

Original Paper

Wither Pre-service Teacher Education in Zimbabwe? Object
Lessons from Teacher Education Systems in the United
Kingdom, United States and South Africa

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Abstract

After pragmatically tinkering with quantity-oriented models of teacher education since early 1980s, Zimbabwe now seems to be faced with quality challenges, necessitating change of policy direction. In recent years, disquiet has been voiced about the declining quality of school education, a trend widely attributed to the low quality of teachers. This has put teacher education provision in Zimbabwe in the spotlight of critical and in some instances derisive scrutiny. Under such circumstances, one would reasonably expect teacher education policy-makers to be diligently seized with change efforts. However, teacher education policy-makers seem to be dithering indecisively in relation to suggesting new directions for teacher education in Zimbabwe. This paper attempts to break the deafening silence in the teacher education policy community by suggesting some objects lessons for the teacher education system in Zimbabwe on the basis of insights derived from analyzing teacher education systems in the United Kingdom, United States and South Africa.

Keywords

Pre-service teacher, teacher education

1. Introduction

Since independence in 1980, Zimbabwe followed mainly quantity-oriented models of teacher education that emphasized the number as opposed to the quality of teachers produced (Ndawi, 1996, p. 58). Between 1980 and 1989 school enrolment in Zimbabwe grew to levels never seen before. This stemmed mainly from the increased access to educational opportunities extended to blacks as part of Universal Primary Education commitment on attainment of independence in 1980. Predictably, demand for

teachers outstripped the country's teacher training capacity thereafter.

To meet the growing demand for teachers, the government quickly got into survival mode, pragmatically embracing a mass production model of teacher education. As part of the crisis response strategy, crush courses in teacher education were introduced to alleviate critical teacher shortage in schools (Mkondo, 1999, p. 35). Writing with Zimbabwe and Malawi in mind, Lewin (2005, p. 3) similarly notes that shortages of teacher supply led to some radical measures being taken to meet the growing demand. Cases in point in this connection were the Zimbabwe Integrated Teacher Education Course (ZINTEC) and Malawi Integrated In-service Training Programme (MIITEP).

As Lewin (2005, p. 3) further notes, under such programmes teacher trainees spent short initial periods in colleges, under induction and general orientation, followed by lengthy periods in schools. In the schools trainee teachers received occasional residential and distance tuition in theoretical aspects of teaching. However, the structure of the programmes seemed not to afford the trainees a positive professional training environment in the schools. Among many negative experiences in the schools, from a training point of view, trainee teachers took charge of full classes, assuming full teaching loads (Chikunda, 2020, p. 16). This left them little time and opportunity to learn how to teach. Worse still, student teachers also worked on their own in the classroom, with little or no formal school-based support for their learning. Thus in the absence of more experienced and qualified teachers in the classrooms trainee teachers had no-one from whom to get practical craft knowledge and receive guidance. Yet insights from contemporary research suggests that school-based learning of student teachers essentially consists in getting access to the practical knowledge of experienced counterparts. Therefore, under the models under review, trainee teachers missed significant opportunities for professional learning, suggesting that the practicum did not make any positive difference to the quality of the teacher produced.

Perhaps, this is the reason why in the years that followed there were increasing complaints about the deterioration of teacher quality (Ndawi, 1996, p. 62). In the same vein, two commissions of inquiry into Zimbabwean education and training in the 1990s noted and lamented the decline of the quality of teacher training and school education (Chetsanga Commission, as cited in Zimbabwe Teacher Education Programme, 2001, p. 1; Nziramasanga Commission Report, 1999, pp. 457 & 507). It seemed as if there is a developing consensus in teacher education policy circles in Zimbabwe on the need to overhaul and modify the organisation of teacher education to address quality issues (ZIPAM, 2000; Nziramasanga Commission Report, 1999, p. 457; Zimbabwe Teacher Education Programme, 2001, p. 3).

