observed through the organized chaos that reigns in schools causing disruption in the teaching and learning process (Eshiwami, 2010). Erasmus (2013) explained that INSET programmes ensure that head teachers possess knowledge, skills and understanding to perform their jobs effectively, to take on new responsibilities, and to adapt to changing school environments. In-Service Education and Training programmes aim at improving head teachers' leadership competencies while changing their attitudes. In-Service Education and Training programmes also equip head teachers with the necessary curriculum leadership competencies to improve students' academic performance (Khumalo, 2013).

Literature reveals that an integral component of curriculum leadership includes the head teachers' supervisory practices such as lesson observation (Okumbe, 2018). Classroom observation makes it possible for the head teacher to discover the potentials in the staff that may be tapped and created. As pointed out by Onyuka (2019), classroom observations are required to improve the quality of teachers, the teaching process

and the accomplishment of learners. Lezotte (2013) adds that through managerial visits, head teachers learn what is done in the classroom, observe the methods and the materials being used, the attitudes and the responses of pupils and other factors that make for efficient learning. However, Jones (2016) established that the majority of principals neither make visits to classrooms to observe teachers' lessons nor give feedback to teachers after class observations.

Musungu and Nasongo (2018), in their study on head teacher's instructional achievement in secondary schools in Kenya, Vihiga District, found that head teachers' instructional practices included checking lesson books, schemes of work, records of work covered, and attendance. According to Onyuka (2019) most head teachers check schemes of work, teachers' record of work and protect students' instructional time. Sigilai, (2013) found that head teachers focused more on work records than on practical work done by teachers and Khumalo (2013) mentioned that In-Service Training in the form of workshops, conferences, and seminars were supervisory practices used to equip head teachers.

According to Gogo (2012), the head teacher must ensure that set standards are maintained through regular supervision of curriculum delivery. The head teacher must be able to organize and plan for staff development through INSET and advice on optimum use of resources to achieve effective teaching and learning (Onyuka, 2019). The leadership role of a head teacher in curriculum delivery must be geared towards guiding teachers to promote effective classroom practices that provide pupils with education that is useful for life and further advancement (Spear, 2014).

Over and above Onyuka (2019) states that pupils that require special attention because of their various physical, mental or educational needs have to be attended to by the head teacher. The head teacher must be conversant with educational information in order to implement a range of activities that require careful monitoring (Odubaker, 2017). For the realization of good performance in a school, the head teacher must make sure that instructional resources are put in place and used effectively in classroom practice (Nyakwara, 2019). The appropriate use of instructional materials is an important factor or component during the implementation of the curriculum, which helps the implementers to realize their goals and guide them in the teaching and learning process in the classroom practice (Onyuka, 2019). Head teachers on a daily basis have the responsibility to ensure that teachers implement the set curriculum and that learning takes place (Gogo, 2012).

In order to support the teaching and learning process, Gogo (2012) observed that head teachers should ensure quality curricular supervision and provision of adequate physical resources. It was noted by (Khumalo, 2013) that schools with adequate facilities such as laboratories and textbooks stand a better chance of performing well in examinations than poorly equipped schools. Low academic performance could

be attributed to lack of adequate finance, which results in inadequate supply of teaching and learning materials and equipment (Onyuka, 2019). Spear (2014) further explained that aspects of curriculum management such as material development and resource utilization should be critical components of head teacher training programmes since they bring out teaching and learning outcomes.

