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The Zimbabwe Continuous Assessment Learning Activity (CALA) Analysis. Stakeholders' Perceptions in Cluster 35 of Nyajena in Masvingo District. A Phenomenological Approach.

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ABSTRACT

According to the dictates and resolutions that emanated from the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action in 2015, a new vision for education made a bench mark for sustainable inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030. Enshrined in this philosophical provisions are pedagogical strings that should equate and in commensurate to the needs of all learners meaning no one will be omitted from learning. More so, encapsulated in the 2015 gathering is a progressive trajectory underpinned by interconnected targets set to realize it. In response to the call for this education for all agenda, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary education (MoPSE) through the former Minister of the Ministry in 2015 quickly ingested the idea and made hast decisions without making informed consultative analytical and critical perspectives pertaining to curriculum innovation. To this end, the Zimbabwe Continuous Assessment Learning Activities (CALA) was adopted for the sole purpose of revamping the education outcomes of learners which include among others the following; cognitive domain (looking at knowledge domain), and also the psycho-motor and effective domain. CALA is part of the Competence Based Curriculum which has completed its seven year cycle. During the period of its existence, there were challenges and disparities in its implementation in schools. Notwithstanding the Government efforts to reform the curriculum and provide an economically transformative education, key stakeholders that include parents, teachers and learners perceive CALA as a burden with more challenges than benefits. The CALA did not live up to the expectations of the stakeholders although its planners had envisioned that it would be both a means and process to extricate the graduates at whatever point of exit out of poverty through active participation that could ultimately bear innovativeness. CALA came as an aggressive response to the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (CIET) of 1998 which had advocated for a practice based education. An interpretive inquiry methodology was thereof employed to gather data during the curriculum review consultation meetings conducted by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education from 22-24 May 2023 . During the topical discussions, focus group interviews were employed alongside selected individual semi-structured interviews to gather data on stakeholders' perceptions and gain a deeper understanding of the consultative proceedings at seven selected schools in Masvingo Province of Zimbabwe. A thematic approach was then used as an instrumental means of coding data and formulation of themes and sub-themes for data analysis. The research paper concludes that parents, teachers and learners as stakeholders are not at liberty to continue with the CALA curriculum initiative and demand that it should be aborted. In light of the above insights, the researchers recommend the engagement of a multi-sectoral approach in developing coping mechanisms that will systematically refine the current dilemma of the curriculum standing into a more robust inclusive education framework.

Keywords: Sustainable inclusive, equitable quality education, lifelong learning, philosophical provisions, pedagogical strings, progressive trajectory, Curriculum innovation, qualitative-consultative approach

Introduction

The 2030 education for all at the 2015 World Education Forum in Incheon, in the Republic of Korea, set in place global targets that were meant to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (UN, 2015, UNESCO, 2O15). The global mandated targets were obligated to eliminate all forms of discrimination in education by eradicating gender, disability, economic, socio-political disparities at all levels to ensure equal access to all levels of education by 2030 (Incheon Declaration, 2015). Furthermore, education for sustainable development and global citizenship by 2030 dreamed of accomplishing a mission intended to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainability in development through education, human rights and gender equality. Also of major consideration were an agenda to build and upgrade inclusive and safe schools that are learner/child, disability, vulnerability, gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments (UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, UNFPA, UNPD, UN Women and UNHCR, 2015).

Just in time to make proportionate its educational policies to international standards, in 2014 the MoPSE in Zimbabwe went aboard on an all-inclusive-comprehensive curriculum reform that had a target to revamp the quality of education (Juliet et al 2021, MoPSE, 2014). This is a child centered approach were a child would be the definition of the education for all agenda as enshrined in the 2015 World Education Forum outcomes. For Zimbabwe to be

aligned to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4), the Ministry had to align its curriculum as outlined in the Incheon conference 2015. Curriculum innovations and reviews are functional prerequisite demands which translate education pedagogies to new methodical paradigms that relate to lived learner experiences directly linked to the cooperate world. Concurring with this sentiment is Professor Sibanda in an interview, an educationist and Faculty of Science and Technology education executive at the University of Science and Technology (NUST), who reiterated that the curriculum review process was of great relevance and importance (The Chronicle, 24 may 2023). In her perception as a qualified education philanthropist, she is of the view that the CALA flows along with the global trends in education. Education is some dynamic experiential phenomena which is a progressive entity that cannot be a static object, this entails that learners of the current ages to come need to be in tandem within the relevant space of the curriculum (Prof Sibanda in Press-The Chronicle 24 May, 2023). CALA as espoused in its methodologies advocates for hands on approaches where learners become active participants of their education process. In response to pragmatic approaches that are advocated for, the curriculum (CALA), if resources are available empower learners with relevant skills as compared to the one previously adopted from the Western-centric approaches which required memory regurgitation (Prof Sibanda in Press- The Chronicles 24 May 2023).

