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Exploring the Correlations between Learning Style Preferences and Academic Performances of Senior High School Students in Integrated Science in the Gomoa East District

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ABSTRACT

The study explored the correlation between learning style preferences of high school students and their academic performances in science in the Gomoa East district of Ghana. An exploratory survey design with quantitative approach was employed. Ontology and epistemology were the philosophical paradigms that guided the study. Stratified sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 280 students from the accessible population. The instruments used were 'VAK' Learning Styles Self-Assessment Questionnaire as well as results from Integrated Science Achievement Test (ISAT), with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.80 and 0.85 respectively. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data in terms of mean, frequencies, etc. Pearson's moment correlation and t-test were also employed for the analysis. The findings revealed that the most preferred learning style of high school students in the district was the visual (43.6%), followed by kinesthetic (30%), and auditory (26.4%) modes. There was a positive correlation between learning style of students and their academic performance while a statistical difference was found between learning styles first- and second-year students in the district. However, there was no statistically significant difference between the learning style preferences of male and female students. The findings of the study could enable curriculum planners as well as policy makers to suggest more a curriculum more acceptable to students. It would also suggest to school administrators to look into the development of facilities to enhance teaching and learning of the Science.

Key words: Learning styles, Integrated science, Academic performance, Senior High School students.

1 INTRODUCTION

Learning is a major component of student life. Individuals who converge in a school as students come from different environments and hence have different learning experiences. Such different experiences make them exhibit different personality traits including ways of assimilating learning materials. There are a number of learning-related concepts which have been the focus of attention when attempting to identify factors that affect diverse learning-related performance One concept in particular which has provided some valuable insights into learning in both academic and other settings is learning style. Today, there is a greater recognition of our

need to gain a deeper understanding of our students, their learning differences, learning styles, learning difficulties and their predisposition to certain types of tasks to achieve their goals successfully (Pawlak, 2012).

Scholars who promote the learning style preference approach to enhance acquisition of knowledge agree that effective instruction can only be undertaken if a learner's learning preferences are diagnosed and the instruction is tailored accordingly (Pashler, McDaniel, Rohrer, & Bjork, 2008). A learner's learning style has been recognized as a potential factor affecting that learner's performance (Gohar & Sadeghi, 2012). A Chinese quotation that states, "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand" by Confucius (551-479 BC), provides evidence that, even in early times there was recognition of the existence of different learning preferences among people. Learning style preference is not a concept that is merely discussed by researchers and psychologists. It is the key to improving school climate and student achievement by recognizing that all people are not the same, and that all students do not learn in the same way (Dunn & Griggs, 2000). Omrod (2008) reports that, some students seem to learn better when information is presented through words (verbal learners), whereas others seem to learn better when it is presented in the form of pictures (visual learners). Others learn better through physical manipulation of learning resources (kinesthetic). Furthermore, in Othman and Amiruddin's studies, learning style approaches are found to some extent to improve students' motivation (2010).

One of the most common and widely-used categorizations of the various types of learning styles is Fleming's VARK model (an acronym for the Visual, Auditory, Read/Write and the Kinaesthetic sensory modalities) which provides the learners with a profile of their learning styles, based on the sensory modalities which are involved in taking in information. This model expanded upon earlier Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) models which split into three groups VAK (Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic) which are referred to as Representational Systems (Sree & Chinyi, 2017). The present study is underpinned by the visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning style (VAK) model. The original VAK concepts were first introduced by psychologists such as Fernald, Keller, Orton, Stillman and Montessori in the 1920´s (Chislett & Chapman, 2005) but recently, the interest has further gained ground in the quest for best teaching practices in education. The VAK theory is considered to be one of the classical learning theories in the educational field, it is best known as VAKT, visual (V), auditory (A), kinaesthetic (K) and tactile (T) (Mackay, 2007). Chislett and Chapman (2015) are of the view that respondents with a preferred learning style focused on Reading (the R in VARK) are included in the Visual learning style. The Intel Corporation (2007) also reported that this theory has proven to be a popular and simple way to identify different learning styles. Byrnes (2010) stated that "the VAK model can be utilized to assist in incorporating different learning techniques into classroom instruction and activities".

A study by Lisle (2007) used a VAK learning model in determining the learning style preferences of adults who experience learning difficulties. The study showed that (34%) participants preferred a visual style, which was an equal proportion to those who prefer an auditory style (34 %). Of the remaining students, (23 %) were kinaesthetic learners and (9 %) had multimodal learning style preferences. The result showed most of

the learners preferred visual and auditory learning, and that younger learners prefer kinaesthetic more than adult learners. From the above, it convincingly suggests that learning is more effective if education is delivered and oriented in a way that matches an individual's learning style. In Kenya, a study by Nzesei on a correlation study between learning styles and academic achievement among Secondary School Students in Kenya found out that, no significant difference existed in learning style preference among male and female students. Also, there is strong positive and statistically significant relationship between learning styles and academic achievement (Nzesei, 2015).

2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Integrated science is one of the core subjects in senior high schools in Ghana. It comprises biology, chemistry, physics, agriculture and partly environmental science. It is a course designed to show the unity, and interrelationship of the distinct disciplines that make up science (Abba, 2000). Poor performance of students in Integrated Science in most Ghanaian schools leaves much to be desired. Tracing the causes of students' poor performances has been a challenge for stakeholders in the educational sector. Perhaps this low performance in science could be attributed to the fact that students learning styles have not been considered. Though extensive literature and research exist on learning styles in some countries, especially European and Asian countries, there have been only a comparatively small number of studies that have assessed learning styles preferences and academic performance of senior high school students in Ghana. A study by Esia-Donkoh on differences in learning style preference of students in Colleges of Education in Central –Western Zone of Ghana revealed that, generally, a combination of visual, auditory and kinesthetic were prefered by the students (Esiah-Donkoh, 2019). This study only focused on Colleges of Education (higher institution) students and did not extend to the Senior High School level. This study will increase the baseline study by Esia-Donkor.

3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were to determine:

1. The preferred dominant learning style of students in the Gomoa East district.
2. The relationship between preferred learning style of first and second year students.
3. The difference between preferred learning styles of male and female students.
4. The correlation between preferred learning style and academic achievement among students in the district.

4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the preferred dominant learning style of students in the Gomoa East district?
2. What is the relationship between preferred learning style of first and second year students?
3. What is the difference in preferred learning styles of male and female students?
4. What is the correlation between students' preferred learning styles and their academic achievement?

5 NULL HYPOTHESIS (Ho)

Ho 1. There will be no relationship between preferred learning styles of first and second year students.

Ho 2. There will be no statistical difference in the preferred learning styles of male and female students.

Ho 3. There will be no correlation between students' preferred learning styles and their academic performance in Science.

6 METHODS

6.1 Conceptual framework

The phillosophical underpinings of the study are hinged on ontology and epistemology. These two paradigms deal with the nature of reality, what can be known about it and how we go about attaining this knowledge. According to Bryman and Bell (2013) epistemological issue concerns the question of what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline. Learning theories concern studies of human mind and behaviour. The theoretical framework of the study is based on the theories of cognitivism, behaviourism and constructivism. These theories considered in this study seek to explain the underpinning variations in student learning styles and performances. Each of these theories makes different assumptions about how people learn and remember. Each of them provides general explanations based on observations over time. They explain processes of knowledge acquisition and predict behaviour.

Learning style theory could be seen as interconnection between the learner, his environment and the learning process. The framework developed by the researchers from these relationships is conceptualized as interplay of several factors within the individual (learner) and the environment. Figure 1 presents how factors such as learning style preferences, and other environmental factors, as evidenced from literature, influence students' performance.

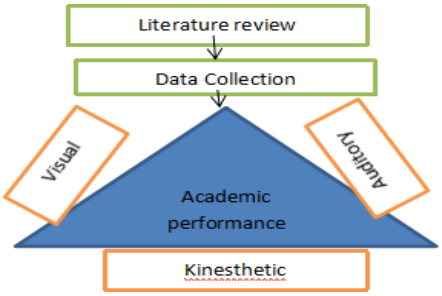

Figure 1: A conceptual framework the study.

The framework suggests that any of the visual, auditory or kinesthetic learning styles could influence students' performance. Other factors include gender and grade level. Reviewed literature has it that culture and teaching style also affect students' performance inadvertently.

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6.2 Research Design

The study was carried out using the survey design. The study was also designed along the lines of correlation research to assess the correlation between desired

variables. Gay (1996) described correlation research as that involving the collection of data to determine whether and the degree to which a relationship exists between two or more quantifiable variables. In correlational studies information is collected without manipulating the environment. Correlational studies are also conducted to demonstrate associations between variables, causality cannot be inferred (Creswell, 2008).

6.3 Population and Sample size

The target population for the study was all Senior High students in the central region of Ghana while the accessible population comprised of all the senior high school students in the Gomoa East district. The population of the students in the district stood at 2,792. Stratified sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 280 students from the two public senior high schools in the district. According to Van-Dalen (1979) a survey research should involve at least 10-15% of the accessible population. The 280 sample size selected constituted 10.02% of the accessible population and is in conformity with Van-Dalen (1979) and is in conformity with the normal sample size for making assumptions.

6.4 Instrumentation

In this study, data was collected by using an adopted VAK 's Learning Style Self-assessment questionnaire originally developed by Chislett and Chapman (2005) and results from administered Integrated Science Achievement Test (ISAT).

Description of VAK learning style self-assessment questionnaire

Dreeben (2010) suggested that the practical mode of VAK assessment, which includes asking learners about the way they receive information, is a strong reason for using it in the educational field. Questionnaire is one of the most widely used instruments for collecting data in survey research. The VAK questionnaire is practical self-assessment instruments that can help the students assess their unique learning styles (Chislett & Chapman, 2005). The model was developed to evaluate each individual's preferred learning style through different sensory channels namely Auditory, Visual, and Kinesthetic. In the present study the researchers adopted the model to model to help identify students that are Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic learning style in the Gomoa East district of Ghana.

Below are examples of some of the items in the questionnaire:

- If I was buying a new car, I would: A) read reviews in newspapers and magazines

B) discuss what I need with my friends C) test-drive lots of different types

- When I am learning a new skill, I am most comfortable: A) watching what the teacher is doing B) talking through with the teacher exactly what I'm supposed to do C) giving it a try myself and work it out as I go

Scoring of the instrument was based on a three points Likert scale response where the number of A's B's or C's were added up. If one chooses mostly A's, one is visual, B's auditory and C's kinesthetic. In the case that one chooses equal number of A's or B's or C's, then he/she has a bimodal number learning style.

Description of integrated science achievement test (ISAT)

A 25 test items was developed to assess the performance of students in

Integrated Science. The Integrated Science Achievement Test (ISAT) was based on items culled from topics in the integrated science syllabus. The test was based on energy, diversity of living things matters and soil. The researcher made sure that, the selected topics in which the test items were culled from were all topics treated by both the first and second year students. This is because, high school education Ghana is a progressive one in which students would go through all the courses till they write the final year examinations by the West Africa Examinations Council (WAEC). Prior to the actual study, a pilot test was conducted using the instruments in a school in Gomoa Central district. This was to establish the validity and reliability of the instruments.

6.5 Validity and reliability of the instruments

To ascertain content validity of the instruments, the instruments were given to the academic supervisor at the department of Science Education, University of Education, Winneba to determine its workability. This consultation was aimed at examining the contents and the structure of the instruments, and judged their adequacy for use in the study. The resultant suggestions and recommendations were used to make appropriate amendments to the instruments. In ensuring reliability of the instruments, data obtained from the LSI and ISAT were subjected to a reliability test using SPSS software which recorded a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.80 and 0.85. This means that, data obtained using the instruments were all reliable.

6.6 Data analysis

The data gathered from the study sample were organized, coded and recorded. SPSS (Version 20) statistical software was used for the quantitative data collected from the questionaires. Prior to the analysis, normality test were run on the relevant variables. The data derived from the VAK categorized into three; visual, auditory and kinesthetic. Again, the data from the ISAT were also recorded and matched the VAK learning styles. Descriptive statistics was run to obtain frequencies of dominant learning styles, the learning styles of boys and girls as well as the form or the grade level of the students. Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Chi square tests were used to find the correlation between preferred learning style of respondents and their academic performances to show whether a relationship exists and how strong or weak it is by gender and grade level.

7 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

7.1 Research question 1

What is the dominant learning style of SHS students in the district?

To answer research question 1, statistics on the dominant learning style of students is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Learning Styles preferences among SHS Students in the Gomoa East District

Statistics	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic
Mean	12.17213	10.71622	11.22619
Kurtosis	-1.30267	-0.6842	0.203724
Skewness	0.13984	-0.21379	-0.51999
Count	122	74	84

According to Tabachnik and Fidell (1996) normality of data is attained when kurtosis and skewness are between -2 and +2. The computed scores for the learning style preferences fell within the ranges for skewness and kurtosis. Hence, all the observations on learning style preferences were normally distributed signifying the absence of extreme values that have the potential of upsetting the results of the study. From the findings, the visual learning style was observed to have recorded the highest standard deviation (2.15), followed by auditory (1.10) and kinesthetic (0.899) (Table 1).

The results in Table 1 also show that visual learning style recorded the highest mean score of 12.17 ± 2.15 (SD). This was followed by kinesthetic and auditory learning styles which respectively recorded means of 11.226 ± 0.899 (SD) and 10.716 ± 1.10 (SD). The foregoing result therefore indicates that the visual learning style was the most dominant learning style amongst the study participants surveyed. This is because the visual learning style recorded the highest count of 122, and a mean score of 12.17 The second dominant learning style by virtue of registering the second highest count of 84 and a mean score (11.23) was the kinesthetic. Auditory learning was found to be the least preferred learning style among the surveyed participants with a count of 74.

The findings of the study are in agreement with a dissertation carried out in Kenya which showed that, majority of the students had strong visual than auditory and kinesthetic modalities (Nzesei, 2015). However, this finding is against the findings by Tachie-Young (2010) on learning style preference of Junior High School (JHS) students in some selected schools in the greater Accra region of Ghana. His findings rather showed that, majority of the students showed preference for the auditory leaning style (65%), followed by the kinesthetic style (25%) and then the visual learning style (10%).

From the findings, the poor performance of students in the Gomoa East district could be due to the fact that, most of them are visual learners but their teachers are mostly known to be using more of the lecture method in teaching (which satisfies the auditory learners). Therefore, the teaching method does not match majority of the students' preferred learning style hence, the low performance in Integrated Science in the area.

7.2 Research Question 2

What is the relationship between learning style of first and second year students?

The objective for this question was to determine the relationship between learning style preferences of first and second year students. Before answering the research question 2, the distribution of students' learning styles and their grade levels were determined. The adapted VAK questionnaire was administered to the students (n=280).

Out of 129 respondents from the first year, who participated in the study, 60(46.5%) respondents were used to the visual learning style, 38(29.5%) were used to audio learning style and 31(24.0%) were used to the kinesthetic style. For the second year students, though majority of them were visual 62(41.0%) from the total (n=151), it was rather followed by kinesthetic 53(35.0%) and then Auditory 36(24.0%).

To determine the relationship between learning style preferences of first year students and second year students, a Pearson product moment correlation test was conducted. Before conducting the analysis on correlation, the number of observations for the learning style preferences for the second year students (n = 151) was brought to be at par with that of the first year students (n = 129). This is because the observations for the second year students exceeded that of the first year students by twenty-two (22) observations. This move was necessary to ensure that each observation under one variable (i.e. second year students learning style preferences) could be paired with observations under the other variables (i.e. first year students learning style preferences) under investigation. Summary of the Pearson moment correlation analysis on learning style preferences of first and second year students are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Analysis on learning style preferences of 1st and 2nd year students

Statistics	Computed Values	Critical values
Pearson Moment Correlation, r	0.1209	0.117*
N	129	

From Table 2, the r critical value was found to be 0.117 at a 0.05 significant level. The computed r-value was observed to be 0.1209, suggesting a positive correlation between learning style preferences between first year and second year students. Furthermore, since the computed r-value (r = 0.1209) was observed to be greater than the r-critical value ($r_{critical}$ = 0.117), it meant that the relationship or correlation between the learning style preferences of first year and second year students in the schools was statistically significant and could not be due to chance. The finding is, however, at

variance with a study by Asiry (2015) on the learning styles of dental students at King Saud University. He found that the learning preference of students remained unchanged from their first to final year at College of Dentistry. This suggests that first year and second year students in Gomoa East District could have learning style preferences which may persist until they have completed school. This has implications for teaching and learning methods used as far as form is concerned. The finding therefore presupposes that a learning style that is effective for first year students may by extension be also effective for second year students to facilitate learning.

7.3 Research question 3

This question sought to determine whether there was any relationship between learning style of males and females. Table 3 presents the summary of cross tabulation of learning styles of respondents and their gender distribution.

Table 3: Crosstab of Learning Style and Gender distribution

	Learning styles			Total
	Visual	Kinesthetic	Auditory	
Male	43(30%)	30(22%)	28(20%)	137(26.4%)
Female	79(58%)	54(38%)	46(32%)	143(41.2%)
Total	122(44%)	84(30%)	74(26%)	208(100%)

Source: SPSS version 20.0 output, 2017.

From Table 3, out of 143 male respondents who participated in the study, 54(38.0%) of them were used to the kinesthetic learning style, 46(32.0%) to audio learning style while 43(30.0%) were used to the visual learning style. However, the female respondents showed more preference for the visual style 79(58.0%), followed by kinesthetic 30(22.0%) and then auditory 28(20.4%). Assessment of the academic performance (scores) of male and female students is summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Statistics of Academic Scores of Male and Female Students in Gomoa East District

Descriptive Statistics	Males	Females
Mean	51.5524	51.0949
Standard Deviation	13.7997	14.2240
Count	143	137

From Table 4, it can be observed that male students registered a mean academic score of 51.55 ± 13.799 (SD), whilst the female students in the study recorded a mean academic score of 51.09 ± 14.224 (SD).

