



HOW DO DISCOURSES AND EPISTEMOLOGIES SHAPE TEACHER EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE?

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to examine how discourses and epistemologies shape education in Africa, compare teacher training in Zimbabwe and other countries. First, the concept of discourses in teacher education is introduced and used to examine the impact of socio-political environment on developments in teacher education, dealing with challenges of attracting teacher candidates, and call for school-based teacher education. Second, the paper examines epistemological bases of science teaching and training, from the traditional discovery approach through constructivist approaches, and the place for reflective practice in teacher education. Third, the paper discusses models of teacher education, three key curriculum components and how credits are used to demonstrate value placed on subject matter knowledge, professional knowledge, and practical experience. The paper uses university-school partnership in Zimbabwe to illuminate how the socio-political environment, discourses and epistemologies can shape teacher education. In conclusion, the paper examines how contextual factors determine the quality of teacher education in a country.

Keywords: Discourses, Epistemology, Teacher Education.

1. INTRODUCTION

All countries, regardless of their national wealth, stand to gain from more and better education (Solberg, 2015). Through education young people can develop 21st century skills like critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and digital literacies. Education is fundamental to development and growth because of its importance in improving people's lives, employability, productivity, health, and wellbeing (King, 2011). In developing nations educational reforms are often justified on the premise that education offers young people opportunities for a fair chance to get a decent job, to escape poverty, to support their families and to develop their communities (Solberg, 2015). Traditionally, investments in education are often measured in terms of the numbers of teachers trained and the numbers of students enrolled whereas a key measurement of the quality of educational reforms is looking at the learning gains (King, 2011). In many cases expansion in education systems occur in environments characterised by shortages of manpower (teachers lacking adequate qualifications and preparation, teachers who rely on transmission-based pedagogy and rote learning), and lack of physical resources (buildings, laboratories, and libraries). All these

contextual factors impede learning gains. This paper seeks to examine how discourses, epistemologies, and contextual factors shape teacher education in Zimbabwe.

2. SOCIO-POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT AND TEACHER EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE

The concept of discourse in teacher education refers to “questions as to the form and nature of professional training, the essential skills, knowledge and attitudes desired of an effective teacher, the most suitable locus of expertise, the relative roles of participants and the balance between theory and practice... have long been rehearsed by educationists, policy-makers, teachers and trainers...” (Robinson, 2006, p. 19).

Discourses in teacher education give rise to tensions between those tasked with the responsibility of providing teacher education and politicians who seek accountability. Robinson (2006), in reference to situation in United Kingdom, argues that fundamental tension in teacher education originates in “increased government control of teacher education, a significant emphasis upon school-based professional training, a much greater diversity of work-related routes into the teaching profession, a mandatory national curriculum for trainee teachers and assessment against prescriptive standards and recently expected outcomes” (p. 19). There is literature to support the view that providers of teacher education are not agreed on control, location, curriculum, and assessment (Robinson, 2006). These tensions exist in other nations and the purpose of this paper is to examine the issues through discussion of key aspects of teacher education and models of teacher learning and university-school partnerships with specific reference to Zimbabwe.

In the 1980’s Zimbabwe’s educational reforms were guided by the ideology of (scientific) socialism. Education with Production (EWP) was used as guiding philosophy. School experiences were viewed as essential in bringing together theory and practice (Maravanyika, 1990). Further education, science education, was considered to be a vital tool for development in Africa (Bunoti, 2011; Wang et al., 2003; Maringe, 2005; Phuthi and Maphosa, 2007; Kerr, 2007; Glennerster et al., 2011; Zezekwa, Mudau and Nkopodi, 2012); hence heavy investments in improving the access and quality of education (Glennerster et al., 2011).

The government of Zimbabwe recognizes teachers as a key factor in producing quality education in an environment of scarce resources (MESC and MHTE, 2004) and, as such, pre-service and in-service training programmes are constantly reviewed. When demand for teachers outstripped the supply through conventional routes, the government launched a number of innovative training programmes in the 1980’s (UK NARIC, 2007), and these earlier initiatives continue to shape teacher education in Zimbabwe today.