The rising unemployment is attributed to too theoretical education which does not develop lifelong skills for sustainable development (Coltat, 2012). The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education introduced together with CALA, a Skills Orientation Program in which graduates would familiarise themselves with industrial skills to become entrepreneurs who can create employment (Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education, 2015-22, Nziramasanga Commission Report, 1999). The idea of having a socially and economically transformative education seemed to be detached from the reality of implementing it. There are always variations in curriculum implementation, one of the chief reasons being the difference in geographical locations. Most schools in urban communities could successfully administer CALA because the middle class families could provide the requirements needed. Conversely, parents in rural areas which are predominantly agrarian communities whose income is seasonal struggled to meet the monetary demands of CALA. Undoubtedly, a huge divide between rural and urban schools emerged. The schools in economically better or affluent communities would come up with most relevant CALA that are appropriate to modern science and technology like computer programming whereas those in rural areas would just be doing low profile vocational skills such as weaving and pottery. Such a divide was a dominant characteristic feature of colonial education.

Relative to the above, the intentions behind CALA no longer yield any positivity as the curriculum demands are marred with a lot of implementation requirements that are beyond stakeholder capacity (Chronicle news report, 23 March 2023). In this regard, critical stakeholders comprising of parents, teachers and school learners feel that CALA is excluding the already excluded marginalized, vulnerable, poor and those living with disabilities, then it must be scrapped (The Chronicles, 23 May 2023). Among other calamitous concerns that have dominated outcries is the economic situation that have grinded the country's capacity to provide free inclusive education to the ordinary citizens (The Newsday, 25 May 2023). On top of the crippling economic situation are challenges consisting of; lack of ICT tools and gadgets, lack of phones with internet access, high cost of data charges especially for the poor and marginalized minority communities and also lack of computers, internet software and infrastructure by schools. In view of these essential accommodations in grim lack, CALA has become an unnecessary burden (Pulitzer Center Report, 10 March 2023).

The introduction and implementation of CALA was guided by policy frameworks. However, the policies are not debatable hence changes on the policies cannot be effected due to complaints from grassroot stakeholders, in most cases they are passive consumers of what is contained in the policies. This is supported by Critical social theorists who argued that policies are often spread through "coercive policy transfer" (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006). Similarly, in Zimbabwe, teachers and learners are obliged to comply with the dictates of the policies regarding CALA despite a feeling that meaningful reviews have to be done. Gatawa (2009), Kazu and Demiralp, (2016) all noted that teachers are key players in curriculum implementation hence the need to update them with new changes and innovations of the curriculum. In 23 Francophone countries, teachers were trained in best approaches in Competences Based Curriculum with financial support coming from OIF (Roigiers, 2008). In addition there was also support from Unicef, Unesco, and the European Union in various countries (Roegiers, 2008). However, it seems to be a different situation in Zimbabwe. Teachers were not adequately trained to implement CALA in an inclusive approach (Kazu and Demiralp, 2016, Ornstein and Hurgins, 2004). Further compounding the situation is demotivation as well as falling teacher professional standards which all stifle successful implementation of CALA. Its implementation is disfigured with irregularities, some teachers demand money from the students to guide them or do CALA for them- a malpractice which expose learners to watered down curriculum package (). The introduction of CALA came with more work load on the part of the teacher hence the louder call to reduce the amount of CALA. The Assessment Model proposed by MoPSE (2015) is that there should be both summative and continuous assessment which contribute 70% and 30% respectively to the final grade. Teachers and learners therefore carry out CALA with full knowledge that it has 30% significant on the learner's final mark which is recorded based on the grading system used by Zimbabwe School Examination Council (ZIMSEC). It is against this background that this research paper sought to inquire about the efficacy of CALA to produce holistic academic graduates of the now and future generations who are able to fit in and blend with technology integration skills. In this context, the researchers' main objective sort to make a constructive critical evaluation on the stakeholder perceptions concerning the challenges encountered during CALA implementation and draw out probable recommendations.