This suggests that an entirely new direction for teacher education is called for in Zimbabwe. However, as the government mulls such a move, it is important to avoid reinventing the wheel by acting in a way that is oblivious to relevant best practices in teacher education in other countries. This is by no means suggesting that reforms that succeeded in other countries can be transplanted wholesale to Zimbabwe, with equally successful results. Rather, the paper argues that Zimbabwe can utilise insights from best practices elsewhere to inform its own efforts at reform in teacher education. Hence in the following sections, the authors analyse teacher education systems in three countries, namely; South Africa, United

Kingdom, and the United States of America with a view to deriving some object lessons for Zimbabwe.

2. Brief Overview of the Teacher Education System in Zimbabwe

The provision of initial teacher education is at present largely the responsibility of public institutions. Private teacher education providers seem to be playing a negligibly peripheral role. The teacher education providers include universities and teachers' colleges. However, teachers' colleges take the most responsibility for initial teacher education. Out of the fifteen teachers' colleges, only three of these are privately owned while the rest are state institutions. However, all the institutions receive a government training subsidy.

Eleven of these teachers' colleges offer a three-year Diploma in Education course for primary school teachers. All applicants for teacher training are required to have five Ordinary level subjects, including English and Mathematics passed at grade C or better. In the Diploma in Education course, students spend the first and third years taking college-based courses in Principles of Education, an Academic subject and Methods of teaching.

The second year is spent on the practicum in schools. The teaching practice is organised on a block basis whereby student teachers go on teaching practice for a continuous period. During teaching practice all trainee teachers are attached to certificated and more experienced teachers, called mentors. This suggests that student teachers do not take full charge of classes.

Although the teachers to whom trainee teachers are called mentors, their role in relation to the learning of student teachers who are attached to them is not clear. There seems to be no officially defined policy which precisely spells out what mentors are supposed to do in the context of their relationship with the trainee teacher attached to them. Also, the mentors seem to have no training for the job, whatsoever. Besides being supervised by mentors, student teachers are also supervised by school heads and college-based lecturers.

Out of the fifteen teachers' colleges, four offer a two-year Diploma in Education course for secondary school teachers. All applicants to this course are required to have at least an Advanced level pass, over and above five Ordinary level subjects which include English. Student teachers spend most of the time taking college-based courses in an Academic subject, Methods of Education, and Principles of Education.

Student teachers go on teaching practice for only one term. During teaching practice the student teachers are attached to appropriate departments in the schools. They generally receive guidance and supervision from the heads of department, school head as well as college-based lecturers. However, the student teachers are not in a one-to-one mentoring relationship with any of the qualified teachers in the school.

As suggested above, universities seem to play a largely peripheral role in the provision of initial teacher education in Zimbabwe. There are eleven universities in Zimbabwe; eight of which are state- while three are privately-owned institutions. Traditionally, most of these institutions offer upgrading courses

for teachers who already hold a diploma or certificate in education. Such offerings often take the form of professional degree qualifications such as the two-year Bachelor of Education in academic subjects, aimed at intending high school teachers. Also, the universities offer a postgraduate certificate or diploma in education for those intending teachers who hold non-teaching degrees.

However, in recent years a few of the universities have started offering pre-service professional degree courses in education. Typically, such qualifications are at least four-year long degree programmes. In general, the structure of these programmes is disproportionately front-loaded with subject content knowledge courses. Other aspects of the teacher education course such as Principles of education and Methods courses constitute only a small component. Students enrolled in such courses tend to go out on the teaching practicum for at least one full year. Examples of such courses include: Bachelor of Education (primary), Bachelor of Arts or Science (with Education), and Bachelor of Education (Honours) (Main subject).

In Zimbabwe there is no central accreditation and quality control authority for teacher education. One of the universities, the University of Zimbabwe serves as the accreditation, certifying and quality control agency for the diploma in education courses offered at various teachers' colleges in the country. This role is undertaken through a relationship of associateship which the colleges have with the University of Zimbabwe. Through its Department of Teacher Education, the University of Zimbabwe monitors the quality of teacher education courses offered at all the teachers' colleges. The colleges are required to submit syllabi for approval by the university. Also, the university closely monitors the quality of summative assessment procedures at these colleges. Additionally, the University of Zimbabwe is responsible for certifying the prospective teachers once it is satisfied with the quality of their work.

