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## **MODELS OF TEACHING PRACTICE SINCE ZIMBABWEAN INDEPENDENCE: A CRITICAL REVIEW.**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

*This paper attempts a critical review of the models of teaching practice adopted since Zimbabwe attained independence in 1980. It is argued in this paper that those who were empowered to decide on models of teaching practice tended to put more emphasis on political, economic and administrative needs at the expense of pedagogical needs of the student teachers. It is against this background that a possible model of teaching practice, which seeks to take into account the pedagogical objectives of teaching practice, has been proposed.*

### **INTRODUCTION:**

There is no doubt that the best place to learn to teach is in a classroom situation with real children just as the best place to learn to swim is in water. Therefore, teaching practice is a very important component in the initial preparation of teachers hence, student teachers all over the world are required to do some form of teaching practice.

However, it is the observation of this writer that those empowered to decide on models of teaching practice do not necessarily consider pedagogical reasons only but administrative, political and economic reasons as well. It is against this background that this paper sought to review the extent to which different models of teaching practice (TP) adopted since independence satisfied political, economic, administrative and pedagogical needs.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:**

The provisions of the 1966 Education Plan announced in the Rhodesian Parliament on 20 April 1966 by the then Minister of African Education Mr. A.P. Smith adversely affected African education until the advent of Independence in 1980. The plan created bottle necks in the secondary education sector in that only 12.5% of primary school graduates were allowed to pursue academic education in what was known as F1 secondary schools. 37.5% were to pursue their education in F2 junior secondary schools which most Africans thought were of inferior quality as compared to F1 schools. The remaining 50% were not catered for and were supposed to fend for themselves.

When Zimbabwe attained independence in 1980, the government introduced "free" primary education while secondary education was made more accessible to all those who could afford to pay for it. (Chivore, 1990). This policy resulted in a phenomenal increase in the number of school children who enrolled in both primary and secondary schools. The table below helps to illustrate this point.

**Table 1. Number of schools and enrolment figures, 1979-1990.**

YEAR	PRIMARY		SECONDARY		GRAND TOTAL	
	Sch	Enrol.	Sch.	Enrol.	Sch.	Enrol.
1979	2401	819 586	177	66 215	2 578	885 801
1980	3161	1 235 994	197	74 321	3 358	1 310 315
1981	3698	1 715 169	694	148 690	4 392	1 863 859
1982	3880	1 907 225	738	225 647	4 618	2 132 872
1983	3960	2 044 487	790	316 438	4 750	2 360 925
1984	4161	2 231 304	1 182	416 413	5 343	2 647 717
1985	4234	2 216 878	1 215	482 000	5 449	2 698 878
1986	4297	2 265 053	1 276	537 427	5 573	2 802 480
1987	4471	2 251 319	1 395	604 652	5 866	2 855 971
1988	4504	2 212 103	1 484	641 005	5 988	2 853 108
1989	4530	2 219 171	1 502	695 882	6 032	2 915 053
1990	4530	2 119 865	1 512	672 656	6 042	2 792 521

Source: Chanakira, (1998)

This dramatic growth in educational opportunities had to be matched by an increase in the number of student teachers enrolled at both primary and secondary teachers' colleges. The table below helps to illustrate this point.

**Table 2: Enrolment in Teachers' Colleges 1979-1990.**

YEAR	PRIMARY (CONVENTIONAL)		PRIMARY (ZINTEC)		SECONDARY		GRAND TOTAL	
	No.	Enrol	No.	Enrol.	No.	Enrol.	No	Enrol.
1979	8	2 249	-	-	2	833	10	3 082
1980	6	2 018	-	-	2	811	8	2 829
1981	7	2 702	3	701	2	908	12	4 311
1982	7	3 299	3	2 856	2	1 574	12	7 729
1983	7	4 164	4	6 058	3	2 338	14	12 560
1984	7	4 349	4	7 853	3	3 385	14	15 587
1985	7	5 315	4	6 600	3	4 305	14	16 220
1986	7	7 125	4	5 230	3	4 904	14	17 259
1987	7	8 019	4	2 497	3	5 275	14	15 791
1988	7	9 264	4	628	4	5 858	15	15 750
1989	8	6 070	2	1 018	4	9 691	14	16 779
1990	8	9 916	2	-	5	5 775	15	15 691

Source: Chanakira, 1998.

