

USING TEACHING / LEARNING AIDS IN THE TEACHING OF PRIMARY SCHOOL SUBJECTS IN BINGA DISTRICT

FRANCIS NDLOVU

LECTURER: FACULTY OF ARTS AND EDUCATION: ZIMBABWE OPEN UNIVERSITY

Abstract

The aim of the present study is to investigate whether teachers in primary schools in Binga district effectively use audio-visual aids when delivering lessons for social studies. The population comprised of all the 1200 teachers in the primary schools and a sample of 320 randomly selected teachers was used. The study employed the quantitative methodology and adopted the descriptive survey design. All the data was gathered by use of a questionnaire which largely had close-ended questions and two open-ended ones. The study revealed that teachers were not effectively using audio-visual aids to deliver lessons. The study recommends that school heads should motivate teachers and guide them in the use of teaching / learning aids for all subject areas. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is also implored to resuscitate the Audio-Visual Services Unit in order for schools to procure instructional materials from the unit.

Key words

Effectiveness, teaching / learning aids, primary school, subjects and district.

Introduction

In Zimbabwe, the primary school curriculum consists of more than eleven subjects all taught by one teacher to a class. As Chivore (2006) argues, this overloaded curriculum means that pupils are not adequately covering the content of the various subjects. Teachers have to rush to cover all the eleven subjects and in the process paying very inadequate attention to catering for individual learning needs of each child (Madziyire, 2010). The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education as a result of this problem, encourages teachers to use teaching / learning aids in order to help pupils understand concepts in a relatively shorter space of time (Ndlovu, 2008). Every lesson in the primary school should be taught using teaching / learning aids and heads of schools are expected to make sure that teachers effectively use the aids to improve understanding of concepts by pupils. Every classroom is expected to have various kinds of

relevant teaching / learning aids for all the subjects for use by both the teachers and the pupils. The schemes of work and lesson plans have sections for teaching/ learning aids and the instruments used by heads, education inspectors and other supervisors for supervising teachers also have a section on teaching / learning aids (Ndlovu, 2008). This, therefore means that teaching / learning aids are viewed by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education as a very important component of the teaching / learning process. It is on account of this information that this study sought to investigate how the teachers were using teaching / learning aids to promote effective teaching and learning in their classrooms.

Literature Review

Learning and teaching aids are items used to facilitate learning and teaching (Martin, 2012). As Drews (2007) states, learning and teaching aids can be visual or audio. Bruner (1966) in Madziyire (2010) defines learning as the process intended to evoke in the learner's mind the patterns of ideas similar to those which already exist in the teacher's mind. To show that the learner has learnt, they must put together those patterns by using more than one sense of the five senses of touch, sight, hearing, smelling and feeling. As Bryant (2004) posits, moreover, the instruction that is provided to the learner proceeded from direct experience through the representation of pictures, films and other forms to symbolic representation as in words.

Teaching / learning aids provide concrete experience to facilitate learning and the acquisition, retention and usability of abstract information (Martin, 2012). According to Sulaman (2011), whatever grade or subject one teaches, a teacher using learning aids is always superior to the one who teaches without aids. Sharma and Sharma (2006) define teaching aids as materials that the classroom teacher uses to help students to understand the concepts he/she introduces in his/her lesson and they can be in numerous forms. Teachers, especially in the primary schools should be encouraged to use as many teaching and learning aids as possible to set an environment which is stimulative and conducive to learning and in which pupils can be easily guided through the discovery of knowledge on their own (Zvavanhu, 2014). There most common forms of teaching / learning aids include fixed on the walls of the classroom like the chalkboard and charts, electronics like the radios, televisions, computers and overhead projectors, as well as the environment itself and resource persons (Zvavanhu, 2014).

In order to make the best use of materials; appropriate materials which are in compliance with the relevant subject and education level should be selected and the right method should accompany those materials (Yildirim, 2008). At the same time, these materials should be used at the right time and in the right setting (Vural, 2004). According to Yildirim (2008), teaching / learning materials should be in accordance with the developmental features, interests and needs of the students, should bring about the planned achievements, should be appropriate for classroom use, should pave the way for presenting the topic more efficiently, should be clear about their methods and conditions for use and should be handy, economic and easy to transport from one place to another. Yildirim (2008) further postulates that the use of teaching / learning

materials in accordance with the above mentioned principles, is very important especially for primary education students because when primary education is compared to other education levels, it becomes evident that it is an education level which should include more materials than any other level.