To determine the relationship between learning style preferences of males and females, a Pearson product moment correlation test was conducted. Before conducting the analysis, the number of observations for the learning style preferences for the male students were made to be at par with that of the female students (n = 137), as the former exceeded the latter by six (6) observations. This move was necessary to ensure that each observation under one variable could be paired with another observation under some other variable under investigation. A summary of the Pearson moment correlation analysis on learning style preferences of male and female students at a significant level of 0.05 was found to be 0.117. The computed r-value was observed to be 0.0526, suggesting a positive correlation between learning style preferences between males and females. However, since the computed r-value (0.0526) was observed to be smaller than the r-critical value (0.117), it meant that the relationship or correlation between the learning style preferences of male and female students in Gomoa East District was statistically insignificant.

To test the second hypothesis, "There is no significant difference between learning style preference of male and female students, a paired t-test was conducted. The computed t-statistic was found to be 0.0177 (p = 0.493, df = 136), a value less than the t critical value of 1.656. This therefore means that there is no significant difference between learning style preference of male and female students. We fail to reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between learning style preference of male and female students.

This finding parallels a study that involved physiotherapy students in Sri Lanka which showed that there was no significant difference among male and female students on the preferred VARK mode. The finding therefore presupposes that a learning style that is effective for male students may also be effective for female students. This means that performance of male and female students in the district may not be influenced by a choice of a particular learning style but largely by other factors as well.

7.4 Research question 4

The last question sought to find out the correlation between the students' learning styles and their academic performance in science. To answer this, a Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was conducted. At a 95% confidence level results indicated that r critical at 0.05 was found to be 0.095. The computed r-value was observed to be 0.09948, suggesting a positive correlation between learning style and academic achievement. Furthermore, since the computed r-value was observed to be greater than the r-critical value, it meant that the relationship or correlation between the learning style and academic achievement of students in the district was statistically significant. In the light of the foregoing, the hypothesis, "There is no correlation between students learning styles and their academic performance in Science" is thus rejected.

Dobson's (2009) study revealed that there was a significant different relationship between perceived sensory modality preference and academic performance (p = 0.06 by ANOVA). This implies that a respondent's score is affected by their choice of learning style. Perhaps majority of the

students in the district have not identified and adopted appropriate learning styles, hence the low performances. The need for students to adopt proper learning styles could help them become better learners, leading to increase in performance.

In contrast, studies related to the effects of learning styles on achievement in a World Wide Web course, results showed that learning styles had no effect on students' achievement or attitude in Web-based instruction (Shih & Gamon). This finding could be due to the Web-based instruction. Learning in a Web-based instruction environment is different from learning in physical environment, perhaps that contrary view. Stakeholders in education should therefore aim at providing enabling environments, as well as auditory-visual materials to increase performance of students in SHS Integrated Science. Also, science teachers should be encouraged to make their lessons as practical as possible to help students' understanding. Besides, Senior High School authorities should organize in-service training on learning styles for teachers. This will enlighten them to be able to vary their teaching methods.

8 CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that the most preferred learning style of high school students in the district was the visual (43.6%), followed by kinesthetic (30%), and auditory (26.4%) modes. There was a positive correlation between learning style of students and their academic performance while a statistical difference was found between learning styles of first and second year students in the district. However, there was no statistical significant difference between the learning style preferences of male and female students. Findings from the study reveal that teachers must of necessity be aware of students' varying learning styles and vary their teaching strategies to cater for each learning style. Since most students in the district showed more preference for the visual learning style, it was found that the teachers' teaching styles, which were mainly suited for other styles did not match these students' style of visual learning style. This could be inferred as the cause of the poor performance of students. Science teachers should focus more on valid methods such as the use of videos, animations, charts and more importantly practical lessons.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were provided:

- National Council for Curriculum Assessment (NACA) of the Ministry of Education could consider introducing strategies related to learning styles to be used by teachers.
- Teacher education institutions must introduce pre service teachers to the concept of learning styles. The concept must be made part of curriculum studies or other educational related courses being run in the institutions.
- School authorities within the Gomoa East district may provide seminars regarding the importance of the awareness of the learning style of students.
- Schools should ensure that their facilities such as libraries, science laboratories and ICT laboratories are well equipped with audio-visual equipment and encourage their usage.
- Future scope: Researchers may consider and extent the study to the correlations between learning styles and teachings styles in future.

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University senior management support and how it influences implementation of professional development programmes for academic staff

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ABSTRACT

In many countries, staff development programmes offered through a university's centre for learning and teaching have been put in place to enhance quality teaching and learning. Zimbabwe state universities experience quality challenges due to various factors including severe brain drain, which has led to the juniorisation of staff who have little or no experience in higher education teaching. Hence, institutions of higher learning were encouraged to establish teaching and learning centres to support quality teaching. The purpose of this study was to find the extent to which senior management in universities support academic development programmes for their teaching staff. This was a qualitative research which adopted the case study design and it was guided by the critical theory. The population of the study included all the state universities in the country and all Vice Chancellors, deans and chairpersons of departments in the institutions under study. Purposive sampling was used to come up with two institutions, one which was established before, and another which was established after political independence as well as the 2 Vice Chancellors, 2 Directors of Teaching and Learning Centres, 4 Deans, 4 Chairpersons of departments and 4 lecturers per institution. Data were collected from Vice chancellors and Directors of centres through interviews and a questionnaire was used for the 4 Deans, 4 Chairpersons of departments and 4 lecturers per institution. Data were analysed through thematic coding of data. Results showed that in an institution where managerial staff support the staff development programmes, most academics' job satisfaction was high because the staff were well informed about their roles. The study recommended that policies should be put in place for all state universities to have well supported teaching and learning centres so as to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in the country.

Key words: academic staff development, higher education, management support, teaching and learning centres.

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The question of quality higher education is taken seriously in higher education institutions. African higher education institutions are expected to address the issues of quality if they are to meet the expectations of stakeholders (Abel, 2010; Baijnath, 2010). Given the high investment in universities, expectations are high. On the one hand, the government and the nation expect universities to offer solutions to issues of development. On the other hand, parents and students expect good quality university education, particularly in view of the introduced cost-sharing policy. Atkinson (1994) and Abel (2010: 3-6) have noted that "Due to poor quality teaching some students felt that they were not receiving their money's worth". According to SARUA (2009), Zimbabwe State Universities experience quality challenges resulting from: unfavorable student lecturer and student computer ratios, shortage of reference materials and severe brain drain that has led to the juniorisation of staff (2009 :118-120). On a similar note, Voster and Quinn (2017) indicate that globally, higher education is situated in a state of flux and is subject to multiple pressures. These impediments constrain universities to deliver quality higher education in Zimbabwe. In pursuit of this goal, the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE) was established through an Act of Parliament in 1990 as a National Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education. One of its major functions is "maintenance of appropriate standards with regard to teaching and course instruction" (ZIMCHE ACT, 2006: 33). Through this national structure the value of teaching in higher education receives the attention it deserves.

It is frequently argued that professional development has the potential to empower university academics with the necessary pedagogical skills for them to cope with educational challenges encountered in higher education. Litchfield and Spear (1999) considered the impact of diverse staff development activities in their project. The project outcome demonstrated clearly that well-funded and managed professional development increase staff's knowledge, skills and competencies about learning and teaching.

In many countries, staff development programmes for higher education teachers offered through a university's centre for learning and teaching have been put in place. The University of Western Australia adopted a comprehensive approach to staff development in order to address the expanding role and changing demands on the academic (Grant, Dollery and van der Westhuizen, 2012; Mahmoud and Kanwara, 2015). In Africa academic staff development has also been viewed as an institutional strategy which builds capacity of university lecturers to cope with changes in higher education (Abeli, 2010 :3; Association of African Universities and World Bank, 1997). An article by Whitcomb et al. (2009) emphasises the role of staff development in unlocking and developing talent within the lecturing force and its positive impact on improving teacher quality. A consensus has emerged from literature that points out that professional development can impact positively on teacher knowledge and skills which will result in student achievement if delivered in conducive and supportive settings (Brazer and Bauer, 2013; Buczynski and Hansein, 2010; Guskey, 2003; Keichner, 2010). However, Baijnath (2010) describes professional development available to staff as woefully inadequate and marginal. In South Africa it is acknowledged that academics in the higher education sector are constrained

(ill equipped) to implement the curriculum in order to meet national needs (Boughey, 2010). This is despite the view that "Professional development is seen as an intervention strategy which could capacitate the higher education sector for it to meet graduate output" (Scott, 2007 :59). Some professionalisation of teaching is increasingly expected where all academic staff should become specialists in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) (Kreber, 2002).

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature suggests that various countries take the issue of academic staff development seriously because it enhances quality teaching and learning. In the UK, academics found in higher education institutions experience a lot of pressure both internally and externally (Chabaya, 2016). External challenges arise from quality assurance and audit agencies as well as government and employment agencies. Internally, factors such as huge increase in student numbers, high student staff ratio and the widespread use of information and communication technology in teaching and research have presented challenges that affect the delivery of higher education. In the UK, like elsewhere, academic staff development provides the opportunity to expand the role of academics in meeting these challenges. It is imperative from this argument that academics need to be empowered through knowledge and skills development in order to cope with the challenges. It is acknowledged that the establishment of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) marked the professionalisation of teaching in higher education in the UK (Carr, 2001). Kilfoil (2012) similarly acknowledges that university teacher development is promoted by the HEA. The HEA plays a crucial role in promoting teaching development through accreditation of the Post Graduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. Additionally, the HEA offers much support to newly recruited lecturers through four fellowships namely: the Associate Fellow, Senior Fellow and Principal Fellow (Kilfiol, 2012:18). Many higher education institutions have taken measures to promote teaching among academics through the HEA Fellowship Programme. Learning and Teaching Centres have been set up in universities so as to promote training on learning and teaching in higher education. Possession of a Masters and a PhD are the specified requirements.

In the USA the role of professional development in enhancing higher education quality is strongly supported. Americans subscribe to the belief that education quality is dependent on educator quality (Camin, 2012; Rice et al. 2004). The Obama education Plan (2009) puts national transformation at its focus with teacher quality as a focal point of the Plan's agenda (Whitcomb, 2009). Under the theme "Powerful Professional Development Models and Practices", the Plan acknowledges the key role professional development plays in improving teacher quality (Whitcomb, 2009). An analysis of the above shows that there is a deliberate effort to raise the profile of teaching through pedagogical professionalisation.

In South Africa, academic development centres have been marginalized and Academic Staff Development (ASD) practitioners have had their roles misunderstood. A clear outcome of this situation is that ASD has not been given the priority and status it deserves in most South African HEIs (D'Andrea, Gosling, Scott and Tyeku, 2002; Gosling, 2008). In spite of the limited initiatives to develop supporting policies, some attempts to professionalize teaching in higher education in South Africa

have been made (CHE, 2004d). A good example is the Improving Teaching and Learning Project. The project promoted the improvement of students' learning experiences together with the professionalisation of teaching in higher education (CHE, 2004). Another promising initiative was the launch of the Higher Education Staff Development Initiative supported by the Education Training and Development Sectoral Education Training Authority (CHE, 2004d). Like the Improving Teaching and Learning project, Higher Education Staff Development Initiative was launched to promote professionalisation of the teaching role of the academic in higher education.

The above developments demonstrate that existence of supporting policies and organisations are critical in creating an environment that is conducive for educational development. In spite of this promise, it emerged that academic professional development suffers from misconceptions of academics which lead to its being marginalised in university structures. Academic traditions and practices found in disciplines and departments exert formidable influence on educational staff development initiatives (Chabaya, 2016).

3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The importance of senior management in creating enabling conditions for staff development

was eloquently presented by the Council for Higher Education of South Africa thus:

> Changes in teaching and learning cannot occur simply through the imposition of policy frameworks. If services and substantive curriculum reform is to be achieved then enabling conditions should be created by those in management (CHE, 2004:99).

Institutional policies will require conspicuous acts of leadership to embed such thinking and support into practice to ensure adoption and implementation of the programme.

In Zimbabwe, professional development was neglected in spite of its potential to transform higher education and promote quality learning and teaching (Chabaya, 2016). The conspicuous absence of teaching and learning centres in most state universities was clear testimony of neglected APD. Given this trend, one gets the impression that the induction of new lecturers and continuous improvement among experienced lecturers who needed help with their scholarship of teaching were not getting expected support. Lecturers needed to be empowered to deal with the demanding challenges of teaching in higher education and yet professional development was not institutionalised in state universities. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate how senior management support influences implementation of academic staff development programmes in Zimbabwe's state universities. The research was meant to investigate and identify institutional structures, policies and conditions which enable or constrain the establishment of professional development in state universities.

The study was meant to answer the following research question: How does support given by university senior management influence implementation of staff development programmes?

4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CRITICAL THEORY

The study is premised in critical pedagogy which draws from critical theory. Critical theory concerns itself with the critique of contemporary society and with offering proposals for improved social conditions for modern societies (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 1988 and Habermas, 1989). These societies are marked by conditions which are unfair to some, while privileging others. According to Apple (1996), Giroux (1997) and Habermas (1989), modern societies must be 'self-reflective' with a view to understanding these unjust, unequal and unfair practices. Ultimately, this self-reflective practice of social conditions will lead to their correction. The primary concern of critical education, therefore, is with social injustice and how to transform inequitable, undemocratic or oppressive institutions and social relations.

Critical pedagogy espoused by people such as Giroux (1997) and Freire (1972) is associated with democracy, which, according to Barnet (2000: 50), promotes 'justice and citizenship'. These concepts have implication for higher education in that they promote ideas of access, inclusion, equity rather than closed access, exclusion and inequalities (Shizha and Kariwo, 2011; Tagoe, 2011). Critical university education has consequently become less elite and is characterised by open access to higher education to previously disadvantaged communities. The result has been massification of higher education, a much debated concept. It has been debated because massification has resulted in a high numbers of diverse students in terms of social, cultural, economic and political backgrounds. The challenge for academic professional development is to empower academics in higher education with critical pedagogical knowledge to deal with and support students whose major characteristic is diversity.

However, the existence of an unequal world likely to be perpetuated by the dominant values of the elites passed on through the cultural socialisation of the school is likely to be a threat to the egalitarian goal of higher education (Carrington and Selva, 2010). In this unequal world, the dominant values of the elites in terms of language and worldview are packaged to form classroom experiences and conveyed by teachers as accepted knowledge. According to Apple and Giroux (1996) and McLaren (2003), the starting point is that critical pedagogy improves people's social conditions based on social class by unblocking and eliminating inequalities which make them fulfil their potential and abilities. There are implications for academic staff development. Clearly, ASD is challenged to equip academic teachers with requisite pedagogic knowledge and disposition which motivate students to realise their full academic potential (Rocha-Schmid, 2010). In this regard, critical pedagogy could be used in academic staff development to empower lecturers with strategies to bring about change among students (Carrington and Selva, 2010).

Critical pedagogy can contribute to university teacher development programmes through reflective practice associated with the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) (Rocha-Schmid, 2010). McLaren justifies use of critical pedagogy in university academic staff development programmes by arguing that reflective practice provides a "framework for explaining classroom teaching" as well as restraining academics from "each other's ill-founded views about teaching and student learning" (2008: 32).

Arguably, critical theory is relevant to academic professional development since it

promotes change and transformation which is the objective of academic staff development. Critical theory challenges and rejects social injustice and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and affirms and accepts diversity in students and communities (DeValenzuela, 2000). Thus, when conceptualising the academic professional development of academics who confront issues of diversity and quality in higher education on a daily basis it is important to consider the potential of critical theory.

5 METHODOLOGY

The study focused on identification and analysis of how top management support enables or constrains the development and implementation of ASD in state universities in Zimbabwe. This was a qualitative case study of two institutions of higher education in Zimbabwe. The case study is described as a systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aim to describe and explain the phenomena in its context, thereby creating realistic chances of getting the truth out of them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Thomas and Nelson, 2001). The population of the study comprised Vice Chancellors, Deans of faculties, Chairpersons of departments, professors and Directors of Teaching and Learning Centres from the two institutions under study. Purposive sampling was used for the 2 Vice Chancellors, 2 Directors of Teaching and Learning Centres and 4 Deans from each institution, while convenience sampling was used to select from each institution, 4 Chairpersons of departments and 4 lecturers. Thus, from each institution, 10 participants were sampled for the study giving a total of 20 participants. Structured interviews were used to collect data from Vice Chancellors while questionnaires were used to collect data from deans, professors, lecturers and Directors of Teaching and Learning centres. An interview holds one of the most effective ways of finding something about a phenomenon if people involved are asked (Tuckman, 1994). In this study, constant comparative data analysis was employed (Morgan, 1993).

6 RESULTS

Results of data collected in connection with institutional management support and its enabling or constraining influence on the development and implementation of academic staff development programmes in the two institutions under study are presented in this section.

Literature points to the importance of good leadership that is supportive of educational reforms for successful implementation of development projects (Blanton and Styhanon, 2009). It is also argued that institutional leadership is crucial for academic staff development policies to become reality (McGuigan and Cheng, 2011).

Top management support for development and implementation of academic staff development.

Various aspects that demonstrate support as well as lack of support from top management emerged from the responses provided various categories of participants.

Interview data across the two case study institutions X and Y reflect interesting results. Whilst data for case study institution X is prevalent with data that link members of senior management with lack of support for ASD activities, data for institution Y reflect that ASD activities enjoy the support of senior management. A probable explanation in the difference is located in the belief and value systems of the senior management of the two case study institutions. Case study

institution Y runs a formal course on ASD over and above workshops while case study institution X runs workshops only for its ASD activities. This is reflective of the strong belief and value system placed by management on the importance of improving the quality of teaching in case study institution Y.

Lack of office accommodation and activity rooms

Interview data for case study institution X reflects that the Teaching and Learning Centre had no home of its own and operated without a clear structure. The centre was also constrained of resources such as manpower and finance. This unsourced position of the centre has impacted negatively on the development and implementation of ASD activities in case study institution X. Lack of management support is reflected in the marginalisation of ASD programmes.

To illustrate this point, participant P_1 of case study institution X explained that the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) did not get substantive support from management resulting in it not having a clear status or resources. This is what P_1 said:

> *Teaching and Learning Centre is not getting good support. Researcher: Why? The structure is not clear. It is not a department. It has no accommodation, just an office with one computer.*

Participant P_3 added his voice to the conversation and elaborated that: *There is no manpower. Only the director is in place. Institution has to supply more resources for APD activities to be undertaken.*

Participant P_5 also made his comments but directed them at APD workshops:

> *They (management) do not encourage workshop attendance. There is talk for new lecturers to get through courses offered by Teaching and Learning Centre. But it has just been talk.*

It is clear from these results that there is little buy in of ASD by institutional leadership. The consequence has been lack of clear policy on ASD, lack of structure, a home and resources to support the programme. Clearly, ASD programmes are not prioritised by the management of case study institution X, with the direct consequence of constraining the development of the programme.