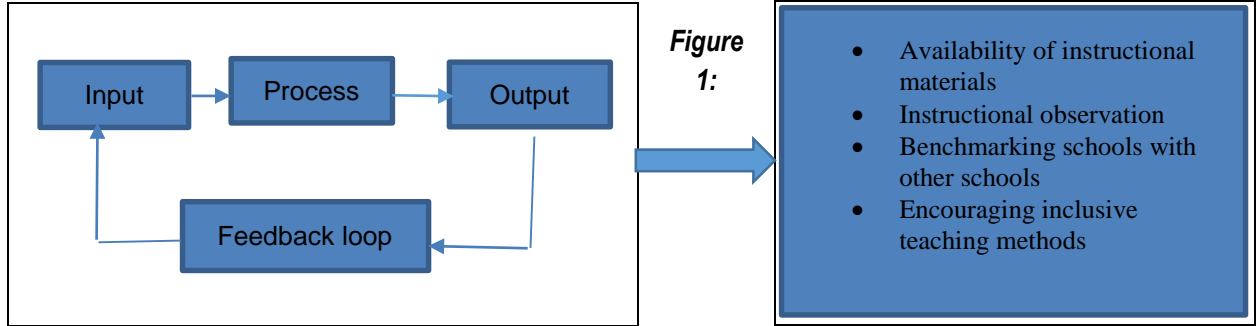
Although several studies have been conducted on In-Service Education in Eswatini; little is known regarding the influence of In-Service Education and Training programme on secondary school head teachers' curriculum leadership competence in the Lubombo region of Eswatini. In a study of the head teachers' instructional achievement in secondary schools in Vihiga District, Kenya, Musungu and Nasongo (2018) concluded that effective supervision of teachers by head teachers is necessary if the teachers are to remain productive. The study however focused on instructional achievement in secondary schools while the current study focused on the influence of In- Service Education on secondary school head teachers' curriculum leadership competence. Okumbe (2018) on the other hand, investigated the relationship between head teachers' management training programmes and curriculum management in primary schools in Uganda and found a positive significant relationship between training in curriculum management and head teachers' competencies. According to Khumalo (2013) more studies on the influence of In-Service Education and Training programmes on secondary school head teachers are most needed in Eswatini, particularly in the Lubombo region. Therefore, the current study aimed at investigating the influence of In-Service Education and Training programme on secondary school head teachers' curriculum leadership competence in the Lubombo region of Eswatini. The specific research question was: What is the influence of In- Service Education and Training programme on secondary school head teachers' curriculum leadership competence in the Lubombo region of Eswatini.

Theoretical framework

Review of literature related to In-Service Education and Training programmes indicates that theorization on curriculum leadership competence is scanty. Notwithstanding, a key conclusion deducible from the literature is that for In-Service Education and Training programmes to deliver positive outcomes, it must be of satisfactory quality. The study was guided by the Open Systems Theory, which was developed by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy. Hoy and Miskel (2008) have appealed to the Open Systems Theory's proposition that the quality of a system's output is a function of the extent to which the inputs and processes of which the output is a function are fit for their purpose. From the point of view of the proposition, the relationship between In-Service Education and Training programmes and the head teacher curriculum leadership competence was theorized.

Independent variable: INSET programmes

Dependent variable: Curriculum leadership competence



Theoretical Relationship between INSET programme

*and curriculum leadership
Competence*

The researcher used the proposition of the open systems theory to establish the relationship between In-Service Education and Training programmes (INSET) and head teachers' curriculum leadership competence. The In-Service Education and Training programmes were looked at as a subsystem of the entire training system. The figure suggests that the curriculum leadership competence depends on the inputs (including feedback), process and output that comprise of the INSET programmes. Curriculum leadership competence requires that each of the system's subsystems (inputs, processes and output) is fit to enhance the head teachers' curriculum leadership competence. Therefore, addressing curriculum leadership related inadequacies require examination of the inputs (including feedback), process and output that comprise of INSET programmes to determine whether the curriculum leadership competence related inadequacies are due to shortfalls in some of these subsystems of the INSET programme. Accordingly, the study examined the input, process and output subsystems of the Ministry of Education and Training INSET programmes and how each relate to the secondary school head teachers' curriculum leadership competence.