Creative freedom and choice of direction provided by the use of multimedia in the instructional process empowers the students to cope up with learning problems even without the teachers' interference (Bell-Gam and Iyamm, 2000). As Heafner (2004) highlight teaching/learning materials empower students by engaging them in the learning process as students construct their understanding of the content and are more likely to be motivated and pupils will develop the zeal and vigour to learn if they are exposed to instructional materials such as computers, charts, projectors, realia an concrete objects.

According to Gamira et.al (2010), teachers need to train and develop their skills outside of the regular school day so that they can concentrate on instruction and training objectives. School leaders should also facilitate the induction of teachers in the making and use of teaching / learning aids (Martin, 2012). For example as Martin (2012) argues, teachers should not rely on aids that are expensive, but should use local aids which the children and teachers make themselves. Outside the classroom there are different flowers which can be used to teach colours, or the classroom itself can be used to in mathematics when learning about lengths, widths and height (Martin, 2012).

In spite of the good uses of teaching / learning aids there are a number of challenges that teachers face during the teaching/learning process. Drews (2007) posits that barriers to using instructional material in education include lack of time, limited access and costs of equipment, lack of vision or rationale for instructional material use, lack of teacher training and support and current assessment practices that may not reflect what is learned with instructional materials. This indicates that the need for teacher training and lack of expertise are major barriers to using teaching / learning aids in the primary schools. Hobbs (2004) states that teachers have a love or hate relationship with mass media. A study of California teachers found that teachers believed that they lacked time to use instructional materials and this implies that the use of staff development courses can be of great value to understand more about teachers' attitudes towards the use of instructional material (Hobbs, 2004). Omariba (2012) states that resources like manila paper, brochures, journals, pamphlets and pictures were usually easy to get; however, audio-visual resources such as films, slides, radios, television and tapes were not available. While many teachers complain about lack of instructional resources, they are guilty of not using what is available (Omariba, 2012). Omariba (2012) also found that scarcity of some instructional techniques and especially lack of modern efficient instructional technologies in the schools, lack of trained personnel such as technological assistants and lack of sufficient knowledge on use of these technologies made the teaching and learning process very difficult.

The literature review has revealed the importance of teaching / learning aids especially for small learners in the primary school system. Literature also reveal that appropriate materials which are in compliance with the relevant subject and education level should be selected. In spite of the good uses of aids teachers experience a number of challenges as they try to use them.

Statement of the problem

Every lesson in the primary school in Zimbabwe should be taught with the support of teaching / learning aids to enhance pupils' understanding of various concepts and heads of schools are expected to monitor teachers to make sure that their comply with this expectation. Whether teachers are actually utilizing the teaching / learning aids as a practical reality is a subject for exploration and thus, this study set out to assess how effectively teachers were using the teaching / learning aids in their classrooms.

Research Questions

1. Are teachers aware of the benefits of teaching / learning aids?
2. Do teachers make use of teaching / learning aids for every lesson?
3. What challenges do teachers experience in the use of teaching / learning aids?

Significance of the study

The importance of the study is promised on the fact that it attempted to expose the obstacles to effective utilization of teaching / learning aids by teachers during the teaching / learning process in order to proffer practical suggestions to improve the status-quo.

Limitations of the study

The study's sample size and geographical size make it difficult to generalize on a universal scale without posing challenges. The other limitation has to do with the descriptive method that was used in this study. The respondents may also give false responses thereby affecting the validity of the findings.

Delimitation of the study

The study confined itself to investigating the effectiveness of using teaching / learning aids in the teaching of primary school subjects in Binga District using a sample of 320 randomly selected teachers. Views from other stakeholders like heads of schools, education inspectors and parents were outside the purview of this study.

Research Methodology

The study employed the quantitative methodology. The quantitative methodology was found to be useful in this study because it enabled the researchers to investigate 320 teachers' perceptions regarding the way how they make use of aids during the teaching / learning process in their classrooms. The study settled for the survey descriptive design. The use of the survey research design enabled the researchers to gather widespread perceptions of the respondents on the phenomenon under review (Bell, 2011). The study's population comprised of 1200 teachers from all the primary schools in the district. The simple random sampling technique was employed to select the respondents because it permitted every teacher in the district an equal opportunity of partaking in the study (Kumar, 2008). The researchers used a questionnaire which had both close-ended and open-ended questions. Close-ended questions enabled the researchers to collect pre-determined respondents' opinions regarding the studied phenomena (Kumar, 2008). The researchers were able to obtain the actual feelings of the respondents regarding using of teaching / learning aids through the use of the open-ended questions. The researchers distributed the questionnaires to the various schools and collected them. Permission to conduct the study was sought first before questionnaires were distributed. Respondents participated voluntarily and they were assured of anonymity and that the results from the study were solely for academic reasons.