A need for graduate teachers has been highlighted as far back as the 1980s (Chung, 1989), for example there were 3,000 graduates among a population of 80,000 teachers in Zimbabwe (Dzvimbo, 1989). Science teacher education (or training of science teachers) is recognised as a key goal in many countries (Wang et al., 2003; Phuthi and Maphosa, 2007). For Zimbabwe, meeting the demand for secondary science and mathematics teachers is an elusive goal because of the economic and political environment, labour migration and negative images of teaching (UK NARIC, 2007). Some candidates lack commitment because they are attracted to teaching as a stopgap measure only, and they tend to leave teaching as soon as they finish training.

Ideological goals and the inherited capitalist infrastructure has shaped educational development in post-colonial states (Maravanyika, 1990). Before 1980 Zimbabwe’s education system was divided along racial lines – European Education and African Education Systems. There was one university, University of Rhodesia, responsible for education of graduate teachers and supervising training of non-graduates in teachers’ colleges. There were two teachers’ colleges responsible for training secondary teachers. The Teachers’ College was for whites only and Gwero Teachers’ College specialised in training prospective candidates to teach in the African Education System. After 1980 there was an amalgamation of the two systems and the number of secondary teachers’ colleges increased to five. From 1995 onwards there was a marked increase in the number of universities in Zimbabwe, thus increasing diversity in teacher education programmes. This

historical antecedent meant that University of Zimbabwe had a monopoly of supervising teachers' colleges in Zimbabwe, and influenced development of teacher education in other universities.

2.1 Attracting teacher candidates in Zimbabwe

Studies of motives for becoming teachers use different expressions. Some examples are motives, teacher motivations and incentives (Towse et al., 2002; Mulkeen et al., 2007; Chireshe and Shumba, 2011), adaptive and maladaptive motives (Fokkens-Bruinsma and Carrinus, 2012); perceptions and aspirations (Watt and Richardson, 2008; Sinclair, Dowson and McInerney, 2006; Hobson and Malderez, 2005; Chivore, 1988; 1986). In the negative the motives act as push factors. Unattractive working conditions have been reported in Africa as reasons why people do not want to be teachers, for example, perceived low salary, unattractive work locations, and unprofessional treatment of teachers (Mulkeen et al., 2007). Low salaries and poor working conditions are the main reasons pushing out potential candidates from teaching profession in Zimbabwe (Chireshe and Shumba, 2011; Marist International Solidarity Foundation, 2011; Chivore, 1988; 1986).

Teaching in Zimbabwe is attracting few candidates and this has threatened viability of teacher education programmes. Teaching is regarded as a last resort by secondary pupils and their parents (Chivore, 1986a). While Bindura University of Science Education enrolled 125 pre-service student teachers in 1996, there were less than 10 students enrolled for BScEd Honours conventional programme in 2011 (Zezekwa et al., 2012). This scenario can be looked at from numerous angles, one of which is, in the '90s this university offered only BScEd degrees and by 2011 it had grown to offer degrees in Commerce, Natural and Social Science. Prospective candidates now had a wide choice, other than teaching degrees. Alternatives that have been adopted to increase enrolments in universities include lowering entry requirements, introducing new programmes, and Virtual and Open Distance Learning (VODL). At other times lowering entry requirements meant that instead of requiring candidates to have two Advanced level passes this was reduced to one, lowering cut off points to 1 (GCE grade E), and wavering requirement of an Ordinary level pass in Mathematics. Students can now enrol for a certificate or diploma in education instead of BScEd Honours degree. These alternatives make it even more difficult to achieve the goal of training quality teachers. Low A-Level passes mean that the candidates have a weak understanding of subject matter knowledge. Non-graduate certificate and diploma programmes mean that moving towards an all graduate secondary teachers in Zimbabwe becomes a difficult goal to achieve. Considering that there was inadequate funding and lack of resources (human, infrastructure and equipment) at universities and in schools, the alternative of using distance education to train teachers was going to be more challenging than providing teacher education at universities and colleges already set up for the purpose. Further, it means thinning out resources to various centres instead of pulling together the meagre resources in one place and offer quality education. It appears that teacher education in Zimbabwe has taken us back some 30 years – it was in the 1980s when Zimbabwe Integrated Teacher Education Course (ZINTEC) and similar programmes were introduced as temporary measures to address teacher shortage. The quality of distance education can be improved by e-learning. However, in Africa e-learning remains problematic because of lack of funding (Kayongo, 2010) and lack of ICT infrastructure.

