

Towards a New Teacher-Training Model for ODL: The Challenges Faced by PGDE Students and Their Mentors and Supervisors During Teaching Practice

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Teacher development through the conventional and Zimbabwe integrated teacher education course (ZINTEC) colleges has gone through several models since independence in 1980. Teacher shortages in many schools and poor student results continued to be the order of the day. When the government of Zimbabwe introduced the education capacity development programme for teachers in 2014, Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU), as the only university mandated to offer open and distance learning (ODL), introduced within its Faculty of Arts and Education, and the Department of Teacher Development. Would ZOU be able to produce equally-trained or even better teachers than other colleges or universities? In light of this background, this study sought to investigate the challenges faced by ZOU students and their mentors and supervisors during teaching practice (TP). Of the postgraduate diploma in education (PGDE) intake 13 students who had come to the Midlands Regional Campus to write their examinations, 50 were randomly sampled and asked to fill in open-ended questionnaires. Twelve mentors stationed at some schools in Gokwe District where TP visits were carried out and 10 TP supervisors at the Midlands Regional Campus filled in similar questionnaires. By quantifying similar responses, emerging patterns and themes were noted. The major conclusions were that the TP period was too short, school based mentors needed training, lecturers spent more time on rushed assessment than supervision and ZOU had to provide sufficient human and material resources and logistics in order to enhance viability and sustainability of TP mentoring and supervision. It is recommended that the challenges faced and solutions offered by the respondents be used to initiate further debate and insights towards coming up with a new teacher-training model for ODL.

Keywords: teacher development, mentoring, supervision, teaching practice (TP) challenges, viability and sustainability of TP, teacher-training model for open and distance learning (ODL)

Introduction

Teacher development through the conventional and the Zimbabwe integrated teacher education course (ZINTEC) colleges has gone through several models since independence in 1980. For example, there have been 3-year college-based programmes with minimum teaching practice (TP) for “O (ordinary)” level holders, 2-year college-based programmes for “A (advanced level)” level holders, 4-year (1st year in college, 2nd year out on TP, 3rd year in college, and 4th year out on TP) for “O” level holders, and 2-5-2 system for primary school teacher education (Nyaumwe, 2012). Some were more cost effective than others, while some produced

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more classroom effective teachers than others (as evidenced by students' results). People at different ministerial levels continued to engage in serious debate as to which could be the best model.

However, teacher shortages in many schools and poor student results prevailed. For example, according to official statistics, teacher shortage of a total of about 10,000 affecting many schools and poor pass rates, of less than 18.4% particularly at "O" level, continued to be the order of the day (The Herald, 2016; 2013). The Zimbabwe Minister of Primary and Secondary Education has said that staff shortage is crippling operations (Harare24 News, 2016).

When the government of Zimbabwe introduced the education capacity development programme for teachers in 2014 (see <http://www.zou.ac.zw/newsandevents/articles/index.html>), Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU), as the only university mandated to offer open and distance learning (ODL), introduced within its Faculty of Arts and Education, and the Department of Teacher Development. Would ZOU be able to produce equally-trained or even better teachers than other colleges or universities? In light of this background, this study sought to investigate the challenges faced by postgraduate diploma in education (PGDE) students in ZOU and their mentors and supervisors during TP.

Theoretical Framework and Review of Related Literature

TPACK stands for technological pedagogical content knowledge. This study is hinged on the TPACK framework for teachers' knowledge for teaching and technology integration (Koehler & Mishra, 2009; Koehler et al., 2014), and on ODL theories of interaction and communication, independence and autonomy, and "industrialization" of teaching (Keegan, 1986; Simonson, Schlosser, & Hanson, 1999). During training, teacher-trainers should ensure that student-teachers acquire pedagogical knowledge (e.g., knowledge of how students learn, knowledge of constructivism, and structured instructional approaches), content knowledge (thorough grasp of the subject matter), and technological knowledge (help to integrate information and communications technology [ICT] skills in teaching and learning). What is more, ODL learners should be independent and self-directed learners, possess good communication skills, and able to interact well with others. ODL is supposed to partition work and make it easy (division of labour), to be cost effective and to produce in large quantities (mass production). A good teacher must also possess some personal attributes, such as wellness, resiliency, time management, moral and professional commitment (Salisbury University Conceptual Framework, 2013), and strong self-efficacy (Burns, 2011).

Trainee teachers need to possess these types of teacher-knowledge and develop sound personal and professional attributes regardless of the training mode, which they undergo. According to Perrato (2000, as cited in Lynd, 2005), there were positive results on classroom effectiveness of Zimbabwean teachers trained through distance education, while the examination achievement of pupils taught by ZINTEC teachers were reported to be in line with the national trend. Samkange (2013) supported this finding by saying that good and effective teachers can be trained through the ODL mode. However, Samkange (2013, p. 222) went on to say that, "... Lack of resources and lack of understanding between different stakeholders was negatively affecting the success of the ODL model of teacher-training at the ZOU...."