Findings and Discussion

The study set out to investigate the effectiveness of using teaching/learning aids by primary school teachers in their daily classroom lesson presentations.

Presentation of data

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by sex (N=320).

Category of responses	Frequency	Percentage
Male	166	52
Female	154	48
Totals	320	100

The information above shows that 52% of the respondents were male and 48% female.

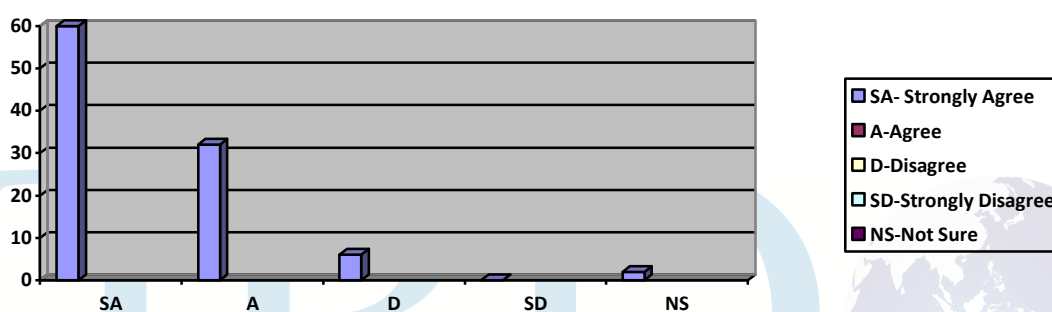
Table 2: Composition of respondents by professional qualifications (N=320).

Professional Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage
Untrained	32	1
Certificate in Education	29	9
Diploma in Education	205	64
Graduate Teachers	54	17

Totals	320	100
---------------	------------	------------

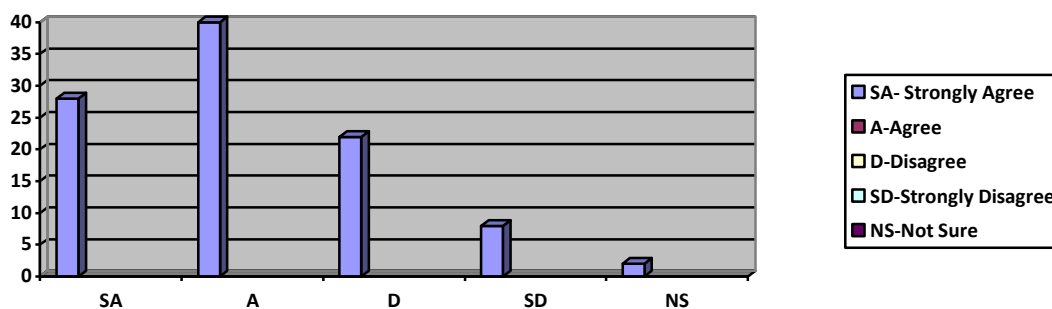
The majority of the respondents (91%) are in possession of a relevant professional qualification with the majority being Diploma in Education holders (64%). A few though (10%) are still untrained teachers.

Figure 1: Responses to the question: “Are teaching / learning aids really necessary for all lessons in the primary school subjects?” (N=320).



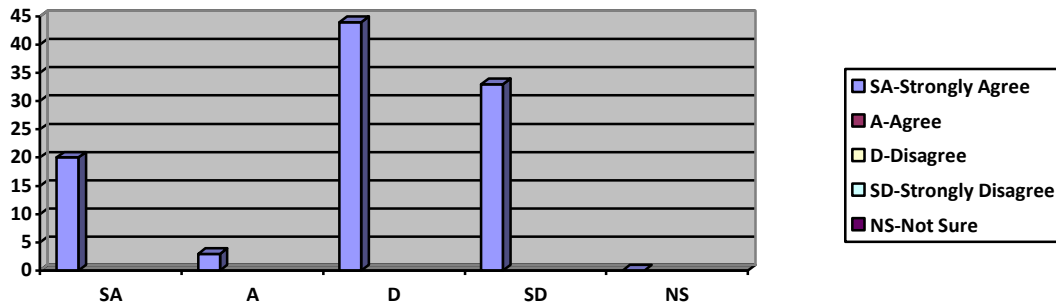
As figure 1 above shows, the majority of respondents (92%) indicated that teaching / learning aids are necessary for all lessons in the primary school subjects. A paltry 6% disagreed and those who were not sure about the question constituted 2% of the respondents.

