

EMERGING TEACHER EDUCATION NEEDS AS A RESULT OF LAND REFORM IN ZIMBABWE: A FOCUS ON NEW RESETTLEMENT AREAS

Oliver Mavundutse

Department of Teacher Education,
University of Zimbabwe,
ZIMBABWE.

Cribert Munetsi

Department of Teacher Education,
University of Zimbabwe,
ZIMBABWE.

Attwell Mamvuto[‡]

Department of Teacher Education,
University of Zimbabwe,
ZIMBABWE.

Pharoah Joseph Mavhunga

Department of Teacher Education,
University of Zimbabwe,
ZIMBABWE.

Phebion Kangai

Department of Teacher Education,
University of Zimbabwe,
ZIMBABWE.

Rosewitta Gatsi

Department of Teacher Education,
University of Zimbabwe,
ZIMBABWE.

ABSTRACT

This study was prompted by public concerns and observations that schools that were rapidly set up to cater for the children of the settlers in the new resettlement areas motion by the Zimbabwean government in 2000, were not properly planned for and, therefore, did not have the basic infrastructure, facilities and resources expected in normal schools. This called for new skills demands on teachers manning such schools, skills that teachers were not prepared for during their training. The methodological approach to the study involved observations, interviews and lesson observations in purposively sampled resettlement schools. The data were qualitatively analysed under emerging themes and validated in a series of workshops to prepare an initial report for interested stakeholders. The study found out that while indeed the schools did not have basic infrastructure and resources expected in a normal school, teachers were doing their best to offer some education to the pupils. It was also established that indeed the fast track schools placed new skills demands on the teachers, for example, in handling composite classes that were prevalent in the schools. The study recommended that teacher education institutions and related organisations should include skills training related to conditions and situations in the fast track schools in the teacher education curriculum since such schools are likely to remain in operation into the foreseeable future.

Keywords: Teacher education; Resettlement; Land reform; Education in Zimbabwe; Untrained teachers

INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe is in Southern Africa and shares its borders with South Africa to the South, Zambia to the north, Mozambique to the east and northeast, Botswana to the west and southwest as well as Namibia to the west at the Caprivi Strip. Zimbabwe is multilingual and multicultural with English as the official language of instruction, ChiShona and IsiNdebele as the other national languages. Zimbabwe follows the 7-4-2-3 system of education, that is, seven years of primary, four years of secondary leading to the Zimbabwe General Certificate of Education Ordinary level (ZGCE O level), two years of advanced high school leading to the Zimbabwe Advanced Level Certificate (A Level) and generally three years of University Education, though some programmes may take much longer than that. On attaining independence in 1980, primary education was made free and compulsory, while secondary and tertiary education were made easily accessible but at an affordable cost. Tertiary education has also expanded rapidly since 1980.[§]

The advent of land reform^{**} in Zimbabwe since the year 2000 has had a profound impact across the socio-political landscape including education. In particular, the greatest impact in terms of education

[‡] Corresponding author: amamvuto@yahoo.co.uk

[§] Zimbabwe's Universities have increased from one at independence in 1980 to 13 in 2012 (eight are state Universities and five are private) and 15 teacher education colleges.

^{**} Land reform was a result of the need to correct land ownership imbalances created by the land apportionment act of 1930 that gave 51% of land to white farmers who numbered 4000 in 1980 while 30% was given Black Zimbabweans who

has been the rapid establishment of new schools in resettlement areas. This entailed the setting up of primary schools to cater for children of the resettled farmers in their respective areas whose needs could not be adequately provided for by the historically limited number of schools in some of the resettled commercial farms. In some cases there was no schools altogether.

Officially, new resettlement schools are referred to as Fast Track schools. In all cases, the schools were unregistered, and therefore had limited access to official support. They were also referred to as 'satellite' schools as they were attached to or regarded as extensions of already established nearby schools for administrative purposes. The majority (66%) are identified in the Ministry documents as Grade Three schools^{††}. In Mashonaland West, for example, in Makonde District where this study was conducted, as many as thirty five new schools were established with an enrolment of approximately 8750 pupils. To date there are about 700 satellite schools countrywide (Ministry of Education, Sports & Culture, 2004).