A questionnaire that asked 8 respondents for case study institution X on whether management supported APD programmes collaborated viewpoints expressed orally by the participants. Statistically 6 (75%) ticked NO response while 2 (25%) ticked YES response, suggesting that the majority of the respondents regarded management as not supportive of APD activities. Below are some examples of the reasons written by respondents in their write ups:

Respondent (R_1), *Top management has not advocated openly for APD. They seem to be lacking clarity on it*.

Respondent (R_3), *It is a requirement by Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE) to have such a department.*

Respondent (R_4), *They recognise that it improves quality of teaching.*

Respondent (R_5), *Not supported – because the person in charge is not provided with adequate resources to operate effectively.*

Respondent (R_6), *Management is taking too long to make decisions on the proper placement of APD on the university organogram.*

Out of the 8 respondents, 4 provided reasons that justified why they felt that institutional leadership did not give ASD support. The reasons included the following: lack of clarity and advocacy of ASD, inadequate resources were provided and that management was undecided about the position of ASD unit in the university structure. However, the other 4 out of 8 respondents felt that management supported ASD and reasons they gave were as follows: it improves teaching, office space was provided and there was support for workshops. However, one respondent did not give any reason although the respondent felt that management gave support to ASD. No possible explanation could be located for the respondent not to give a reason. Basing on the responses above, it is clear that management support is lacking in the institutions studied.

The Director of the Teaching and Learning Centre of case study institution X also expressed similar views in response to interview questions. The Director was of the view that she was not getting the support of management she expected. She mentioned that she felt side-lined by management since she had no access to the executive. In expressing her frustration, she recounted that:

> *I am stuck in a corner and you meet people out there and people don't know where I operate from. If I don't have access then obvious that nobody will know. We have no meeting point anywhere so these are my frustrations. You feel like giving up.*

It is clear that management did not create an enabling environment for APD practitioners to operate. Practitioners, particularly the Director, do not get the cooperation they expect from management with the consequence of feeling frustrated or "giving up". According to Caffarella and Zinn (2009), people and personal relationships strongly influence implementation of ASD. Deans as part of management that deal directly with academics have also been linked to lack of support. The Director mentioned that deans treated faculty issues as their core business and discouraged academics from attending workshops facilitated by her centre.

Commenting on deans' support this is what the Director said:

> *Deans tell lecturers not to attend workshops. They say your first job is to teach that academic staff development is secondary. They suggest that workshops be conducted over vacation or week-end since they should not disrupt university teaching and this is a source of disagreement.*

It is clear that deans do not promote ASD activities. ASD activities are viewed as interference to faculty core business of teaching, resulting in ASD programmes not being prioritised. Literature shows that if awareness of the importance of raising teaching quality in faculties is not there it

affects staff development (Nicholls, 2005). Clearly, the influence of the discipline is at play (Henkel, 2000) which militates against academics' development into university teachers (Scot et al., 2007: and Quinn, 2012).

Similarly, the Director of the Teaching and Learning Centre did not enjoy the Vice Chancellor's support in her efforts to develop ASD activities. The Director felt unrecognised and isolated by senior management with the consequence of having a questionable status in the university. The Director operates from "a corner and meeting of people is done out there." Requests for a place "so that students, lecturers could feel free to drop in" was not prioritised suggesting that a home that could make ASD visible was not prioritised (Gosling, 2008 :6). This creates negative perceptions among academics about ASD, leading to lack of interest and motivation to participate in ASD programmes. In describing her frustration at the lack of cooperation with management, she commented that:

> *There is no access to the executive. If I don't have access, then it's obvious that nobody will know Teaching and Learning Centre plans. We have no meeting point anywhere. There are many frustrations. You feel like giving up.*

This suggests that the Director of the Teaching and Learning Centre as the main driver of ASD programmes is not being shown the recognition and status that she deserves. That behaviour has a likelihood of marginalising the development of ASD activities. Lack of a link between a unit in an institution and the office of senior management is associated with limited influence and power to attract resources (Gosling, 2008; D'Andrea and Gosling, 2005) to facilitate implementation of projects of that unit. Clearly, lack of the Director's influence with management is reflective of lack of support that might constrain ASD activities in the institution. Lack of the senior management's interest in ASD activities was reflected when he was directly asked about his views of the Teaching and Learning Centre. In his view, "centres are just there to satisfy accreditation requirements by the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education" (ZIMCHE). In the Vice Chancellor's view, "they are only an imposition" suggesting that they are not appreciated in the university. Consequently, there is "no specific expectation on them as senior management to support the Teaching and Learning Centre." The purpose of APD is not appreciated which is a result of the influence of academic traditions and culture such as disciplinary identity that militate against ASD programmes. This suggests that senior management prioritises discipline based research at the expense of ASD. The implication is that lack of senior management support will constrain development and implementation of ASD.

Equally, focus group participants added their voices about the extent to which senior management support APD. One participant explained that "token attention was given" since management offered no practical support to Teaching and Learning Centre in terms of "staffing and a home of its own and other resources." The consequence would be that implementation of APD programmes would be constrained in the absence of resources. This is consistent with literature in which Boud (1999) emphasises that requirements such as office space are necessary for effective implementation of a programme.

Through triangulation of data from interviews, focus group discussion and

questionnaire, it can be concluded that lack of senior management support in case study institution X constrained the development and implementation of ASD activities in the university. There is also evidence to claim that the strength and influence of the discipline as an academic tradition was prioritised by deans with the consequence of ASD not being mainstreamed and getting marginalised in the university (Hunt, 2007). These results are consistent with findings made by Gosling (2006) in UK universities where it was found that discipline based research led to the marginalisation of teaching. Also Knight and Trowler (2011) emphasised the influential role deans as managers of academic sites had on promoting ASD.

It is also clear from the findings that lack of a clear status of the Teaching and Learning Centre compared to a faculty creates negative perceptions about the centre and ASD activities. Findings also confirm that a low belief system and understanding of ASD by senior management is linked to lack of support of the programme in the institution. Similarly, studies by Fermain and Namser (2001) warn that beliefs and vision of management that do not see the need for higher education practice to change and improve can act as a barrier to effective ASD programmes. Indeed, institutional context has influence on management's support of ASD in case study institution X with the consequence of constraining its development if resources are not availed.

Turning to case study institution Y, participants' data are dominated by the viewpoint that ASD programmes are strongly supported by management. The support has taken the form of supporting policies, budget allocation and personal commitment of the Vice Chancellor and deans. The other major difference compared to case study institution X is located in the influence of the Post Graduate Diploma in Tertiary Education (PGDTE) programme, which is a compulsory formal course that offers modules in Foundations of Education offered by case study institution Y.

The voice of management support was eloquently made by participant P_{14} who described the "*support as one hundred percen*t." The argument of P_{14} was that management sponsored academics who took up studies in PGDTE. The participant emphasised that the sponsorship was evidence of management's immense support. Participant P_{13} offered an account of the Vice Chancellor's personal interest and involvement in the institution's ASD activities. P_{13} explained that the Vice Chancellor's support was based on his own experience in which the teaching challenges he faced were addressed through training. He shared his experiences with academics and advised them that teaching following the way they were taught at university (Boud, 1999) was not compatible with challenges of teaching a new generation of students. In describing the Vice Chancellor's support P_{13} succinctly explained that:

> *He is the mastermind. He (VC) told us about his experience. He explained and he shared the problems he had faced when he started teaching. Using my professors' teaching ways was not working. I got help and I was effective.*

The Vice Chancellor's statements in response to interview questions were: *The launch of the PGDTE was influenced by the belief that an education system can only be as good as its teachers.*

This suggests that Vice Chancellor's support is based on practical experience and has the belief that ASD can improve the quality of teaching and learning in his institution.

The Director of the teaching and learning centre of case study institution Y also reflected similar views about management support. The Director was more eloquent in describing the Vice Chancellor's belief and value in the ASD programme where she said "the programme is on his (VC) heart and that it is his vision." This statement suggests that the Vice Chancellor's support is based on strong commitment.

Responses by academics to administered questionnaires on whether management supported APD activities, show that all 8 participants (100%) unanimously indicated that management gave support to ASD activities suggesting that academics appreciated the support given. Also, what is significant is that ASD is associated with the development of academic teaching effectiveness rather than mastery of teaching skills which is associated with the nuts and bolts of teaching (Light and Cox 2001; Rowland, 2003).

The quality of the impact on teachers' teaching development is reflected in the reasons listed by respondents on why they thought management supported APD programmes. A list of the reasons written up by respondents in an open ended questionnaire are given below:

Respondent (R_9), *Management lends support towards ASD activities because of their perceived positive impact on the quality of higher education.*

Respondent (R_{10}), *In order to upgrade and uphold the quality of teaching and hence the quality of graduate produced.*

Respondent (R_{11}), *Because this improves the level of teaching thereby improving the results.*

Respondent (R_{12}), *Because of late the only ASD programme in the institution is taken as a pre-requisite for tenure.*

Respondent (R_{13}) *APD activities are also a catalyst for efficiency and effectiveness in teaching.*

Respondent (R_{14}), *They want to develop and would want lectures to enhance their delivery in teaching learning situations.*

Respondent (R_{15}) *Empowerment of craft and subsequent or ultimate benefit of students.*

Respondent (R_{16}), *Management believes people have not been exposed to teaching methods or training elsewhere.*

Interesting and varied reasons were provided by respondents as to why management supported ASD programmes in the institution. The most common reason mentioned was the need to improve the quality of teaching mentioned by 4 respondents out of 8. This was followed by the need to develop and mould lecturers highlighted by 2 of the 8 respondents. Only one respondent cited pre-requisite for tenure as the reason for management to support ASD programmes. Reasons mentioned by the respondents are reflective of the position that management supports the programme not only to improve the quality of teaching and its effectiveness but also that it may result in moulding and improving lecturer quality. This demonstrates that

management has had a positive influence on staff to appreciate that ASD can contribute towards improving the quality of teaching in higher education.

Whilst management support is acknowledged, interview extracts from case study institution Y reflects concerns about the coercive nature of the policies that might be at variance with academic traditions and culture of academics including academic freedom and autonomy. These results are consistent with findings made by Slaughter (2001) where policies imposed by higher education management were found to be a threat to academic autonomy and intellectual freedom which are fundamental values of higher education.

Highlighting this concern, P_{10} mentioned that "Top down approach is evidence of support." P_{12} added his voice to the conversation and said "*Anyone not tenured, it's compulsory to do the course. It is compulsory whether PhD or not*." One participant from focus group discussion presented the view succinctly thus:

> *There is support because management has made it conditional for one to attend ASD for one to be tenured. Although it is compulsory I mean coercive, the policy ensures participation.*

It would appear that academics have concerns expressed inadvertently about the sustainability of ASD programmes driven by policies that are compulsory. Compulsory policies in the long term can create negative attitudes and resistance with the consequence of making ASD programmes unsustainable. Literature warns that ASD programmes that are not driven on account of the personal responsibility of the academics (Merrian, 2001 and Wood Kowski, 2004) are associated with unsuccessful implementation.

Through triangulation of data from interviews, focus group discussion and questionnaires, it can be concluded that management support is an enabler or constraint to implementation of ASD.

It is evident that implementation of ASD in case study institution X was constrained because of lack of management support while ASD in case study institution Y was enabled and successful because of quality leadership support (Knight, 2000) the institution received. In their studies in the UK, D'Andrea and Gosling (2005) as well as Halstead (2010) claim that leadership support from the executives of the university contributed towards the success of university teaching development.

> In case study institution X, there is clear evidence of lack of buy in by senior management. Consequently, ASD activities have been marginalised. ASD suffered from lack of clarity and indecision about its place and role in the institution. Resources including a budget and personnel to implement ASD are not prioritised and allocated. This strongly suggests that teaching is given a lower status compared to discipline based research (Hunt, 2007). Management has not encouraged a culture in the institution in which teaching is valued as much as research (Quinn, 2012) and in which ASD can be viewed as a strategy that can bring about transformation.

There is also evidence to claim that the strength and influence of the discipline as an academic tradition was prioritised by the deans when they treated ASD activities as 'secondary' compared to faculty teaching.

Commenting on the power of departmental leadership, Sin, McGuigan and Cheng (2011) warn that those managers have huge influence on improvement that can take place in teaching and learning since they are in charge of departments that are central loci of change. In observing this viewpoint, Knight (2000) comments that such institutional leaders offer defective leadership in mentoring faculty members with the consequence of ASD not being implemented successfully. So, deans' attitude towards ASD have militated against effective implementation of ASD programmes. It is also clear from the results that lack of a home (T&LC) compared to a faculty office creates negative perceptions about ASD activities. Lack of a T &LC reduces the visibility of ASD. Documented evidence suggests that there are advantages for management to establish a teaching and learning centre. In Australia for example, Gosling (2008:6) found that management that give APD a home not only give the programme visibility and legitimacy but contributes towards interest of academics in professional development programmes. Findings also confirm that a low belief system and low value system attached to ASD activities is linked to lack of support by management (Fermain-Namser, 2011).

However, by contrast, case study institution Y enjoyed management support and that institutional commitment was highly rated. The role of management support in creating enabling conditions is evident. The pillar of ASD support in the institution is the staff development policy that makes it compulsory for all lecturers to take up Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Tertiary Education (PGDTE). Lecturers who registered for the course were not only sponsored but were given time to attend diploma lectures during semester time. Indeed, a culture in which teaching is valued as much as research (Quinn, 2012 :4) is evident from documents since funding allocated to sponsor the diploma course (PGDTE) is comparable to research according to the budget. The consequence of such support is that ASD has been mainstreamed into the university wide culture of the institution. Given this evidence a claim can be made that institutional management support is an enabler for successful development and implementation of ASD in case study institution Y.

However, although management support has been associated with creating enabling conditions for successful implementation of ASD the potential for academic resistance to imposed institutional staff development policies should be recognised (Slaughter, 2001). Compulsory institutional policies can be associated with corporate agenda linked to "new managerialism" (Lynch, Grumwell and Denile, 2012) often resisted by academics and professors for "infecting" (violating) academic norms of intellectual freedom and autonomy (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

On a similar note Nicholls (2005) advocates for adult learners to be treated with respect and view them as students who can take responsibility for lifelong learning choices. Adult learning theory (Knowels, 1990) advocates for student's autonomy and psychological space to be created with regards to programme choices by adult students in order to ensure student motivation which is likely to be associated with successful completion of the programme.

So, while quality management support acts as an enabler in creating enabling conditions for effective ASD to develop, it is likely that compulsory programme policies are likely to generate resistance in the long term. However, in practice lecturers will not opt for staff development opportunities unless there is

pressure on them (Quinn, 2012). Institutions will have to weigh the merits and demerits of offering compulsory courses.

Finally, it can be claimed that management support can enable or constrain the development and implementation of ASD programmes as shown in the results from case study institutions X and Y. Arguably, there is evidence to suggest that institutional context has huge influence on management support.

7 CONCLUSIONS

There is evidence from the research that management support can enable or constrain the development and implementation of ASD programmes. Commitment of senior management shown in terms of supporting policies, a budget for ASD and appointments made to TLC's are crucial for ASD programmes to be successfully implemented. This was demonstrated in that in the institution that had support from the VC and deans, staff had a buy-in of academic development programmes and the attendance was satisfactory. While in the second institution, where the centre did not get support, (it was just set up as a token to satisfy the ZIMCHE requirements), there was no actual progress in academic staff development. This a structural arrangement had a constraining influence on ASD development and implementation.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Management should give Directors of TLCs status equivalent to that of a dean of a faculty to raise the status of teaching and ASD activities in a university.
- A national structure like ZIMCHE should have policies that influence universities to have their academics go through a formal course that promotes professionalisation of university teaching.
- Management should have a belief and value system that places importance on improving the quality of teaching and learning in a university.
- University goals and mission among other issues should promote institutional quality development and assurance in order to facilitate mainstreaming of ASD programmes into the university culture and activities. Academic staff should receive formal training through (PGTHE) to become qualified tertiary educators.
- Institutional policies that support the valuing of teaching and learning as an institutional culture should be put in place.

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ANALYSIS OF DECOLONISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN A NEW SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the issue of decolonising higher education and how a new university can possibly respond to this call through the teaching and learning, assessment, curriculum development and the research process. Using a qualitative research methodology, the study interrogated the perspectives of 10 senior academics from one new comprehensive university, who were purposively selected to participate in the study. The study used Antonio Gramsci (1971) cultural hegemony theory as the lens with which to make sense of the data. Data were analysed using the thematic approach, with themes that emerged from the interviews forming the basis of the discussion of the results. Data were also analysed using verbatim statements from the participants. The participants interviewed emphasised that the decolonisation of the higher education system was not only urgent but also long overdue. It came out clearly that academics remain the vanguard of the decolonisation project given their critical role as teachers, curriculum developers, assessors and researchers. The study therefore recommended that all progressive forces including students, academics, university leaders and the public must adopt non-violent intellectual and evidence-based approaches to the decolonisation campaign.

Key words: decolonisation, curriculum, higher education, hegemony

1 INTRODUCTION

Towards the end of 2016, the entire South African higher education (HE) sector was engulfed by potent student protests which were driven by the need for a fee-free decolonised higher education (HE) system. The protests were of different magnitude across institutions and their manifestations ranged from marches, disruption of the academic project, destruction and incineration of university property and infrastructure. The students were so resolute in their demands and efforts such that it became more of a coordinated movement rather than isolated efforts of individual groups of students.