Mukeredzi (2013) said that teachers can gain pedagogic content knowledge (PCK) and professional growth through lesson supervision, mentoring, whole-school meetings, and demonstration lessons. She also said in her study that, "PGDE students in ZOU gained a lot through mentoring, while South African participants missed out on gaining PCK because of lack of mentoring."

Teacher-Training Models

Apart from the traditional teacher-training model at teachers' colleges, several other models have been tried, documented (Lynd, 2005), developed, and proposed (Kachelhoffer, 1995; Lim, Oh, & Lee, 2015). These include the fast-track teacher-training models, such as the crash-training programme, distance education model, mixed-mode model, local recruitment model, and the structured materials model (Lynd, 2005). Kachelhoffer (1995) had proposed the 2-year residential, 1-year distance education with internship model, and the 4-year primary and secondary teacher-training programme at college, university, or technicon. The programme would contain academic studies of two subject areas, professional preparation, and school practice of at least 10-week under mentorship of schoolteachers and lecturers. Lim, Oh, and Lee (2015) had developed similar programmes that include technology, art, and networking. The question of which of these models could be most effective would depend on several factors, such as cost, human and material resources, teacher quality, and attitude of trainees, trainers, and policy-makers.

TP Models for ODL

TP models for ODL have been tried in Zimbabwe and elsewhere. According to Lynd (2005, p. 37), ZINTEC was a mixed-mode and accelerated, the 4-year teacher-training program consisting of two terms in college—one at the beginning and the other at the end. The rest of the time spent teaching in the schools accompanied by distance learning materials and face-to-face tutorial support.

Elsewhere similar programmes were the Malawi's Integrated In-Service Teacher Education Program (MIITEP) pegged as a "3-20-1" (months) mixed-mode programme, Uganda's teacher development and management system (TDMS) pegged as a 2-year residential and 3-year field based programme and Guinea's "Formation Initiale des Maîtres en Guinée (FIMG)" meaning Guinean Initial Teacher-Training Program (FIMG) pegged as a "3-3-9-3" programme. For instance, "3-3-9-3" meant three months of academic reinforcement, three months of professional studies, nine months of TP, and three final months at the institution for reflection and consolidation (Lynd, 2005). These models were reported to be fast track, cost effective, and practical.

In Zimbabwe, ZOU has designed three programmes for teacher-training which all include TP. These are the PDGE for secondary school teachers (1.5 years), diploma in education (DIPED) for primary school teachers (3 years), and the bachelor of education in early childhood development (BECD) for infant teachers (4 years) (see http://www.zou.ac.zw/faculties/arts_education/deptTeacher.html). ZOU's PGDE programme is designed for degree holders who already have subject content knowledge, but do not hold any teaching qualification. PGDE students also do courses, such as psychological perspectives in education, research methods, computer applications in education, entrepreneurship in education, and the research project through distance and e-learning, courses. For all the three programmes, the student-teacher will be on TP at a distant school for one semester, three semesters, and two semesters, respectively. TP is intended to equip the student with teaching skills and to develop him/her as a professional teacher. Now, the question also arises as to which is the most effective TP model for ODL.

The Statement of the Problem

According to official statistics, teacher shortages in many schools and poor student results continued to be the order of the day. It would appear that the problem is worsened by the fact that student teachers on TP, their

mentors, and TP supervisors face a lot of challenges, which could be rectified if there was a new and implementable teacher-training model for ODL.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the challenges faced by PGDE students, their mentors, and supervisors during TP in ZOU. The study also sought to initiate debate aimed at coming up with a new teacher-training model for ODL.

Research Questions

The research questions for the study were:

1. What challenges are faced by TP supervisors, student mentors, and PGDE student teachers on TP?
2. How can these challenges be overcome?
3. What are the suggestions of the TP supervisors, student mentors, and student teachers on TP regarding the best model for ODL?

Materials and Methods

Thirteen students of the PGDE intake who had come to the ZOU Midlands Regional Campus are required to write their examinations and 50 were randomly sampled and asked to fill in open-ended questionnaires. Twelve mentors stationed at some schools in Gokwe where TP visits were carried out and 10 TP supervisors at the Midlands Regional Campus filled in similar questionnaires. The study employed the mixed methods approach where respondents' qualitative answers were quantified in terms of percentage ratings and meaning or interpretation was sought from the most popular, biggest, or smallest percentages. By quantifying similar responses, emerging patterns and themes were noted and compared or triangulated with similar sentiments gleaned from the review of related literature.