Review of related literature

Zimbabwe is not the first country to adopt a Competence Based Curriculum in which CALA is a component but quite a number of developed countries embraced the CBC. According to Jonaert (2001), the French Community of Belgium introduced competences into its primary and lower secondary curriculum in 1994 and 2001. This followed curriculum reform policies. Jonaert (2001) further noted among other countries Luxembourg dumped its old curriculum in favour of the Competence Based Curriculum. The major aim was to align education with global trends in socio-economic development. Education policies that digress from the economic growth positions of a particular country become unsound and irrelevant. North America embarked on

socio constructivist competence education while Latin America made major reforms in education to come up with Competence Based Curriculum (UNESCO & Orelac, 2001). Competence Based policies were also introduced in Mexico starting with pre-school curriculum in 2004 and later spread into the entire primary and secondary education system in 2011 (Portill, 2013). The models of Assessment in all these countries consists of summative and continous assessment. However, it is continous assessment which contributes greater percentage on the final mark in a particular area. This is in contrast to the Zimbabwean model which has 30% and 70% for continous and summative assessment respectively.

In Africa, Roegiers (2008) reported that at least half of the countries adopted competence based pedagogical approaches and assessment. He mentioned Tunisia, Djibouti, Mauritania, Gabon, and Madagascar which had earlier participated in OIF initiatives. Zimbabwe was lagging behind since it was implementing its traditional curriculum. OIF (2008) also mentioned Benin, Tunisia, Guinea, Senegal and Mali as countries that had taken competence based curricula and assessment. According to OIF, Algeria had adopted competence based pedagogy but had not implemented it in classrooms. Asian countries that implemented competence based pedagogy include Vietnam and Kazakhstan but he major reforms infused in their curriculum are not clear (Roegiers, 2008). In southern Africa, Botswana instituted a 1993 reform that Richard Tabulawa (2013) analyzed under the broad rubric of learner-centered instruction. However, Tabulawa made clear that the reform included a focus on very broad "skills", which resemble lists of competences (critical thinking skills, individual initiative, interpersonal skills and problem-solving ability), and that it aimed to encourage projects and group work. Moreover, Botswana justified the reform in OECD-like language as preparing workers for modern factories, even though prospects for such modern factories in Botswana were slim to nil. Tabulawa also noted that a push for accountability focused the reform in practice on much narrow objectives.

According to Malcolm (1999), South Africa launched a Curriculum reform known as outcomes based Education in 1997 but as Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008) put it, the curriculum was just competence based pedagogy. However, due to a number of challenges and contestations on this curriculum within the country, South Africa officially abandoned it in 2010 (Chisolm, 2015). Japan, a country with a giant economy also launched competence based curricular with Competence based assessment. Takayama (2013) saw the reform as a competence-based curriculum (2013) in line with the OECD's vision, and certainly the OECD described it favourably (OECD, 2012). However, sensitivity to PISA results and national testing introduced in 2007 narrowed the original focus to formal schooling (Takayama, 2013). The Japanese competence based curriculum also faced backlash from stakeholders particularly in response to PISA results in 2006 and 2009 (Takayama, 2013), and in 2011 the Ministry of Education "rebalanced" by returning to a more prescriptive curriculum, albeit trying to retain the goal of critical thinking (OECD, 2012).

In 1998, the president of the Republic of Zimbabwe set a task force to interrogate the sensitivity of the Curriculum into the 21st century demands of the world of work (Nziramasanga Commission Report, 1999). This was a state commissioned inquiry meant to unveil the state of affairs in the education system such that appropriate adjustments could be made to make the curriculum relevant in line with the flow of global trends (Government of Zimbabwe, 2006). The Nziramasanga commission tabled the Commission's esteemed findings to the Presidium, among the topical issues of concern was that although the Zimbabwe secondary education curriculum in its nature was theoretically comprehensive, it had its pragmatic pitfalls in preparing the released graduates to the technicalities related to the world of industrialized work (Nziramasanga Report, 1999). The curriculum's contextual praxis of academic subjects was void of relevance and lacked a conceptual alignment to the practicalities and prerequisite demands expected of the technologically industrialized realm of career prospects and work (Pedzai, Tsvere and Nkhonde, 2016, Nziramasanga Commission Report, 1999, Government of Zimbabwe, 2006). Concurring along was Coltat (2012) who commented that the key concerns of education had a major bias for academic subjects which betrayed the education system to adequately prepare students for the economic world.

An introspective look into The Nziramasanga Commission was advocated for in 2014 and the premise perspective suggested that it was the time to act than complaining, the Minister of Primary and Secondary education was echoed in his lamentations at a press meeting (Dakwa, 2016, The Sunday Mail Report, 2014). The Minister of Primary and secondary education (Dr Lazarus Dokora by then), castigated the strides at which the Nziramasanga Commission recommendations were being implemented (The Sunday Mail Report, 7 Sep 2014). The grounding arguments were based on the fact that Zimbabwe was trailing behind in curriculum relevance in Southern Africa and at a global parity since the country's neibhours were already implementing this type of the curriculum. The Nziramasanga commission was endorsed by the President of Zimbabwe to make an analytical diagnosis into the problems that were getting in the way of the education sector (Mawere, 2013, Nziramasanga Commission Report, 1999, Dakwa, 2016).