There is no standard or national teacher education curriculum in Zimbabwe. This implies that there are no nationally sanctioned criteria or guidelines defining the standard of the teacher expected. This is perhaps the reason why there seems to be no uniformity in the courses offered at the various teachers' colleges.

3. The Teacher Education System in Other Countries

United Kingdom

Brief overview

Since the early 1990s teacher education provision in England and Wales became a joint responsibility of schools and higher education institutions (HEIs), with the former taking an unprecedentedly significant responsibility for teacher education (Carney, 2003, p. 413; King, 2004, p. 197). Through the twin *Circulars 9/92 and 14/93* (Darling Hammond and Cobb 2006, p. 16; King, 2004, p. 197), the HEIs are statutorily obliged to get into partnership with schools. The new scheme of things significantly altered the balance of roles and responsibilities between HEIs and schools (Darling Hammond and Cobb, 2006, p. 32). This policy shift towards school-based teacher education was in response to

concerns about the declining standards of school education, a development ultimately attributed to the poor state of teacher education.

In line with the New Right thinking, school-based teacher education signalled shifting emphasis away from theoretical to practical concerns (Pretorius, 2004, p. 54; Carney, 2003, p. 415). As Jones (2006, p. 57) similarly points out, school-based teacher education represents a move from theory-driven teacher education traditionally offered by the universities to a practice-oriented one. Following scholars such as Schon, this policy change is based on the premise that learning best takes place in the context of authentic and on-going practice in schools (Carney, 2003, p. 414). Given this thrust, it is no wonder why under the school-based teacher education model the teaching practicum is now longer than at any time before, taking more than half of the total training time (King, 2004, p. 199).

Under the new model, schools no longer serve as mere sites for hosting the teaching practicum. Rather, they are supposed to provide structured work-based professional learning opportunities for novice teachers through a mentoring scheme. Under the scheme, trainee teachers learn how to teach under the tutelage of qualified and experienced teachers, known as mentors. The mentors are expected to support the student teacher's efforts to attain a Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). In the UK, mentors are given sponsored opportunities to undergo training for their new role.

Teacher education is governed by a framework of national and officially sanctioned accreditation criteria, called the Standards. Until 1998, the Standards were known as the *Competences* (King, 2004, p. 197). The Standards constitute a basis for controlling the quality of ITE provision at all institutions throughout the country. Also, all institutions offering teacher education courses are required to align their courses with the Standards. Hence the Standards represent a national teacher education curriculum. Thus all prospective teachers are assessed on the basis of the Standards before they are awarded the QTS.

Since 1984, there has been a statutorily mandated central agency for accrediting teacher education programmes in the UK (Pretorius, 2004, p. 55). This accreditation authority changed names, from the original *Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education* (CATE) in 1984 to the current *Teacher Training Agency* (TTA). Among other responsibilities, the TTA establishes and updates the Standards and recommends to the Secretary of State for Education courses suitable for accreditation, recruitment of prospective teachers and quality control teacher education (Pretorius, 2004, p. 56). Another statutory body, the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) provides additional institutional quality control capacity through conducting regular on-site inspection of all teacher education providers (King, 2004, p. 201).

Two conventional entry level teaching qualifications exist in the UK (King, 2004, p. 197). At the first and basic level is the Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). This is the government's baseline qualification for teaching. At the second level is the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) offered by the universities. The PGCE also includes the qualified teacher status (King, 2004, p. 197). These programmes are offered through school-university partnerships.

However, in addition to the above, there are alternative and non-standard routes into teaching which are associated with the advent of school-based teacher education (Pretorius, 2004, p. 56). These include: the *Licensed Teacher and the Articled Teacher Schemes*. Under the licensed teacher scheme, a person with relevant work experience would be allowed to work in the school while undertaking a school-based and personalised teacher training programme (Pretorius, 2004, p. 56). After being satisfied with the trainee's competence, the local educational authority would apply to the Department of Education and Science for a teaching licence for the novice.