Results and Discussion

Students' Questionnaire Data

Table 1 shows that slightly more male (51.2%) than female (48.8%) student-teachers responded to the questionnaires. The majority of the student-teachers (56.1%) had an age range of 31-40 years. The lowest age was 27 years and the highest was 47 years with an average age of 33.3 years. Also, the majority of students (26.8%) were from Gweru district and minorities (9.8%) were from Mvuma/Chirumanzu district. Their teaching experiences ranged from 1-year to 20-years with an average experience of 7.5 years. The majority (46.3%) had a teaching experience of 1-5 years. A range of secondary school subjects were being taught with the most popular being History (19.5%) and Geography (19.5%). It is interesting to note that of the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects, only three students (7.3%) were teaching General Science, one student (2.44%) was teaching Computer Science, and none (0%) was teaching Mathematics. Although the majority of respondents said that their mentors were qualified teachers (80.5%) and competent ones (75.6%), they still believed that those mentors needed to be trained in the ZOU house-style. This could imply that student teachers view their mentors as lacking in ZOU's requirements for mentoring. In this vain, the researcher believes that ZOU should come up with a guideline for mentors.

Table 1

Showing Demographical Data of the Students (Questions 1-8, N = 41)

Gender	Male (51.2%)		Female (48.8%)
Age in years	Below 20 years old (0%)	20-30 years old (36.6%)	31-40 years old (56.1%)
	41-50 years old (7.3%)	Above 51 years old (0%)	
District	Gokwe North (17.1%)	Gokwe South (21.9%)	Kwekwe (19.5%)
	Gweru (26.8%)	Mvuma/Chirumanzu (9.8%)	No answer (4.9%)
Teaching experience	One to five years (46.3%)	Six to 10 years (31.7%)	11-15 years (12.2%)
	16-20 years (4.9%)	Above 20 years (0%)	No answer (4.9%)
Subject being taught	MOB (Management of Business, 7.30%)	Sociology (2.44%)	Ndebele (7.30%)
	History (19.50%)	English (9.82%)	Music (2.44%)
	Geography (19.50%)	Computer Science (2.44%)	RE (Religious Education, 2.44%)
	Gen Science (7.30%)	Commerce (2.44%)	Shona (4.90%)
	Divinity (2.44%)	Agriculture (7.30%)	No answer (2.44%)
Is mentor qualified teacher?	Yes (80.5%)	No (17.1%)	No mentor (2.4%)
Is mentor competent?	Yes (75.6%)	No (22%)	No answer (2.4%)
Does mentor to be trained in ZOU house-style?	Yes (85.4%)	No (12.2%)	Not applicable (2.4%)

Questions 9-11 asked student-teachers to state the kind of assistance they got from their mentors, the challenges they were facing, and how those challenges could be overcome. Their responses as well as the theme/main idea relating to the responses (in brackets) and the percentage of students who mentioned the same or similar idea (shown at the end of the response) were as follows:

The responses (theme) and percentage for Question 9 (What kind of assistance do you get from your mentor?) are as the following:

1. Mentor's guides, directs, and advises (mentor's professionalism)—15%;
2. I get assistance on lesson planning, teaching techniques and lesson delivery (teacher's pedagogic knowledge)—46.6%;
3. I get help on resources and subject related material (teacher's content knowledge)—11.6%;
4. He gives me moral support, assists me with classroom management skills, and supervises my lessons (knowledge on student's professional development)—20.1%;
5. Nothing (poor or negative student-mentor relationship)—6.7%.

The above sentiments reveal that the most assistance given by mentors to student-teachers relate to lesson planning, teaching techniques, and lesson delivery (i.e., on the teachers' pedagogic knowledge) and relatively less assistance on moral support, classroom management, and general lesson supervision to boost the students' professional development. Regrettably, some student-teachers (6.7%) mentioned that they do not get any help from their mentors and this could be a sign that the mentors do not know what kind of help to give or that there could be poor student-mentor relationships at the school.

The responses (theme) and percentage for Question 10 (What challenges are you facing as a student-teacher on TP?) are as the following:

1. I have big loads and inadequate time to cover both TP and school demands (TP period too short)—43.6%;
2. ZOU lecturers are keen on assessment rather than supervision (need for TP policy)—7.3%;

3. I get limited supervision/assistance from mentor (mentor incompetence)—9.1%;
4. I lack material and financial resources and media (lack of TP resources and student incentives)—21.84%;
5. There is lack of regular communication with institution (lack of communication)—12.7%;
6. Some supervisors are inconsistent (supervisors lack professionalism)—1.82%;
7. There is mistrust among degreed and un-degreed school staff (poor staff relationships)—1.82%;
8. No challenges (good TP model)—1.82%.