Pursuant to make significant improvements that would revamp the key sectors particularly the Ministry of Education, around late 1997, the government of Zimbabwe resorted to conducting an inquiry through its two incumbent Ministries concerning the then Education and Training system (Government of Zimbabwe, 1999). Since 1980 to 1998, many numerous significant reforms had been set in place for implementation and did not yield any fruition (Nziramasanga Commission, 1999). Dating back the hands of time, it was in 1962 since a similar inquiry was carried out 18 years before independence and 17 years' post-independence amounting to 35 years of inactivity. This was the judges Commission set up by the colonial government to make an inquiry into the African education and was followed by the Lewers-Taylor Committee 's report on African Education in particular (Nziramasanga Commission Report, 1999).

As said above, this lack of a real inquiry for thirty-five years inclusive of eighteen years of post-independence Zimbabwe and a transition of revolutionary changes, it was considered thereof a necessity to make such an inquiry into the National Education (The Sunday Mail Report, 7 Sep 2014, Nziramasanga Commission Report, 1999). This was regarded as a holistic agenda putting into perspective the fundamental transformations that had become apparent in the socio-political context and the continuous evolving technological and global paradigm shifts of the 21st error. Among the recommendations, there was need for a rapid computerization of schools, curriculum and the teaching profession so that they become commensurate and able to sustain challenges of the technology-driven 21st Century expectations (Nziramasanga Commission Report, 1999, Coltat, 2012). Again, the Commission report also implored that the asbsentism of a specific implementation policy framework on the curriculum coupled with deferred action would result in irredeemable destruction to the employment capabilities of all the school leavers.

Research questions

1. What are the challenges encountered in implementing CALA?

2. What could be the implications of these challenges to the education of learners in Zimbabwe?

3. Which strategies can be employed to effectively implement CALA?

Methodology

 A qualitative research design was employed which made use of focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews to gather data on stakeholders' perceptions and gain a deeper understanding of the consultative proceedings (Krueger and Casey, 2000, De Vos et al, 2011). All discussions and interview proceedings were done in the vernacular language (Shona) and were later on translated to transcribed verbatim. Consent to tap and video record the proceedings was sort from forum participants (Holstein and Gubrium, in De Vos, 2011). Field notes were also captured for a good record of information likely to be forgotten and to complement gaps in data gathering (Field and Morse, 1994 in De Vos, 2011). Data was collated, themes and sub-themes were compiled for data analysis. (Marshall and Rossman, 1999, Creswell , 2003)

Results and Discussion

Theme 1: Challenges in implementing CALA

All the stakeholders that include teachers, learners and parents indicated that they encounter various challenges in the implementation of CALA. Parents, who will be at home when children and learners interact at school are not kept in a far distance on this issue hence they also have their own types of challenges. This was revealed by their responses;

 A parent Mr. A (name protected) had the following to say regarding CALA;

Translation: "*We spend a lot of money buying the items needed for CALA, our budgets are strained considering that we do not have a reliable source of income. CALA is now a burden"*

Again a Mrs. B (name also protected) had the same outcry concerning CALA and reiterated the following;

Translation: *"I do not have money; I survive on subsistence farming but my child is in need of money to buy items needed by the teacher for CALA. The files are sold at school at $1 each but I have to buy although they are expensive here otherwise I would incur traveling costs to buy from town."*

The parents have the same sentiments. Their burden is centred on financial resources which they should channel towards purchasing learning materials needed by their children. Furthermore, the parents used to enjoy the help of their children in doing home chores. However, the children have no time to do such home chores because they will be doing CALA.

Another parent Mrs. C (name concealed) presented her views as expressed below:

Translation: "*Previously, I knew that after coming from school, Jane would do the home chores like washing plates, fetching water and preparing meals but now she will be doing CALA" (Parent C).*

Mr. D (name protected) one of the village elders grumbled saying;

Translation: *"We used to chat with our children but nowadays they will be occupied by CALA such that there is no longer time for that. My child is unable to control an ox drawn plough because he will be doing CALA. Where then will he learn survival skills?"*

Parents also believe that it is not only CALA that develops hands on skills in their children but also the home based learning in form of chores help to prepare the child for a living. They however cry for the absence of such time when they can prepare their children in a traditional set up. This of course stimulates parents to challenge CALA which they accuse of taking up precious time of instilling values at home.

