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# QUALITY CHALLENGES DURING TEACHING PRACTICE IN TEACHERS' COLLEGES

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## ABSTRACT

This study sought to find out the quality challenges during teaching practice in Zimbabwean primary Teachers' Colleges. The multiple case study design was used and five teacher colleges participated in this study. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants. The participants included student teachers and lecturers. Data were generated through focus group discussions for student teachers and interviews for lecturers. Data were analysed through interpretive study analysis. The study found out that there were a number of challenges faced by both student teachers and lecturers during teaching practice. These included work overload on the part of the student teachers. Lecturers had problems in supervising students on teaching practice regularly. The study recommended that more resources should be allocated to teaching practice and student teachers should have adequate preparation in college before embarking on teaching practice. The study concluded that the quality of teaching practice was negatively compromised in the context of quality of quality.

**Key Words:** Quality, Teaching Practice

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers are trained in eight government teacher primary colleges and three private colleges. The teachers graduate with a Diploma in Education. This is a three year programme in which students are resident in college for theory for two terms and go for teaching practice for five (5) terms then come for another two terms for theory. The model is known as the 2-5-2 model. Entry requirements to train as a teacher considers five ordinary level passes with a C grade including Science, Mathematics and English as compulsory subjects (Zvobgo, 1998).

According to Chivore (1994), DTE of the University of Zimbabwe ensures that the graduates from teachers colleges are of quality and certificates are awarded to successful candidates. This research investigated the quality of teaching practice during the time student teachers are on teaching practice.



## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Teaching Practice and Teacher Education Quality**

Feiman – Nemser (1990) provided conceptions that guide and influence on implementation of teaching practice. He identified form of orientation teaching practice could be moulded around. These are the academic orientation, practical orientation, technical orientation and personal orientation. Academic orientation emphasizes mastery of subject matter to be taught as well as subject matter pedagogy which is learnt at college. According to Buchberger (2000) the academic orientation can be defined as celebrating the academic disciplines. Quality of the teacher is based on teacher subject expertise. Another form of orientation is the practical orientation. According to Calderhead and Shorrock (1997) practical orientation focuses much on practical knowledge. The knowledge base of teaching includes craft and technique. The teacher is viewed as a craftsman. The argument within the practical orientation is that the teacher needs practical wisdom and scientific knowledge. This belief attaches importance to classroom experience and apprenticeship models of teacher training. Another type of teaching practice is the technical orientation.

Technical orientation is derived from the behaviourist model of teaching and learning. According to Calderhead and Shorrock (1997) this orientation emphasizes the knowledge and behavioural skills teachers are a result of micro and peer teaching as well as the competency based approaches to teacher education. Teaching practice should enhance acquisition of teacher competencies. Another type of orientation is the personal orientation. Personal orientation emphasizes development of interpersonal skills. Interpersonal relationships should be cultivated between the student teacher and other teachers, children and the community. In this orientation teaching practice involves creating a conducive environment for teaching and learning for the children as well as getting support from other experienced teachers as well as the school community. In this orientation teacher development encourages development of interpersonal relationships, conducive environment in teaching and learning as well as discovery and experimentation. The last type of orientation is the critical inquiry. Critical inquiry orientation is another aspect that can guide teaching practice. Teacher educators are developed to become critical thinkers and reflective change agents (Calderhead and Shorrock 1997).

How teaching practice is designed and implemented as well as how students are assessed is dependent on the model used by a teacher education institution. This also applies to monitoring and implementation of teaching practices quality is a factor of the type of orientation prevalent in that institution.

### **2.2 Characteristics of high quality teaching practice**

Eyers (2004) identified characteristics of a high quality teaching practice programme. These include a good partnership between the teacher education institution and the schools, clearly critical stages of development of the acquired knowledge and skills, attributes and disposition for the student teacher. Teaching practice assessment is against clearly delineated objective, roles and expectations of student activity and performance. An assessment of resources needs and implementation is flexible and promotes innovation as well as assessment of student teachers understanding and capacity to learn from the future experience.

### **2.3 Critical aspects influencing quality of teaching practice**

Quality teaching practice is based on critical aspects the teacher educator programme should have. These are institutional design, classroom management, managing learning activities and assessment of learning ( Zechner, 2006).

Instructional design involves analyses, planning, development, implementation and evaluation of a lesson . Involves analysis of learner characteristics and tasks to be learnt and identify learner entry skills, designing objectives as well as the instructional methods. Managing learning activities involve discipline and control as well as other activities such as classroom procedure, pupil behaviour monitory, dealing with misbehaviour and keeping student busy. Managing class activities in an essential learning outcome hence student teachers need to demonstrate competence in this area.



Assessment of pupil performance is also an important aspect of teaching practice. Feedback will assist in determining achievement of instructional objectives. Student teachers are expected to demonstrate their assessment skills and their ability to support pupil learning in order to evaluate and monitor student progress. Hence pupil assessment will assist student teachers identify difficulties and misconceptions in the instructional design and process to plan for the next lesson. The teaching practice programme should be comprehensive enough to cover these different aspects which are critical pillars of practical teaching. The theoretical aspects are taught at college.