The Conceptual Framework

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE: INSET PROGRAMME CURRICULUM

DEPENDENT VARIABLE:

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCE

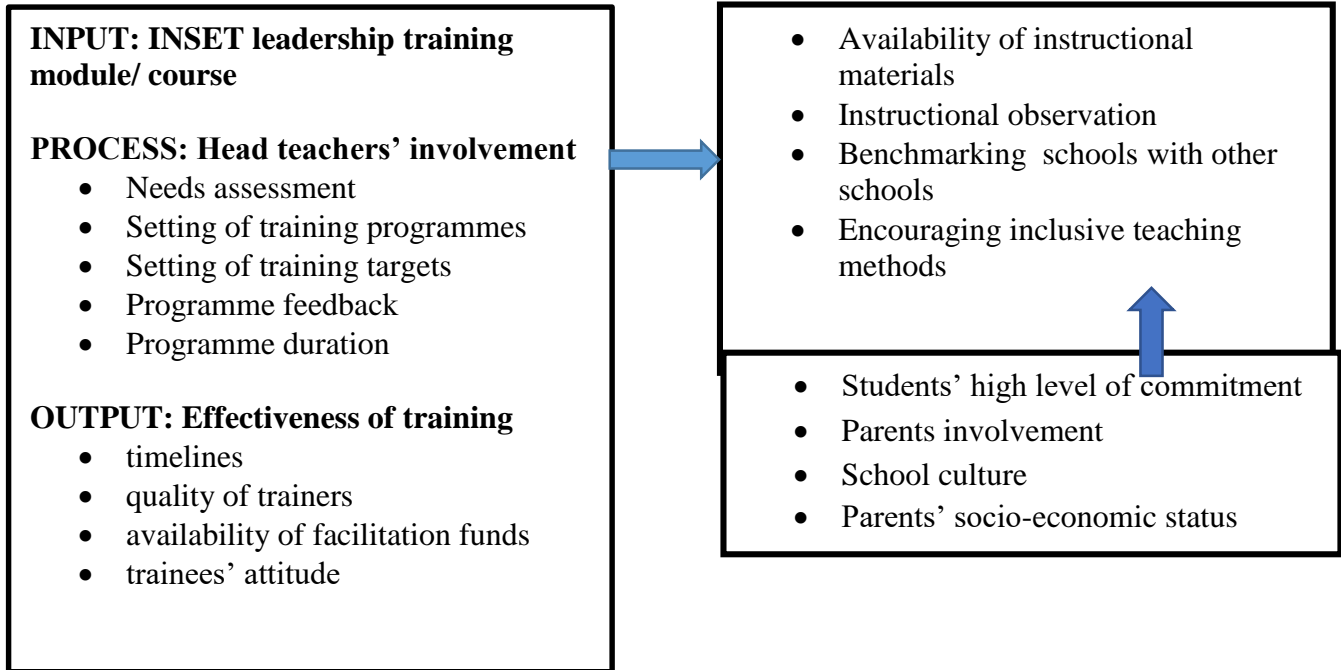


Figure 2: Model of the Conceptual Framework for the study of the influence of INSET programme on secondary school head teachers' curriculum leadership competence. Source: Derived from reviewed literature on influence of In-Service Education and Training Programmes on head teachers' curriculum leadership competences.

In the conceptual framework, curriculum leadership competence is perceived in terms of head teacher's competence in availing instructional materials in his capacity to observe lessons, in his skills to benchmark their schools with other schools and his ability to encourage inclusive teaching methods. According to several authors as per the reviewed literature, these are some of the key variables that make up curriculum leadership competence. These are conceptualized to depend on In-Service Training Programmes. In turn effective INSET leadership programmes (input and feedback) should involve the trainees, who are the head teachers, in terms of needs assessment, setting of training programmes, setting of training targets, setting the appropriate programme duration and giving proper programme feedback (process). In order for this programmes to be effective (output) they need to have a time line. The trainers should be of quality. The Ministry of Education through the Government should pump in adequate finances. In addition, the head teachers should have a positive attitude towards the trainings. However, there are extraneous variables that can contribute to the head teachers' curriculum leadership competence, which are not the concern of this study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study adopted a concurrent triangulation design. The design was most appropriate because it lies in the ability to find agreement and validation of results through a variety of research methods (Cresswell, 2014). This ensured that the results were truly a reflection of what was actually happening and not a reflection of the methods of testing used to gather the data. Another justification was that trends and inconsistencies from the quantitative research enabled the researcher to dig into those issues using qualitative methods to find out why they occurred.