Another challenge emanates from non engagement of parents right in the beginning of CALA. This affects their views and perceptions on CALA. Some of the parents, despite having better education and jobs do not know what it is all about. Their responses reveal that MoPSE never made parents become aware of CALA, what it is all about and its benefits.

Concerning this regard, a parent Mr. E commented;

Translation: "I *learnt in the previous years but I got a better job. Please teach children in a way we used to be taug*ht in the past."

Another parent Mr. F added,

Translation: *"What has CALA benefited us so far? Nothing at all except pumping out money to purchase items needed. I don't see anything good that is coming out of CALA "*

The parent's lack of understanding on what CALA is all about contributes to the mounting negative perceptions on CALA. Learners also face challenges which have shaped their views and perceptions on CALA. They are required to do CALA for final grading. Without submitting CALA, they will not be graded in a particular learning area. Their responses reveal that the amount of CALA is a burden they cannot shoulder on:

Learner A (name protected) at one of the schools lamented the following;

Translation: "*CALA has a lot of work to be done. I have to do CALA for all the 11 learning areas I study. If I do not submit CALA, I fail, so tough!*"

Another learner, learner B expressed her situation saying;

"*I am an orphan and my grandparents cannot afford all the things that a demanded by the teachers to do CALA, I feel like I should drop out of school because teachers don't understand my situation. The teachers are supplying the materials at a price so if you don't buy from them, you become a victim*"

Learner C (name protected) complained;

Translation: "*CALA is killing us, sometimes I would need to research some of the ideas and concepts on the internet. It is difficult because most of the time I have no money to by data. I sometimes ask my brother who is in Masvingo to research for me but I do still struggle because of lack of WhatsApp data and network connectivity problems*"

Another of the learners, learner D made an outcry concerning ICT gadgets and accessories;

Translation: "*It is an enormous challenge for me because when I have to do the CALA assignment at home, I struggle a lot because I don't a have a phone that can google stuff for me. If I ask to use from others they say I should pay $1 dollar/30 minutes. I do not know how to research so sometimes I fail to come up with the right points that I need*"

 Some learners will even pay to have their CALA done by someone who can be teachers. Usually the CALA are written by teachers because they require some technicalities only known by teachers. Despite the CBC being underpinned by the philosophy of Unhu/ Ubuntu which cherishes such values like integrity and honesty, both teachers and learners revealed that they cheat for marks. Regarding this concern, the following learners expressed their predicaments:

Learner E explained;

Translation: "*I pay someone to do CALA for me because I need time to prepare for my examinations.*"

Learner F an Ordinary level student reiterated: "*Because of the workload and demands required, I buy already prepared CALAs from those who are now selling them. I have seen that it's better that way because in the end what is needed is to submit the CALA, how you have done it nobody cares*"

Another learner G had the following to say:

Translation: "*I will just go and by from the teachers because it makes me relieved since I know that I will not fail as I would buy from the one who made the assignment and also grade the assignment*".

 Some learners feel that CALA improves their pass rate but it no easy task considering the time and intellectual energy it requires.

Learner G expressed:

Translation: "*CALA enables us to pass exams but there is a lot of work on doing it.*"

Another learner F jovially said:

Translation: "*I will not fail at all because if I find it difficult I will have to buy from those who are doing CALA assignments for business. I will even obtain high marks since the work will be done neatly and perfectly to lure students*".

Teachers revealed that they are finding it difficult to supervise learners doing CALA considering the total work load they have. They showed that they can only supervise CALA just to comply with the policies with paying attention to the objectives of CALA. In some cases, they can just award the marks without going through the CALA. A teacher from a certain explained:

"*I have a lot of teaching load, I mark the exercise books and prepare for the next lessons. Therefore, I can just record marks for the purpose of submitting them to ZIMSEC.*" (Teacher 1).

Another teacher added, "*You can't expect me do all that work, it was better if I had to supervise only one CALA*" (Teacher 2).

The teachers are not even aware of how the CALA will be moderated by ZIMSEC where they submit the final mark. They are suspicious that the moderation may lack validity and reliability. The criteria used by ZIMSEC to come up with a mark they use for final grading remains unclear to teachers hence rampant cheating and cooking up of marks for learners. This was revealed by the following responses:

"*We do not know how they come up with a final mark on CALA because the learners' work is never inspected by ZIMSEC.*" (Teacher 3).

Another teacher participant added, " *The training on how to supervise learners doing CALA have to be consistently done, we face difficulties in coming up with appropriate CALA.*" (Teacher 4).

