

# **Challenges of Achieving Quality Teacher Education, the Case of Secondary Teacher Education Colleges in Zimbabwe**

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## Introduction

- Recent developments in teacher education in Africa show that teacher preparation is subjected to the combined pressure of external constraints including increase in demand, stagnant budgets as well as internal constraints.
- The deep and multi- dimensional crisis of teacher education which Zimbabwe is facing compels us to look at the challenges institutions face in their effort to provide quality teacher education.
- Teacher education institutions provide training to young professionals and future teachers through teacher education programmes.
- Teacher education institutions in Zimbabwe have in built problems of achieving quality education.
- Teacher Education in Zimbabwe in particular has evolved from the early days of missionary education with only one government teacher education institution (The Teachers' College now Hillside Teacher's College).
- All teacher education colleges enjoy a scheme of association which is based on what was obtained under the British teacher education of the 1960s and 1970s which was linked to the Institute of Education University of London.
- The logic behind the scheme of association was based on creating a coordinating agency designed to give effectiveness to a variety of training activities (Atkinson 1975).
- The scheme of association which I will continue to refer to was established as a collective structure and agency responsible for enabling colleges to make meaningful contribution to sustainable education and professional development.

- To this and the department of Teacher Education at the University of Zimbabwe pursue and promotes professional growth through the provision of benchmarks for excellent teaching, learning, research and accrediting services to teacher education colleges in Zimbabwe.

## Theoretical frameworks:

- The study is framed within a critical and realist philosophy by Roy Basker (1991) and Margaret Archer (1995) which observes that there is a reality which exists independently of human conception.
- To understand the social system or an educational program requires the understanding of the structure, agency and culture that generates unobservable events and this distinguishes between the event and what causes it (Basker 1998, Archer 1995).
- The issue is about how structures, culture and agency shape the situation in which people act.
- Structure emerge from activities of people and they exert an effect on the ideas and beliefs of society from which events and experiences emerge (Kivinen and Piironen 2006)
- Culture, structure and agency impose constraints on the actions of people.
- The three elements play a critical role in enhancing the achievement of any social system that seeks to achieve its goals.
- In their daily lives, people as key agency make choices that either reinforce the existing structure and culture or transform them.
- A deeper understanding of how structure, culture and agency contribute towards understanding of social reality makes us aware that social practices are not value free
- Archer (1995), Gidden (1979) and Boudieu (1977) advocate a dialectical approach to structure and agency, where both have autonomy in interaction.

- Margret Archer has made a significant contribution to the development of critical realism and more narrowly to the structure and agency debate in developing the morphogenetic approach.
- Morphogenetically understood, structure pre-date actions which in turn reproduces or transforms the structure.
- According to the Baskearian and Archerian theory, major challenges affecting the achievement of organisational goals are mainly emanating from inherited structure, cultural and agential entrenchments in the organisation.

## Literature Review

- On examining the quality of secondary teacher education through a socialist realist framework or trajectory, structure, culture and agency play a pivotal role in shaping and achieving quality processes and products (Darling-Hamond 2006).
- Teacher education is based on the theory that “Teachers are made, not born”.
- Since teaching is both an art and science, teachers have to acquire not only knowledge, but also skills which are known as “tricks of the trade”.
- Teacher education programs be provided with the most appropriate tools and structures during and after training which should include content, knowledge and skills.
- Darling –Hamond argue that teacher education curriculum content plays a crucial role in determining the quality of the teacher produced.
- Teachers in training are required to acquire adequate knowledge, skills, interest and attitudes towards the teaching profession.
- The American Commission on Teacher Education rightly observed, “The quality of a nation depends upon the quality of its citizens. The quality of its citizens depends not exclusively, but in critical measures upon the quality of their education, the quality of their education depends more than upon any simple factor, upon the quality of their teachers”.
- The quality of education, like the quality of any product depends on the provider.
- From a business analogue, the most fundamental requirement for good quality products is the presence of a well-motivated and skilled manpower.
- Teacher education seeks to create human talent pool that can adapt to new ideas, culture and environment.

## **Methodology**

- Study was basically a case study of three teacher education colleges.
- I adopted an interpretivist paradigm that uses a qualitative approach which seeks to expose underlying casual mechanism that are responsible for what is experienced.
- Qualitative studies seek to understand phenomenon in its setting (Patton 2002)

## **Population and Sample**

- Study population was made up of all groups of people in the three teacher education colleges and participants were drawn from lecturers and students.
- Purposive sampling was used to select information rich cases drawn from lecturers and students.
- To acquire valid and a reliable diverse realities, multiple data sources and multiple methods of collecting data were used.
- Prolonged engagement with member checking also enhanced validity and reliability.

## Results

- Analysis of data was done using a coding frame consistent with grounded theory (Charmaz 2006).
- Also qualitative content analysis using the research questions was used.
- Key themes from each transcript were captured through intensive reading of each manuscript consistent with qualitative content analysis approach.
- While evidence from the interview data indicated that DTE visits college students on teaching practice, the results suggest that this was not a standard practice across schools visited.
- Lecturers appear to be overwhelmed by the support from DTE, but suggested that they need support from DTE.
- A principal in one of the colleges had this to say “most of the lecturers have not had the opportunity to participate in professional development which equips lecturers with new skills, knowledge and attitudes.
- Little is done to improve the quality of trainers resulting in poor quality teacher preparation.
- DTE does not seem to play a significant role in improving the quality of training in training colleges.
- Pre-service is not enough and participants advocated for continuous professional development courses (CPDC) for qualified teachers.
- Lack of ICTs
- Infrastructure is run down in all the three colleges.

## **Recommendations**

- Teacher education colleges should have well structured quality frameworks to make a range of decisions about their improvements.
- There is need for quality enhancement efforts by providing for continuous improvement.
- Given the state of infrastructure in the colleges, it is necessary that there is an effective mechanism for maintenance of physical and institutional infrastructure such as ICT, laboratories and libraries.
- There is need for continuous professional development for lecturers to enhance their competences.

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