From the above responses, it seems that the majority of student-teachers (43.6%) believed that they could not meet their TP obligations because of big teaching loads and inadequate time to cover TP work, project work, and other school demands. They also cited limited supervision from their mentors and supervisors, and lack of financial and material support. Similar student-related challenges were mentioned by Majoni and Nyaruwata (2015) in a study looking at challenges in achieving effective mentoring during TP in teacher education institutions. However, those institutions were not necessarily offering their programmes through ODL. Because of these challenges, it would appear that there should be a new or revised TP model for ODL students.

The responses (theme) and percentage for Question 11 (How can these challenges be overcome?) are as the following:

1. ZOU should have TP policy stipulating TP model, TP rules, teaching periods, and resources, one should have while on TP (broad TP policy)—35.6%;
2. Lecturers should supervise first, and then, come last for assessment with flexible dates (supervision and assessment policy)—13.3%;
3. Extend TP terms/semesters, TP to run for two terms and to be well timed (TP management and timing)—13.4%;
4. ZOU to hold workshops/seminars with mentors and school heads and allow qualified ones to supervise (capacitation of school heads and mentors)—13.3%;
5. University to communicate regularly with students on TP (regular communication)—11.1%;
6. Increase salary/allowance for students and schools to provide media and resources (students' support and motivation)—11.1%;
7. Not applicable (good TP model)—2.2%.

The above points of view raised by the student-teachers seem to suggest that school heads and mentors should attend TP supervision and assessment workshops that deal with the ZOU house-style. Student-teachers on TP also need to be communicated with on a regular basis. Ultimately, it was suggested that ZOU should come up with a TP model specifying all rules, regulations, and activities for students on TP.

Questions 12-14 asked respondents to state how long they should be on TP during the course of their training, how the TP periods could be staggered, and what suggestions you could provide to a TP model for ODL. The questions and corresponding responses are as follows:

The responses and percentage for Question 12 (For how long should a student teacher be on TP during the course of his/her training?) are as the following:

1. One-term (48.8%);
2. Two-terms (34.1%);
3. Three-terms or 1-year (12.2%);
4. No answer (4.9%).

From Question 12, it seems that the majority of the students (48.8%) agree to the idea that a student-teacher had to be on TP for only one term (or four months) during the course of one's training.

However, this contradicts with challenges given in Question 10 where respondents said that the TP period was too short such that the terms/periods had to be extended as suggested in Question 11.

The responses and percentage for Question 13 (How should the TP periods be staggered?) are as the following:

1-1-2 (2.43%) 1-3-2 (19.5%) 2-5-2 (17.1%) 1-2-1 (4.9%) 3-3-3 (12.2%) 2-4-2 (2.43%)
 1-1-1 (2.43%) 1-3-1 (2.43%) 2-1-1 (4.9%) 3-2-3 (2.43%)
 One term (4.9%) Two to three terms (2.43%) Three terms (2.43%) Two consecutive terms (2.43%)
 No answer (17.06%)

The current PGDE programme in ZOU runs for three semesters (1.5 years or 4.5 school terms). For example, the ratio “2-5-2” meant that a student-teacher had to spend the first two parts of the programme duration doing the initial programme courses, the next five parts of the programme duration on TP (being supervised and assessed), and the last two parts of the programme duration doing the last programme courses. Those who wrote “One term, three terms, two to three terms, or two consecutive terms” meant that the students had to be on TP continuously during those terms. It is interesting to note that the majority of the respondents (19.5% and 17.1%) favoured the “1-3-2” and “2-5-2” systems respectively, while 17.1% had no answer. The “2-5-2” system is the one being implemented at conventional teacher-training colleges in Zimbabwe.

The responses (theme) and percentage for Question 14 (What suggestions could you provide to a TP model for ODL?) are as the following:

1. Model to include TP and other modules, but not to clash with research project (Avoiding overloading student, need for TP policy)—12.8%;
2. Have TP for two terms and supervise twice per term and increase time, terms, semesters, or periods when one should be supervised doing TP (Increasing TP supervision sessions and periods/terms)—19.1%;
3. Student-teacher should be supervised by subject specialist and trained mentors (Subject experts/trained mentors)—8.5%;
4. Train/teach first on expectations, then peer teaching, micro-teaching, TP supervision, and lastly TP assessment (TP lectures, expectations, and sequencing of activities/events not adequate or not familiar)—21.3%;
5. No need for new model (Current situation is good)—38.3%.