The participants and setting

Thirty-five (35) head teacher participants were sampled from fifty-one (51) conveniently selected public secondary schools in the Lubombo region. Table 1 presents participants' demographic information. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants based on their teaching experience, qualification and training.

Table 1: Participants' demographic information for the study (n=35)

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	20	57.1
Female	15	42.9
Age Group		
31-40ears	10	28.5
41years and above	25	71.5
Professional qualification		
Diploma in Education	8	22.9
Bachelor' degree in Education	22	62.9
Master's degree in Education	5	14.2
Experience		
1-5 years	6	17.1
6-10 years	10	28.6
11-15 years	17	48.6
16-20 years	2	5.7

Note: INSET=In-Service Education and Training

Data collection tools

Data were collected using a five Likert scale questionnaire and a face-to-face semi-structured interview. A five Likert scale questionnaire was used as the main research instrument; it was administered to 35 secondary school head teachers from the Lubombo region. The Likert scale questionnaire entailed a category of statements and respondents chose their level of agreement with the content for the research objective. The five-Likert scale questionnaire was used because sizeable amounts of data were collected within a short period. Each head teacher took approximately 15 minutes to fill in the Likert scale questionnaire. A face-to-face semi structured interview was administered to head teachers and INSET officers in order to get more detailed information pertaining to the influence of INSET programmes on head teachers' curriculum leadership competence. All interviews were conducted in English though participants were allowed to respond in both English and SiSwati. The semi-structured interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes and all interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed. The two data collection instruments were used in this study for purposes of triangulation and data crosschecking.

Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct the study was granted by the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) in Eswatini. All head teacher participants included in the study signed consent forms and audio tape recording consent forms before they engaged in the study. The INSET Officers also agreed to participate in the study by completing the consent forms prior to the in-depth interview. Participants were informed that participation in the study was purely voluntary, and of their right to withdraw from the study without negative consequences. No participant's name or school was revealed, anonymity was observed by assigning letters and numbers to participants and schools respectively.

Validity and Reliability

Validity of research instruments refers to the extent to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure (Creswell, 2014). In order to ascertain validity, the research instruments were presented to three (3) lecturers from the University of Eswatini who helped in restructuring and ensuring the questions align with the objectives of the study. Validity ensured that respondents perceived the questions as accurately as the researcher intended (Creswell, 2014).

Reliability is the degree to which a measuring procedure gives similar result over a number of repeated trials (Creswell, 2014). To ensure reliability, Cronbach' alpha coefficient was used. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the research instruments was 0.8, which means that the research instruments were reliable. To ensure the reliability of the instruments, a pilot study was conducted in two (2) secondary schools in the Lubombo region. The schools were conveniently sampled and were not part of the final study.

Trustworthiness of the study

Trustworthiness of every phase of the analysis process, includes preparing, organizing, and reporting of results to support the argument that the findings are worth (Okumbe, 2018). Member checks with the participants were done to observe credibility and the accuracy of responses from each participant (Jones, 2016). The process of member checking gave the participants an opportunity to correct flaws from responses, comments, and to interpret and solidify some of the findings. In addition, participants were encouraged to be as honest as possible and be free during discussions to ensure dependability. There was consistent recording and reporting during the discussions.

Data analysis

Data were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively according to the study objectives.

Frequency counts and percentages were used to summarize the quantitative data collected through the questionnaire and the data were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) computer software version 23.0. Qualitative data were processed by categorizing and discussing responses for each item according to themes (thematic analysis). This enabled the researchers to become intimately familiar with the data by reading and re-reading the data and listening to the audio at least once if relevant (Creswell, 2014). Initial codes were identified and compared. Then similar codes were grouped into categories that led into the development of one major theme and sub-themes crucial for the purpose of the study.

FINDINGS

The objective of the study was to investigate the influence of in-service education and training programmes in the Lubombo secondary school head teachers' curriculum leadership competences. The findings were quantitatively represented in percentages (%), frequencies (f) and also qualitatively represented in themes and sub-themes, emerging from data analysis. Table 2 indicates percentages and frequencies from the quantitative data analysis and Table 3 indicates the sub-themes, which emerged from qualitative data analysis.