In this context, there was, therefore, a justifiable need to establish how all these schools, their teachers and students could be effectively provided for within the existing educational system. Of particular interest in this study was the need to establish which specific teacher education needs required attention. This is key issue surrounding on-going discussions about quality education provision in Zimbabwe and in the region. Of particular interest were such issues as the management of composite classes which emerged as a key issue at the UNESCO sponsored Belvedere Technical Teachers' College Workshop held in September 2003 as a follow up to the World Education Forum in Dakar on Education for All in 2000. Composite classes provided new challenges to teachers by demanding classroom management and teaching skills that teachers were not equipped with during initial training.

Although the issue of composite classes remained a major concern, other issues of importance did emerge. These included school-community relations, teacher quality, low pass rates (36 % on average), resources and facilities. It was also interesting to find out the extent to which the young learners had adjusted to the new environments that included long walking distances to and from schools and other challenges associated with these types of schools. In the same vein, it was also important to establish how teachers faced the challenges in the new schools, such as lesson presentation, class management and provision of learning materials.

Theoretically, the study focused on an educational system in transition under conditions of fundamental change, different from the changes experienced in the 1980s. Whilst the 1980s focused on quantitative expansion of the education system, it appeared to this research that the country's education system is now faced with fundamental changes impacting on quality, for example, the issue of composite classes, teachers awaiting training (untrained teachers), resource provision and equity. The issue of equity is broader than that of emergent equity issues amongst competing interest groups in the new resettlement areas such as between trained and untrained personnel, professional staff and parents, education officials and local parents as well as established and new satellite schools.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The 1999 Nziramasanga Commission of Enquiry into Education and Training notes the remarkable advancement in the provision and access to education at all levels since Zimbabwe's independence in 1980. There were 2401 primary schools enrolling 81958 pupils at independence and ten years later, there were 4504 schools enrolling in excess of 2 274 178 pupils (Zvobgo, 2003). This phenomenal expansion created a number of challenges in terms of provision of quality education. Nziramasanga (1999) notes some of the following challenges: shortage of teaching/ learning materials e.g. textbooks; inadequate infrastructure e.g. classrooms and libraries and inadequate financial resources.

numbered seven million in 1980. The remaining 20% was assigned to parks and forests. However 20 years down the line situation had not changed thereby giving birth to the Fast Track land redistribution programme in July 2000. The establishment of new resettlement areas was also associated with the establishment of new schools that are often referred to as fast track schools

^{††} For administrative purposes, Zimbabwean schools are generally in three categories depending on student enrolment. Grade 1 are the largest, grade 2 medium and grade 3 have the least number of students

While access to education had largely been achieved and attention was now shifting to emphasise on quality education, the 2000 land reform programme which saw the massive movement of families to new farms and resettlement areas through the fast track land redistribution programme brought about new changes. This resuscitated some of the problems and challenges experienced at independence such as the problem of access to education by children in these resettlement areas.

The Sunday Mail of 16 January 2005 notes that the problems with such schools included poor accessibility; poor infrastructure; poor facilities; lack of teaching/ learning materials e.g. books; lack of trained teachers and lack of financial resources The Nziramasanga Report of 1999 points out that, in many cases, education in resettlement areas was not planned for when people were in former commercial farms and this became a source of problems such as those cited above, with a bearing on the provision of quality education. This study sought to investigate how teachers, pupils and parents were coping with these challenges in the identified schools.

The Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (2005) lays down enabling inputs for quality teaching/ learning, which among other things include good places for learning, availability of learning materials, good teachers and adequate financial support. This entails the provision, distribution and delivery of resources and provision of standard well-furnished classrooms. According to the report, this leads to 'learner friendly schools' yet, a study by Chisaka and Mavundtse (2003) found out that teachers taught large composite classes in some schools in Rushinga and Bikita districts.

The Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (1999) further notes that education in resettlement areas was the poorest in the country, mainly due to poor infrastructure. Old broken down tobacco bans and storerooms were serving as classrooms, accommodating composite classes. One wonders how quality education could be achieved under such circumstances. This study, sought among other things, to find out how teachers were coping with composite classes and the skills they may have needed to be effective in such circumstances. A similar research carried out in Zambia on the lack of text-books in classrooms indicated that less than 10% of the books procured, had actually reached classrooms. This was due to an inefficient distribution system. Another survey in Guinea found wastage of up to 67 % of textbook stocks. Yet a school effectiveness research including several studies in the 1970s and 1980s shows that the availability of relevant, good quality and affordable textbooks resulted in positive learner achievement.

Furthermore, the EFA Global Monitoring Report (2005) notes that teachers are a key enabling factor in the improvement of the quality of education. They are critical to the success of any reforms designed to improve quality and by far the most significant factor in this regard. The report proposes a number of critical elements in teachers that ensure quality education in schools and they include: sound recruitment procedures for teacher training; rich initial training; on-going support on the job; good remuneration; appropriate deployment and general good conditions of service. These requirements are necessary and relevant in any teaching/ learning situation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study sought to:

- a. Find out what new skills and professional demands resettlement schools required from teachers;
- b. Establish professional needs of teachers in those schools and communities; and
- c. Assess school needs that would help towards the achievement of quality basic education in resettlement primary schools.

METHODOLOGY

The design was derived in part from qualitative studies including those by Bogdan & Biklen (1992), Marshall & Rossman (1999), as well as local studies such as those by Chisaka & Vakalisa (2003), Chisaka & Mavundtse (2003), Shumba *et al.*, (2004).

Methodologically, the research was a participatory case study in which data were obtained, among other things, through focus group discussions with parents, teachers and pupils over several weeks. It was primarily hoped that community involvement and participation provided by this approach would provide suitable and more reliable and valid data. The approach was also advantageous because it provided first-hand information from the direct experiences of the participants.

In addition, interviews were carried out with the school heads, teachers and community leaders. Lesson observations were made to find out more about actual teaching/ learning processes, challenges and children's experiences in different classes in the fast track schools. An observation schedule was also prepared and used to assess the availability of physical infrastructure and its effects on teacher effectiveness and optimisation of pupil learning. Some of the important elements in the observation schedule included reviewing of needs such as teachers' accommodation, communication facilities, classrooms, teachers' toilets, children's playgrounds and general appearance of the school.

One of the key characteristics emphasised in all the cited studies, was the need to maintain participatory relationship between the researchers and participants. There was, therefore, in practice an attempt to break the hierarchical relationship between researchers and participants though the teachers naturally tended to maintain the traditional distance. The team achieved the desirable symmetry through initial visits, informal discussions and a pilot study. Efforts were also made by the team of researchers to contribute some of the pressing material needs through bringing along with them books, magazines, pens and chalk. This assisted to open up the space for participants to volunteer information.

The researchers observed a number of ethical guidelines to ensure the integrity of the study and maintain confidence among the participants. Before the actual study, the team of researchers introduced itself and clarified its intentions to the school leaders as honestly as was possible. The team also presented itself as bona fide university researchers by presenting letters of introduction from the Head Office and Regional Office (Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture). The research team made it clear that it was looking for information that would benefit the schools, community and the researchers. The research team also made it clear that the school would also have access to the findings and have a chance to review the report before final publication. The schools were assured that they would remain anonymous and there would be no danger in using the information to victimise any elements within the schools.

Commensurate with a case study design, Marshall and Rossman (1999) advise that the study population should normally be homogeneous while the approach should encourage both emic and etic perspectives. Therefore, in determining the sample size and study sites, the research team was guided by purposive sampling. This meant that the study had to focus on a small group of schools with the intended characteristics to be studied in depth. Qualitatively, the findings would, therefore, not be representative of all resettlement schools, but would only give detailed insights into specifics of each of the two school sites under study.

Two main study sites were selected on this basis, both from Mashonaland West^{‡‡}. In order to maintain anonymity, the schools were named school A and school B respectively. Each selected school had its own unique individual characteristics. Similarities and differences were quite evident in the social, historical, geographical, cultural and political settings.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section summarizes the findings of the research in relation to the initial objectives. The findings must be viewed as interrelated in many ways, hence compartmentalising them may not be the best approach.