In order to understand the essence of decolonisation, one needs to understand the essence of European colonialism and its impact on the education, knowledge and cultural system in African societies. As Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2012) exposits, the decolonial perspective seeks to address the problem of coloniality of knowledge which took the form of invasion of mental universe

of the colonised Africans. This is important if higher education system is to succeed in serving as a transformative tool that levels the existing unequal social structure in South Africa and other post-colonial States of Africa. Although South Africa is an independent state, it is important that the remnants of colonialism that are perpetuated through social institutions including the HE system be examined and addressed so that the education system serves the interests of a broad-based and inclusive society

The CHE (2013), in its motivation for the adoption of a flexible curriculum structure in South African universities, observed that "…the origins of South Africa's current higher education curriculum structures lie in the adoption, early in the twentieth century, of the Scottish educational framework owing to colonial ties.'' It further notes that the structure and assumptions of the core degrees in universities were set many decades ago, predicated on a largely homogeneous intake with middle-class cultural capital. Given the changes that have happened both outside and inside the HE system since 1994, the need to review the extent to which the present curriculum structures, assumptions and values meet the needs of the contemporary society becomes more urgent than ever before.

This research therefore explores the issue of decolonising higher education at a new university with a view to understand academics' conceptualisations of decolonising HE, approaches to decolonisation as well as the role of different stakeholders in decolonising HE.

2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The issue of decolonising higher education, including the decolonization of knowledge and curricula, has gained significant attention in South Africa in the past five years or so. Among other factors that have made this particular issue critical is the Fees Must Fall and Rhodes Must Fall movements (Mbembe, 2015). Many scholars have taken this up and various books and special issues of journals have been published, as well as many other materials. It should however be acknowledged that the movements that have given traction to the issue of decolonising knowledge are actually informed by scholarship on this matter which is not new. Prominent scholars who have contributed to the growth of scholarship on this matter include Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018), Santos (2014), Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2012), and Somo (2016). The critical thing to note is that all these scholars were focusing on the situation in existing and well-establised universities in South Africa and elsewhere and not in a new university. Therefore, this paper seeks to explore the issue of decolonisation of higher education curricula from a practical point of a new university.

In order to appreciate the significance of the struggle for decolonisation of HE, one needs to appreciate the role that education, training and innovation play in South Africa's long term development agenda as articulated in the National Development Plan (Somo, 2016). One also needs to understand how performance and success patterns in the South African higher education system are still racially skewed with African students being affected most negatively (CHE, 2013; Scott, Yeld and Hendry, 2006; Dhunpath & Vithal, 2012). Viewed in this context, the decolonisation movement is thus seen as a key instrument in the reduction of inequality and the elimination of poverty not only in the higher education sector but in society at large. It is crucial that a new university engages in a deep conversation on this issue so that it develops appropriate structures,

processes and mechanisms to deal with the decolonisation imperative.

The university that is the research site of this study is one of the two universities established by the South African democratic government in 2014. It is referred to as a new university to differentiate it with the other universities that were established long back during the apartheid era. This university has a current student population of 4500 and an academic staff complement of 350. Regardless of its relative newness, it was not spared by the massive disruption that arose from the fees must fall and decolonisation protests. It is thus crucial that as a new university it engages in a critical conversation on this issue so that it develops appropriate structures, processes and mechanisms to deal with the decolonisation imperative.

This paper therefore seeks to explore the issue of decolonising the higher education curriculum, with a view to understand how a new university can possibly respond to the decolonisation imperative through the teaching and learning, assessment, curriculum development and the research process. This is important because students and other stakeholders might want to approach this issue with haste, anger and emotions. It is hoped this research will equip the university to approach the issue with care and reason in an evidence-based manner.

The next section presents a brief background to the study followed by a review of related literature, research methodology and discussion of findings and recommendations.

3 ESSENCE OF CURRICULUM

The term curriculum can be conceived from different epistemological and ontological assumptions. Jan van den Akker (2009) refers to curriculum as all the experiences that the student undergoes through while being part of that institution. Diamond (2008) has elaborated on this concept by asserting that "a curriculum is a blend of educational strategies, course content, learning outcomes, educational experiences, assessment, the educational environment and the individual students' learning style, personal timetable and the programme of work". Mgqwashu (2017) adds that the notion of curriculum involves attitudes, beliefs, dispositions and worldviews that students learn, unlearn, relearn, construct, reconstruct, deconstruct as a result of the experiences that students acquire through engagement with their programmes. Both Diamond (2008) and Mgqwashu (2017) conceptualisations of curriculum are important for this study as they are more comprehensive and cannot be reduced to mere syllabi, course outlines or the programmes of study that students are pursuing. Cornbleth (1990) ccontends that the way we conceive of curriculum and curriculum making is important because our conceptions and ways of reasoning about curriculum reflect and shape how we see, think and talk about, study and act on the education made available to our students.

4 ESSENCE OF COLONIALISM

To understand the essence of decolonisation one needs to reflect back on colonialism and what it entails. In my view this is necessary because decolonisation efforts are meant to address issues and practices that are rooted in colonialism. Colonialism entails the establishment of political, economic and cultural control over one state by another (Shamuyarira, 1965). Europe's keen interest in Africa's natural resources, which reached peak between1400 to 1800 served as the major driving force behind the colonisation of African States.

This led to the Scramble for Africa which saw many European states competing for colonies in the African continent (Mbembe, 2015). Countries such as Britain, France, Germany, Spain, Portugal and Italy played a significant role in the colonisation process. The net effect of colonialism in Africa was the creation of African nation states which were controlled politically, economically and culturally. This in essence meant a total disruption and distortion of the traditional, political, cultural and social institutions that had developed in Africa over the years. In the process, the indigenous knowledge and educational systems of African States were severely affected. As a consequence, and as cogently pointed out by (Kamanzi, 2017) schools and universities built in the African continent were modelled along European systems, values, norms and culture. This forms the crux of the problem that this paper sought to investigate.

Although successive African governments did try to align their higher education systems, consistent with the democratic imperatives, such efforts were largely marginal and of very limited consequence as the HE system remained largely unchanged. Therefore, the decolonisation of education debate should be understood against this background. As amply demonstrated by CHE (2013) to this day, performance patterns in universities in South Africa are still heavily related to apartheid patterns where white students do well followed by Indian, coloured and African students coming last.

5 THE CONCEPT OF DECOLONISING HIGHER EDUCATION

Although colonialism is no longer in existence, its legacy continues to influence social, political economic and cultural life in the African continent (Kamanzi, 2017).

The debate on the decolonisation of education is predicated on the assumption that the current HE system is imbued with colonialist tendencies, ethos, values, practices and norms. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) refers to this as a process of epistemological decolonisation that is meant to bring epistemic freedom not only in academia but society at large. He argues further that epistemic freedom is about democratising knowledge so as to regulate the overrepresentation of Eurocentric thought in education, knowledge and social theory. This, he argues, is a pre-requisite for any successful decolonisation struggle as it gives rise to the emergence of a critical decolonial consciousness. Mgqwashu (2017) contends that decolonisation involves among other things exorcising existing educational practices, beliefs and norms of the idea that anything other than European is inferior. He further argues that this, in essence, calls for a shift in our epistemological and ontological perspectives. This among other things calls for the recognition and incorporation of indigenous knowledge systems into the HE system. For this to happen, knowledge systems including universities need to show a genuine interest in diverse cultures, peoples and languages (Kamanzi, 2017). The decolonial approach seeks to address what Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2012) refers to as the problem of coloniality of knowledge which expresses itself as an invasion of the mental universe of the colonised people of Africa.

Heleta (2016) makes a cogent observation that up to this day the South African Higher Education continues to reproduce hegemonic identities instead of eliminating them. His argument is based on the observation that the major theories that inform educational practice are largely informed by Western theories which are not

complemented by locally generated theories that are informed by life as it is lived, experienced and understood by local people. In the same vein, Mbembe (2016, p. 32) contends that there is something profoundly wrong when syllabuses designed to meet the needs of colonialism and apartheid should continue well into the liberation era. As one of its motivation for the proposal for the restructuring of the undergraduate curriculum degree structure in South African Universities, CHE (2013) noted that the present curriculum was adopted almost a century ago, during the colonial period, and has remained largely unchanged despite the major changes that have occurred in social and economic conditions. This gives credence to the argument that most of what has existed as Western Eurocentric, intellectual tradition and social science is proving irrelevant, impotent, in the analysis of African experiences (Mbembe, 2016; Alace, 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). From the foregoing, one can suggest that African scholars need to reduce their scientific dependence on hegemonic Eurocentric knowledge that has become canonical in academic practice. This dependence expresses itself among other things when African scholars continue to seek confirmation and validation of their knowledge in Europe and North America in their propensity to publish in so-called international high-impact journals (Waghid, 2014). Santos (2014) therefore advocates for the departure from treating 'knowledge' as if it is canonical in preference of the 'knowledges'

Practically, the call for decolonisation of the curriculum should not be misconstrued as a discouragement to learn from the West and the rest of the world. Rather, it should concern itself with the recognition of various forms of knowledge and knowing. (Kamanzi, 2017). As Letseka (2014, p. 14) maintains that "decolonisation should concern itself with making higher education relevant to the material, historical and social realities of the communities in which universities operate". This view resonates well with Mbembe (2015) research on decolonising the curriculum in African universities where he argued that locally theorised knowledge from Africa should be brought into dialogue with knowledge from other continents and the process of knowledge generation and dissemination, should reflect African norms, practices and beliefs. This is important as it helps address what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) refers to as the problem of epistemic hegemony that characterises the present higher education system in South Africa.

Pillay (2015) extends on this idea by asserting that decolonisation of higher education is about justice that addresses the epistemic violence of colonial knowledge and colonial thought. The same author remarks that many students including academics and leaders in higher education still believe that Western knowledge systems constitute the only basis of higher forms of thinking. The epistemological transformation also depends on the significant increase of black, coloured and Indian academics at Universities (HESA, 2014). However, we should not lose sight of Maserumule's (2015) caution that the replacement of white academics and leaders by African leaders while necessary is not a sufficient condition for the attainment of a decolonised curriculum since many of these African academics and leaders who were schooled largely in the Eurocentric tradition may find it difficult to renounce their very identity. This calls for what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) refers to as the need to shift the geography and biography of knowledge, as the knowledge that has led Africa to its current state of epistemic crises cannot serve as the emancipatory tool to extricate Africa from that crises. In this vein Alace (2016) is spot

on when he suggests that African academics need to rethink thinking as well as learning to unlearn in order to relearn.

6 THEORETICAL LENS

This study is informed by the cultural hegemony theory which Gramsci, in Apple (2010) regards as a phenomenon that refers to the ways in which assumptions of a group achieve dominance over another and are considered as common sense understandings. It entails the dominance of one group over other groups without the threat of force. This argument has it that consent to the rule of dominant is achieved through the spread of dominant worldviews, beliefs assumptions, and values through social institutions such as the education system, media, family, religion and politics. These institutions socialise people in terms of the beliefs, norms and values of the dominant social group.

Cultural hegemony is perpetuated when those ruled by the dominant group come to believe that their social conditions are natural and inevitable rather than created by people who have a vested interest in particular social, economic and political orders (Pitsoe & Dichaba, 2013). The power of consent is therefore seen as key to the maintenance of the hegemonic status quo. Thus, Gramsci regards the educational system as one of the central elements of cultural hegemony that spreads an ideology that helps reproduce the existing unequal social structure.

The South African higher education curriculum or knowledge system is hegemonic because it is imbued with European values, views, assumptions, practices and ways of knowing which negates African and indigenous knowledge systems and ways of knowing. European values, have over time come to be regarded as universal and necessary as most teaching, learning and research practices are validated through Western logic at the expense of African or indigenous rationality (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 2012). This has resulted in the subjugation and subordination of African students' interests to colonial interests. This alienation is often cited as contributing to the current unsatisfactory performance patterns of African students in HE as compared to students from other racial groups. Universities should therefore start the process of rethinking thinking as well as relearning so as to address the problem of epistemic crises that currently exists in HE Santos (2014).

7 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives of this study were to:

- Examine academics understanding of what it means to decolonise higher education
- Highlight possible approaches that universities can take to decolonise higher education
- Analyse the various roles that university stakeholders can play to decolonise higher education

8 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study was guided by the following research questions

- What does decolonising higher education mean to academics?
- What approaches can universities take to decolonise higher education?
- How can university internal stakeholders assist in decolonising higher education?

9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research adopted a qualitative research methodology which enabled the researcher and the researched to co-construct the data through the generation of multiple subjective realities (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). The use of open-ended questions was key to the generation of rich descriptive data which forms the mainstay of qualitative research.

10 SAMPLE.

The sample for this study comprises 10 black senior academics, five from each gender, from the level of senior lecturer up to professor, who were purposively selected to participate in the study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability technique in which the researcher uses his/her judgement to select participants which she/he feels will give accurate information (Creswell, 2009). It involves choosing the people whom the researcher feels are well equipped with information that will be relevant to the focus of the study (Creswell, 2009). Black senior academics were therefore preferred in this study since they were not only considered relevant for the theme of the study, but also experienced and competent enough to provide information-rich and substantiated responses on the issue of decolonisation.

11 INSTRUMENTATION AND PROCEDURES

Data were collected through an unstructured interview guide. Structured interviews were selected since they would enable the researcher to interact freely with the participants in order to get a deep sense of their understanding of decolonisation. In the process, meaningful and information-rich data will be generated (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). The interview questions centred on the issue of academics understanding of the concept of decolonisation and how university stakeholders can help decolonise the higher education curriculum through the teaching and learning, curriculum development, assessment and research process. Interviews were conducted at times agreed between the researcher and the participants during normal working hours throughout the whole month of April 2018. Each interview session lasted between 30 to 40 minutes.

12 DATA ANALYSIS

The thematic analysis approach was used in the analysis of data. This model requires the researcher to become familiar with the data, develop codes, identify, define and review themes (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). Data were also analysed using verbatim statements from the respondents.

13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

First, permission to conduct research was sought and granted by the institution's research ethics committee. Prior to the interviews, the researcher clarified the purpose of the research and reassured the participants of their rights to anonymity and confidentiality as well as the freedom to withdraw from the research process any time they felt so. Fortunately, none of the participants withdrew from the study. Acceptance to participate in the study was confirmed by the completion of acceptance and consent forms.

14 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results for this research were presented and discussed under the five themes that emerged from the unstructured interviews with the participants as follows: The meaning of decolonisation; approaches

to decolonisation; role of stakeholders in decolonising higher education; decolonising the curriculum through teaching and learning; decolonising the curriculum through research and knowledge generation process. Verbatim statements from participants were also used as major organising principles.

The meaning of decolonisation.

Participants were generally unanimous that decolonisation entails doing away with aspects of colonialism that is embedded in the curriculum or processes of teaching and learning. The participants described the present higher education as being Eurocentric which necessitates the decolonisation process. The following responses were apt:

Respondent 1: *Historically higher education in the colonial world was configured according to the prescriptions of the coloniser. This has tended to continue in those countries well after they attained independence.*

Respondent 2: *It is a deliberate effort of teaching of content and practices that abhor and are at variance with colonialism and apartheid. Such effort focuses on revising the curriculum by removing content and pholosophies that glorify colonialism.*

A running thread across many responses was that the existing higher education system had some remnants of colonialism or was completely entrapped in it.

Respondent 3: *decolonisation is the removal of foreign aspects in the curriculum of HE and replacing it with indigenous elements to portray the culture of locals.*

The incorporation of indigenous knowledge into the curriculum also emerged from participant responses as a necessary ingredient of a decolonised education system. What respondents said linked well with Santos (2014) assertion that epistemological decolonisation seeks to redress issues of epistemicides, linguicides, culturalcides and alienation which were attendant to colonialism. As Magqwashu (2017) cogently puts it, locally theorised knowledge from Africa should be brought into dialogue with knowledge from other continents. He goes on to add that the process of knowledge generation and dissemination should reflect African norms, practices and beliefs. It is therefore important to point out that the call for decolonisation of the curriculum is not a call for the rejection of knowledge from the Western world. Rather, it is a call to make university education relevant to the material, historical and social realities of the local communities in which universities are located.

Approaches to decolonisation

It emerged from the study that the task of decolonising the HE system will not be easy nor linear. It calls for an eclectic approach that requires the participation of many stakeholders both internal and external to the university. While students and academics will exercise great agency in the decolonisation campaign, they obviously cannot go it alone as they also need the support of external stakeholders such government, alumni, funders, community and others. This study established that in order to succeed in their roles as agents of decolonisation academics and executive management need to acquire the right orientation and consciousness. An Afrocentric perspective is therefore key in this regard. This is consistent with Maserumule (2015) observation that many of the old academics and leaders were schooled in the colonial tradition and as such they may be reluctant to disclaim their identity.

Universities the world over have often earned the criticism of being too conservative thereby casting doubt over their capacity to initiate and execute the decolonisation campaign to its logical conclusion. This resonates well with Apple (2010) assertion that the intellectuals of society cannot act as the vanguard of the interests of the ordinary working class values, interests and aspirations as they are actually embedded in a privileged social class where they enjoy prestige in society. One respondent echoed the following in this regards:

Respondent 6: *Decolonisation calls for revolutionary and progressive academics, those that have declared a de-taste for apartheid and colonialism and all that it stands for. An academic whose writing has exposed the evils of apartheid and one who associates with the suffering majority. You cannot expect an academic that is complicit to map such an agenda. The responsibility may also be extended to organisations and international scholars with an impeccable record of fighting oppression and colonialism.*

Most participants located the agency to decolonise higher education within both internal and external university stakeholders such as students, academics, leaders in higher education and other stakeholders. For instance, two respondents gave the following responses:

Respondent 7: Government, universities, funders, teachers, students, civil society and industry should take part in the decolonisation process.

Respondent 8: All curriculum stakeholders including students, lecturers, subject specialist, curriculum developers, department of education officials, university administrators should be involved.

It is clear from the above responses that the decolonisation process will require an inclusive approach if it is to succeed.

Role of university internal stakeholders in decolonising Higher Education

Under this broad theme data were further categorised into three sub-themes that emerged namely, students, academics and university management as internal university stakeholders. Data was presented in terms of how in the eyes of the participants each category can exercise agency in the decolonisation of higher education process.

Students

The involvement of students was seen by many participants as critical in the decolonisation process. This did not come as a surprise given the fact that the decolonisation debate, which had become dormant for quite some time in the South African Higher education sector, was brought to the fore by students' acts of activism during the 2015/2016 academic year. However, respondents emphasised that students need to be pragmatic and evidence-based in their approach to decolonisation rather than being emotional and ideological. The need for public debates and conversations on decoloniality was therefore proposed as one way of promoting student awareness and understanding on the issue.