Table 2: Influence of INSET programmes on Curriculum Leadership (n=35)

INSET programmes have influenced me in:	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
	% (f)	% (f)	% (f)
1. Developing strategies for ensuring availability of teaching and learning materials	29(11)	20(7)	51(17)
2. Encouraging teachers to use different methods to cater for learners with different learning needs	10(4)	25(8)	65(23)
3. Benchmarking my school with other schools	60(21)	5(2)	35(12)
4. Developing the skills of instructional observation	51(18)	10(4)	39(13)

Source: Field data (2019)

Table 3 Themes and sub themes on Curriculum Leadership competence

Theme	Sub-themes
Curriculum leadership competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Developing strategies for ensuring availability of teaching and learning materials -Encouraging teachers to use different methods to cater for learners with different learning needs. -Benchmarking their school with other schools. -Developing skills of instructional observation

Source: Field data (2019)

Developing strategies for ensuring availability of teaching and learning materials

This section presents the influence of INSET programmes on head teachers' curriculum leadership competence about developing strategies for ensuring availability of teaching and learning materials. Seventeen (17) which is 51% of 35 respondent head teachers disagreed that INSET programmes had an impact regarding developing strategies for ensuring the availability of teaching and learning materials as opposed to 11(29%) of head teachers who agreed that INSET programmes influenced them in this area. Seven (7) which is 20% of head teachers however gave a neutral response pertaining to this curriculum leadership competence.

A majority of the head teacher participants from in-depth interviews 7(70%) out of 10 indicated that INSET programmes did not influence them in developing strategies for ensuring availability of teaching and learning materials, some of the participant head teachers objected as attested by the following narratives:

INSET programmes have not helped me in developing strategies for ensuring availability of teaching and learning materials in the school. In the trainings, we were only taught how to identify authentic suppliers and also the procurement procedures we have to follow when acquiring teaching and learning materials. We were not taught anything about making sure there is a steady supply of teaching and learning materials. We, as a school, therefore find it difficult to always have teaching and learning materials throughout the year. This challenge however is caused by parents who do not pay school fees for their children and the delay of payment from government bursaries. The good thing however, is that we are in good terms with our suppliers because they are patient with us. But we have debts because our fees are low. (Head teacher D, 2 March 2019).

INSET programmes have never taught us how to develop strategies for ensuring availability of teaching and learning materials. Currently we do have teaching and learning materials which come from donations and some of which we bought. Our greatest challenge is that we lack finances and donations to aid us as a school. (Head teacher H. 24 March, 2019).

**Encourage teachers to use different methods to cater for learners with different learning needs**

A majority of respondent head teachers 23 (65%) out of 35 head teachers who responded to the Likert scale questionnaire disagreed that INSET programmes influenced them in encouraging teachers to use different methods to cater for learners with different learning needs as opposed to 4(10%) who agreed that INSET programmes impacted them in this regard. Eight (8) which is 25% of head teachers however gave a neutral response pertaining to being influenced to encourage teachers to use different methods to cater for learners with different learning needs. The huge number of the participant head teachers 8(80%) out of 10 in the in-depth interviews disagreed that INSET programmes influenced them in encouraging teachers to use different methods to cater for learners with different learning needs. The following narratives reflect some of their positions:

INSET programmes have not helped me in that area because I do not remember the facilitators from INSET telling us to encourage teachers to use different methods to cater for learners with different needs. Even if I highlight it to my teachers, I do not emphasize it because I know it can be time consuming. This is also because the teacher will not be paid for the extra working hours he or she will be putting in addressing the learners' different needs. I doubt if the syllabus will be complete within the stipulated time. (Head teacher A, 26 Feb, 2019).