Teacher Qualifications

While the six teachers at school A held the initial Diploma in Education qualification, all the four teachers at school B were untrained. In fact, only one of them would qualify to enter any of the

^{‡‡} Mashonaland West is one of the 10 provinces of Zimbabwe and is predominantly a farming area hence it has a high concentration of Fast Track Schools.

teachers' colleges for initial training as the other three did not have the prerequisite Mathematics at 'O' level. The issue of concern was that if untrained teachers were expected to go for training one day, why would the Ministry of Education Sports and Culture continue to employ people without requisite subjects? Over and above that concern, the requirement of 'O' level Mathematics arose from observations that primary school teachers who did not have 'O' Level Mathematics were contributing towards pupils' poor performance in Mathematics.

The contradiction between teacher education expectations and reality in the two schools had several implications for all stakeholders. Each of the four untrained teachers had the minimum 5 'O' level passes, yet the primary school curriculum has eleven subjects to be taught. If a teacher had been to a training college with the basic 5 'O' level subjects, they would then be equipped with content in the remaining five or six subjects through the Professional Studies course. For those four untrained teachers, the research found out that they were short in both content and methodology in the teaching of which ever subject they had not done at 'O' level. Teacher qualifications also help to instil and build confidence in the individual teacher. The level of confidence in the untrained teacher was found to be low.

Teaching Methodologies

Although school A was staffed with appropriately qualified teachers while school B had untrained teachers, their teaching approaches hardly reflected those differences. Both types of teacher largely depended on the lecture method. The untrained teachers' situation was compounded by the school environment in which they operated. Teaching resources such as text-books, guides and charts were not available at both schools. While one may argue that in terms of content, even an untrained teacher could read and teach, it was not that simple because untrained teachers lack in teaching methods. Resultantly, teachers relied on the lecture method and the question and answer methods. Creighton (1997) and Stierer & Maybin (1994) agree that effective teachers are those who are able to tailor instructional strategies and activities to the needs of learners. The classrooms that were investigated, therefore, negatively impacted on teachers' instructional strategies, both trained and untrained.

Reading for the acquisition of subject content was also very limited because resources such as basic textbooks and other relevant books were not available. Teachers reported that they would be very lucky if they had a single text-book in any given subject. Mullis *et al.*, (2004) reported negative impact of lack of relevant text-books on lesson delivery. The absence of furniture in all the classrooms visited made teaching and learning very difficult. While at school A, the classrooms had cement floors, it was observed that at school B, pupils sat either in the sand or on thin pole benches which were not comfortable at all. As the temporary (teacher awaiting training) Teacher in Charge indicated,

No qualified teacher would be prepared to come and teach here. When I was appointed in Chinhoyi to come and teach here I was very excited that I had got the job. However, when I arrived, I felt like going back to Chinhoyi. I felt lost. As you can see, the conditions here are difficult. I had never lived in a pole and dagga hut in my life, having been born and brought up in Chinhoyi. There is no water her, no electricity, no entertainment- it's remote. The working conditions are poor. Anyway I needed the job. So I am here.

Composite Classes^{§§}

At both schools, there was at least one composite class^{***}. A composite class is composed of pupils belonging to different grade levels. Such classes present a myriad of challenges if one is not adequately prepared to handle them. All teachers interviewed expressed difficulties arising from lack of knowledge, skills and capacity to teach composite classes. The problems arose from not having been trained in managing composite classes in the case of qualified teachers, and from not having heard about such classes in the case of untrained teachers. All trained teachers expressed that they had not been taught anything about how to teach composite classes when they were at training college. The

^{§§} A composite class is made up of pupils from two different grade levels taught by one teacher in the same classroom. Ideally they follow different curriculum content.

Teachers' Colleges Professional Studies course needs revision. Specific skills teachers would need that the syllabus could incorporate include management of two or more grade levels, simultaneously attending to learner needs, appropriate teaching methodologies, curriculum organisation, among others.