Mentoring is a critical element of teacher preparation and is considered as one of the most effective ways of developing student teachers. Mentoring is an intense caring relationship in which an experienced teacher works with a student teacher to promote professional development. Mentoring has been used to train professionals in the areas of medicine, banking, sports and the military (Strong and Baron, 2004). When using the school-based approach to teacher education mentoring is extensively used. It is a source for professional learning for student teachers. In Zimbabwe student teachers go out for five terms teaching practice. During teaching practice the student teachers are placed under, guidance and mentorship of qualified teachers (Mapolisa 2012, Ngara et. al. 2013).

### **3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The current teacher education programme has created problems during the implementation process for both the student teachers and the lecturers. What are the challenges being faced by both student teachers and lecturers in the implementation of the ZINTEC programme?

### **4. RESEARCH QUESTION**

- What challenges are being faced by student teachers during teaching practice?
- What are the students' views towards effective the implementation teaching practice?
- What are the lecturers' views towards effective the implementation of teaching practice?

### **5. METHODOLOGY**

This was a qualitative research. Qualitative research involved the researcher studying the participant in their natural setting. This natural setting was the schools. A multiple case study design was used in this study to study the mentoring processes in the various schools to which student teachers are attached.

#### **5.1 Sampling Procedure**

The purposive sampling techniques were used to identify the participants to this study. The participants included student teachers on teaching practice and the mentors to whom student teachers were attached.

#### **5.2 Data Collection Procedure**

To collect data interviews and focus group discussions were used with both mentors and student teachers.

#### **5.3 Data Analysis**

The interpretive case study analysis theory was used to analyze the data. During data analysis the following steps were followed and which involves describing relationships action, events and the interaction of the participants.



## 6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The student found the following aspects as compromising the quality of teaching practice:

- Conflicting comments are made by the assessing lecturers tend to confuse the students and hence they are not sure of the correct thing to do.
- Some lecturers who come to assess students on teaching practice tend to be fault seekers and one student said “vanenge vari kunyangira mbavha” meaning its like they are waylaying a thief.
- Some lecturers can dress down the students in front of children during supervision. One participant student reported the he or she was asked, “Ndo chii chaurikuita urikuuraya vana” meaning what sought of content are you teaching you are poisoning the children with wrong content.
- Students are overloaded during teaching practice. The undertake distance learning assignments, daily lesson plans, evaluation of both schemes of work and the daily lesson plans (DLP) as well as participate in all the school extra curricula activities.

Students who participated in this study consider the workload as unmanageable. One student participant coined to teaching practice, “cheating practice”. This is mainly because students participants indicated that they write children’s records such as reading record, social record and the attendance registers at home after school without reference to what will be happening in the classroom. Data reveals that these records are done to meet the requirements of the course without a critical reflection of what will have transpired in the classroom. Data gathered from student participants also reveal that there is too much emphasis on production of records by the colleges at the expense of pupil learning.

On quality of teaching practice the study found out that students go for teaching practice without an adequate preparation. There are no formalized partnerships agreements between colleges and schools. However some student teachers found teaching practice to be beneficial because they were able to apply theory learnt at colleges others did not find it helpful and they thought it was too long. The study found out that student teachers were attached to a mentor during teaching practice. There were no documents available to guide mentors who have students under them. Various criteria are used to select mentors in the school these include teachers holding positions of responsibility such as Heads, Deputy Heads, TICs, Sports Masters and in some cases those favoured by the school head were allocated students to ease their teaching load. Ineffective teachers were also allocated students including temporary teachers. Mentors decide the number of the lessons the student teacher will teach despite the availability of college recommendations. Recently graduated teachers were found to be very helpful to the professional development of student teachers. School heads rarely supervised student teacher and where it was done in most cases it was superficial done. To increase commitment mentors feel they need to be paid for the work they will be doing since student teachers pay teaching practice fees.

On assessment of teaching practice the study found out that any lecture in the Teachers College can assess any student on teaching practice teaching any subject without consideration of expertise. Conflicting comments are sometimes given by lecturers during teaching practice to the same issue. Lecturers use supervision forms during lesson observation to assess student teachers yet lecturers are not trained to assess teaching practice using the designed form. Some lecturers tend to be more fault finding during teaching practice supervision and do not provide a conducive environment for student learning.

College lecturers viewed the external assessment to be of poor quality. These lecturers consider appointment of assessors by DTE fraught with favouratism. The external assessors tend to be inconsistent and give conflicting comments from one year to another hence there is tension in some cases between internal and external assessors. All colleges achieve very high pass rates every year and distinction students will be quite sizeable in some areas while others will be very few in the same cohort of students and the average pass rate is usually more than 95%.



## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends the following:

- Review of the Teacher education Curriculum and the period for the theory acquisition of teacher training from six months to one year
- Training of lecturers on assessment of teaching practice and award of a certificate.
- Training of lecturers on assessment of teaching practice and award of certificate.
- Training of monitors on mentoring and award of a competency certificate.
- Establishing of a standard criteria for appointment of external assessors.
- Increase in resources to support teaching practice.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the quality of teaching practice is negatively compromised due to inadequate preparation and lack of resources to support teaching practice. Student teachers were overloaded with assignments and the teaching load during teaching practice this affected the quality of their work.

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