Figure 2: Responses to the question: “Are teaching / learning materials or aids readily available at your school?”



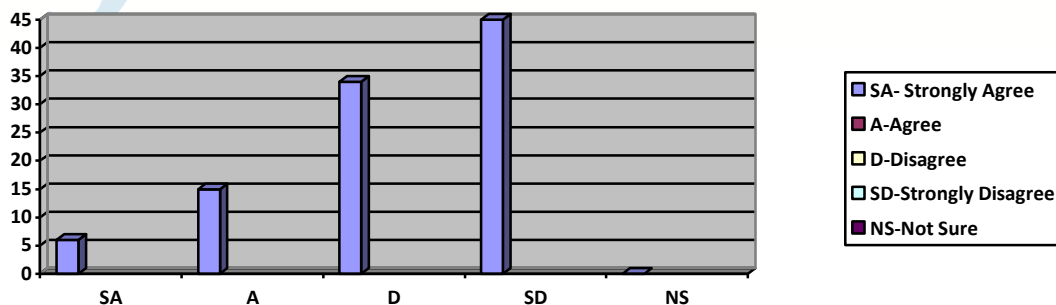
Most of the respondents (68%) stated that teaching and learning materials were readily available to make use of in their lessons; whereas (30%) indicated that they were not readily available.

Figure 3: Responses to the question: “Do you use teaching / learning aids in all your lessons?” (N=320).



Information on figure 3 shows that 77% of the respondents admitted that they were not using teaching / learning aids during lesson presentations. Those who indicated that they used teaching / learning in all their lessons constituted 23% of the respondents.

Figure 4: Responses to the question: “Are you staff developed on the effective use of teaching / learning aids?” (N=320).



Most of the respondents indicated that they did not receive any staff development on the effective use of teaching / learning aids (79%) and 21% stated that they were staff developed.

The questionnaire had two open-ended questions which bolstered data from the close-ended questions. The first question wanted to find out from the respondents the most common types of aids that were available in their schools. The most common in order of popularity included the following:

• Chalkboard	-	100%
• Charts	-	100%
• Natural materials	-	100%
• Pictures	-	100%
• Newspapers	-	96%
• Radio	-	87%
• Dictionaries	-	83%
• Maps	-	77%
• Models	-	75%
• Computers	-	56%
• Library	-	53%

The second question wanted to find out from the respondents what the major challenges they were experiencing in relation to effective use of teaching / learning aids were. The majority of the respondents stated that the primary school curriculum was very congested and made it very difficult for them to use teaching / learning aids for each and every lesson. In addition, they stated that the work overload they went through, left them tired and could not adequately prepare aids after a days work. The other challenge mentioned was the common types of teaching / learning aids use across all the classes in the primary school. This killed pupils' motivation since aids they meet in a current grade might have been used in the previous grade. An example given was of such things like charts, models, natural materials and the chalkboard.

Discussion

The majority of teachers in the district are qualified and most likely to be aware of the role of teaching / learning aids as teacher training colleges teach students about the importance of aids. This finding correlates with data from this same study which revealed that most of the teachers indicated that teaching / learning aids were very necessary for all lessons. This tallies with observations by Martin (2012) who stated that teaching / learning aids provide concrete experience to facilitate learning and the acquisition, retention and usability of abstract information. Bryman (2004) further corroborates this assertion when he states that, to show that the learner has learnt, they must put together those patterns by using more than one sense of the five senses of touch, sight, hearing, smelling and feeling. In other words, this means that use of teaching / learning aids enable all the child's senses to be engaged which helps them to retain information better than relying on one sense.

Teaching / learning aids were readily available in most of the teachers' classrooms. These were largely the ordinary aids like the chalkboard, charts and the locally found materials. However, teaching / learning aids like radios, tape recorders, computers, cassettes and such modern

equipment were not easily available and yet they play any equal significant role to motivate pupils. As Omariba (2012) states, resources like manila paper, brochures, journals, pamphlets and pictures were usually easy to get, however, audio-visual resources such as films, slides, radios, television and tapes were not available.