Whilst School A had qualified teachers who often assisted each other by formally and informally sharing ideas on how to teach composite classes, School B they had very little to share since they were not trained. The 'mother school' at which the headmaster worked from was too far for him to offer regular assistance and hence it is not surprising, as he indicated that he had not visited the satellite school for the past one and a half years. "May I join you so that I may also visit the school?" This behaviour was not peculiar to headmasters only, but the Provincial Office and the District Office also behaved in the same manner. Furthermore the study found that composite classes ended up being treated as one class in terms of scheming, planning, and lesson delivery at both schools. Some of the reasons cited for such a practice included the amount of work involved, lack of resources and general low esteem that negatively impacted on teachers' performance.

Availability of Resources

Resources are a very important factor in the provision of quality education. They influence the kind of teaching / learning environment teachers create for themselves and the learners. The research established that there were serious shortages of instructional materials like basic textbooks, chalk and manila-paper for charts, children's exercise books and furniture for teachers and pupils at both schools. During interviews teachers expressed desperation arising from resource shortages and this was confirmed through researchers' observations of lessons being taught without textbooks, charts and concrete media. Shortages of resources were particularly acute at School B where teachers relied on improvisation. In one class the teacher used a flat slate rock as 'chalkboard' and used charcoal in place of chalk. His remarks were "Unonyora zvingani ipapo?" (How much can one write on this small board? However, despite one's creativity and ingenuity, there is a limit to which one can continue be innovative. This lack of resources was attributed to lack of funding. At School B unqualified teachers also lacked training to simple teaching learning media. This was compounded by coupled poor infrastructure, thereby presenting challenges and frustrations to the otherwise very enthusiastic untrained teachers at School B.

Quality of Infrastructure

The availability of infrastructure such as roads, buildings, water resources and teachers' recreational facilities contribute positively towards the quality of education provided. While there were major roads linking both Schools with Chinhoyi town where education administrative offices are located there was no reliable public transport. In terms of buildings there were not conducive classrooms and teachers' houses for effective teaching and habitation respectively. Thatched pole and dagga classrooms, teachers' houses and three-holed pit toilets at school B depicted unsuitable teaching/ learning and living structures. The hut for the Teacher-In-Charge had no door. One parent commented on what the community was able to do for its teachers "Isuwo neurombo hwedu, ndizvo zvatakakwanisawo kuitirai maticha edu" (Due of our poverty this is what we as parents managed to do for our teachers). The school buildings, in general, were in a deplorable state. The absence of chalkboards, furniture for both teachers and pupils at school B, compromised the untrained/ unskilled teachers' efforts.

School infrastructure in use such as farm store rooms, machinery shades and poultry houses were not meant for educational use and will never provide a conducive teaching learning environment as long as there are no any significant renovations and adjustments.

Extra Curricula Activities

The schools were keen to offer a complete curriculum that included academic and sporting activities. However, extra curricula activities were hampered by the sporting fields. One teacher said, "Chero tichida kutamba bhora racho tinotamba nani?" (Even if we wanted to play ball games, the other nearest school is 15 kilometres away). At school B, for instance, trees and shrubs had just been cut without uprooting the stumps in the soccer and netball grounds. This state of affairs would not enable smooth performance of ball skills and athletics without injury to pupils. The sports fields also had over grown

grass, indicative of very little sporting activity taking place at the schools. Sporting activities were also said to have been negatively affected by the long distances that most children walked to and from school. Teachers indicated that they had to dismiss children soon after lunch to enable them to get home before dusk. Parents interviewed saw no need for sporting activities as they thought walking to and from school was enough exercise.

IMPLICATIONS

Skills and Professional Demands for Teachers in Resettlement Areas

The study established that both trained and untrained teachers could not effectively discharge their duties in the new resettlement schools as a result of poor infrastructure or non-existent resources. Even the trained teachers found themselves incapacitated because their training had not adequately prepared them to function in this kind of school, particularly when it came to handling composite classes. Thus it is recommended that teacher education curricula should develop a teacher equipped with problem-solving skills with the capacity to identify, diagnose and search for a solution. This, therefore, calls on teacher education to develop what Stenhouse (1975), Carr & Kemmis (1986) call 'a teacher researcher.'