2.2 Socio-political environment and school-based teacher education

Zimbabwe witnessed phenomenal increases in enrolments at primary and secondary schools in the 1980's and this created a demand for teachers. Zimbabwe Integrated Teacher Education Course (ZINTEC) was introduced as a distance education and school-based teacher training programme for primary teachers. Pre-service student teachers attended residential courses for the first two, and last sixteen weeks of a four-year programme. The student teachers spent the rest of the four years in schools practising teaching on a full-time basis with the same responsibilities as qualified teachers (Maravanyika, 1990; Ndawi, 1997; Shresta, 1997). For some time (both primary and secondary) conventional colleges were 'Zintecized' – three-year fulltime

programmes were changed to four years so that student teachers spend the first and third years of their training at college and the second and fourth years teaching in schools (Maravanyika, 1990). Student teachers with some form of training were used by schools to reduce shortage of teachers. There were others who doubted the success of ZINTEC (Ndawi, 1997) because after four years from inception of the programme, ZINTEC colleges were being absorbed into the conventional system. ZINTEC exemplifies the 'social market' paradigm because it was dependent on-the-job training at the expense of college-based learning. The major criticism was that reduced academic content led to production of teachers lacking a sound theory base (Ndawi, 1997). The same criticism has been used against apprenticeship models of teacher education even in developed countries.

At university level "the post-graduate certificate programme was offered on part-time basis to allow (student) teachers to spend more time with pupils" (Maravanyika, 1990, p. 17). Further, "government introduced in-service upgrading courses for non-graduate teachers, to enable them to teach competently, and also improve their career prospects through the Bachelor of Education programme" (Maravanyika, 1990, p. 17). As graduates, they could then teach Advanced level classes. The notion of in-service training meant that these student teachers had some teaching qualification and teaching experience because they were already employed as teachers. The government, which employed the teachers, funded their full or reduced salaries during in-service training. The university on its part designed shortened in-service programmes lasting one to two years to enable early return into the classrooms. It was thought that in-service student teachers did not need extended school-based training, and this part was greatly reduced. Teacher shortage shaped both pre-service and in-service teacher education at universities in Zimbabwe. However, engaging student teachers as fulltime practitioners during their training reduced school-based learning because of lack of strong mentoring system.

In the 1990s movement toward an apprenticeship model of initial teacher training was witnessed in England and was supported by a strong mentoring system (Tomlinson, 1995; McIntyre, Hagger and Wilkin, 1993). Tightly controlled standards, in the form of a national curriculum of competences and skills, were introduced in order to attain qualified teacher status (Teacher Training Agency, 1997). However, there were mixed reactions; providers of teacher training feeling threatened autonomy and complaining of interference, and on the other hand politicians believing it necessary to control the quality and standards of teacher training (McPhee and Humes, 1998). In cases where the professional studies module has been shifted away from the traditional 'disciplines' (philosophical, psychological and sociological justifications for educational practice), the major criticism has been perception of weakening trainees' theoretical grounding (McPhee and Humes, 1998).