On the other hand, the articulated teacher scheme entails a situation where a graduate would undertake two year training under the guidance and supervision of a school-based mentor (Pretorius, 2004: 56). Under this scheme there is no role of college-based while the student teacher is on the practicum. At 80% of the training time is spent in the school while the student teacher uses the remainder of the time to take some courses in the higher education institutions.

Critical evaluation

The teacher education system in the UK can be seen as having the following strengths. Firstly, the existence of statutorily constituted accreditation authority for teacher education programmes in the country allows for easier monitoring of standards. Such an accreditation body ensures that no programmes of dubious quality are allowed to be offered. Also, a central accrediting body complement institution-based quality review procedures, thereby tightening the standards control and monitoring framework in teacher education.

Secondly, the Standards are usefully give those engaged in teacher education provision a clear indication of the national goals of teacher education. This would make it easier for them to develop their respective curricula in a way that maps onto the national goals. Relatedly, the Standards make it easier for the central government to monitor and account for the quality of the teacher produced.

Thirdly, taking teacher education to schools is likely to makes for easier bridging the gap between theory and practice in teacher education. This is a perennial dilemma of most teacher education programmes. Also, the move towards school-based teacher education seems to be consistent with the latest research and trends in teacher education. Several scholars such as Schon, Shulman and Lave and Wenger have for various reasons pointed out that teacher training can best take in the schools where they learn to teach under the guidance, supervision and collaboration of qualified and certificated teachers.

Fourthly, to its credit the teacher education system in the UK provides alternative and non- standard routes for entry into teaching profession. In this way, the system provides an opportunity for mature and dedicated mid-life career changers to join teaching. As indicated above, such schemes include the licensed teacher articulated teacher schemes.

However, the teacher education system in the UK can be seen as having the following weak points. Firstly, the Standards seem to be based on a narrow conception of teaching as performance. Yet teaching encompasses other dimensions which the Standards seem to ignore. For instance, teaching

also involves a moral-ethical dimension since one may have the technical competence but may not be committed to helping those in need of his or her services.

Relatedly, the Standards imply top-down model of teaching whereby teachers passively implement externally-defined and imposed standards. This potentially undermines teachers' professional autonomy and limits their scope opportunity to adapt their teaching to suit different or unpredictable situations in the classroom. If teachers are denied the opportunity to exercise informed professional discretion in the classroom, they are as good as paraprofessionals. This is likely to undermine their self-esteem.

Also, the Standards erroneously assume that a static and rigid set of competences can be effectively applied across all teaching-learning situations. Yet, there may be some situations which the Standards may have failed to anticipate. Teachers who have mastered only the Standards may find themselves out of depth in the face of such situations. This is particularly so in the 21st century where it is difficult to anticipate how situations will develop. Such situations seem to call for teachers who have the capacity to flexibly adapt their teaching to deal with unanticipated turn of events. This suggests that instead of insistent exclusively on mastery of skills that help teachers to perform in the classroom, the UK government may advisedly also seek to cultivate reflective capacities in their teachers to allow them to function in the classroom of the 21st century.

United States of America

Brief overview

The current state of teacher education in the United States was shaped mainly by the reforms introduced in the 1980s, following the publication of *the Nation at risk (1983)*, an adverse evaluation report on the state of education in the United States of America then (Wise & Leibbrand cited in Pretorius, 2004, p. 51). This report, which can reasonably be seen as a policy watershed in teacher education in the United States, was compiled and published by the *United States Commission on Excellence in education (1983)*(Darling-Hammond & Cobb, 2006, p. 14).

In the USA, higher education institutions play a central role in teacher education provision. These include faculties of education in universities and degree offering colleges of education (Beyer, 2002, p. 306). However, some specially designated schools, known as Professional Development Schools (PDSs), sort of laboratory schools also play an important role through hosting the clinical practice internship (Pretorius, 2004, p. 49).