In spite of the fact that the majority of teachers saw the importance of teaching / learning aids and that they were readily available, they nonetheless were in the majority of cases not using teaching / learning aids during lesson delivery. This runs contrary to scientific views on the utility of teaching / learning aids by for example, Zvavanhu (2014) who posits that, teachers especially in the primary schools should be encouraged to use as many teaching and learning aids as possible to set an environment which is stimulative and conducive to learning and in which pupils can be easily guided through the discovery of knowledge on their own. The major reason cited for this contradiction came out in the open-ended question where teachers indicated that the primary school curriculum was over congested and did not give the time to prepare and make use of aids for each and every lesson.

Schools were not staff developing teachers on the use of teaching / learning aids particularly the new forms of technological aids like computers, over head projectors, film strips and video cassettes. As Gamira et.al (2010) posits, teachers need to train and develop their skills outside of the regular school day so that they can concentrate on instruction and training objectives. School leaders should also facilitate the induction of teachers in the making and use of teaching and learning aids.

Conclusion

Given the background of the above findings, the researchers make the following conclusions: -

- Teachers were very much aware of the significant role played by the teaching / learning process and yet they do not use them.
- Common and cheap teaching / learning aids were readily available in most classrooms. However, they had been monotonously used to a point where they had ceased to motivate pupils. The modern technological aids were not available and yet they could help to motivate pupils.
- Teachers were not using teaching / learning aids yet they were available due to an overcrowded timetable and work overload.
- Schools were not staff developing teachers on the use of teaching / learning aids especially the new technological equipment like computers, overhead projectors and others.

Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study, the researchers would like to make some recommendations:

- Heads of schools should make sure that every teacher at primary school level utilizes teaching aids for all the lessons to help simplify content for the children. Supervision of lessons should prioritise the effective use of aids.
- The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should reduce the number of subjects taught to primary school pupils as it is affecting the quality of learning due to a congested timetable that leaves teachers too fatigued to prepare teaching / learning aids.
- The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should reintroduce its Audio-Visual Services department so as to provide current and relevant teaching / learning aids for all school at low cost.
- Heads of schools should organize seminars, workshops and staff developmental courses for teachers to be equipped with the necessary skills for increasing productivity towards the effective use of teaching / learning aids.



References

- Awasthi, D. (2014). *Utilising audio-visual aids to make learning easy and effective in primary education*. International Journal of Scientific research, 3(8): 62-63.
- Bayero, H. I. (2012). *Resources for teaching social studies at primary and junior secondary school*. Zaria: Almadu Bello University.
- Bell-Gam, V. and Iyamu, E. O. S. (2000). *The role of the computers in social studies teaching*: Journal of Development Studies, 3(5): 53-58.
- Bryant, T. (2004). *Social software in academia*. Educare Quarterly, 29(2): 61-64.
- Chivero, C. (2006). *Education and technology*. Harare: College Press.
- Drews, D. (2007). *Do resources matter in primary mathematics teaching and learning?* London: Learning Matters Limited.
- Gamira, D., Ndamba, G. T. and Mswazi, J. (2010). *Translating environmental science policy into practice: A case study of the environmental science curriculum implementation in Masvingo District of Zimbabwe*. Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa, 12(8): 227-240.
- Heafner, T. (2004). *Social studies and technology: teachers' perceptions of effective integration*. North Carolina: University of North Carolina.
- Hobbs, R. (2004). *A review of school-based initiations in media literacy*. American Behavioural Scientist, 48(1): 42-49.
- Kumar, R. (2008). *Research in educational settings*. London: University of London.
- Madziyire, N. C. (2010). *Supervision of education personnel*. Harare: Zimbabwe Open University.
- Martin, J. (2012). *Locally sourced teaching aids are engaging students and improving education*. Dar-es-alam: UNICEF.
- Ndlovu, S. (2008). *Improving staff performance through in-service*. Harare: Zimbabwe Teachers Association.
- Omariba, A. (2012). *Challenges facing teachers and students in the use of instructional*

technologies: A case of selected secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya. Nairobi: Kenyatta University.

Suleman, Q. (2011). *Role of educational technology at primary school level.* International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Services, 1(3): 85-95.

Vural, S. (2004). *How to become a teacher in Turkey.* Budapest: Prezi.

Yildirim, K. (2008). *A case study on the use of materials by classroom teachers.* Educational Sciences: theory and Practice, 8(1): 305-322.

Zvavanhuchopper.blogspot.com/2010/10/blog-post-16.