This great need for qualified teachers led to a review of teacher education preparation courses and, in particular, models of teaching practice so as to alleviate the acute shortage of qualified teachers caused by this phenomenal expansion in education. It is the conviction of this writer that reforms in teacher education preparation courses took into account mainly

political, economic, and administrative needs at the expense of pedagogical aspects of teacher education in some cases.

## **MODELS OF TP SINCE INDEPENDENCE**

### **(a) 5-7-9 Scheme**

This scheme was adopted in 1981 and effected in 1982 by some teachers' colleges. The scheme allowed student teachers to go on TP during the fifth, seventh and ninth terms of their three-year course. The scheme gave student teachers an opportunity to teach for a total period of one year though it was not continuous. The scheme also ensured that the colleges could enrol more student teachers than before since facilities meant for three year groups were being used by only two year groups in any given term. This was an economic measure because colleges could then enrol more student teachers than before without the need of additional facilities. The scheme was political in the sense that for that term the student teachers were on teaching practice, they acted as full time teachers thereby alleviating the acute shortage of qualified teachers. School administrators and parents welcomed these student teachers because though not fully baked, they were a step ahead of unqualified teachers in terms of pedagogical practice.

Student teachers were likely to benefit from this model of TP because they had an opportunity to reflect on their TP experiences during the residential term and were also likely to improve on their pedagogical practice each time they went back on TP. This model of TP was, however, abandoned prematurely at the end of 1982 in preference for a four-year teacher education programme. It would appear that the change from a three to a four-year teacher education programme was both economical and administrative as will be highlighted in the next section.

**(b) ONE YEAR IN -ONE YEAR OUT**

Most teachers' colleges adopted this model of TP in 1982 when the duration of the teacher education programme was changed from three to four years. It is important to note that those who did a four-year programme used the same syllabuses for residential courses as those used for the three-year programme. The only notable difference was in the duration of TP, which was increased from one to two years.

It is claimed in the National Report (1984), that one of the factors that led to the change in the duration of the programme was a result of the "success" story of the ZINTEC programme. The National Report (1984:17) states that:

*The success of ZINTEC revealed by the evaluation exercise resulted in the Zintecisation of teacher training colleges. In place of the three years conventional training programme a four-year course comprising of first year residential, second year on the job, third year residential and fourth year on the job has been instituted.*

It would appear that the "success story" of the ZINTEC programme was based on numbers of student teachers enrolled and not the quality of the products because it was too early to evaluate the success of the ZINTEC programme in terms of quality considering that the ZINTEC programme had just been in operation for less than a year. (The four year programme was introduced in January 1982 and yet the ZINTEC programme had just been introduced in January 1981.)

This four year programme was an example of what Perraton (1990) referred to as an "Alternative Needs -Response Model" of teacher education. Such a model is meant to solve a crisis. In this case, the rationale behind adopting such a model was two-fold; firstly was the need to increase the teacher stock rapidly and secondly, to find alternative ways of training teachers cheaply.

This model of TP was mainly meant to satisfy economic and to some extent professional needs. This practice was economical since student teachers in their fourth year were paid as untrained teachers and yet if these same student teachers had completed their course in three years, as was the case before, they could have realised a salary of a fully qualified teacher. An informal interview with some of the now qualified teachers who underwent this four year programme, revealed that they did not benefit much from the fourth year of TP because they were rarely supervised or guided by either college lecturers or school heads and this rendered this model of TP pedagogically unsound. The problem of supervision was also confirmed by the Secretary's Report (1990) when it stated that supervision of student teachers was rather complex and difficult due to lack of adequate vehicles and sometimes due to lack of funds for travel and subsistence.

However, school administrators and pupils did not complain much because this model allowed student teachers to be in schools for at least a full year as full time teachers, thereby easing, to some extent, the acute shortage of qualified teachers. This practice was, however, phased out in 1990 following the recommendations of the Teacher Education Review Committee Report of 1986.

**(c) ONE YEAR FULL TIME TP**

From 1988, the duration of teacher education reverted to three years. This programme allowed student teachers to spend the first and third years at college and the second year on TP as full time teachers. This is a "Sandwich" model of teacher education. Sandwich in the sense that the second year of TP is somehow "sandwiched" between the two layers of residential courses.