The PDSs represent the interactive space wherein the universities collaborate with public schools. Describing the term *professional development schools*, Pretorius (2004, p. 52) says, "It usually refers to a partnership for the pre-service education of teachers in which schools and university personnel share the decisions of operating both the school-based and the entire length and breadth of the teacher education programme". In the PDSs, a group of career teaching professionals, known as *lead teachers* are charged with the responsibility of supervising the learning of teaching candidates on the practicum. Also, these senior professionals are supposed to act as consultants for regular teachers. Further, the lead

teachers' work involves developing curricula as well as acting as link persons with teacher education programmes at the university while involved full-time in classroom teaching. In this connection, Pretorius (2004, p. 53) further notes that the role of PDSs is to facilitate the professional development of qualified teachers as well as sponsor collaborative research.

There is a centrally generated and interstate framework of standards that governs and guides the provision of teacher education (Beyer, 2002, p. 306). The decision to turn to standards occurred on the back of concerns about the declining quality of teacher and school education. The standards could be seen in that context as a way of ensuring and guaranteeing education quality. The standards spell out the goals of all teacher education programmes in terms of expected outcomes for teachers in three domains, namely; knowledge, performance and dispositions. For trainee teachers to be given a teaching license, they have to demonstrate sufficient competence across the entire range of standards. The standards were generated by a statutory body, known as the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

The (NCATE) is the interstate accrediting authority for all the teacher education programmes in the United States (Darling-Hammond & Cobb, 2006, p. 34). The NCATE periodically revises the standards to make sure they are in line with current research findings and best practices in teacher education. However, NCATE accreditation seems not to be mandatory, as there is also intra-state accreditation institutional alternative

All teaching qualifications in the United States are offered at degree level or above. A teaching degree takes at least five years. In such degree programmes students take courses in the liberal arts for four years and then take education related courses in the fifth year.

Critical evaluation

The teacher education system in the USA can be seen as having the following strong points. Firstly, the existence of a central accrediting agency, the NCATE and the common standards ensures that quality can be centrally assured and guaranteed. However for this to happen there is need for a strong standards monitoring and enforcement mechanism.

Also, a clearly defined set of performance standards provides a guiding framework for the design of teacher education courses. This makes teacher educators aware of what they are expected to do. The central accrediting authority also complements the normal reviews for quality assurance in universities, hence further consolidating the quality of teacher education programmes.

The USA seems to have gone further than most countries in developing and formalizing the partnership between universities and schools engaged in the provision of teacher education. The presence of lead teachers in the PDSs who serve as link persons with the higher education institutions ensures that the two systems take a coordinated approach to teacher education provision. Thus in this sense the USA system can be seen as having gone some way in reducing the gap between higher education and the schools. Also, the collaboration between universities and schools through the lead teachers who are full time in PDSs will enable theory and practice to mutually interrogate each other, thereby facilitating the

integration of the theoretical and practical components of the teacher education course.

Relatedly, giving lead teachers in PDSs a differential status and remuneration package motivates them to carry out their mentoring responsibilities in schools. This is in contrast to some teacher education systems where the mentoring role is not rewarded in any way. Also, the roles and responsibilities of lead professionals in PDSs in relation to the learning of the intending teachers are clearly spelt out. This ensures that the prospective teachers have a structured environment within which to learn how to teach. Equally highlighting the importance of structured training experience, De Knowles and Cole (1996, p. 671) cite Dewey who contends that “It is not enough to insist upon the necessity of experience, nor even of activity in experience. Everything depends upon the quality of experience which one has”.

However, the USA teacher education has some weak points which need to be highlighted. Firstly, the standards, insofar as they define teaching competence in terms of performance represent a reductionist and narrow conception of teacher’s work. This view of teaching ignores many other dimensions which contribute to effectiveness in the classroom.

Also, the uniform standards may not be able to anticipate what will happen in all teaching –learning contexts. Hence a teacher who has mastered the competences will not be able to flexibly adjust his or her teaching practices in order to deal with the emerging and unanticipated situations. This implies the need for teachers to have reflective capacities, over and above mastering the standards.

South Africa

Brief overview

Teacher education provision in South Africa is largely the responsibility of university Faculties of Education. As Jansen (2009, p. 165) notes, there are 25 universities involved in providing initial teacher education. These institutions are in receipt of government training subsidy.