Another teacher expressed her concerned opinion:

"I think if learners specialize with CALA in one learning area, they can do research focusing more on depth than breadth of the subject. This allows us to identify their potentials and give advice on career path they can take" (Teacher 5).

However, some teachers hold different views with regards to the effectiveness of CALA. They admit facing challenges but feel that CALA has to stay with only minor changes to be effected. This was revealed in the following responses:

"Unlike the theoretical examinations only, this model of assessment adopted by MoPSE in which CALA is used assesses the total potential of the child. They are children who have hands on skills who are disadvantaged by theoretical examinations only yet they can do something for a living." (Teacher 6).

Such teachers have a deeper appreciation and positive perception of CALA hence they effectively supervise learners doing it. With this positive perception, they try by all means to solve the challenges in their school environment.

"Of course I face challenges but I suggest there must be a fifty-fifty on our current assessment model. The weight of the Continous assessment must be equal to the weight of summative assessment." (Teacher 7).

Theme 2: Implications of challenges faced in implementing CALA to the education of learners in Zimbabwe.

The challenges have a significant impact on the learning programs of the learners in both primary and secondary schools. These challenges that have been cited include unavailability of resources to support implementation of CALA, too much workload, lack of understanding of CALA and limited time on the part of the learners who are loaded with too many tasks of CALA. The stakeholders who were interviewed revealed that the challenges have effects on the education of learners:

"Syllabus coverage is delayed because I will be supervising CALA and the learners will be busy making their models or writing if it is a pen and paper CALA" (Teacher 8).

Another teacher contradicted saying, *"CALA enables the learners to understand the concepts because it is a teaching method in itself that promotes active participation of learners." (Teacher 9)*

The teachers' perception of CALA can be attributed to lack of understanding of it's benefits. Their negative perceptions influence how they administer CALA. The heavy workload of CALA close teachers' opportunities for professional growth such as carrying out classroom based research and studying.

"Last semester, I could not register for my courses because I was occupied by supervising learners' CALA since they were about to write their exam." (Teacher 10).

There is also a tendency by both and teachers to overlook theoretical aspects of the curricular content in favour of the practical aspects which are gaining over-emphasis.

"No more teaching of theoretical concepts is taken seriously because that has been replaced by CALA." (Teacher 11).

Theme 3: Strategies to effectively implement CALA

The teachers feel and learners feel that the amount of CALA needs to be reasonably reduced. This was revealed by the response,

"One thing important is to reduce the number of CALA to manageable levels." (Teacher 3).

*It w*as also added that, "tr*aining us to handle issues to do with CALA improves the way we manage CALA and definitely the outcome also improves." (Teacher 7).*

There is also need for the provision of teaching and learning resources that aid learners to carry out CALA that is appropriate in the context of economic and technological advancement. This was revealed by one participant, *"schools or the government itself should provide smart phones and laptops as well as installing WiFi in schools." (Teacher 8)*

Discussion of findings

The study thrived to explore on stakeholder (parents, teachers, students) perceptions on the implementation of CALA and how it has impacted on the teaching and learning process across the curriculum. Findings reveal that confusion has rocked as a hangover regarding CALA implementation in schools nationwide. It has caused untold turmoil of emotions because of its burdensome demands. According to nationwide reports, pupils, teachers and parents are struggling to cope up with the requirements of the project-based learning curriculum (The Chronicle, 23 May 2023). The findings reveal that the existing socio-economic factors are worsening the situation. While CALA seems to be an effective pedagogical and assessment tool, parents, teachers and learners face challenges which shape their perceptions on CALA (Sithole et al, 2021). Parents express discontentment that they have never been told about the importance of CALA and most of them do not even know what it is all about (Pulitzer Center, 10 March 2023, Sithole et al, 2021). Parents want their children to pass examinations and if the curriculum model is failing to meet their expectation, they are likely to dump it. A similar situation

was experienced in the Japanese competence based curriculum which attracted backlash from stakeholders after poor PISA results in 2006 and 2009 (Takayama, 2013). The Ministry of Education in Japan reviewed the curriculum and returned to a more prescriptive curriculum (OECD, 2012).