Handling Composite Classes

It emerged that both trained and untrained teachers had no idea of handling composite classes. Where two different grades were taught by the same teacher in the same classroom, they taught the same content at the same and this proved to be detrimental to the development of either class. Therefore the stakeholders, namely the Department of Teacher Education (DTE), University of Zimbabwe and the Ministry of Education Sports and Culture, should, as a matter of urgency, mount in-service training programmes for the concerned teachers. Such programmes focus on issues such as time tabling, planning lessons for composite classes, class organisation and management among other skills. The long-term measure is for Teacher Education to develop a versatile teacher with problem solving skills as suggested earlier.

School Needs for Achievement of Basic Quality Education

Since land reform and resettlement are government programmes, government is urged to mobilise resources and construct standard facilities as a matter of urgency at all resettlement schools. Communities concerned also need to be mobilised to augment government efforts in this regard. To solve the problem of the non-availability of teaching/ learning materials in fast track schools, the Ministry of Education Sports and Culture, through districts and provincial offices, should urgently mobilise teaching and learning materials from the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) and the Audio Visual Services (AVS) which apparently have these resources in stock.

It is recommended that the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture should consider introducing a substantial hardship allowance to attract qualified teachers to such schools. The untrained teacher who qualifies for teachers' education should be given preference to go for training.

Composite classes are not the best arrangement for quality education there the Ministry should gradually do away with the phenomenon of composite classes.

CONCLUSION

While it is commendable that there was provision of education at the two schools studied, some major anomalies were noted. Some other emerging issues could also not be ignored Major findings made related to how issues of teacher qualifications, dilapidated infrastructure, non-availability of resources and general discontent among teachers in new resettlement schools are intertwined. The insights derived from the study, one might conclude, are representative of what obtains in other districts and provinces of the country where fast track schools have been established. This therefore calls for a replication study of a greater magnitude to authenticate, validate and consolidate the findings of this study.

REFERENCES

- Bogdan, R.C. and Biklen, S.K. (1992). *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods* (2nd ed). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Belvedere Workshop, (2003). *Theme: Handling Composite Classes at Primary Level*. Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, Zimbabwe, (Unpublished Paper)
- Carr, W. and Kemmis, S. (1986). *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research*. London: Falmer Press.
- Chisaka, B.C. and Mavundutse, O. (2003). *Report on Needs Assessment Study on Access to Quality Basic Education: The Case for Bikita and Rushinga Districts* (Unpublished)
- Chisaka, B.C. and Vakalisa, N.C.G (2003). Some Effects of Ability Grouping in Harare Secondary Schools. *South Africa Journal of Education* 23 (3)
- Creighton, D.C. (1997). *Critical Literacy in the Elementary Classroom Language Arts* 74:438-448
- Marshall, C. and Rossman, G.B. (1999). *Designing Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publication Ltd.
- Mullis, V.S., Kennedy, A.M., Martin, M.O. and Sainsbury, M. (2004). in Pirls (2006): *Assessment Framework and Specification*, TIMSS and PIRLS International Study Centre, Amsterdam.
- Nziramanga, C.T. (1999). *Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training*. Harare: Government Printers.
- Stenhouse, L. (1975). *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Developmen*. London: Heinrman.
- Stierer, B. and Maybin (eds) (1994). *Language, Literacy and Learning in Educational Practice*, Buckingham: Open University Press
- Shumba, O. (2004). Zimbabwe Quality Education for Social Transformation (QUEST) (Sexual Maturation Project): *Growing up and Sexual Maturation in Primary Teachers' Colleges and Primary Schools: Zimbabwe*. University of Zimbabwe, Harare.
- Sunday Mail Newspaper, 16 January 2005 Article 'Chijaka School Still Sings the Blues'
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (2004). *Education for All: The Quality Imperative. (E.F.A) Global Monitoring Report*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.
- Zvobgo, R.J. (2003). The Impact of the Structural Adjustment Programme on Education in Zimbabwe. *Zimbabwe Bulletin of Teacher Education* 12 (2): 65- 101.