Teacher education policy in South Africa is centrally planned and regulated. The central government has put in place a statutory framework for governing the provision of teacher education. Thus roles, responsibilities and obligations of various players in teacher education are defined by relevant Acts of parliament or regulations.

In this connection there are national statutory bodies responsible for accreditation and quality control in teacher education in South Africa. All providers of teacher education have to go through several levels of compulsory accreditation. At the highest level, the Council for Higher Education (CHE), through its sub-committee, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) approves all teacher education providers as well as their learning programmes. At the second level, a prospective teacher education institutional provider needs to register its qualification with the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA). The third level involves having the qualification approved by the Department of Education for funding and employment purposes.

There is a national standards framework governing accreditation and quality control in teacher education, called the *Norms and Standards for Educators*. Gazetted in February 2000, the *Norms and Standards* provide a common frame of reference for all players in teacher education in South Africa.

They define not only the teacher education policy in South Africa but also provide a picture of an ideal teacher all providers must strive to produce. The Norms and Standards are also closely linked to the Curriculum 2005 so that the teacher produced will have the right combination of skills, knowledge and values that enable him to effectively implement it.

Central control of teacher education is also ensured through the core curriculum for teacher education. This consists of core courses which every provider must teach. However, institutions are free to bring in variations in the way in which they fulfil these requirements but within the framework of the Norms and Standards.

There are two major pathways into initial teacher education in South Africa. The first one is a non-degree track open to those who do not have a certificate of Matriculation Exemption. This track combines academic and professional courses in a variety of ways, leading to a four-year Higher Education Diploma or the Higher Diploma in Education. The second track leads to the award of a four-year degree and diploma or a teaching degree which incorporates courses which would have been taken in a professional diploma. This track is open to those who hold a certificate of Matriculation exemption of the Matriculation Board.

All teacher education programmes include a significant component of teaching practice conducted in the schools. At present the statutory minimum length of a practicum is twenty weeks. The predominant pattern of organising teaching practice seems to be a dispersed practicum whereby periods of teaching of varying length are spread over the four years.

In the schools trainee teachers are attached to qualified and experienced teachers who are given the title of mentor. However, the role of the mentor seems not to be clear.

Critical evaluation

The teacher education system in South Africa can be seen as having the following strong points. Firstly, to its credit the South African system has a network of central accreditation and quality control agencies. This enables the government to account for the quality of teacher education courses offered in different institutions. Such multiple quality control institutions help complement the internal quality control review processes in university departments.

Relatedly, the Norms and Standards provide clear guidelines and expectations to enable the design of teacher education by various institutions. This helps the government to assess the quality of courses so as to make informed accreditation decisions. Also, the Norms and Standards make it easier to standardise courses offered at different institutions in the country.

Thirdly, the teacher education system is based on a broad conception of competences. Part of the competences mentioned in the Norms and Standards are the reflective capacities. In this way the South African teacher education system can be seen as trying to produce an educator who can operate effectively in the fast-changing and unpredictable world of the 21st century.

However, on a negative note, the teacher education system in South Africa does not provide room for alternative and non-standard route of entry into teacher education. In this way it shuts out mid-career

changers who may be dedicated to teaching but for one reason or another failed to make it into the profession when they were young. Thus seen from this point of view, the teacher education system loses an opportunity to reunite with its lost stars.

Further, there seems to be no effort on the part of teacher education authorities to organise the schools to ensure that students have a supportive school-based learning environment. Thus deployment of student teachers to schools on a practicum seems to be based more on availability of vacancies than considerations of the schools as supportive environments for teacher learning. Perhaps this explains why there is no national policy framework governing the school-based learning of student teachers.

However, a related positive development is the introduction of the concept of learnership by the Department of Labour in 2001 through the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAS) as part of a broader skills development strategy (Jansen, 2009, p. 109). Under the auspices of the Education, Training and Development Practitioners SETA, schools can take on board trainee teachers who undergo a school-based training programme under the guidance of a mentor appointed by the school. The training programme is conducted in conjunction with an institution of higher learning. The trainee spends between one and two thirds of the training period in the school receiving practical guidance on how to teach from the mentor. Throughout the training period, the trainee will be in receipt of a government training grant. However, it seems the learnership model is still at a trial stage and has not yet been fully integrated into the teacher education system.