Similarly, in post-colonial states, new regimes have encountered wide differences in the quality and quantity of teacher training provided by different trainers. The discourse drivers in South Africa have been The National Curriculum Statement and Standardization; Growth, Employment and Redistribution, and Reconstruction and Development (Hill, 2003). In order to address such anomalies, and standardize teacher qualifications and remuneration some governments like South Africa have developed new policies for teacher education. In South Africa the Norms and Standards of Educators 2000 policy, aimed at addressing dichotomy between theory and practice, provides a list of practical, foundational, and reflective competences newly qualified teachers must demonstrate (Robinson, 2003). The policy also provides a list of seven roles expected of teacher educators. Covertly the policy dictates teacher education curriculum, and therefore it is not surprising that teacher educators used to autonomy were not happy about the directives (Robinson, 2003). Other countries in Southern Africa, e.g. Zimbabwe, are likely to follow suit in developing a curriculum of competences and skills for trainee teachers.

3. EPISTEMOLOGICAL BASIS OF SCIENCE TEACHING AND TRAINING

Scholars argue that the dominant classroom discourse in Africa is authoritarian, teacher-centred and transmissive (Bunoti, 2011; Akyeampong et al., 2000). The role of the teacher is transmitting knowledge clearly and effectively to students (Akyeampong, 2000). In schools this is

evident in government prescribed textbooks, factual knowledge, imparting knowledge and orderly classroom environment. School textbooks and curriculum documents, where they are available, validate the prescriptive and authoritarian structure of teaching and learning (Akyeampong, 2000). Access to other reference materials apart from government prescribed textbooks is limited by unavailability and lack of supply. The dominant classroom discourse in Africa has a historical legacy, that is, an education system which does not allow students to “ask questions, to criticize or to develop and express their own ideas” (Akyeampong, 2000, p. 4). In many traditional African societies knowledge is seen as something fixed, finite and to be handed down rather than something to be contested. Teachers in Africa are conscious of the value of progressive teaching and learning methods, and constructivist and child-centred approaches but fail to make them a constant part of their practice (Akyeampong et al., 2000; Maringe, 2005; Nyaumwe and Mtetwa, 2010; Zezekwa et al., 2012).

Most teacher training/education programmes have witnessed a shift in assumptions about science teaching and learning from traditional positivist to constructivist approaches and reflective practice (Maringe, 2005; Adúriz-Bravo and Izquierdo, 2002; Lederman, 1992). Positivistic approaches are based on the assumptions that external truths exist, whereas post-positivism assumes that knowledge does not exist outside the consciousness of people (Maringe, 2005), as such post-positivism is consistent with philosophical relativism (Feyerabend, 1978). Teaching informed by positivism would seem to suggest that a science teacher’s role is to provide the facts and procedures for investigating scientific ideas (Maringe, 2005). As an example, guided discovery, rooted in positivism, is often taught as an objective method of investigation that involves verifying existing knowledge and arriving at already established conclusions.

Contrary to this, constructivist approaches are open ended and emphasize the processes of science, self-generated questions and predictions, as well as providing explanations that are compatible with people’s shared experience of the physical world (Maringe, 2005). When using constructivist approaches, the role of teacher becomes helping learners in constructing and reconstructing knowledge and understanding multiple social constructions of reality (Robson, 2004), because people build their own understanding of the world and interpret it in ways reflecting their specific circumstances and local environmental influences.