Academics

All the 10 participants in this study indicated the central role that academics should play in the decolonisation process. Most of them identified two processes in which academics can exercise agency in the decolonisation process. The most important one involves the revision of the curriculum followed by academics' teaching approaches. The following responses from selected participants further substantiate the point:

Responded 1: *Academics can assist in the decolonisation process through revising the curriculum and the teaching approaches they use.*

Respondent 2: *Academics must revise the curriculum. Content must be aligned to a people's present, past and future aspirations and history.*

Elaborating on the teaching approach as a strategy to influence the decolonisation process, one respondent indicated that student centred teaching methodologies that are informed by the constructivist and humanist perspectives play a major role in the decolonisation process. Three participants indicated that methods that promote critical thinking and problem solving skills are more useful in ridding the higher education system of the colonial aspects. Five participants underlined how academics can influence the decolonisation process through their approaches and practice of research. To sum up, participants indicated that academics can assist in the decolonisation campaign through the revision of the existing curriculum, teaching approaches and their approach to research.

Executive management

Many participants felt that executive management can contribute to the decolonisation of university knowledge at the level of policy making and implementation. There was also an indication that executive management can assist in the decolonisation process by creating enabling environments and platforms for academics to debate issues on decolonisation, re-orienting academics' paradigms through staff development workshops, seminars and "indabas". The appointment of renowned African scholars was also brought to the fore. However, three participants raised a critical concern that it cannot be taken for granted that executive management will certainly act in the desired way by the mere fact that they belong to executive management. These participants underlined the possession of the right orientation and consciousness as catalytic requirements in the decolonisation process. Following from this view one participant remarked as follows:

Participant 4: *…. but executive management need to cleanse themselves of the knowledge forms and practices that are known by society of sustaining or glorify apartheid and colonialism.*

This calls for what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) refers to as a need for re-education to align distortions caused by centuries of miseducation while Santos (2014) calls it a process of learning to unlearn in order to relearn. In sum, the need for an inclusive approach to decolonising HE was underlined.

Decolonising the curriculum through teaching and learning.

On how to initiate decolonisation through the teaching and learning process, participants were unanimous that what was needed first was the revision of the curriculum or some form of reform. This was followed by the need to change teaching practices, approaches and facilitation styles. On curriculum reform participants highlighted that this can be done by integrating indigenous knowledge system into the curriculum. It came out that selection of curriculum content should also be informed by the need to include content that promote African ideals. A running thread throughout the responses was that the existing university curriculum is largely disconnected from the majority of the African students, which creates a state of alienation in their learning. This is probably one reason why African students do not perform well as compared to students from

other racial backgrounds. One participants responded as follows:

Participant 4: *The curriculum needs revision. Changing the aims, objectives, content, teaching practices and assessment strategies of the curriculum that is known to aid apartheid or colonialism is key.*

Participant 6: *One approach to decolonisation is* by integrating African knowledge into the curriculum; by letting students look at things from Afrocentric perspectives. *A lot of African oriented technologies and knowledge should be incorporated in the curriculum. Quality assurance systems should monitor and evaluate the incorporation of indigenous knowledge system in the curriculum.*

The above sentiments resonate well with the South African Council on Higher Education (CHE) (2013) report on the existing three and four-year undergraduate curriculum structure. In the report the CHE raised an important observation that the present curriculum was adopted almost a century ago, during the colonial period, and has remained largely unchanged despite the major changes that have occurred in social and economic conditions of many students. Since this type of curriculum is not in the best interests of many African students, it is strongly believed that this could be one reason why most African students are not succeeding in their studies in higher education as compared to students from other ethnic backgrounds. Consequently, a flexible curriculum structure was therefore proposed.

When asked to describe the teaching approaches that would be needed, most respondents said that these should promote situated learning and Afrocentric perspectives. Elaborating on this point one respondent said this can be done by way of using local examples and content derived from the African context. Practical and research oriented teaching as well as problem based learning approaches were cited as key in decolonising education. The following quotes may serve to illustrate the point:

Respondent 9: *When teaching or demonstrating concepts use examples or readings from the cultural or African origin. When responding to questions students should be encouraged to give examples for their answers from the local and cultural aspects. Furthermore, students should be assessed on information which is integrated with Afrocentric issues, where they are asked to compare and contrast knowledge systems from different contexts including the African one.*

The need for student-centred, constructivist-inclined teaching approaches that foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills should therefore be at the centre of university teaching.

Decolonising the curriculum through the research and knowledge generation process?

With regards to the role of research in the decolonisation of knowledge, participants underlined the need for a paradigm shift in the practice of research in universities. There was a general feeling that research that is conducted in universities should foreground issues that are at the heart of African culture, values and development. These views link well with Pillay (2015) advice that one way of addressing the injustice of epistemic violence that has been at the centre of colonial education is incorporating African worldviews in research. This will signify a significant departure from the current HE curriculum which is largely disconnected from the realities of Africans including the lived experience of the black South Africans (Le Grange, 2016).

Another major finding on this issue was that universities should prioritise indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) as a niche area in their research agendas. Respondents felt that IKS as a field of study is currently under researched and less documented. There was a feeling that students should engage in more action research than is currently the case. The following statements were typical:

Participant 1: *Academics should engage in cutting-edge research about the needs of post-colonial states. They should also contribute in writing the literature which students use in their learning. Academics must collaborate with other African scholars from different African countries, by publishing in African journals, by publishing in African content in reputable journals.*

Respondent 2: *Academics can assist by re-writing history books. Academics need to popularise a people-oriented narrative and not one that is peddled by sympathisers of colonial and apartheid education.*

The above views find expression in Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2012) sentiment that university research, teaching and learning should be grounded in the African archives. In the same vein Chilisa (2012) indicated that mainstream research conducted in African societies must not ignore African ways of knowing and knowledge systems. He goes on to argue that epistemic freedom can only be achieved if research methodologies are decolonised and indigenised. This among other things implies that research methodologies be embedded in the experiences, value systems and histories of the African people.

Taken together, findings from the literature and the responses from the participants clearly suggest that the need for decolonising higher education curriculum is not a mere academic debate but a real issue that should be attended to with a heightened sense of urgency and pragmatism by all those concerned.

15 CONCLUSION

The decolonisation of higher education campaign has gained a new sense of urgency given the important role that higher education plays in individual and social development as well as the elimination of poverty and social inequality. The campaign is predicated on the need to align HE with the diverse needs of students from different social, political and economic backgrounds. The notion of decolonisation can no longer be restricted to the mere removal of colonial aspects imposed on the curriculum but should be up-scaled to include the dismantling of what we may have constructed post-colonialism, but which does not align with local imperatives. In other words, the call for decolonisation of the curriculum should not be misconstrued as a discouragement to learn from the West and the rest of the world but a call to make the university curriculum and knowledge as inclusive as is desirable. The use of Afrocentric-compliant pedagogies as well as the conceptualisation and implementation of cutting-edge research driven by African epistemological systems remain key to the decolonisation of the university curriculum in South Africa and beyond. All progressive forces including students, academics, the public and the government need to rally behind the campaign and engage with each other in a non-violent, non-emotional and intellectually motivated approach.

16 RECOMMENDATIONS

Arising from the findings of this study, it is recommended that academics,

academic leaders and students in universities continue to engage on the issue of decolonisation of university education as well as knowledge systems. In the current era of the COVID 19 and the subsequent national lockdown, these engagements can be conducted through properly planned webinars facilitated by prominent authorities in the field of educational planning and curriculum design.

Engagements and debates involving decolonisation of education should not only be confined to Higher Education practitioners and institutions. Instead, such debates need to be activated even at the level of basic education involving teachers, institutional heads and students. This is important because most of the teaching and learning concerns and problems that are experienced by students and lecturers at university are rooted in primary and secondary education level. Therefore, instigating conversations at this level might be a more holistic way of understanding the issue of decolonisation of education than is currently the case.

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Challenges of embracing the Zimbabwe Culture Hut Concept in selected Bindura rural primary schools

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ABSTRACT

The role of culture in education is incontestable, particularly during the early years of schooling where it is mandatory to bridge the gap between the home and school. In line with Zimbabwe's Culture Policy of 2004, Zimbabwe's Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education introduced the Culture Hut Concept at primary school level. The study sought to explore infant teachers' and primary school heads' perspectives on the challenges of implementing the Culture Hut Concept in a postcolonial context. Accordingly, the postcolonial theory paradigm guided this study. The study adopted a qualitative case study research design. A semi-structured questionnaire, focus group discussions and individual face-to-face interviews were used to collect data. The study participants, who were purposefully selected, included 3 school heads and 15 infant school teachers from Maizelands Cluster in Bindura District of Zimbabwe. Data were analysed using the constant comparative method for thematic coding. The study findings revealed that the major constraints were educators' low levels of confidence purportedly due to insufficient knowledge on the Culture Hut requirements, failure by school heads to ensure implementation through monitoring teachers and involving the community, negative attitudes towards cultural issues by teachers, learners and parents and scarce resources. Participants believed that the challenges they faced could be resolved and they proposed some intervention measures. The study recommends staff development as well as enlightening the community on the benefits of implementing the Culture Hut Concept in education.

Key words: culture hut concept, culture policy, implementation challenges, intervention strategies, Zimbabwe

1 INTRODUCTION

This research focuses on the implementation of the Culture Hut Concept (CHC) at infant primary school level. Informed by Zimbabwe's Culture Policy of 2004, the CHC entails the establishment of a culture hut or culture village within the school premises. Such a development is aimed at promoting the teaching and learning of culture in the country's formal education system. A culture hut represents a cultural museum in which cultural artefacts are meant to be displayed for the benefit of learners. As a matter of policy, all schools in Zimbabwe are expected to have culture huts as a curriculum innovation.

Culture has the ability to shape even the young learner's life, especially if the school and the community are involved in the child's development (Emmanuel & Asah, 2019). Therefore, culture huts should be

viewed as having a role to play in the teaching of subjects across the primary school curriculum, particularly at infant level where learners can manipulate the displayed artefacts as concrete objects. Zazu (2016) proposes the use of heritage education for sustainable development in southern Africa where a post-colonial context could promote learners' active participation, critical thinking and problem solving skills. When learners are exposed to and engage with cultural artefacts such as woven baskets and mats, they may consider mathematics as a crucial component of their cultural heritage (Madusise, 2015; 2019).

Shumba (2017, p.6) advocates for an education system which is sufficiently connected to "learners' backgrounds, experiences, and cultures with great implications for quality and relevance, especially in Science and Technology Education". Besides academic benefits, the CHC may empower learners to appreciate their African heritage and the philosophy of Unhu/Ubuntu, both of which have the potential to remove colonial mentality and maintain qualities of a good person, respectively (Rogoff, 2011; Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru & Makuvaza, 2014; Shumba, 2017; Gwede, 2019). It is evident that having culture huts in schools has several benefits to the learner, especially in the development of aesthetic, mathematical and scientific concepts, among others. Accordingly, implementation of the CHC in primary schools in Zimbabwe may be regarded as a major initiative which deserves academic enquiry to establish challenges facing teachers in implementing that noble concept.

2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This research study was framed and guided by the variables that Brynard (2005) identifies as critical for any effective policy implementation. Brynard (2005, p.13-21) identifies five critical variables, namely; content, context, commitment, capacity, and clients and outside coalitions. The first variable is *content*. Content is vital with regard to what it spells out as the means to achieve its objectives. In the context of the Zimbabwean CHC, Nyoni and Nyoni (2010) observe that school heads were simply being told at the District office to go and erect culture huts. It shows that school heads were not equipped with requisite content to disseminate to teachers at their respective schools on how to manage culture huts. The school head is responsible for monitoring the implementation process by creating opportunities for teachers to gain self-confidence through communicating and collaborating with one another (Anderson, 2002).

The second crucial variable is *context.* According to Rogan and Grayson (2003) implementation should take into account the context of a particular school including its teachers, pupils, leadership and environment. Brynard (2005), citing Berman (1980), and O'Toole (1986), declares that a context-free theory of implementation is not likely to produce powerful explanations or accurate predictions. Thus, it may be concluded that implementing an innovation depends on the context of a specific school. In this study, it is significant to find out the extent to which teachers and school heads regard the Zimbabwe CHC as context specific to enable them to implement it.

The third variable is that of *commitment.* Both the bottom-up and the top-down perspectives consider commitment a crucial variable to effective implementation of policy. Brynard (2005) summarises the thinking on the significance of commitment by saying that firstly, commitment is important at all levels through which policy passes. Secondly, that commitment will be

affected by, and will influence, all the other variables. Thus, in the case of the CHC, it can be concluded that if those responsible for implementing the policy are not committed or are unable, then little will happen (Warwick, 1982 cited in Brynard, 2005).

Capacity is the fourth variable and Brynard notes that the analytic literature is unanimous on the importance of implementation capacity for effective implementation to take place (Fullan, 1998). McLaughlin (1998) explains implementation capacity as the availability of and access to resources such as human, financial, material, technological and logistical. McLaughlin (1998) goes further to argue that there are also intangible requirements which are critical in transforming rhetoric into action, for example, leadership, motivation, willingness and endurance.

The support of *clients and outside coalitions* is the final critical variable. In this study, primary school teachers are the critical clients who need the support of their school heads in the implementation of the CHC. The outside stakeholders that can be identified as relevant in this study are the local communities (Emmanuel & Asah, 2019). The surrounding communities could frustrate the schools' efforts to construct and furnish culture huts as per the expectations of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE).

These variables may easily fit within the context of our study since they are widely accepted as contributing towards effective implementation of policy. In this study, implementation of the CHC is a task which teachers are required to accomplish and continue to manage effectively for the benefit of primary school learners. Collarbone (2009) asserts that in order to successfully implement change, it is crucial to understand, value and act on what teachers are thinking, doing, feeling and saying at each stage of the change process. That way, you appreciate why some stakeholders may violate the requirements of the intended policy. It is therefore pertinent to assess what teachers and school heads value, the information and beliefs that they have, as well as their motivation and commitment to implement the CHC as a curriculum innovation.

3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The CHC is not being meaningfully implemented in some rural primary schools in Zimbabwe (Nyoni & Nyoni, 2010; Zazu, 2016). Specifically, this study searches for any challenges that school heads and infant teachers face in implementing the Zimbabwe CHC as a curriculum innovation with reference to Maizelands cluster schools in Bindura district.

4 RESEARCH QUESTION

The study was guided by the following research question:

What challenges do teachers and school heads face, and what intervention measures can be employed, for effective implementation of the Zimbabwe Culture Hut concept?

5 METHODOLOGY

The study aimed at identifying the challenges faced by infant school teachers and school heads, and to propose solutions to the acknowledged challenges regarding the implementation of the Zimbabwe CHC in primary schools in Bindura. Previously, to consider African cultural issues was regarded as being backward (Phillips, 2011). Accordingly, the study was guided by the postcolonial theory which aims at individual

and societal transformation (Ndamba, 2017). The postcolonial theory encourages participants to speak out what affects their lives in their own voices and allows them to come up with possible solutions to their problems (Ratele, 2006).

The research design adopted was a qualitative case study which allowed the researchers to gain an understanding of the participants' views in their natural setting (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The study participants, who were purposefully selected, included 3 school heads and 15 infant teachers from 3 schools in the Maizelands cluster of Bindura. It was felt that they had the capacity to provide rich descriptions and details of their experiences (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011) in implementing the CHC in primary schools. Data were collected through the use of face-to-face interviews with school heads, semi-structured questionnaire and focus group discussions (FGDs) with infant teachers. The FGDs and face-to-face interviews were audio-taped, with the permission of the participants. Data were transcribed verbatim, coded and organised into themes through the use of the constant comparative mode of data analysis (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

To develop trustworthiness of the qualitative data, the researchers focused on attaining credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability (Guba, 1981). By using more than one tool to gather data in qualitative approaches, reliability is improved, and even guaranteed (Gray, 2009). Participation in the study was voluntary and participants were informed that since their involvement was voluntary, they were free to withdraw any time. In order to protect the identity of individual participants, pseudonyms were used instead of their real names and the names of their schools.

6 FINDINGS

The findings of this research were based on the responses of teachers and school heads concerning the challenges which they faced in the implementation of the Zimbabwe CHC. The themes which emerged are: lack of confidence due to lack of training and insufficient knowledge on policy requirements, failure by school heads to ensure implementation through monitoring teachers and involving the community, negative attitudes towards cultural issues by teachers, learners and parents, scarce resources, and proposed intervention strategies for effective implementation of the CHC.

6.1 Theme 1: Lack of confidence

A challenge which came out prominently as a hindrance to implementation of the CHC was that of lack of confidence. Three sub-themes which emerged are the implementers' insufficient knowledge of policy expectations, lack of training, and incompetence in handling learners from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Insufficient knowledge on the culture hut concept

The following views represent those that were expressed by many of the teacher participants who responded to questionnaires:

> *Not well informed about the culture hut and no staff developments are being done.*

> *We have no knowledge of the requirements thus making it hard to implement that culture hut concept.*

During focus group discussions, similar views were raised by teachers pertaining to lack of confidence in

implementing the CHC as expressed by two of the participants:

> Ini somurairidzi ndiri kushanda nefungidziro because culture hut yacho chaiyo handiizivi saka ndiri kungoita zvekungofungira kupa vana saka painozosvika kwavari information inenge yatova distorted havatozivi kuti zvii. *(As the teacher I am working on assumptions since I don't even know the culture hut and hence I just think of what to give the children which may not be relevant and in the end the learners receive distorted information.* **(Participant - FGD)**

> *We are doing nothing fruitful that makes learners understand about culture and hence the culture hut concept is not being implemented*. **(Participant - FGD)**

The school heads indicated that they also had little knowledge on the requirements of the CHC because they had gained insufficient information from the heads' meeting where they were told that a Culture Hut is a requirement in schools. School heads' sentiments are indicated below:

> *No no no I don't have adequate knowledge because this is something that we were just asked to attend a workshop and we never really had something tangible to bring home. It was just talked about in the meeting but there is nothing on the ground. Policies are being imposed and they do not yield intended objectives.* **(School Head 1)**

> *As an administrator I don't have much knowledge because the knowledge I might have is just that which I gathered when I was at the heads' meetings. So we are just being told to go and implement the culture hut as these facilitators explained to us. So that is the knowledge that I might have. It's just basic; I don't have adequate knowledge because also at the college we didn't learn about the culture hut.* **(School Head 2)**

One school head was an exception to the rest with his response. His response showed that he had some knowledge on how to implement the CHC although he did not have the structure in place at his school. He expressed it thus:

> *Yaah I've got some knowledge and with resources available and positive attitudes I think it is possible to establish one.* **(School Head 3)**

Lack of training

On whether the teachers had been adequately trained for effective implementation, all the school heads concurred that the teachers did not receive any specific training towards the use of the CHC at their schools. This was stated as follows:

> *They haven't had any training at all (in house training) at school concerning this.* ***(School head 1)***

> *It will also be a challenge to the teachers because at the teachers' college it is not learnt. (****School head 2)***

> *I am not very sure but I would like to think through social studies they might have come across that.* ***(School head 3)***

Cultural diversity of learners

There was indication that teachers had no confidence to implement the CHC

since learners belonged to various cultural backgrounds as their parents were farm workers from different places. This view was expressed as follows:

> *The first challenge is that we are not aware of the concept. Secondly learners are from different backgrounds and cultures so it becomes very difficult to know aspects of these different cultures.* **(Participant - FGD)**

All the vignettes under this theme appear to suggest that teachers in this study did not have the confidence to integrate culture hut artefacts in their teaching due to lack of training.