During INSET programmes it was highlighted that we should encourage teachers to use different methods to cater for learners with different needs. This is however not practical because there is no way teachers can teach each student according to his or her different needs, and to do so teachers need special training. The roles of teachers, students and parents are not specified because students are too diverse and teachers are not well versed about inclusive practices. Maybe only those who are doing related personal studies in the area of inclusive education might understand what methods to use, and how to use them to cater for learners' different needs. INSET programmes therefore have not helped me in this aspect since I am not able to encourage teachers to use different methods to cater for learners with different needs. (Head teacher G, 18 March, 2019).

Benchmark their school with other schools

A considerable number of the respondent head teachers 21 (60%) out of 35 head teachers who responded to the Likert scale questionnaire agreed that INSET programmes influenced them in being able to benchmark their school with other schools as opposed to 12 (35%) who disagreed that

INSET programmes influenced them in this area. Two (2) which is 5% of head teachers however gave a neutral response in being influenced to benchmark their school with other schools.

A number of participant head teachers 6 (60%) out of 10 head teachers in the in-depth interviews agreed that the INSET programmes influenced them in benchmarking their schools with others. Their affirmative views were supported by the following narratives:



INSET programmes influenced a lot in enabling me to benchmark my school with other schools. In the training, it was mentioned that visiting other schools was one of the easiest ways to benchmark your school with other schools. In my school, teachers are taken to visit other performing schools and this has made the teachers to be very dedicated for duty. For instance, they even now do voluntary weekend and holiday teaching – a habit they have copied from the good performing schools. (Head teacher J, 30 March, 2019).

INSET programmes do emphasize the importance of benchmarking with other schools. In these trainings we are also taught strategies to use to benchmark with other schools. These teachings have helped us because at the beginning of every year we now usually compare our Junior Certificate and Senior General Certificate examinations with other well performing schools in the region. This has helped us to benchmark our school academically with other schools. We analyze the results together with teachers as soon as they are released and strategies are developed on how to improve the school's results the following year. (Head teacher E, 11 March, 2019).

INSET programmes also give us a lot of group activities with other head teachers. This then gives us an opportunity to develop a mutual relationship with them. The power of having a strong network with other head teachers cannot be underestimated. As you interact with different head teachers about their schools you are also able to benchmark your school with theirs and you can be assisted one way or another. As we interact with different head teachers in this INSET programmes I have been helped to benchmark my school with other schools. (Head teacher D, 2 March 2019).

Developing the skills of instructional observation

Slightly more than half of the respondent head teachers 18 (51%) out of 35 head teachers agreed that INSET programmes influenced them by being able to develop skills of instructional observation as opposed to 13 (39%) head teachers who disagreed that INSET programmes influenced them in this regard. Four (4) which is 10% of head teachers however gave a neutral response.

Most participant head teachers 7 (70%) out of 10 head teachers in the in-depth interviews were in agreement that the INSET programmes influenced them in developing skills of instructional observation. Their affirmative remarks are echoed in the following narratives:

INSET programmes have influenced us as we were only taught on how to observe instruction in the classroom. As a result, I sometimes make surprise class visits where I sit down at the back of the class during the lesson and observe the teacher. This has helped the effectiveness of lesson delivery as the teachers are always prepared because they do not know when I might visit their classes. (Head teacher C, 28 Feb, 2019).



Yes INSET programmes have influenced me greatly in being able to observe instruction in the classroom. I must admit that sometimes I am not around so I task heads of departments with the duty of supervising the teaching and learning process in the various classrooms. Still on the aspect of observing instruction in the classroom. There is an instrument the heads of departments are given to record on how the supervised teacher delivered the lesson. The head of departments also give their recommendations on how the lesson could have been improved. This exercise is therefore done to all the teachers at least once a month. (Head teacher D, 2 March 2019).

DISCUSSIONS

The findings of the study are a clear signal that INSET programmes have very little impact on the head teachers' curriculum leadership on issues to do with developing strategies on making sure that teaching and learning materials are always available. According to Sigilai (2013), lack of properly trained head teachers on proper physical resource management can impose serious constraints on both educational quality, development and expansion. In the same breath, Spear (2014), explains that aspects of curriculum leadership such as material development and resource utilization should be critical components of head teachers' training programmes, since they bring out teaching and learning outcomes. By implication of Spear's recommendation, it is noted that schools headed by the participant head teachers were likely not to achieve the expected teaching and learning outcomes. This could even be supported by poor performance records in the national examinations and therefore head teachers needed to be properly trained in this aspect.