4. Teacher Education Systems in the UK, United States and South Africa: Some Object Lessons for Zimbabwe

Analysis of teacher education systems in three countries above seem to point towards the following object lessons which can serve as a potential basis for improving teacher education in Zimbabwe. These are considered under the following sub-headings: centralised and independent accreditation framework, school-based support system for trainee teachers in schools, rigorous licensure procedures, multiple pathways into the teaching profession, core national teacher education curriculum.

Nationally centralised and independent accreditation of teacher education programmes

As pointed out above, the teacher education system in Zimbabwe does not have a centralised accreditation and quality control authority, making it difficult for the responsible authorities to monitor the quality of teacher education courses being offered at various colleges. Although the University of Zimbabwe, through its Department of Teacher Education purports to play the role of an accrediting agency for the colleges, the fact that the courses offered in the colleges are its own makes it an interested part. Accordingly, it cannot be seen as playing an independent accrediting role. This concern was obliquely echoed by The *Nziramasanga Commission (1999)* when it called for the establishment of an independent accrediting agency for teacher education in Zimbabwe.

In the three teacher education systems analysed above, there is one national teacher accreditation board. In South Africa and the UK, the accreditation authority is a matter of statutory policy. This arguably

invests such an accreditation authority with adequate official leverage to carry out their mandates. As already pointed out, the presence of centralised institutional accreditation framework seems to have positive results for the countries analysed.

On the basis of the foregoing line of argument, it seems a reasonable expectation that Zimbabwe teacher education is better with a centralised accreditation of teacher education than otherwise. Such a board will provide a crucial quality control sieve, to weed out or bring into compliance dubious teacher education providers. Additionally, a centralised accreditation body will also provide additional quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that those entering the profession from the colleges by subjecting them to supplementary licensure procedures and requirements. Completion of a teachers' diploma cannot be an open sesame to entering the profession. Thus in effect, the teachers will serve some kind of articles under some experienced teachers in the schools for a certain period before they can be licensed. Of course, there is some similar arrangement in the present system where teachers serve probation of two years before they could become established members of the civil service. Regrettably there seems to be a tenuous connection between the progression of teachers and professional requirements. It seems there has been official remissness to utilise this arrangement to make teachers meet some supplementary licensure requirements. This would arguably auger well for the quality of teachers in Zimbabwean schools.

School-based integrated support system for pre-service and in-service teacher development

It seems as if student teachers can be deployed to practice teaching in any school regardless of the capacity of those schools to provide an enabling environment for professional learning. In this regard, there seems to be no effort on the part of teacher education authorities to ensure that the schools to which the student teachers are deployed provide a supportive environment for teacher learning. Yet some school environments may not provide the trainee teacher with support he or she needs in order to effectively learn how to teach.

By contrast, in the teacher education systems analysed above, there seems to be a consistent emphasis on ensuring that the schools that host the practicum are structurally and culturally configured to facilitate the professional development of the intending teachers. This ensures that the portion of training period trainee teachers spend in the schools is optimally utilised to advance the trainees professionally. In the UK, there are officially recognised school-based mentors who are supposed to help the intending teachers learn how to teach. There are similar developing trends in South Africa where the Ministry of Labour and Skills Development is engaging schools in learnership programmes through the Education, Development and Training Practitioners Sector Training Authority (EDTPSETA). The United States seems to be the most developed of the three teacher education systems analysed above in this connection. There are specially designated schools which are charged with the responsibility of hosting the teaching candidates. This suggests that not every school can host the practicum as is the case in Zimbabwe. In such schools, termed Professional Development schools are deployed specially qualified, experienced and committed carrier professionals who are charged

with responsibility of overseeing the learning of trainee teachers. In addition, such teachers, referred to as Lead teachers serve as consultants, providing professional development scaffolding to all other teachers as they seek to meet the requirements for successive teacher licensure. The Lead teachers work closely with Higher education institutions in developing the teacher education curriculum.