The Zimbabwe CALA got confronted with stiff resistance from stakeholders due to numerous factors (Dube and Jita, 2018). Teachers as major role players have expressed discontentment over the way CALA is being handled by the MoPSE in the country (Sithole et al 2021). The Ministry has to overcome attitudinal problems within the teachers by conducting workshops that help to build up positive perceptions to CALA. In a similar research carried in Nyanga, teachers complained that the MoPSE did not strategize appropriately prior to the introduction of CALA (Juet et al 2021, Sithole et al 2021). For a comprehensive and a meaningful implementation exercise, the MoPSE should have budgeted funds and also catered for the empowerment of teachers through in-service workshops to upskill its workforce (Kazu and Demiralp, 2016, Ornstein and Hurgins, 2004, Nyamudzodza et al, 2021, The Newsday, May 2023, The Herald, March 2023). Skilled workers would fully understand the expectations before the commencement of the initiated learning program (Kazu and Demiralp, 2016, Ornstern and Hurgins, 2004). On this notion, teachers as active drivers in the implementation process were not inducted on how they should spearhead the initiative and this has provoked a negative attitude coupled with stiff resistance by the teachers (The Newsday, May, 2023, Juet et al, 2021). This is consistent with Gatawa (1992) whose view is that teachers need in-service training to keep them updated with major curriculum reforms. The Government wanted to shift from the colonial education which it had inherited in 1980 and offer quality education commensurate with the changing economy as per the recommendations of CIET (1999). However, there seems to be lack of political will to implement the policies particularly as evidenced by failure to supply adequately the much needed teaching and learning resources (Dzimiri and Marimo, 2017, Juet et al, 2021, The Newsday, May 2023). Schools in the marginal areas continue to be on the suffering end with no meaningful CALA to match those in urban areas. This has created a digital divide between rural and urban schools. No doubt that curriculum reform was regarded as a holistic agenda putting into perspective the fundamental transformation that had become apparent in the socio-political context and the continuous evolving technological and global paradigm shifts of the 21st error.

Again, this curriculum phenomenon is antagonized by a number of undesirable realities which include among the following; unavailable of supportive infrastructural resources such internet facilities, computers, smartphones and electricity in rural schools (Dzimiri and Marimo, 2015). Once more, endless time and resource demands are a major problem since these culminations end up affecting other important aspects of the learning process. This correlates with Dzimiri and Marimo (2015) who in their research unearthed that there was a continuum of challenges associated with different schools in the implementation of CALA. They estimably exhibited in their research findings that schools in Nyanga in the Eastern part of Zimbabwe in Manicaland province were operating without sufficient resources such as textbooks, teaching materials, funds to carry out activities and support from the heads of schools. In congruent with the research findings of this paper and also by Dzimiri and Marimo (2015) is a report compiled by the Nziramasanga Commission (1999) which revealed that it was a general trend that secondary schools were under-resourced with a short supply of textbooks which are a prerequisite source of data and academic information.

Due to lack of ICT tools and gadgets in rural and marginalized communities, there has been a huge rift as some online research platforms could not be convenient to rural communities. The e-learning passport launched by UNICEF and the MoPSE (MoPSE, 2021) was meant to improve the learning barriers imposed by the Covid19 but has failed to be useful due to lack of ICT infrastructure in schools. This e-learning platform could have made CALA so easy to tackle but the calamitous lack of reliable network and internet has gone on a progressive regression speed in Zimbabwe (The Herald, 25 May 2023). Still on that note, the learning passport and other facilities like Ruzivo could have smoothly bridged the digital learning gap but the acute shortage of finances in rural and marginalized communities present huge catastrophic challenges. Moreover, the lack of adequate ICT infrastructure has been a stumbling block to a smooth shift into digitalized platforms because of lack of supportive communications that could utilize ICT tools and devices for online researching during CALA assignments (Newzimbabwe.com, 23 May 2023). In this regard, learners and teachers have been encountering lots of obstacles during the current CALA era, such as lack of access to devices for online research (Almanthari et al., 2020; Dube, 2020). On the same aspect, Zimbabwe battles with rampant electricity power cuts and this is a major problem which also causes poor and unreliable internet connectivity. This notion goes congruent with Rotas and Cahapay, (2020) who also content that unstable internet connectivity is a major obstruction to online learning activities which is required during CALA activities.

More so, high cost of internet data especially among the rural, marginalized and vulnerable communities including those with disabilities is a common dilemma that has mired challenges for learners to do research for their CALA. As evidenced by nationwide reports, parents, teachers and school learners have vehemently reiterated that the high cost of data is a major drawback since most of the CALAs need internet connectivity and navigation. (The Sunday news, The Chronicles, The Herald, 25 May, 2023). In the same strain, researchers in Namibia made similar findings concerning challenges of online learning platforms experienced during the outbreak of Covid19. On this notion, resources to access internet and network were a major problem as noted by Kaisara and Bwaya (2021). Learners faced a number of problems such as encounters with data costs and poor network connectivity as expounded by Kibuku et al (2020). Again, Kibuku et al (ibid) stress that the issue of data expenses has been acknowledged as the major issue detouring e-learning in developing countries. On the same impression, research conducted by Duve (2020) echoes the agreement that a paradigm shift to learning was very difficult due to the fact that facilities and infrastructure for online research in schools was problematic especially in Zimbabwe.