6.2 Theme 2: Failure by school heads to monitor implementation

Findings show that school heads were not monitoring policy implementation through supervising teachers and involving the community.

Monitoring at school level

The view on how school heads monitor the implementation of the CHC is evident from the following responses:

> *In their classes the teachers have different corners where they display material for the children. As a head of the school sometimes I encourage them to have a corner where they display artefacts of culture.* **(School Head 1)**

> *Verbally we talk and I just give feedback from the heads' meeting. I just say to them go and implement as what we are told. So it's a matter of disseminating the information coming from the top to bottom and I just dish out to them exactly what I have been given. It's not much functional, sometimes you find clay pots in the classroom corners but when you supervise the teacher will be having his or her lessons planned so we don't look much into the culture being implemented.* **(School Head 2)**

Rather than ensure that teachers implement the CHC, school heads simply tell teachers what would have been said at the heads' meeting without making any follow up. It is evident from the school heads' responses that instead of encouraging the construction of culture huts, heads encourage teachers to have a culture corner/area in their classrooms and they do not create time to monitor how teachers utilise it during the teaching and learning process.

Non-involvement of the community

On how the community was involved in the implementation of the CHC, presentations were made as follows:

> *Because the admin is not doing anything and so the community wouldn't know what is to be done, community haingafemberi nokuti ivo ndivo vanofanira kupinda mu community telling them so that they can assist (There is no way the community would guess unless the administrators make an awareness).* **(Participant - FGD)**

> *Community would be very helpful because there are some who have information concerning culture. Even the culture hut could have been the correct building, "chaiyo inonzi culture hut kwete iyi yechirungu iyi". (A real culture hut could have been built not the modern one we have here).* **(Participant - FGD)**

One school head added his voice on community involvement by stating that:

> *Secondly even the surrounding community like our school which is under farm set up, most of the parents don't consider school as something vital to them so they don't support the culture centre even if you are to call for a meeting it's a challenge; the turn up is very low.* (**School Head 3**)

It is evident that the local communities were not involved in any meaningful way towards the implementation of the CHC, since they were either not informed by the school heads or they were not interested in participating.

6.3 Theme 3: Negative attitudes towards cultural issues

Findings indicated that there were negative attitudes exhibited by teachers, learners and parents. Some participants were of the opinion that to focus on cultural issues was not important since it was archaic.

Teacher attitudes

The attitudes of teachers and their workload were regarded as a hindrance to the full implementation of the CHC. This was expressed in the following manner:

> *Sometimes the teachers get carried away with reading and writing lessons. They do not make time for the culture hut concept which is not regarded as important as reading at infant level.* **(Participant - FGD)**

> *It is the attitude of teachers towards implementing it and the resources to establish or to put up one such structure at the school and then also considering the new curriculum we find that teachers are mostly preoccupied in trying to cover up theoretical work or classroom work than to engage in hut activities.* **(School Head 2)**

> *The major challenge is pressure of work. They don't have time to accommodate the implementation of the culture hut which is something not recorded. I am looking at the teachers who have a lot of records which are actually supervised; they would rather prefer to deal with classroom work first and then maybe if they can get some time may concentrate on the culture hut.* **(School Head 3)**

Learner attitudes

This view was evident during focus group discussions where participants expressed the following views pertaining to the attitudes of learners who are said to view culture issues as primitive:

> *The teachers at infant level face challenges of the learners not showing interest in the lessons that have to do with culture, thinking it's primitive.* **(Participant - FGD)**

> *The teachers lack the knowledge on culture huts while the learners think the huts are primitive and of no use to their present time and their future.* **(Participant - FGD)**

Beliefs and values of parents

All the school heads expressed the same sentiments concerning Christianity as a factor that contributes towards negative attitudes towards the CHC. Responses given are as follows:

The culture is associated with ummm most people think it is something that is evil. Most people have turned to Christianity and zvechivanhu havachazvida (Christians no longer accept the traditional way of living). **(School head 1)**

Now we are living in a Christian world whereby some of the parents might have a negative attitude towards culture because they don't believe much in it. **(School head 2)**

Havadi nevana vavo kuti vave involved nezve culture culture kunyanya sevanhu vakuita zvechinamato asi panoda kuti vanhu ivavo vadzidziswe kuti culture hainei nekuti unonamata here kana kuti wakaita sei. (Parents do not want their children to be involved in cultural activities since they are Christians. So it needs awareness to them to understand that culture does not tarnish their Christian way of living). ***(School head 3)***

According to the findings, some parents lack awareness and appear to believe that cultural activities violate their Christian values.

6.4 Theme 4: Scarce resources

Limited resources were cited as a challenge since there is no support from the MoPSE as well as from the local community to ensure effective implementation of the CHC. This was disclosed by participants as follows:

We don't have much knowledge because the ministry itself doesn't also give full support concerning the culture implementation, they just simply say go and implement whilst they don't support. **(School head 1)**

There is need for money like I said before to build the culture hut and also to buy some of the required things inside the culture centre and also the Ministry is supposed to establish such things as this as it has to give full support such as training to the teachers and to us as the heads. **(School Head 2)**

The experience of other participants at one of the schools was that although the culture hut had been built at the school, it was not effectively made use of due to lack of relevant artefacts. This view was expressed by one of the participants during focus group discussion as follows:

The hut was built but no utensils were bought. We therefore don't teach about the concept. It was built of bricks and cement and the learners never visit the culture hut for educational purposes. **(Participant - FGD)**

The responses towards the involvement of the community showed that the parents in the community were not in any way involved. It was noted that they did not cooperate with the schools, did not participate in the schools' activities, let alone the establishment of the culture hut.

6.5 Theme 5: Intervention strategies for effective implementation of the CHC

According to the questionnaire responses, all the participants indicated the need for staff development for school heads and teachers.

During the FGDs participants reiterated that teachers should be trained, and that there should also be some awareness campaigns in the community to encourage community members to play a part in establishing culture

huts at the schools. The following intervention strategies were proposed:

> *Workshops and training should be conducted on what culture hut concept is and its benefits to the teacher and the learner. At school level help each other on way forward about the concept and finally to the community alerting them on what is culture hut concept so that they can help in establishing one.* **(Participant - FGD)**

> *If it can be included on the timetable just like Information and Communication Technology (ICT) which is allocated an hour where one is forced to adhere to the timetable it could be very helpful in implementing the concept.* **(Participant - FGD)**

> *Again the culture hut should have the required instruments or objects so that when visiting it one is quite confident to find something valuable not it to be like a storeroom.* **(Participant - FGD)**

Some of the intervention measures suggested by school head interviewees included the involvement of the MoPSE and local communities for the successful implementation of the CHC. The sentiments were given by one of the school heads as follows:

> *We need full support from the Ministry. They should train the teachers and provide financial support for buying some of the materials. The implementation of the culture hut concept will be more effective when the community is in support of it and also the Ministry.* **(School head 2)**

Conducting educational tours and creating committees in schools were also mentioned as intervention strategies as illustrated below:

> *There must be a committee in place for learners and teachers to have educational trips to go and see where it is being implemented. Since it is impossible for all teachers to make tours the committee will go and learn/observe then when they come back they then give feedback on what they would have observed and learnt during the tours.* **(Questionnaire response)**

Participants suggested that staff development was necessary as well as including culture time on the timetable. The major issue is that to begin with the administration ought to have full information and knowledge about this CHC so that they can be able to supervise their teachers. At school level, a committee was viewed as necessary. The community was also expected to play its part for the successful construction of culture huts in schools.

7 DISCUSSION

Findings indicate that participants concurred that effective implementation of the CHC was marred by challenges which include teachers' lack of confidence, failure by school heads to ensure implementation through monitoring teachers and involving the community, negative attitudes towards cultural issues and scarce resources. Participants proposed intervention strategies for effective implementation of the CHC.

Participants in this study reported that they had no capacity to implement the CHC, possibly due to lack of training on how to integrate culture hut artefacts in the teaching and learning process. As a result, teachers

possibly did not show commitment towards culture issues as they were said to be busy with those areas which they regarded as more important under the new competence-based curriculum. The same views are echoed by Chakwamba (2013) and Chifunyise (2015) whose observations are that teachers were not aware of any circular from the MoPSE which stipulated the guidelines of the Culture policy and spelt out the use of culture huts. When teachers have a feeling of low self-confidence, they cannot persevere in the process of introducing new ideas (Fullan, 1998; McLaughlin, 1998; Smit, 2005; Collarbone, 2009; Zindi, 2018).

In implementing the CHC, participants felt that there was a need to consider the contexts of their schools (Rogan & Grayson, 2003). In this study, parents were mostly farm labourers from different parts of the country and some also from neighbouring countries. Hence, teachers indicated that they had no confidence in catering for those learners from diverse cultural backgrounds. The same findings were evident in related studies on cultural activities in Zimbabwe where it was established that teachers lacked training and aptitude to deal with cultural diversity (Ndamba & Madzanire, 2012; Madzanire, 2019).

Implementation failure was compounded by the fact that school administrators in this study neither monitored nor supported implementation (Bitan-Friedlander et al., 2004; Brynard, 2005). School heads indicated that they had no content on the CHC as they had been instructed by word of mouth at district level to go to their respective schools and construct culture huts. Thus, effective implementation may only occur when there is congruence between how the CHC was introduced as a curriculum innovation and how it is monitored. Elsewhere, Ndamba and Van Wyk (2018) conclude that inadequate dialogue between policy makers and the policy implementers may have contributed to teacher resistance on the use of an African language in education.

Participants indicated that teachers, parents and even learners did not show interest in the CHC possibly due to negative attitudes towards cultural issues. Such findings seem to suggest that these three groups of stakeholders are not aware that education should aim at holistic development of learners through instilling human qualities such as African cultural values and self-realisation (Rogoff, 2011; Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru & Makuvaza, 2014). In view of the social decline in values, it is important for both parents and educators to support the teaching of Unhu/Ubuntu principles so that these permeate all levels of society in order to end up with citizens who are not only educated but who value their heritage and have a strong moral foundation (Shumba, 2017; Gwede, 2019).

Lack of commitment was also evident in the community where parents, who are described by Brynard (2005) as critical outside coalitions, were not actively participating in the construction and equipping of the culture huts with requisite artefacts for efficient implementation. At one of the schools in this study, a culture hut had been constructed, yet it did not have the essential artefacts to make it useful and to serve its purpose. Similar findings were made by Emmanuel and Asah (2019), where they established that some communities in Ghana no longer involve themselves in education unlike what used to happen in the past. When introducing change in schools, it is crucial to involve the community and/or school boards since research points out that the support of the community towards the school was positively correlated with innovativeness (Fullan, 1991).

Findings show that schools had no capacity in terms of human, financial and material resources to support successful implementation of the CHC. The school heads in this study did not make meaningful effort to secure requisite resources and provide leadership on how teachers could incorporate culture huts artefacts in their teaching. Fullan (1991) proclaims that the actions of the principal, not what he or she says, determine whether change will be taken seriously by teachers or not. The CHC was not on the school timetable and it is also not an examinable subject like reading and writing as revealed by the study participants. Given the fact that the prime consideration in teachers' curriculum and pedagogical planning is preparing their learners for public examinations, and Culture not being a core examination subject, it may be regarded as something not worth committing their time and effort.

Intervention strategies for effective implementation of the CHC

In keeping with the postcolonial theory expectations, participants added their voices on what they believed could be the solutions to the challenges that they face in implementing the CHC. From the findings, a number of intervention measures were proposed, mainly staff development. Training or staff development on the role of culture in education was seen as a critical intervention measure towards successful implementation of the CHC. Deducing from this statement it shows that teachers and school heads may be willing to undergo in-service training programs or any form of training so that they are empowered with the knowledge on how to integrate culture hut artefacts for earners to gain mastery of critical educational concepts (Shumba, 2017; Madusise, 2015, 2019; Madzanire, 2019).

Another proposed strategy was that of educational tours or field trips, which is in line with the suggestions in the Family and Heritage Studies syllabus (2015) for Zimbabwean schools. The syllabus encourages educational tours, at least once a term, for the successful implementation on issues such as cultural heritage, family history and local heritage (Thondhlana, 2014; Zazu, 2016; Viriri, 2017). Hence, through the CHC, teachers would be required to adapt and complement the ideas documented in the syllabus, putting into consideration the experiences, developmental level and the context of the learners (Family and Heritages studies syllabus, 2015; Shumba, 2017). Participants in this study believe that if learners engage in these educational tours with some selected committee members from within the school, it would help in implementing the CHC.

Some of the participants' recommendations were similar to Bhebhe and Mudokwani's (2016) findings that stress that culture time should be on the timetable so that teachers do not only concentrate on examinable subjects. The impression is that once the CHC is on the timetable, then an examination will have to be set so that both the learners and the teacher would consider it as serious as any other learning area. Funding towards the CHC was also encouraged by the study participants. Thus, contributions from participants on intervention measures become important for the MoPSE to make a follow up for the successful implementation of the CHC.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

Basing on the challenges found in this research on the implementation of the CHC, this research recommends that:

- Primary school heads and teachers should be given enough training on the role and impact of culture huts through workshops initiated by the MoPSE in order to boost teacher efficacy.
- Primary school heads should monitor implementation of the CHC and consider slotting culture time on their timetables.
- The community should be enlightened on the role of culture in education and be involved as active participants so that culture huts can be constructed and adequately furnished with cultural artefacts.
- ZIMSEC should have a section which examines issues to do with culture huts in the Grade 7 General paper.
- The MoPSE should distribute the Culture Policy to all schools so that schools may use the document to infuse the culture huts components with other learning areas.

9 CONCLUSION

The study explored the challenges that teachers and school heads face in the implementation of the CHC in rural primary schools. Lack of capacity and/or commitment on the part of educators, negative attitudes towards the African culture, inadequate resources and lack of support are some of the challenges that appear to contribute towards failure to efficiently implement the CHC in the Maizelands cluster in Bindura district of Zimbabwe. If the above recommendations are integrated in the planning and implementation of the infant school curriculum, that may enable primary schools in Zimbabwe to produce critical thinkers for sustainable development and learners who value their heritage through the CHC.

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Interactive instructional approaches to teaching Integrated Science and their effect on students' performance: A study in a Ghanaian University Context

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ABSTRACT

This study determined the effect of an interactive approach to teaching and learning on students' performance in selected concepts in Integrated Science. The study took place at the University of Education, Winneba, in the Central Region of Ghana. First year Integrated Science students were purposively selected for the study. The sample of the study comprised of 40 Level 100 students made up of 4 females and 36 males. Test items were the main instruments used to collect data for the study. The students completed a pre-intervention test before each lesson after which an interactive instructional approach was used to teach the selected concepts in Integrated Science, after which a similar test, but different in content was administered as a post-intervention test. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0, for windows and Hake's normalized gain were used to analyse the data. The findings from the average normalized gain of the post-intervention and pre-intervention test scores showed a gain of 0.76, indicating the effectiveness of this interactive instructional approach. The study recommends the use of interactive instructional approaches for teaching Integrated Science lessons at the first-year level of the university.

Keywords: interactive instruction, concept-based, VARK modes, case study, Integrated Science

1 INTRODUCTION

Science education involves the cultivation and the disciplining of the mind. Individuals use science for the improvement of their lives as well as to cope with an increasing technological world. This includes both the pursuit of academic and professional programmes in science and allied fields (Akpan, 1992).

Ifamuyiwa and Alebiosu (2008) have indicated that science education plays a vital role in the lives of individuals and the development of a nation scientifically and technologically. Ifamuyiwa and Alebiosu further assert that, the gateway to the survival of a nation scientifically and technologically is scientific literacy, which can only be achieved through science education. To wit, many nations, seeing the need for science education, have devised various means of getting their young generations interested in the study of science. Various scientific

policies have been established, while various explorative, inquiry-based, interactive and engaging methods of teaching the subject have been developed (Antwi, Anderson, & Sakyi -Hagan, 2014; Seidenberg, 2013; Namrata, Amrita, & Singh, 2014). In the USA, to increase the quantity and quality of science and technology workers in the country, the federal government in 1950 established the National Science Foundation (NSF); its primary mission was to initiate, support, and promote basic scientific research and education (Mazuzan, 1994). In Nigeria, the Federal Government of Nigeria National Policy on Education (2004) provided educational expenditure on science and technology (Ifamuyiwa & Alebiosu, 2008). The Nigerian government also came up with a policy that 60 percent of the students seeking admission into the nation's Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education should be admitted for science-oriented courses, while 40 percent of the students should be considered for Arts and Social Science courses (Ajibola, 2008). Ghana has not been left out in the quest for nations to get their young population to be interested in science. According to the Ministry of Environment Science and Technology Innovation (MESTI), Ghana's vision of the National Science Technology and Innovation Policy (May, 2017) is to support national socio-economic development goals with a view to lifting Ghana to a middle income status by the year 2030 through the perpetuation of a science and technology culture at all levels of society, which is driven by the promotion of innovation and mastery of known and proven technologies and their application in industry and other sectors of the economy (MESTI, 2017). The policy has its basic objectives among others as:

i. ensuring that by the year 2030, 60% of all students in the public universities and 80% of those in the polytechnics and vocational institutions are registered in science and science related disciplines;

ii. promoting post-graduate education in scientific disciplines, targeting 10% of the student population in tertiary educational institutions enrolling at the post-graduate level;

iii. creating special incentives for students and graduates of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

iv. improving science education at all levels and in all aspects of the educational system, especially at the basic and secondary level with emphasis on creativity and innovation (MESTI, 2017).