It seems as if the Zimbabwean teacher education system can benefit by remodelling its school-based aspects of teacher training along the same lines. This will ensure that intending teachers serving a practicum in schools are provided with the necessary and adequate support system for their professional learning. It is arguably quite a reasonable expectation that this may enhance the quality of school-based teacher training experience for the intending teachers. Also, the close involvement of schools, through the Lead teachers, who are full-time classroom teachers in planning and delivery of teacher education courses, makes it possible for the oft-lamented gap between theory and practice to be bridged.

Provision for multiple and non-standard pathways into the teaching profession

The teacher education system in the UK provides for multiple and non-standard routes into the teaching profession. This seems to deny mid-career changers the opportunity to join teaching. Admittedly, there may be some people who for different reasons may have failed to join teaching yet it may have been their dream to do so. Such people are usually dedicated and mature, qualities which are rare but much needed for a human service profession such as teaching. Thus, absence of alternative and unconventional routes into teacher education makes the teaching profession to lose an opportunity to reunite with its lost stars.

From the foregoing, it seems teacher education in Zimbabwe will be all the better for providing multiple and non-standards routes into the teaching profession. This is particularly so in the context of widely recognised monetarily unrewarding nature of the teaching profession in Zimbabwe following the limited fiscal capacity and political will to duly and fairly remunerate teachers. In such difficult circumstances, dedicated and mature teachers, possibly mid-career changers will constitute a frontline in the defence of the professional values of teaching.

National teacher education curriculum

All the three teacher education systems analysed above seem to be based on a core national curriculum. As pointed out above, in the UK, the national teacher education curriculum is defined by the Standards, in South Africa, the curriculum is anchored on the Norms and Standards for Educators while in the United States, the NCATE defines a common inter-state framework of standards, which is not however statutorily mandatory. Unlike United States, UK and South Africa, the national core curriculum is statutorily mandated.

The general merits of a national core teacher education curriculum have already been discussed above. However, a national curriculum seems to be especially called for in Zimbabwean circumstances. As noted above, there is a multiplicity of teachers' colleges, each of which seems to offer a different teacher training course. Perhaps this stems from a lack of a common framework of standards and

expectations to guide and govern design of teacher education courses offered at the various teacher training colleges. Also, the lack of a national teacher education curriculum makes it difficult for the national government to coordinate and synchronise teacher education with other facets of education and national development goals, as is the case in South Africa and the UK. Furthermore, lack of a common curriculum suggests lack of common standards for accrediting teacher education courses and teacher licensure. Thus, in the absence of a framework of expectations and standards, everything seems to go.

5. Conclusion

In overview, this paper sought to draw object lessons for new directions for teacher education in Zimbabwe on the basis of analysing three teacher education systems of three countries, namely; United Kingdom, United States and South Africa. It seems the Zimbabwean teacher education system can derive the following potentially beneficial lessons from these teacher education systems. Firstly, the creation of a national and independent accreditation authority may provide a potentially effective mechanism for monitoring the quality of teacher education provision. Secondly, the countries whose teacher education systems have been analysed above seem to pay serious attention to the conditions under which intending teachers learn how to teach while on the practicum. In this regard, the learning of trainee teachers on practicum in Zimbabwean schools may be all the better for ensuring adequate support systems for the school-based learning of teacher trainees. Of particular note in this regard are the Professional Development Schools in the United States. Thirdly, Zimbabwe only provides traditional routes into the teaching profession, thereby shutting out potentially dedicated and mature mid-career changers who may want to join the profession. Thus Zimbabwean teacher education can be all the better for introducing alternative and non-standard routes into the teaching profession as is the case in the United Kingdom. Lastly, given the multiplicity of teachers' colleges providing different versions of teacher education courses, it seems the country will be better off following the South African and UK route of coming up with a common curriculum for initial teacher education. This seems to be a potentially beneficial option for the Zimbabwean scenario in that a common curriculum will provide all teacher education providers with a guiding framework within which they could design their courses. This also facilitates monitoring of the quality of teacher education provision.

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