The notion of reflective practice (Schön, 1983; Zeichner, 1983; Calderhead, 1991; Pollard, 2002) sees learning to teach as learning to make professional and informed decisions based on the needs of learners and educational theoretical frameworks - that is, teaching is no longer just seen as the deployment of skills and competences to a learning situation. One of the key components of teacher education, as mentioned earlier, is school teaching experience. By its very nature school experience provides opportunities to integrate theory and practice (Kiggundu, 2007; Maravanyika, 1990). Student teachers have opportunity to observe experienced teachers in action and question their decision making, to try out new ideas in authentic contexts, and to challenge ‘taken for granted’ practices. As elsewhere, studies of student teachers’ perceptions of teaching practice in Africa often report contradictions and tensions encountered during school attachment (Heeralal and Bayaga, 2011; Kiggundu, 2007; Major and Tiro, 2012). These contradictions and tensions attenuate learning to teach and are often not seen by student teachers as possibilities for transformation. Student teachers often found themselves teaching in contexts where examinations dictate activities and in impoverished contexts where they are concerned with professional survival and ‘fitting-in’ to their school’s way of working (Drent and Meelissen, 2008). In Zimbabwe lack of qualified teachers led to student teachers being given fulltime teaching responsibilities (Ndawi, 1997; Maravanyika, 1990). What this might mean is that student teachers tend to find themselves in situations where they may not try out new ideas. Further, Clark (2003) provides evidence that the school context plays a crucial role in shaping a teacher’s practice, such that students in different schools encounter widely differing experiences, and can therefore learn to teach in varying ways.

4. SELECTED MODELS OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

4.1 Discourses, epistemological orientations, and curriculum aspects in teacher education

Three key curriculum aspects stand out prominently in most teacher education programmes, namely; subject matter knowledge, professional knowledge and practical experience. The attributes of effective teachers include practical experience, wisdom, common sense, understanding and communication skills (Makitalo and Saljo, 2002). The structuring of teacher training programmes, world over, show variations in terms of emphasis put on the three aspects because of differing epistemological orientations, political and contextual factors. However, there are at least three areas where there is agreement. First, researchers concur that effective teachers are those who have a strong subject background and good communication skills (Whitehurst, 2004; Greenwald, Hedges and Laine, 1996). Second, effective teachers require pedagogical (content) knowledge to reach out to learners. Third, teachers who understand the context of the work environment are more effective than novices, and for this reason school experience plays an important role in teacher education (Rowan, Correnti and Miller, 2002). Student teachers learn theory and practice of education at both a higher education institution like university and in school settings. While it is possible to achieve a greater sense of balance between strong grounding in theory, practice, and research e.g. Finland (McPhee and Humes, 1998), most nations Zimbabwe included find this difficult to achieve. Various models of teacher learning put different emphasis on each of the three key areas of teacher education; some may value subject matter knowledge at the expense of pedagogy, and others value practice more than theory. As an example, the 'disciplines' approach is heavily oriented towards the study of the academic subject within schools of education in universities, and students use school experience to demonstrate their understanding of theory e.g. Spain (McPhee and Humes, 1998).

In order to illustrate how adoption of different epistemologies impact on structure and organisation of teacher education two examples of models from Africa are used below. Providers of teacher education use a credit system to show the value placed on a particular course, that is, an important curriculum component is assigned more credits than an inferior one.

4.2 Science teacher education in Kenya

The discussion of teacher education in Kenya is based on Thomson's (2002) paper and focuses on science teacher preparation at Moi University. The university offers a 4-year Bachelor of Science degree program. Students take major and minor subjects, e.g. Chemistry and Mathematics in the Faculty of Science Education. They take education courses and Kenya's Heritage and Experience courses in The Faculty of Education and the Institute of Human Resource and Development. Student teachers learn contemporary educational philosophies, practices and technologies, and are taught a clear understanding and appreciation for African culture and heritage, and in particular Kenya's political and social context as well as aspirations for the Kenya's future (Thomson, 2002). The Kenya Model is shown in the table below (S stands for semester and numbers are credits).

Table 1: Kenya model

Course(s)	Credits (%)
Teaching subject (SMK)	67
Education courses (PK)	33
(School experience)	(16 weeks)
Total	100

Altogether, student teachers earn two-thirds of their credits (67%) through learning subject matter knowledge and learning education courses makes up one third (33%). Learning subject matter knowledge is more valued than educational theory and professional studies. Teaching practice is a demonstration of competence (Thomson, 2002), and provides evidence of readiness to be awarded qualified teacher status. Teaching practice is pass/fail, but it is neither taken as a course nor is it an officially examined course and consequently, does not count towards graduation credits (Thomson, 2002).