It is interesting to note that the majority of respondents (38.3%) believed that there was no need for a new TP model despite them pointing out in Question 10 that they were facing many TP challenges, such as big loads, inadequate financial and material resources, limited supervision, and poor communication. Popular responses given in Question 14 could mean that respondents agree to the idea that increasing time for TP lectures, increasing TP supervision sessions and periods/terms, and having a TP policy outlining all TP expectations, activities, and events should carry out.

Question 15 asked for any other information. The student-teachers suggested that TP supervision should aim at assisting students and not be for fault finding. They said it should also not be fast-tracked. They pointed out that untrained mentors needed to go for training, while some supervisors needed to attend TP supervision workshops. The issues of inadequate preparation to do the research project and lack of computer skills, while one was on TP were also raised. These students’ concerns and others pointed out earlier (Questions 9-14) point to the need for university authorities to relook at the PGDE programme and to come up with a new TP model for ODL. The need for a future model of teacher-training which could include teachers’ roles required in the

future society, such as problem-solving, creativity, and ICT using ability, was also echoed by Lim, Oh, and Lee (2015).

Mentors' Questionnaire Data

Table 2 shows that there were more male (83.3%) than female (16.7%) mentors. The majority (58.3%) of these mentors were aged 20-30 years, while the minorities (16.7%) were of the age range 41-50 years. Their experiences as mentors' ranged from 1-5 years (83.4%) with some (8.3%) having an experience of 16-20 years. The majority of the mentors (83.3%) were qualified teachers, while a minority (16.7%) was not qualified. Only a few (33.3%) had been trained in mentoring with 50% having not been trained and 16.7% not giving any answer. These statistics of a few years of experience as mentor and not been trained in mentoring (although being a qualified teacher) seem to imply that the mentors could be facing challenges regarding supervision and assessment of their mentees.

Table 2

Showing Demographic Data of the Mentors (Questions 1-5, N = 12)

Gender	Male (83.3%)			Female (16.7%)	
Age in years	Below 20 years old (0%)		20-30 years old (58.3%)		31-40 years old (25%)
	41-50 years old (16.7%)		Above 51 years old (0%)		
Experience as mentor	One to five years (83.4%)	Six to 10 years (8.3%)	11-15 years (0%)	16-20 years (8.3%)	Above 20 years (0%)
Is mentor a qualified teacher?	Yes (83.3%)			No (16.7%)	
Does mentor to be trained in mentoring?	Yes (33.3%)		No (50%)		No answer (16.7%)

Questions 6-8 asked respondents to state what they considered to be the roles of a mentor, the challenges they were facing as mentors and how those challenges could be overcome. The questions, responses, emerging themes, and percentage are as follows:

For Question 6 (What are the roles of a mentor?), the responses (theme) and percentage are as the following:

1. To supervise the student-teacher (supervision)—24%;
2. To assist the student-teacher on areas of need, preparing schemes, and lesson plans (pedagogic assistance)—20%;
3. Coaching, teaching and informing the student-teacher (academic assistance)—16%;
4. Leading, guiding, and counselling the student-teacher (counselling)—28%;
5. To inspire, motivate, and encourage the student-teacher (moral support)—12%.

For Question 7 (What challenges are you facing as a student mentor?), the responses (theme) and percentage are as follows:

1. Limited time to supervise or mentor and disturbance due to other school duties (work overload)—25%;
2. Lack of communication and coordination between institution and mentor (communication problems)—18.75%;
3. Student lack professionalism and dedication and they only wants marks (student-teacher lacking professionalism)—12.5%;
4. Lack of training in mentoring (mentor lacking training)—18.75%;
5. Lacking teaching media and resources for mentoring (lack of resources)—18.75%;
6. Students lack knowledge of subjects they teach (inadequate student-teachers' content knowledge)—6.25%.

For Question 8 (How can these challenges be overcome?), the responses (theme) and percentage are as follows:

1. Need for university lectures and mentors to communicate and collaborate (communication and collaboration)—23.1%;
2. Need to acquire more resources (resource mobilization)—23.1%;
3. Need to train mentors (training of mentors)—7.7%;
4. Put in place schedule and more time to do mentoring (more time for mentoring)—23.1%;
5. Allow students to specialise in specific subjects (subject specialists)—15.3%;
6. Improve students' confidence (thorough or more training of student-teacher)—7.7%.