Both the quantitative and qualitative findings held INSET accountable for not influencing head teachers in encouraging teachers to use different methods to cater for learners with different learning needs. Twenty three (23) 65% out of 35 head teachers disagreed that they were influenced by INSET in this regard. According to Onyango (2011), schools should be restructured, adopted and improved to fit, foster and support the diverse needs of all learners in the school, with or without disabilities allowing them to learn together in a supported environment (Annual Education Census Statistics report, 2017)

In-Service Education and Training programmes however did have an influence in curriculum leadership competence regarding having the ability to benchmark their school with other schools. Head teachers applauded INSET for giving them strategies to use in benchmarking their schools with other schools. The participant head teachers were able to apply these strategies with an aim to improve their academic performance. The findings of the study are thus in line with Magagula (2017), who states that when the lessons learnt from a benchmarking exercise are applied appropriately, they can facilitate improved performance in critical functions within the organization.

Head teachers agreed that INSET programmes did have an influence on their school curriculum leadership competence regarding developing the skills of instructional observation. According to Mwinjuma & Baki (2012), through instructional observation, head teachers learn what is done in the classroom, observe the methods and materials of teaching used and are able to detect the attitudes and the responses of pupils.

This implied that the participant head teachers were able to observe their teachers as they conducted lessons - a skill they acquired from attending INSET programmes. Mwinjuma & Baki (2012), further recommend that it is important for head teachers to hold conferences with their teachers as part of a supervisory plan. Onguko (2012) mentions that it is critical for every school administrator/head teacher to have an in-built supervisory system of instructional observation in order to provide cohesion and direction necessary to improve school performance, particularly academic performance. By implication of Onguko's recommendation, it was therefore likely that the schools headed by the participant head teachers were likely to be making headway towards improving their learners' academic performance. According to Onguko, Abdalla & Webber (2012), classroom observation makes it possible for the head teacher to discover the teachers' potentials.

The finding is in line with the study conducted by Musungu and Nasongo (2018), on the head teachers' instructional achievement in Kenya, Vihiga District secondary schools. Their study concluded that effective instructional observation by head teachers was necessary if they were to remain productive. According to Mullins (2010), observing instruction in the classroom is a technical task that requires meticulous, firm and objective assessment. Mullins, further cautions that instructional supervision cannot be left in the hands of charlatans or mediocre but one needs to be well trained in order to observe instruction in the classroom. Following Mullins' recommendations, the Ministry of Education and Training through INSET could also ensure that head teachers are properly and adequately trained on issues to do with instructional observation and this should apply to the deputy head teachers and heads of departments. This is to enable the head teacher to delegate this technical task with ease and confidence.

CONCLUSION

The study investigated the influence of In-Service Education and Training programme on secondary school head teachers' curriculum leadership competence in the Lubombo region of Eswatini. Evidence from the study indicated that INSET programmes had influence on the secondary school head teacher curriculum leadership competence in areas to do with benchmarking their schools with other schools and developing the skills of observing instruction in the classroom. However, the study found out that INSET programmes had no influence and in some aspects marginal influence on head teachers' curriculum leadership in areas to do with provision of teaching and learning materials and in encouraging teachers to cater for learners with different needs. This study thus suggests a need for the In-Service Education and Training department to overhaul its training programmes for secondary school head teachers by considering factors such as head teachers' involvement in training needs assessment, setting training programme duration, and coming with a convenient training period and in ensuring that the trainers' are experts. The study additionally suggests a need for the Eswatini Ministry of Education and Training to consider introducing a training programme that is intensive and skills-oriented with an accredited certificate at the end of the training. This could be a motivation for head teachers to yearn attending INSET programmes for enhancing their qualifications. Finally, the Ministry of Education and Training could also consider making periodic appraisals for head teachers through the inspectorate department to ensure their competency in curriculum leadership.

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