The only notable difference between the four-year programme and the three-year programme was that the TP period was shortened from two full years to one full year. The nature of TP remained both political and economical and this was endorsed by the Teacher Education Review Committee (TERC) of 1986 when it recommended that student teachers should continue working as full time teachers during their year of TP in order to help solve the national problem of teacher shortage. Surprisingly, the Teacher Education Review Committee, which consisted of mainly educationists, did not advance any pedagogical or professional reasons for recommending such a model of TP. This move brought a sigh of relief to the student teachers because their training period was effectively shortened from four to three years. The student teachers' preference for a three-year programme was confirmed by a study carried out by Chivore (1990) when the majority of the secondary student teachers (81.3%) under study indicated that they preferred the three-year conventional to the four year training pattern.

While the student teachers using this model of TP benefited from exposure to the world of educational reality, the programme did not give ample opportunities for student teachers to receive guidance from experienced teachers or to learn from observing qualified teachers teaching because of their role as full time teachers. Because of this, there was room for the perpetuation of bad teaching habits by the student teachers.

Therefore, a missing professional aspect in this model of TP was not to consider these student teachers first and foremost as students who required close guidance and supervision from experienced teachers (mentors), a fit which could not be achieved if they remained as full time teachers. As a way of addressing this anomaly, a new mode of TP commonly referred to as Attachment Teaching Practice (ATP) was introduced in 1995.

#### **(d) ATTACHMENT TEACHING PRACTICE (ATP)**

A committee of College Principals first mooted the idea of ATP as early as 1991. (Minutes of the Principals' meeting, 6 August 1991). One of the terms of reference for this committee was to review the deployment of student teachers on TP in the light of perennial problems of shortage of vehicles and lack of funds necessary for the efficient and effective supervision of teachers. The committee chaired by Mr.P.K. Nhenga, then principal of Gweru Teachers' College, unanimously agreed to propose a new pattern of TP where student teachers would get attached to qualified teachers. The committee advanced both administrative and pedagogical reasons when justifying the new model of TP.

Among some of the administrative reasons given were that the student teachers would be deployed as near to the college as possible making it easier and cheaper for lecturers to supervise students. The other reason advanced for the introduction of ATP was clearly articulated in the Secretary's Report (1993) that it was becoming increasingly difficult to deploy student teachers as full time teachers because all provinces had advised that they were no longer able to deploy all student teachers in their schools. This was a signal that schools' staff needs were reaching a saturation point.

Among some of the pedagogical reasons given for the introduction of ATP were that student teachers would get ample time to prepare lessons thoroughly, have time to experiment and innovate since teaching loads would be minimal. It was hoped that high quality teachers would be produced because this model of ATP would allow close monitoring and effective supervision by the colleges since student teachers would be deployed closer to the parent college. It was also argued, by the same committee of Principals, that TP spread through out the year in either full term or in short blocks would allow students and lecturers time for reflection, review, feedback and evaluation. It was also noted that the practice where student teachers went on TP for a year as full time teachers was devoid of the principle of immediate feedback. It was encouraging to note that for the first time, the model of TP was being considered mainly from a sound pedagogical point of view.

Attachment Teaching Practice was finally introduced in January 1995. This ATP which is currently (1999) in operation requires that student teachers go for TP during the rest of the second year of their three-year training period. The student teachers are deployed to schools where each one of them is supposed to get attached to a co-operating teacher (mentor). The mentors share their teaching loads (classes) with the student teachers. This leaves the student teacher free to observe the mentor teach and vice versa. The mentor is supposed to advise the student teacher in matters pertaining to his/her professional development. In a nutshell, the mentor is supposed to be a professional and critical friend who helps the student teacher in his /her day to day life while on TP.

While this ATP model was a step closer to producing a high quality teacher, the model has a number of loopholes. One of the

major problems as cited by Walker, (1997) was that some secondary schools did not understand the concept of attachment despite some workshops having been conducted to explain the concept. Mutare and Marymount Teachers' Colleges jointly hosted one such workshop at Mutare Teachers' College on 3 March 1997.

Schools did not appreciate the concept of ATP and viewed student teachers as relief teachers who come to relieve qualified teachers of their heavy loads. Student teachers were treated as full time teachers who required minimal help from the school, as was the case before the introduction of ATP. Such a practice meant that student teachers were not likely to benefit from the envisaged advantages of this model.

In an investigation carried out by Chiromo (1999), 37.5% of the student teachers under study indicated that there was need for all mentors to be aware of college expectations. This could be an indication that this model was prematurely introduced or imposed on schools before teachers were fully prepared to take their role as mentors. Maybe the assumption was that all effective teachers would be effective mentors, which is a very misleading assumption.