It would appear that the majority of mentors (28%) view their major role as that of counselling student-teachers and this agrees with the concept of mentoring. A mentor should be an experienced and trusted guide, leader, and adviser who should also give pedagogic, moral, and academic assistance. School heads and university or college lectures should then do much of the supervision and/or assessment. The mentors mentioned that it was difficult to execute their mentoring duties because of challenges and the major three are being lack of training in mentoring (18.75%), lacking teaching media and resources for mentoring (18.75%), and disturbances due to other school duties (25%). The mentors, however, pointed out that the challenges could be overcome if they were given more resources (23.1%) and mentoring time and if there was more and regular communication and collaboration (23.1%) between them and university lecturers. Some mentors also said they needed training in mentoring student-teachers. Similar sentiments were echoed in a study carried out with students at a tertiary institution (although not necessarily offering open and distance learning) in South Africa by Leke-ateh, Assan, and Debeila (2013) and in Zimbabwe by Majoni and Nyaruwata (2015).

Questions 9-11 asked mentors how long a student-teacher should be on TP, how TP periods could be staggered, and what suggestions could you provide to a TP model for ODL.

For Question 9 (For how long should a student-teacher be on TP?), the responses are as follows:

1. One school term (16.7%);
2. Two school terms (33.3%);
3. One year (41.7%);
4. No answer (8.3%).

For Question 10 (How should TP periods be staggered?), the responses are as follows:

- | | | |
|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| 1-3-2 (41.67%) | 2-5-2 (25.13%) | 3-2-3 (8.3%) |
| 1-2-1 (8.3%) | 3-1-2 (8.3%) | 3-3-3 (8.3%) |

For Question 11 (What suggestions could you provide to a TP model for ODL?), the responses are as follows:

1. Assessment by the school head and the mentor should be done fortnightly—25%;
2. Assessment by the university lecturers should be done three times during the TP period—33.3%;
3. Continuous assessment should be done, while the student-teacher is on TP right from the first semester—8.3%;
4. ZOU should appoint a representative at district level who should assist student-teachers on TP including approval of and assistance in their research projects—16.7%;
5. ZOU should organize TP through whole year of training and assist students to marry theory with practice, while lowering their teaching loads to allow for more effective delivery of lessons—16.7%.

Although these views point to the need for the training institution to review the current TP model and

come up with a more effective and user-friendly one, it seems that the respondents failed to mention other aspects, such as content of the modules, individual differences, and learning strategies.

Question 12 asked mentors for any other related TP information. Some mentors pointed out that there should be more supervision than assessment (23.1%) and that mentors as well as student-teachers should be staff-developed on the use of ICT in the teaching and learning of sciences (15.4%). Others were of the opinion that the university should improve on its communication with mentors and students on TP (23.1%). It was also pointed out that the student teacher must be resourceful, continuously search knowledge, and be well versed in the upcoming new Zimbabwe curriculum (23.1%). The remainder had no information to offer.

TP Supervisors' Questionnaire Data

Table 3 shows that there were more male than female full time TP supervisors at the ZOU Midlands Regional Campus. Currently, part-time tutors have also been requested to supervise students on TP. The supervisors were mature (above 41 years old) and qualified as teachers and their average age being 50.9 years old. However, most of them (70%) had 10 or less years of experience as TP supervisors although 60% said they had been trained in TP supervision, while 40% of them had not been trained or sufficiently trained. The average TP supervision experience was 9.4 years.

Table 3

Showing Demographic Data of the TP Supervisors (Questions 1-4, N = 10)

Gender	Male (70%)			Female (30%)	
Age in years	Below 20 years old (0%)		20-30 years old (0%)		31-40 years old (0%)
	41-50 years old (40%)			Above 51 years old (60%)	
Experience as TP supervisor	One to five years (30%)	Six to 10 year (40%)	11-15 years (10%)	16-20 years (20%)	Above 20 years (0%)
Supervisor trained in TP supervision	Yes (60%)		No (30%)		Not really (10%)

Question 5 asked the respondents to state what they considered to be the roles of a TP supervisor. The responses, emerging themes, and percentages in descending order of popularity are as follows:

1. Guiding students in being effective teachers (guidance)—28.6%;
2. To critique and grade students on TP (assessment and evaluation)—23.8%;
3. Assist students to consolidate theory and put it into practice (pedagogical assistance)—19.1%;
4. Train, teach, coach, and suggest areas of improvement (offering training or academic assistance)—19.1%;
5. Monitor students on TP (monitoring)—4.7%;
6. Oversee students' competencies in practical classroom experience (watching and directing)—4.7%.

From the responses above, it appears that a significant number of supervisors (28.6%) view their roles as being to offer guidance to student-teachers, while some (23.8%) consider assessing and evaluating students' performance as more critical. Others view their roles as those of offering pedagogical and academic assistance, monitoring, observing, and directing students as they perform their duties. However, TP supervision should include more of directing, guiding, watching, evaluating, giving assistance and less of assessment, and grading.

Questions 6 and 7 asked the respondents to state the challenges they were facing as TP supervisors and how the challenges could be overcome.