4.3 Science teacher education in Zimbabwe: Case of Bindura University of Science Education

Currently, universities in Zimbabwe offer a one year Post-Graduate Certificate/Diploma in Education, a 3-year or a 4-year Bachelor of Science Education degree for secondary science and mathematics teachers (UK NARIC, 2007; Mtetwa and Thompson, 2008; Maravanyika, 1990; Dzvimbo, 1989). Non-graduate teachers are trained in teachers' colleges affiliated to the Department of Teacher Education, University of Zimbabwe. BUSE offers diploma in science education, a 4-year undergraduate degree program to pre-service student teachers and a 3-year undergraduate degree program to in-service student teachers. Student teachers combine learning a subject at university level and education courses so that they graduate with a teaching qualification. Pre-service student teachers come straight from O/A-Level schools, whereas in-service students are holders of a certificate/diploma in education from a teachers' college or university together with some work experience. Teacher training involves departments within the Faculty of Science Education, usually the department of education, and a subject department (e.g. chemistry department) in the Faculty of Science.

Lecturers who teach subject matter do not teach education courses, and therefore teach courses similar to what would be studied by scientists (e.g. chemists). Lecturers in the department of education teach theoretical foundations (representing the 'disciplines'), curriculum, educational technology, pedagogy and teaching skills, and teaching practice. The dilemma faced by students is that subject matter knowledge (e.g. chemistry) learnt by prospective science teachers is similar to what would be taught to prospective scientists (and some of it will not be relevant to the school curriculum), and when education courses are pitted against subject matter on the study timetable, candidates who opted for teaching as a stepping stone might not take educational theory as seriously (even though it is possible they may end up teaching for some years or life). In the past students went on a 2-week long school experience during Term II in schools (when university was on vacation), usually between the 2 semesters. Prior to these school attachments, students attended lectures once a week preparing for the observations and teaching practice, and in the second semester they attended further lectures and wrote reflective accounts of their experiences. These reports made up the assessment for the course. In the third-year students undertook an extended school experience of two full school terms (24 weeks), during which they prepare, plan, teach and evaluate lessons. The school experience tends to be used to demonstrate competence of university-based learning, rather than to experiment with new ideas. University lecturers visited schools to supervise and assess the students, and all students must pass ASE courses (teaching practice) to receive the teaching qualification. Lately, in response to the challenging socio-economic environment, school experience has been moved to Part III, and students spent 2 semesters in schools. This is also consistent with non-teaching degrees that assign a full year to work experience.

Table 2: Zimbabwe model

Course(s)	Credits (%)
Teaching subject (SMK)	70
Education courses (PK) (School experience)	30 (24 weeks)
Total	100

Student teachers at BUSE earn 70 % of their credits from learning subject matter knowledge, and 30 % comes from learning educational theory, professional studies, and school experience. It appears models from across the world show similarities in that the key areas in teacher education are subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and practice. Differences in emphasis put on these key areas are evident in the distribution of credits and time allocation. Further comparisons can also be made in the kind of university-school partnerships.

5. CONTEXTUAL FACTORS AND ZIMBABWE'S CURRENT PARTNERSHIP MODEL

In the early 1980s, the government of Zimbabwe pioneered a Teacher Education Model in order to increase the supply of primary school teachers. The model was known as Zimbabwe Integrated Teacher Education Course (ZINTEC) and described as '2-5-2' model. Student teachers spend 2 terms at college, 5 terms attached to a school, and 2 terms at college. For 1½ years student teachers are in the classroom. While the government succeeded in reducing the problem of teacher shortage in primary schools, the '2-5-2' model of training produced a new capacity demand on experienced teachers as mentors because so many of the primary school teachers had to be teacher educators. In 2008 the model was re-introduced to cater for primary school and Early Childhood Development teachers. This gave rise to collaboration in teacher education through in-service training of school mentors. Although the '2-5-2' model was targeted at primary schools it had far reaching consequences for training of secondary teachers, particularly the engagement of student teachers as full-time classroom teachers during their school attachment whether the period was 4 weeks or a full school term.