A casual observation of those schools that purport to have understood the concept of ATP, shows that in some secondary schools, there is a temptation to use student teachers as full time teachers because supervision by mentors is done as a formality so as to satisfy college requirements of, say, one crit a month. Some class teachers in secondary schools tend to release their classes " permanently" to the student teachers and seldom check progress of their classes.

However, the ATP in primary teachers' colleges is less confused than in secondary schools since the mentor and the student teacher literally share the same class. From a surface point of view, such a set up would appear to be more conducive to achieving the objectives of ATP. But sharing the same class does not necessarily mean that the student is attached to the mentor. The association between the mentor and the student teacher is more beneficial if the mentor acts as a critical professional friend.

Taking into account that the country (Zimbabwe) now has new challenges of producing high quality teachers, there is need for teachers' colleges to adopt more pedagogically sound models of TP in the next millennium.

## **THE WAY FORWARD**

When deciding on a model of TP, the following factors should be taken into account: That practice should be central to training and that theory and practice should be clearly integrated. The model should take into account first and foremost pedagogical aspects of teacher education. The following objectives as propounded by Brown and Brown (1990) should be considered when deciding on models of TP; the TP experience should give the student teachers: an opportunity to gain in confidence,

- the chance to put theories into practice,
- an opportunity to learn the skills and attitudes of a competent teacher,
- the chance to learn about children in real life,
- an opportunity for self evaluation and to discover strengths and weaknesses,
- an opportunity to improve knowledge of subject matter,
- the chance to gain from the benefits of constructive criticism and
- an opportunity for the teaching institution to evaluate itself.

Below is an example of a TP model for a three-year conventional programme, which could take the above objectives of TP into account.

**Table 3: Model of a three year Teacher Education programme.**

YEAR	TERM 1	TERM 2	TERM 3
1	College based courses	College based courses	Initiation in schools & college based courses
2	College based courses	Attachment Teaching Practice	College based courses
3	Attachment Teaching Practice	College based courses	College based courses & Examinations

### Year 1

The above model allows first year student teachers to be at college during terms 1 and 2 for college based courses. In term 3, student teachers go for an "Initiation period" in nearby schools during the first half of the term. It is the responsibility of Colleges of Education to liaise with school authorities to ensure that during this "Initiation period", student teachers get attached to experienced and competent teachers. Student teachers should observe a number of these experienced and competent teachers teach and also do some supervised teaching. Both teachers and college lecturers should do the supervision. This initiation period seeks to replace the "home area" teaching practice, which does not guarantee that student teachers are attached to competent teachers during this crucial period of their training.

The initial practice should allow student teachers to gain impressions and experience of teaching without being subjected to assessment pressures. This will help student teachers to gain confidence. Therefore, this period should be strictly for supervision and not assessment. Student teachers go back to college during the last half of the term where they reflect on the "Initiation period".

## **Year 2**

The first term of year 2 will see student teachers back at college for more college based courses. This phase will give student teachers an opportunity to gain more theories and subject matter, which they will be required to marry to practice during TP. In term 2 of their second year, student teachers go on TP where they get attached to co-operating teachers who are currently referred to as mentors even though they have not been trained to be mentors. Student teachers will teach a given number of lessons per week under the close supervision of their mentors and college lecturers. Assessment of student teachers can now take place but the weighting of this assessment could be say 40% of the total weighting. The rationale of this weighting is that TP should be taken as a developmental process and, therefore, supervision and assessment should concentrate on a few skills at a time. Student teachers go back to college in term 3 where they reflect on their TP experiences and for more college based courses.

## **YEAR 3**

In their third year, student teachers go on their final TP during the first term. This phase of TP can be organised in the same way as the second year TP. However, assessment at this stage could carry 60% of the total weighting. In term 2, student teachers are at college for college-based courses and preparation for the final theoretical examinations to be held during term 3 of third year. Term 3 of third year could also be used to psyche student teachers on their future roles as independent teachers and

mentors. This psychological preparation is vital if the newly qualified teachers are not to take the first few years of their teaching as a resting period far away from the "madding crowd" of college staff.

## CONCLUSION

Very few educationists would dispute the fact that the first two decades of our independence have seen a mass production of teachers so as to meet the acute shortage of teachers. Understandably, the Alternative -Needs models of Teacher Education had to be adopted to increase the teacher stock rapidly. Regrettably, some of the teachers produced during this phase were not fully baked. Therefore, the next millennium should see more emphasis being placed on the production of teachers of a higher quality. The adoption of pedagogically sound models of teacher education would enhance this dream.

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