The responses (theme) and percentage for Question 6 are as the following:

1. Driving long distances and harsh journeys without rest (long and harsh journeys)—29.4%;

2. Inadequate and poorly disbursed TP allowances (inadequate TP allowances)—23.5%;
3. No TP seminars, orientation, or induction on expectations (need for seminars and orientation)—11.75%;
4. Inadequate time for actual supervision due to heavy workload (inadequate time and heavy TP workload)—11.75%;
5. Not being part of the teaching/academic staff (lacking self-confidence)—5.9%;
6. Students not found on station (student-teacher absenteeism)—5.9%;
7. Poor programming by TP coordinator (poor TP programming)—5.9%;
8. Ill-prepared trainee teachers, no use of e-learning (poor TP preparation)—5.9%.

The responses (theme) and percentage for Question 7 are as the following:

1. Avail adequate transport and allowances and improve on programming (improved programme and transport logistics)—37.5%;
2. Induction, workshop, and in-service for TP supervisors (training of supervisors)—31.1%;
3. Allocate more time for supervision (more time for supervision)—12.5%;
4. Give students notice of visit (improved communication)—6.3%;
5. Come up with a TP policy (new TP policy)—6.3%;
6. Identify key personnel and lessen reliance on full time staff who have other duties (improved human resource base)—6.3%.

The challenges mentioned by the supervisors appeared similar to those mentioned by the mentors as well as the students (shortage of supervision time, inadequate resources, poor communication, etc.). The ways to alleviate them were also similar and this points to the need for the university to come up with a new TP policy and model. There is also need to train both supervisors and students on e-learning or the use of ICT in TP as ICT cannot be divorced from 21st century education. Christensen et al. (2015, p. 175) held similar views on the use of ICT by saying,

In the competency-based environment that surrounds 21st century education, proficiency in technology itself has also assumed an important role whether it is used to enhance instruction, used for communication among teachers, students, and parents, or used to assess student learning. ... It is important to measure whether or not teachers are confident in their ability to integrate the evolving tools in order to target professional development.

Question 8 asked TP supervisors how long a student-teacher should be on TP. The majority of the respondents suggested that a student-teacher should be on TP for two semesters or one full year (70%), others suggested an adequate period depending on mode of training or type of learners (20%), while the rest opted for half the total training period but comprising two sessions (10%). The above suggestions could mean that the TP supervisors consider the current TP period of one semester for PGDE students to be inadequate to produce a competent teacher, and therefore, wish that a student-teacher should be under TP supervision for a longer period such as the whole year.

Question 9 asked how TP periods or terms could be staggered. The responses are as follows:

2-5-2 (33.4%)	1-3-2 (16.7%)	Diploma 2-3-2-2 terms (8.3%)	Diploma 3-3-3 terms (8.3%)
PGDE 1-1.5-1-1 terms (8.3%)	terms	Last two semesters (8.3%)	No answer (16.7%)

It appears that most supervisors were in favour of the “2-5-2” system, which is being currently practiced at most teachers’ colleges in Zimbabwe. Others were of the opinion that a student-teacher should spend three terms or last two semesters (equivalent to one year) under TP supervision. This also suggests that the current one semester for PGDE students is too short, while two semesters for BECD students and three semesters for DIPED students are somehow satisfactory. Similar sentiments were raised by the students and the mentors in this study.

In the TP model for ODL (Question 10), different suggestions were proffered. Some respondents (60%) suggested a model where, after registration, the student should learn theory for one term, do micro-teaching for another term and then go on TP for three terms. Supervisors should then visit the student once during each of the three terms in a year. The first visit should be more of supervision than assessment where the lecturer helps the student to be more familiar with TP requirements and requisite teaching skills. Others (40%) suggested a model for the PGDE programme where TP supervision should start late in the first semester and span into early second semester, having four weeks in between to allow sufficient time for students to correct errors. This would appear like: early first semester (theory), 4-week reflection and correction, late first semester (TP), 4-week reflection and correction, early second semester (TP), 4-week reflection and correction, one month in third semester (theory), 4-week reflection and correction, and one month in third semester (TP). It was also suggested that the “3-3-3” model be used for the diploma in education (primary) students and the “2-5-2” model be used for the PGDE students. Samkange (2013) had also recommended that the “3-3-3” model be considered for training teachers at ZOU.

Respondents also suggested adequate face to face and TP preparation sessions and meaningful collaborations in all activities related to TP. Supervisors needed to be trained on TP supervision and the TP department was urged to prepare TP handouts for students and supervisors. These handouts should have clear rules, regulations, and policies. Similar suggestions for the TP department at a South African institution to produce a booklet for the mentor-teacher were offered by Dicker and van Schalkwyk (2014).