The current model of university-school partnership at BUSE could be described as HEI-led partnership. The university uses schools as laboratories to put theory into practice, and demonstrate teaching competences. The university provides detailed guidelines of what student teachers do, and spell out the kind of support they expect schools and teachers to give. The role of lecturers is to assess student teachers using university criteria and guidelines, and experienced teachers are expected to act as mentors. Such an arrangement tends to leave teachers unsure and less confident of how to help the student teachers, because the student teachers know much more about BUSE expectations than the experienced teachers. However, on paper, the school-based experience is described as a smart partnership involving the university, the school, the community, and the student-teacher (ASE Handbook, 2010). Student teachers are expected to perform all duties as prescribed by school heads and any other senior member of staff (ASE Handbook, 2010), and often find themselves filling in gaps created by teacher shortage. The model is informed by socio-cultural theory, reflective practice and constructivist teaching approaches. Student teachers are encouraged to observe experienced teachers and get support from mentors, and to provide evidence of reflective practice in records they keep; and to this extent show similarities with university-school partnerships elsewhere.

Inadequate supervision of student teachers by lecturers has been reported (Chivore, 1986b). Nyaumwe and Mavhunga (2005) reported concerns about validity and reliability of teaching practice assessment instrument and marker agreement. When classroom assessment is viewed as interpretive and subjective, Connelly (1994) marker agreement is no longer an issue.

Educational reforms from 1990 were focused on the relevance and quality of education in general, and, in particular, teacher education. In 2000 and beyond the gains of reforms of the 1990s were "eroded by the adverse economic climate, with registered successes being reversed and

implementation of programmes challenged by lack of continuity and resources to move policy to action” (Kapungu, 2007, p. 3). Cuts in education funding because of negative economic growth and lack of investment, compromised the training of teachers (Kapungu, 2007). Lack of funds meant that daily operations at the tertiary institutions could not be carried out (Murwira, 2013), completion of infrastructural projects was stalled because contractors and consultants could not be paid (Murwira, 2013), and students could not get loans and grants through the cadetship scheme (Moyo, 2013; Murwira, 2013). Toward general elections institutions of higher learning were directed by the government not to turn away students who had failed to pay fees, however, the institutions were withholding certificates and transcripts to force students to pay (Moyo, 2013). Despite writing for different media Moyo (2013) and Murwira (2013) concur on how cuts in education impact teaching and learning in institutions of higher learning.

The Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education Act (ZIMCHE) 2006 was put in place to regulate education provided by institutions of higher education and maintain standards of research, teaching and learning, and assessment (UNESCO, 2008). This is not unique to Zimbabwe because establishment of national councils of higher education has occurred in other African countries, e.g. Uganda (Bunoti, 2011).

The lack of adequate resources, for examples, computers and ICT infrastructure was reported by UNESCO (2008) to be a hindrance to achieve Public Service Commission directive in Zimbabwe that all graduates of tertiary institutions must be computer literate by the time they complete the training or education. Student teachers completed their training without attaining the requirement computer literacy.

While it is debatable to class Zimbabwe as a ‘failed state’ or not, there is evidence of “political violence (especially during elections), severe socio-economic decline, the extreme diminution of the state’s ability to deliver public goods such as health, education, and social welfare, and the highly polarized political environment” (Pswarayi and Reeler, 2012). All the factors point towards ‘fragility’ and negatively impact on learning in school, colleges, and universities.

6. CONCLUSION

Educational reforms in Zimbabwe can be viewed as successful based on traditional metrics, increase in the number of teachers trained and the number of students enrolled. However, measuring the quality of the educational reforms in terms of learning gains, paints a different picture. To redress the situation political will to create an enabling environment and to make the needed investment are required to improve the quality of teacher preparation, learning and teaching in all educational establishments.

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