There is every indication that many countries desire to increase the number of students studying science subjects in order to meet an expected demand for increased numbers of scientists and to address under-representation in the subject (ACOLA 2013; EACEA 2011; BERA, 2011; Royal Society 2014; MESTI, 2017). Despite the growing importance of science and technology in all realms of life in any society, students continue to show ambivalence toward the study of science education (Anderson, 2006).

In England, a study conducted by Sheldrake, Mujtaba and Reiss (2019) indicated that while secondary school students have often considered science to be fairly interesting and relevant for wider careers, relatively few have chosen to study (non-compulsory) upper-secondary science subjects, especially physics, and few have aspired to become scientists (DeWitt, Archer, & Osborne, 2014; Institute of Physics, 2014; Jenkins & Nelson, 2005; RoyalSociety, 2008).

A study in Australia by Palmer, Burke and Aubusson (2017) revealed that many children become disenchanted with science when they enter high school and develop a view that the subject is irrelevant and uninteresting (Goodrum, Hackling, & Rennie, 2001). They further reveal that when given the opportunity to choose subjects for their final years of schooling, almost half of Australian Year 10 (typically age 15–16) students do not choose a science subject for their final two years of schooling and instead choose alternative subjects from the wide range of courses available to them (Lyons & Quinn, 2015; Lyons & Quinn, 2010).

In their study on students' interest and attitudes towards the study of science, Antwi, Anderson, and Sakyi- Hagan (2015) established that many students across Africa also show such negative attitudes towards the study of science at both pre-tertiary and tertiary levels of education (Omosewo, 1999; Usun, 2004; Olugbenga & Adebayo, 2010; Aina, 2012; Antwi, 2013). According to Anamuah-Mensah (2004), there are many reasons for this situation of Ghanaian students' failure and ambivalence in science education. Anamuah-Mensah considers over-dependence on the chalk-and-talk instructional approach as a major cause for students' disinterest and failures in science learning. Other uncreative and traditional methods of teaching and learning are textbook dependent teaching and learning; examination-oriented teaching; learning by rote memorization; lack of science practical work in most schools; and even where they are done they are designed in a cookbook manner to confirm known answers, as well as the use of de-contextualised curricula.

In September 2015, 193 countries including Ghana, adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ensconced at the heart of it, and pledged to ensure that the seventeen SDGs were given the necessary attention they deserved (UNDP, 2017). SDG Goal Four (4), which talks about quality education by 2030, is likely to be achieved if teaching and learning is made relevant to the students we teach, through varied means, that appeal to the multifaceted needs of the students (GSDR Global Sustainable Development Report, 2019).

A lot of research in teaching and learning of science education point to the fact that there is the need to adopt interactive and more engaging methods in teaching the subject to make it more meaningful, arouse and sustain students' interests in studying it and improve their performance (Akpan, 1992; Anderson, 2006; Jenkins & Nelson, 2005; Namrata, Amrita, & Singh, 2014; Antwi, Anderson, & Sakyi- Hagan, 2015). As a result, the idea for teaching in higher education is now recognised to involve much more than lectures as the means of information provision, but of more interactions and practical activities (Antwi, 2013). According to Antwi (2013), more interactive approaches to teaching integrated science, involving as many sensory modes as possible is likely to help students achieve more than the age-old traditional methods of teaching, which cripple students' achievements in understanding scientific concepts.

In this study, the authors adapted the Interactive Instructional Approach (I^2A) that uses multi modes. Interactive Instructional Approaches of teaching refer to the integration of different modes within the same text or topic to represent scientific ideas, reasoning and findings in order to facilitate understanding of lessons by learners (Vaughan & Bruce, 2008). These approaches were deemed necessary as students respond to information differently, and therefore, imperative to employ several modes during

the teaching process to cater for the different needs in the classroom.

In a study carried out with a sample of undergraduate students studying at the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) by Sankey, Birch and Gardiner (2010) it was found that only four out of the sixty participants preferred to be instructed using aural mode. The majority of the students appreciated interactive instructional approaches using multiple modes of learning. The authors connected the improvement in the scores that students obtained between the pre-intervention test and post-intervention test. The qualitative data clearly indicated that students perceived that learning resources with additional representations of content assisted their comprehension, understanding and retention of content (Sankey, Birch, & Gardiner, 2010). The additional representations also made content more interesting and enjoyable to them. In particular, students expressed a strong preference for a combination of learning resources and options. According to Sankey, Birch and Gardiner (2010), the importance of improving student progression and retention, and engendering a joy of learning, leading to life-long learning, educators should be encouraged to continue to explore the use of interactive instructions.

In a research by Picciano (2009), it was discovered that multimodal designs of teaching allow learners to experience learning in ways that they are more comfortable with, while challenging them to learn in other ways as well. To understand further the interaction between the senses and how teachers can capitalize upon this phenomenon in their classrooms, Mayer (2005) demonstrated the advantages of including as many senses as possible in the learning process. One of Mayer's experiments that exemplify this point involved three groups of people. One group received information delivered via one sense (hearing), another, the same information from another sense (sight), and the third group the same information using a combination of the first two senses. The results confirmed that the multisensory group did better than the unisensory groups. According to Mayer (2005), they had superior and more accurate recall and had better resolution, which lasted longer. Mayer further indicated that the benefits were not just confined to a combination of sight and sound. When touch was combined with visual information, recognition learning leaped by almost 30%, as compared with touch alone. Mayer (2005) contends that students learn more deeply from a combination of words and pictures than from words alone; known as the "multimedia effect".

Highly interactive multimodal learning environments allow instructional elements to be presented in more than one sensory mode. In turn, materials that are presented in a variety of presentation modes may lead learners to perceive that it is easier to learn and improve attention, thus leading to improved learning performance; in particular, for lower-achieving students (Chen & Fu, 2003; Moreno & Mayer, 2007; Zywno, 2003). This mode of learning according to Jewitt, Kress, Ogborn and Tsatsarelis (2001) also deepen students' understanding of scientific knowledge leading to enhanced grasping of concepts. Again, the interactive approach to teaching and learning enables students to accurately translate a concept from one mode to another easily (Lesh, Post, & Behr, 1987).

Furthermore, Shah and Freedman (2003) discuss a number of benefits of using visualisations in learning environments, including: (1) promoting learning by providing an external representation of the information; (2) deeper processing of

information; and (3) maintaining learner attention by making the information more attractive and motivating, hence making complex information easier to comprehend. Fadel (2008) also found out that students engaged in learning that incorporates multimodal designs, on the average, outperform students who learn using traditional approaches with single modes.

2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The researchers, who have lectured at the University of Education, Winneba for several years had observed over the years that first year (level 100) Integrated Science students, who had just completed secondary education, came into tertiary education with a lot of difficulties, perhaps due to the instructional methods used to teach at the pre-tertiary levels (Anamuah-Mensah, 2004). These students show lack of conceptual understanding in many scientific principles in their courses of study, which result in ambivalence towards their study of Integrated Science. This greatly informed the choice of this level for the study. Specifically, the researchers noted that first-year students who participated in this study lacked the conceptual understanding needed to excel in learning basic scientific concepts, which mostly affected their performance in classroom exercises and laboratory activities. Similarly, the researchers realised that these students experienced difficulties with chalk-and-talk when scientific concepts were explained. It is in this direction that the researchers of this study employed a versatile and a more student-centred approach (I^2A) to teaching, in order to help Integrated Science (Physics Minor) students who had enrolled in the researchers' class to generate their own knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts, and apply them to their studies. The study, therefore, aimed to investigate the effect of a highly Interactive Instructional Approach (I^2A) to teaching Integrated Science using multi modes on the performance of Integrated Science (Physics minor) first year university students.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The main theoretical framework underpinning this study is the situated cognition theory. Situated cognition is a theory which emphasizes that people's knowledge is constructed within and linked to the activity, context and culture in which it was learned (Brown, Collins & Dugid, 1989). According to research, learning is social and not isolated. As people learn while interacting with each other through shared activities and through language, they discuss, share knowledge and problem-solve during these tasks (Hurst, Wallace, & Nixon, 2013).

The phenomenon observed in many classrooms is that, the teacher expends a lot of energy preparing lecture notes, reading various texts, picking out the most important points and organizing them in a cohesive manner, writing the lecture notes and delivering the information to students who sit passively often thinking about everything but what the teacher is saying. This is in contrast to social learning (Brown, Collins, & Dugid, 1989). Vacca and Vacca (2002) contend that we need to shift "the burden of learning from teachers' shoulders to students'. In this case students must be made to actively participate in the teaching and learning process. According to Hurst, Wallace and Nixon (2013), one way for students to shoulder the responsibility of learning is for them to be the readers, writers, speakers, listeners and thinkers in the classroom through active engagement in social interaction with others (Alvermann & Phelps, 2005; Vacca, Vacca, & Mraz, 2011). All their senses should be engaged in the teaching and learning process.

According to Russell and McGuigan (2001), learners need to generate different representations of a concept and recode the representations in various modes to make meaning out of them.

Cognitive apprenticeship is considered an important aspect of situated cognition (Brown, Collins, & Dugid, 1989). During this social interaction between a novice learner and an expert, important skills, interactions and experiences are shared. The novice learns from the expert as an apprentice, and the expert often passes down methods, skills and experiences which the apprentice can learn only from the expert and which are authentic learning (Brown, Collins, & Newman, 1989). In Hurst, Wallace and Nixon's (2013) research, they intimate that the main intent of cognitive apprenticeship, which has some similarity to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978), is to engage the learner in meaningful and constructive activities that encourage augmentation and preparation of new skills and conceptions (Moll, 1990; Newman, Griffin, & Cole, 1989). This theory has helped researchers understand more widely about how people learn because it has focused on what people learn in their everyday experiences, which are authentic contexts for a variety of skills (Brown, Collins, & Newman, 1989). In addition, it has also helped educators to understand how to capitalize on knowledge and skills that their students already possess in order to help them learn new content and skills. Therefore, in this study, the researchers employed highly interactive instructional approaches using multiple modes to help the students generate their own knowledge and apply the understanding to learning scientific concepts. The introduction of multimodal methods of learning helped the students to accomplish different levels of tasks through different degrees of skills, which also helped them to recognize that no one is an embodiment of expertise, and thus encouraged them to understand that learning is a continuing process (Vygotsky, 1978).

The objective of this research was to determine the level of performance of first year university students in Integrated Science after the use of Interactive Instructional Approaches in teaching selected concepts in Energy.

The question which guided the study was:

What effect could the use of interactive instructional approach have on the performance of students in their learning of Integrated Science?

This study therefore investigated the effect of Interactive Instructional Approaches to teaching on students' performance in selected concepts in Energy at the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana.

4 METHODOLOGY

First-year Physics minor students made up of 40 students were purposively sampled from a group of 134 Integrated Science students for this study. The research was conducted in three phases. The first phase was the problem identification. The second phase was the preparation and teaching of lessons using I^2A to teach selected topics on Energy, and the final phase was data collection, coding and analysis. Both authors dealt with the first phase of the research after a thorough discussion. The first author then handled the second phase of the research with occasional assistance from the second author. Both authors handled the third phase, as well as drew the conclusion after mutual discussion at the end of the whole research.

The instruments used to collect data were self-constructed pre-test and post-test

items. The internal consistency of the research instruments was determined using test-retest reliability. The reliability coefficients of both pre-test and post-test were 0.76 and 0.81 respectively. According to Borg, Gall and Gall (1993) coefficient of reliability values above 0.75 are considered reliable. Hence, the reliability coefficient values obtained were considered consistent.

Four major topics on Energy (The Concept of Energy, Energy Types, Classifying Energy Types and Conservation of Energy) were purposively taught interactively, and then assessed for this study. Prior to teaching each lesson, the students wrote a pre-test which was scored over 10 marks. The pre-tests sought to identify students' weaknesses in their understanding of the concepts based on what they had been taught previously at the pre-tertiary level. Each pre- test (Appendix A) was followed by a highly interactive lesson employing multi modes of instruction (group work, group discussions simulations and videos). Post-tests that were also scored over 10 marks each, were written after each topic. The post-test questions sought to determine the effect of the interactive lessons on the students' understanding and hence performance.

The strategy used for the interactive lessons was based on using visual, aural, read or write and kinaesthetic (VARK) multimodal instructional approaches introduced by Fleming (2007) in the constructivist teaching approach. The authors sought to engage at least three senses of the learners at any point in time. The steps included, but not limited to:

Interactive brainstorming, which was typically performed in group sessions. Students were mostly grouped in twos or fours for interactive sessions. Each student had a partner in the group. It proved very useful for generating creative thoughts and ideas in the learners and helped activated their prior relevant knowledge.

Think, pair and share, where a problem or a question was posed by the researchers and then the students were to collaboratively solve it. Each pair was given sufficient time to form a conclusion and permitted to participant in drawing a conclusion using his or her personal voice. As one student explained a concept the other student evaluated what was being shared. The researchers gave remarks or comments based on what the students had shared, after which the students were given the opportunity for reflection. Where necessary, the pair had an opportunity to reshare their conclusions after reflection. By so doing, every member of the class gained from the learning experiences of each other.

Discussion, where the students became conscious of their own and others' thoughts. They shared their ideas, and sometimes defended their answers until a consensus was reached about the solution to the question without the interference of the researchers. The groups constructed their tentative answers freely and submitted a common answer to the researchers after the discussion.

Video and simulation sessions, where specific simulations and interactive videos were explored by learners with guidance from researchers to explain certain abstract concepts. The students, through these videos saw at first hand some perceived difficult concepts like energy conservation law, heat as a form of energy, differences between heat and energy vividly explained with simulations or videos from the internet. Aside the excitement accompanying the opportunity of understanding concepts which hitherto were not clear to them, the students interacted with each other and also with the researchers for further learning to take place.

Results and Discussion

Results from students' pre-intervention and post intervention test scores were compared to assess their conceptual gains. The results are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Students' Pre-Intervention Test Scores

Test	N	Mean Score Values (Std. Error)	SD	Variance
The Concept of Energy	40	2.60 (0.202)	1.28	1.63
Energy Types	40	2.75 (0.272)	1.72	2.96
Classifying Energy Types	40	2.93 (0.285)	1.80	3.25
Conservation of Energy	40	3.40 (0.359)	2.27	5.17
Overall Average	40	2.92 (0.267)	1.76	3.25

Table 1 shows students' mean scores, the standard error, standard deviation (SD) and the variance in the pre-intervention test score for each lesson. Results from the Table indicated that all the mean score values of the pre-intervention test fell below the average score of 5. This indicated that the overall performance of the students was poor.

The findings observed from students' scores revealed a number of factors that caused their difficulties in learning the selected topics. It appeared most of the students could only memorize the definitions of terms rather than the ability to interpret and comprehend the concepts. This was because most of the questions tested students' abilities to interpret, comprehend and construct concepts which most of the students could not do. Another key observation was that, students tended to give explanations to concepts using alternative conceptions which were not in line with current thinking. Again, it seemed that the single mode of instruction which had been used to teach them at their pre-tertiary level alone did not cater for most of their learning styles in class. This is also likely to be the one of the reasons why they recorded low overall mean score mark.

Table 2: Students' Post-Intervention Test Scores.

Test	N	Mean Score Values	SD	SE	Variance
The Concept of Energy	40	7.75	2.67	0.42	7.12
Energy Types	40	8.35	1.96	0.31	3.82
Classifying Energy Types	40	8.50	1.83	0.29	3.33
Conservation of Energy	40	8.60	1.37	0.22	1.89

Overall Average	40	8.30	1.96	0.31	4.04

The mean scores obtained by the students in the post-tests are reported in Table 2. The table also shows the standard deviation (SD), standard error (SE) and the variance in the post-intervention test score for each lesson.

From Table 2, it is evident that the overall mean score value of the post intervention test was above the average mark of 5. Additionally, the overall mean score value of the post-intervention test (8.30) was significantly higher than the overall mean score of the pre-intervention test (2.92). This indicated an improvement in performance of the students after the interactive lessons.

To determine the effectiveness of the interactive lessons in improving students' performance, the mean scores for the pre-intervention test and post-intervention test for each lesson were analysed based on Hake normalized gain theory (Hake, 1998). According to Hake, the normalized gain is the ratio of the difference in mean scores between post intervention test and pre-intervention test to the difference in maximum score of the test to that of the pre-intervention test (Hake, 1998). It is mathematically presented as

$$< g > = \frac{\textbf{Post intervention test mean score – pre– intervention test mean score}}{\textbf{maximum score of the test – pre–intervention test mean score}}$$

Using the gain score, Hake classified interactive lessons into one of three groups:

High gain; < g > greater than 0.7

Medium gain; < g > between 0.3 and 0.7

Low gain; < g > less than 0.3 (Hake, 1998).

The results presented in Tables 1 and 2 were used to calculate the normalized gain for each lesson. Table 3 shows the normalized gains (Hake gain) for all the lessons.

Table 3. Hake Gain (g) Values for the Lessons

Topic	N	Mean Pre-Intervention test	Mean Post-Intervention test	Hake Gain	SD
The Concept of Energy	40	2.60	7.75	0.70	0.36
Energy Types	40	2.75	8.35	0.77	0.36
Classifying Energy Types	40	2.93	8.50	0.79	0.36
Conservation of Energy	40	3.40	8.60	0.80	0.36
Overall Average	40	2.90	8.30	0.76	0.36

The normalized gain (g) for the first lesson after the intervention recorded a medium gain of 0.70, which indicated that the lessons were effective. The second and the third lessons also recorded higher mean scores in the post intervention tests and had Hake gains of 0.77 and 0.79, respectively. Again, the last lesson also saw a rise in their normalized gains value to 0.80. This shows that all the interactive lessons recorded very high gains (Hake, 1998).