Question 11 asked TP supervisors for any other related TP information. They pointed out the need to train mentors in the ZOU house style and for more workshops for students and lecturers to improve performance. Assessment could be done better by subject specialists at both secondary and primary school levels. All these views point out to the need for a new TP policy for ODL.

Discussion

Challenges faced by students on TP are not only peculiar to Zimbabwe as similar challenges were reported elsewhere. In Nigeria, for example, Baiyelo and Oke (2015, p. 33) said,

The duration of practical teaching is short, especially in university teacher education programmes. Classroom observation practice before TP is not emphasized. There is little or no time for formal induction prior to TP. Hence, the quality of supervision, lesson plan preparation and delivery of content by student teachers is low.

Mentors also had a share of challenges in mentoring with the most occurrences being lack of communication between mentors and the student-teachers' institution and lack of training or lack of staff development on the part of most mentors. The problem of lack of training was also raised by Majoni and Nyaruwata (2015). In this study, TP supervisors mentioned similar challenges.

Baiyelo and Oke (2015, p. 29) proposed that the solution to the challenges rests in formulating and implementing good educational policies because policy “... Is expected to specify desirable values and guide against uncertain/disruptive developments. It is also a response to socio-economic, dominant political and cultural pressures through space and time.” The need for a new TP policy for teacher-training in ODL was also echoed by respondents in this study.

Students, mentors, and supervisors mentioned the need for the use of e-learning or ICT facilities for communication, teaching and learning, and other TP-related work. This view supports that of Eskola (2009)

who says that teacher-training in Tanzania could include more ICT studies and Onuka (2015, p. 66) who believed that, “ODL teacher education practices are yet to conform to global standards in which animation, power and electronic methods of instruction presentations are the order of the day.”

In this study, the major challenges highlighted by students, mentors, and supervisors were grouped into emerging themes. For the students, these were inadequate TP time, need for TP policy, mentors’ and supervisors’ inconsistency and incompetence, and poor levels of communication. For the mentors the challenges hinged on work overload, communication problems, student-teacher is lack of professionalism and content knowledge, resources, and training. For the supervisors, the emerging issues centred on long and harsh journeys, inadequate TP allowances, need for seminars and orientation, inadequate time, heavy TP workload, and poor TP preparation and programming. These challenges also point out to the need, in line with educational developments in the 21st century, for the Department of Teacher Development to come up with a new teacher-training model suitable for ODL which would include a new TP policy. Elsewhere, for example, in Sri Lanka, cost effective teacher-training models by distance education have been developed (Lynd, 2005). In Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Malawi (Lynd, 2005), models that mixed distance and residential teacher-training systems were put in place and were reported to have been effective and of low cost.

In the case of ZOU, could it come up with a teacher-training model meeting the criteria of good quality, low cost, effectiveness, relevance, and adequate pace? After analyzing the suggestions given by the respondents and comparing with other models cited in the literature review, it is hereby proposed that the ZOU’s ODL model could include the following components:

1. Time: Two years (with four semesters).
2. Courses: Pedagogical modules, teaching subject courses, lesson planning, lesson delivery and evaluation, computers, and media and technology applications for the first semester. TP supervision and assessment for the second semester. Research methods, research project, pedagogic courses, and teaching subject courses for the third semester. TP assessment for the last semester.
3. Delivery mode: Initial face-to-face tutorials at the institution, ODL, e-learning, workshops and conferences, and cluster meetings and presentations.
4. Student Support: Students on TP should be attached to qualified and dedicated mentors. School heads and mentors to assist in TP supervision (not necessarily TP assessment). Support in terms of teaching/learning resources and media should also be given.
5. Assessment: Coursework assignments on other courses already on the programme and on lesson planning, lesson delivery, lesson evaluation, files, and records to be given. Examinations include all aspects of TP and lecturers from the institution also to set, mark, and moderate assignments and examination, and carry out TP supervision and assessment.
6. Policy, rules, and regulations: ZOU should draft students’ guidelines, mentors’ guidelines, and TP supervisors’ guidelines stipulating all procedures, rules, regulations, and policies regarding TP.

There could be need for ZOU to design and pilot-test such a new model before full implementation and evaluation.

Conclusion

The major conclusions were that the TP period was too short, school based mentors needed training,

lecturers spent more time on rushed assessment than supervision and ZOU had to provide sufficient human and material resources and logistics in order to enhance viability and sustainability of TP mentoring and supervision. Respondents also suggested the need for ZOU to craft a new teacher-training model and TP policies meeting the demands of 21st century ODL.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the challenges faced and solutions offered by the respondents be used to initiate further debate and insights towards coming up with a new teacher-training model for ODL.

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