 Although challenges are at the forefront in all curriculum implementation programs, it is believed that teachers are an instrumental resource able to effect change through ecological learning methodologies grounded by the concept of being an improviser in the learning process. According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1917-2005) in Louw and Louw (2014), teachers should take advantage of their localized environmental settings and contextualize concepts based on the resources available. Learning becomes more meaningful when concepts and aspects focus on the child and the localized environments, this will have an influence on the learners' academic development. This accession echoes with Chiromo (2010), who assets that teachers should by nature of their work become innovators and improvisers of scientific teaching and learning resources by all means instead of waiting on

conventional apparatus that may not be acquired due to derisory financial resources in rural schools. However, internet searching is a functional prerequisite in order to link and blend scientific knowledge to reality checks of pedagogical indigenous knowledge systems thus the need for internet and broadband connectivity cannot be overlooked. Learning requires an eclectic approach, in this context, infusion of localized means of obtaining data and scientific ways become a dire requisite in order to complement gaps in knowledge acquisition. It is however encouraged that where resources are strained learning should be improvised and it is only possible if teachers agree to be innovative and transformative regardless of impeding challenges.

Linked to teacher motivation as indicated above, there is no motivation for the teachers due a paltry remuneration that they receive as salaries at the end of each month. In this regard, teachers are now masquerading as academic entrepreneurs in the business of making financial returns through selling CALA assignments to the students (Newsday, 25 May 2023). The incapacitation due to poor remuneration made teachers to dilute their professional quintessence and compromise their moral and professional values by selling assignments and cheating of marks (NewZimbabwe.com, 23 May 2023, Newsday, 25 May 2023,). There is no more quality assurance in the education of the children because both teachers and students have developed coping mechanisms that are flawed to manage the crisis.

Perilous findings of this study perceive that the teachers now shift all of their effort to CALA while ignoring to explain some concepts that are theoretical (Juet et al, 2021, OECD, 2019). The study also found out that the introduction of CALA has adversely impacted on the education of children because of irregularities that are beyond their coping strategies. The schools are struggling to fix all the programs of the day in timetables. The day schedules of the teacher and learner is heavily packed because of the shortage of teachers in schools (Berle and Embiza, 2015), thus there is not enough manpower which leads to a low teacher pupil ratio. The study also found out that theoretical aspects of the curricular content are being ignored. Teachers also find no time to do other tasks that are important for their professional growth.

Conclusion

Based on the findings from the interviews carried out, the stakeholders who are active implementers of the curriculum feel that CALA must be miscarried as a curriculum framework. CALA has brought turmoil to parents, learners and teachers due to overload of expectations without supportive resources to fund it hence a dire some need to scrap it completely. CALA has proved to be an expensive and an insurmountable instructional commitment which cannot be implemented in Zimbabwe due to lack of resource funding, ICT tools, computers, smartphones for learners especially rural primary schools and WI-FI systems. Lack of training to teachers and the technical know-how to make use of technological tools has also hampered CALA implementation. The bureaucratic nature of curriculum implementation that is from top to bottom has caused ripple effects since teachers as critical implementers and point of conduct were never consulted from the start. Teachers as a critical point of departure in curriculum innovation and implementation were not engaged and consulted for a more informed decision making process.

Recommendations

1. Among the recommendations, there was need for a rapid computerization of schools, curriculum and the teaching profession so that they become commensurate and able to sustain challenges of the technology-driven 21st Century expectations (Nziramasanga Commission Report, 1999, Coltat, 2012).

2. The government through the MoPSE should prioritize a financial commitment of budgets targeted to finance the education of children through its obligation of the education for all SDG goals; these include teacher remuneration, provision of teaching and learning resources. This would entail resource mobilization through partnership with non-governmental organization (UNICEF, Save the Children) and non-profit organization through good governance and positive political will.

3. The government of Zimbabwe should embark on a massive implementation of in-service workshops to emancipate teachers with relevant skills and change of attitude.

4. The government must by all means engage all stakeholders through meaningful consultative forums and awareness campaigns to develop a comprehensive understanding of what CALA is all about, its benefits to the nation at large without imposing decisions.

5. The MoPSE should collaborate with ZIMSEC and reduce the number of CALAs to specific main subject areas that can be taken as compulsory components per learner.

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