The findings based on the normalized gain revealed that the highly interactive instructional approach to teaching using multi modes deepened students' understanding of scientific knowledge, as thinking became easy to students (Jewitt, Kress, Ogborn, & Tsatsarelis, 2001) . Again, the approach accurately translated a concept from one mode to another which enabled students to grasp the concept being taught easily (Lesh, Post, & Behr, 1987).

Furthermore, to determine the statistical difference in students' mean scores for the pre-intervention tests and post-intervention tests, an independent-sample t-test was used to analyse the lessons. Table 4 shows the significant differences between the pre- intervention and post-intervention test scores of the lessons.

Table 4: Statistical Difference between Pre-intervention and post-intervention test scores

Test	Pre-intervention mean	Post-intervention mean	Mean difference	Significant difference
The Concept of Energy	2.60	7.75	5.15	0.00
Energy Types	2.75	8.35	5.60	0.00
Classifying Energy Types	2.93	8.50	5.57	0.00
Conservation of Energy	3.35	8.60	5.25	0.00

Significant level at $\rho < 0.05$

Independent-sample t-test analysis showed that the differences in the mean scores of the students' means for the pre-intervention and post-intervention test were statistically significant with ρ-values of less than 0.05. These ρ-values indicated that the students had better knowledge and improved conceptual understanding in the selected topics after they had been exposed to the highly interactive instructional approaches using multiple modes. They reaffirm the findings of a study of Russell and McGuigan (2001) that students need to generate different representations of a concept and recode the representations in various modes.

The results are also congruent with Picciano (2009) who identified the benefits of multimodal designs as allowing students to experience learning in ways that they are more comfortable with and challenges them to experience and learn in other ways as well. According to Russell and McGuigan (2001) and Picciano (2009) I^2As allow students to concentrate on the physical meaning of abstract concepts, hence, obtaining an in-depth understanding of the theory. All these attributes of Interactive I^2A may have contributed to better understanding of concepts leading to a high performance. These findings have significant implications on the approach to teaching since they

suggest that incorporating varied instruction into Integrated Science courses may be a valuable tool for improving the performance of students.

Again, lessons of this nature where students' sources of stimulus were varied breaks monotony in the lesson and makes class livelier. According to Jewitt, Kress, Ogborn and Tsatsarelis (2001), this approach catered for a range of different modal preferences and provided students with a choice on how they can access key content, and therefore may be considered a more inclusive response or stimulates metacognition to the needs of learners.

5 CONCLUSION

The introduction of the interactive instructional approach produced a significant improvement in students' learning and understanding of the concept of Energy. Students' abilities to interpret and comprehend the concepts were enhanced when they were taught using highly interactive instructional approaches which also improved their knowledge in the concept. It helped students to properly interpret and comprehend concepts. The I^2A also motivated and catered for individual differences among the students during Integrated Science lessons.

6 IMPLICATIONS

Primarily, teachers' instructional approaches have direct effect on learners' understanding and it correlates with students' achievement (Tatto, 2001). The findings of this study indicated that the Interactive Instructional Approach had a direct impact on teaching and students' performance. This approach when adopted is likely to improve the students' knowledge in concepts in science courses. The different modes of instructional approach could be used to cater for students' learning styles, arouse and sustain their interest in the classroom. The method of instruction used in the study also motivated and challenged the students to think critically about concepts in the teaching process. The study therefore suggests that students should be taught using highly interactive instructional approaches using multiple modes in the teaching of scientific concepts.

In conclusion, Integrated Science concepts should be taught using I^2As to improve students' abilities to interpret and comprehend concepts. This is because it creates a conducive and friendly environment for all students with different learning styles in the classroom.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that Integrated Science teachers in pre-tertiary schools should model their instructions to break the monotony of chalk-and-talk in the classroom. Also, innovative, highly interactive and more effective student-centred strategies such as multimodal instructions should be used at all levels in teaching Integrated Science lessons particularly, and all science-based subjects to promote meaningful learning of scientific concepts.

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Appendix A: Sample of Pre-Assessment Test

1. What is kinetic energy?
   a. Stored energy
   b. energy of motion
   c. energy of friction
   d. energy stored in chemical bonds
2. How do we express the total amount of energy a moving object has?
   a. KE x PE
   b. KE + PE
   c. KE - PE
   d. KE / PE
3. What type of energy represents the sum of the KE and PE that a moving object has?
   a. chemical energy
   b. total mechanical energy
   c. electromagnetic energy
   d. electrical energy
4. When a roller coaster cart falls towards the ground, what happens to its potential energy?
   a. Increases
   b. Decreases
   c. Stays the same
   d. Nothing
5. What is the kinetic energy of a ball sitting on top of a hill?
   a. 0 J
   b. less than 0 J
   c. more than 0 J
6. The Law of Conservation of Energy states that total amount of energy in a closed system will always
   a. stay the same
   b. increase
   c. decrease
   d. cannot be determined
7. Based on the formula for potential energy, what 2 variables influence PE the most?
   a. mass and height
   b. mass and velocity
   c. velocity and height
   d. velocity and mass
8. What is being transferred as you do work?
   a. Energy
   b. Heat
   c. Power
   d. Gravitational Potential Energy
9. List the energy conversions that occur when riding a bicycle.

List four different forms or types of energy. Give one example of a conversion from each of these forms to another form.

Who is disengaging the gear? Is school leadership the impediment in the implementation of the new curriculum in Zimbabwe?

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ABSTRACT

School leadership is there to build 'learning bridges' between learners and the curriculum content (Everand, Morris & Wilson, 2004, p. x). This study seeks to investigate challenges that school leadership face in the implementation of the new curriculum in Zimbabwean primary schools. It particularly examines the dissonance between the current implementation level and the expected standard of implementation. The implementation of a new curriculum requires effective school leadership (Bennett, Crawford & Cartwright, 2003). The key stakeholder in the process of curriculum implementation in any education system is school leadership. This article argues that school leadership should have a clear picture of what to do and how for effective implementation of any new curriculum. The curriculum introduced in Zimbabwe is not spared. The study was located within the qualitative paradigm using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to generate. Purposive sampling was done to select information rich cases from among school leaders in Masvingo Province. The study highlighted a number of complex challenges linked to school leadership which include the problem of suffering from multiple meanings and conceptual complexity of the new curriculum and lack of orientation on the new curriculum. The study also revealed that school leadership has not been sufficiently retrained for fitness of purpose. The study thus recommends retooling of school leadership so that they develop the craft competency needed in the implementation of the new curriculum.

Key words

school leadership, curriculum, curriculum implementation, leadership, perspectives, implementation, craft literacy, craft competency

1 INTRODUCTION

Some schools are more effective and more successful because they are better led than others (Everand, Morris & Wilson, 2004, p. x). There is growing recognition among educational leadership and management scholars and practitioners of the crucial role that school leadership plays in curriculum implementation (Hallinger, 2016). The Zimbabwean formal curriculum has been evolving over the years. When European colonialists and missionaries came to Zimbabwe, they introduced a two-tier education system. There was the academic curriculum that catered for whites learners and another to show their supremacy over the blacks and the watered down curriculum for the Africans (Shizha & Karivo, 2011, p. ix). At independence in 1980 Zimbabwe's quest to change the curriculum was too high. The

government wanted wanted to address the needs and concerns of most Africans who felt they had been disadvantaged for too long. Mutumbuka (1978) highlights that at the onset of independence, the Zimbabwean curriculum needed a new mentality and a new direction and thus needed to be reviewed. Why? The Eurocentric colonial curriculum excluded African traditional norms and values and was bent on alienating black Zimbabwean learners from African culture which was considered inferior nothing worth learning. To address such a legacy, many curriculum policy changes took place although in the beginning they were incremental. The Zimbabwean government introduced a new curriculum in 2014 for primary and secondary education. School leadership is expected to play a pivotal role in ensuring that the new curriculum is effectively implemented. There are glaring challenges that militate against effective implementation of the new curriculum. School leadership, in particular, seems not to be clear about where to go and is not in the gear. This study seeks to extrapolate school leadership challenges in the implementation of the new curriculum in Zimbabwe. School leadership bears the responsibility to take Africans out of the straight jacket of colonial mentality which considered Africans as in educable idiots. Historically, white supremacy considered Africans as lazy and difficult to teach. Such a view is expressed by whites who had this to say:

> The Mashona are by nature lazy, frivolous and very difficult to be kept attentive under instruction, hence much patience and tact is needed in school (Atkinson, 1972, p. 33).

School leadership should emancipate learners from mental slavery and create bridges that enable effective implementation of the new curriculum in Zimbabwe. Of importance is that school leaders should demonstrate supremacy of their minds (effective leadership in both action and thought) and be enlightened to look at the breath and depth of the updated curriculum in order to implemented it with fidelity.

2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

School leadership is faced with complexities and ambiguities that eventually make their leadership role a challenging one (Simkins, 2005) when implementing a new curriculum. **"**Curriculum change is a journey, not a blueprint" (Fullan, 1993, p. 24). There is growing emphasis on the importance of strong school leadership as a key factor in successful implementation (Hammad & Shah, 2018, p. 755) of a new curriculum and the leaders' ability to employ adequate knowledge and skills to manage diversity and dissonance in schools (Keung & Rockinson-Szapkin, 2013; Walker & Cheong, 2009). This study sought to investigate school leadership challenges in the implementation of the new curriculum in primary schools in Zimbabwe. The implementation of a new curriculum requires effective school leadership (Bennett, Crawford & Cartwright, 2003). The key stakeholders in the process of curriculum implementation in any education system are school leadership. This article argues that school leadership should have a clear picture of what to do and how to do it for effective implementation of any new curriculum. The new curriculum introduced in Zimbabwe is not spared. The bases of curriculum reform were underlined by the MoPSE in its curriculum review framework as follows:

> There is need to transform the structure and curriculum of the country's education system in order to adequately

> meet the evolving national development aspirations. This should see greater focus being placed on the teaching and learning of science, technology engineering and mathematics, including a prioritization of youth empowerment and entrepreneurship development (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, 2013, p. 1).

The above citation denotes serious implications to school leadership in the Zimbabwean context. It is important to note that there is need for school leadership to figure the internal efficiency during the implementation process otherwise mere exposure to science, mathematics, technology, among others, does not bring about the intended changes in the education system. Internal efficiency of the education system hinges on what is happening to inputs, process and outputs. Internal efficiency is an important dimension of the concepts of success and quality of implementation of any new curriculum. It is usually measured by indicators such as student input/output ratios or survival/ attrition rates, learning efficiency, teacher utilization and retention, and teacher effectiveness. It also shows the survival rate of a cohort of students as they go through the current education system (Galabawa, 2003, p. 4). It is argued that there must be a constant quest on the part of school leadership to see whether the same outputs in terms of measured learning achievement can be achieved with fewer financial or real resource inputs (Galabawa, 2003, p. 4). Quality and relevance issues thus become critical pillars that are set out by effective school leadership as critical guideposts during implementation.

The mere introduction of a new curriculum does not necessarily guarantee an improvement of the country's education system. School leadership stands out as the fulcrum to curriculum implementation in any context. School leadership is vital to the success of the curriculum paradigm shift (October, 2009, p. 11). The ushering in of the new curriculum in Zimbabwe requires knowledge and skills to implement it with fidelity (Wiles & Bondi, 2014). Effective implementation particularly of new curricula requires school leadership to feel confident in the delivery to ensure accurate implementation (American Institute for Research, 2016). It is argued that in the process of curriculum implementation many variables that include school leadership is central to whether a curriculum is delivered consistently, effectively and with efficacy to enable support of learner progress and growth (Lochner, Conrad & Graham, 2015). Various stakeholders view the new curriculum that has been ushered in the schools with mixed feelings in the education system in Zimbabwe. In particular, school leadership, which is at the helm of curriculum implementation, has a lot of mist on the way forward.

Schools need leadership that has the necessary qualities for effective implementation of the new curriculum. Rutherford (1985) suggests that schools need school leadership with a vision. With this vision in mind, school leadership works towards a shared understanding of the goals and the coordination of the curriculum and instruction (Rutherford, 1985, p. 32). It is also argued that school leadership should be able to translate the vision into action and should be so influential in determining how a new curriculum should be implemented (Hallinger, 2017; Hallinger & Bryat, 2013). It is the responsibility of school leadership to raise expectations of teachers and learners Hallinger & Hammad, 2017) so that the pith

of implementation is raised. All this is only possible if the school leadership has knowledge of the expectations and realistic goals of the new curriculum. Effective school leadership creates an environment of supportive efforts to achieve curriculum goals (Rutherford, 1985, p. 3). The blame for failure to learn by school pupils is always shouldered on school leadership.

Darling-Hammond (2010) laments that many schools suffer from weak teaching and impoverished learning and fail to effectively implement new curriculum changes. This is against the backdrop of professional school leadership that is expected to possess proficiency (Goodyear, 1992) in curriculum implementation. In the same vein it is argued that school leadership holds teachers and students to account for the curriculum and the standards (Pinar, 2012). Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins (2008) stress that successful school leadership requires four basic sets of practices namely, "building vision and setting directions; understanding and developing people; redesigning the organisation and managing the teaching and learning programme" (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins (2008, p. 29). This has relevance to curriculum implementation and demands that school leadership should meet the challenges head on. Hallinger, Lee & Walker (2011) explored challenges in implementing different programmes in international schools in Saudi Arabia and found out that school leadership encountered problems in curriculum implementation, assessment and pedagogical approaches. This study is linked to challenges encountered by school leadership in implementing the new curriculum in Zimbabwe.

The development of education in Zimbabwe has undergone many phases since the colonial era and after the attainment of national independence. After independence, the Zimbabwe government went on a reform course designed to eliminate the imbalances and inequalities that existed during the colonial era. In 1999 the Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry was set to address more specifically on specific areas in the education and training systems requiring reform (Government of Zimbabwe, 1999). The commission of inquiry recommended the need for curriculum reform in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. The process to reform the curriculum took quite a long time but like flowing waters, the new curriculum has been introduced. What remains is the critical mass that is required by school leadership for its effective implementation. In this article, I want to ventilate the argument advanced by Blake and Mouton (1985: 1) that "The character of leadership is a significant factor in organisation success or failure." What is critical in any change is the influence of school leadership in the process of implementation of the change. Craft literacy and craft competence are issues school leadership should possess for effective implementation of a new curriculum.

3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Parents are arguing that there is a lot of lip service in the implementation of the new curriculum. The problem in Zimbabwe is that the new curriculum is not being implemented with fidelity. School leadership seems not to understand how to effectively implement the new curriculum. They are failing to understand the practice and processes. Concerns from Zimbabwean society show that low level pass rate has to do with the ineffective implementation of the new curriculum. While some people might argue that literature to teach the new curriculum is not available and there are no resources but the problem hits at lack of innovativeness on the part of school leadership. School leadership is not fitted and

tuned to understand the work and methods of effective implementation of the new curriculum. The problem extends to lack of professional knowledge when implementing the curriculum. The gap also expands to cover a lack of professional development on the implementation of the new curriculum for both school leadership and classroom practitioners. School leadership is increasingly an absent presence in the discourses of education policy, an object rather than a subject of discourse. The curriculum is just handed down to schools. School leadership is the change agent and they have the responsibility of managing the implementation of the curriculum. To that end, school leadership has to be conversant with the subject content and methods of all subjects taught in the schools. While effective implementation of the new curriculum might bring about learner growth of knowledge and academic preparedness (Polikoff & Porter, 2014), lack of it might disengage the school leadership gear and become impediments to curriculum implementation. There is thus a void in terms of whether school leadership is the impediment in the implementation of the new curriculum particularly in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. My basic research question is:

What are the school leadership impediments to the implementation of the new curriculum in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe?

4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Does school leadership have adequate knowledge about the new curriculum?
2. To what extent does school leadership understand pedagogy and instruction for effective teaching and learning of the new curriculum?
3. What challenges are faced by school leadership in improving the internal efficiency in the implementation of the new curriculum?

5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: THE CONCEPT IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation can be described as "a dynamic construct, which refers to the process of continuous specification and redefinition of the essential characteristics of an innovation by developers and users during the planning and implementation phases of the planned change process" (Fullan & Pomfret, 1975, p. 71). There are two critical players in the implementation process, inter alia, developers and users who should see the process together in the same way from the planning process to the implementation stage. If any player is left out at any one stage then the orientation differs and implementation fails. This study hinges on the aspect of users who include school leadership. These are the perceived drivers in the implementation of the new curriculum. The process of curriculum implementation requires school leadership to possess craft literacy and craft competence. Craft literacy in this case refers to the ability by school leadership to translate and interpret content in context correctly, understanding requirements, understanding procedures, understanding what is expected of you, understanding what to do and evaluating and analysing processes. Craft competence refers to the ability by school leadership to conceptualise successful and effective models of implementation by knowing what action to take, knowing how to go about following procedures, putting plans in place, knowing how to implement and knowing the

processes and knowing what to evaluate and what to analyse (Nyoni, 2007).

For effective curriculum implementation, quite a number of variables have a role to play. It is argued in theory and practice that for effective implementation of any curriculum to take place, there are five critical variables that have to be considered (Brynard, 2005, p. 13-21). The five variables which shape the directions of implementation are *content, context, commitment, capacity* and *clients and outside coalitions*. These are the fountain pillars when implementing a new curriculum and it is relevant to closely look at these variables in studies that deal with curriculum change and implementation. This study deals with impediments in the implementation of the new curriculum in Zimbabwe in the eyes of primary school leadership.

5.1 Content

The first crucial variable is the *content*. Curriculum determines the content that is learnt because it spells out all the matter that must be taught. Brynard (2005) notes that the content of a programme or policy is vital with regard to what it spells out as the means that it will employ in order to achieve its objectives. Based on the above exposition, it shows that the role of the content of a programme is to bring out its objectives and specific ways of how to achieve the agreed outcomes. In the context of the Zimbabwean curriculum, there is a glaring lack of implementation guide as evidenced by the lukewarm approach where the education authorities seem to shift the burden to school leadership to run their own schools without getting relevant textbooks from the government. Syllabuses are general guide which can be interpreted differently in different schools. Lack of specified content thus renders it difficult for school leadership to help teachers on the content to be taught at each specified grade level.

5.2 Context

The second crucial variable is *context*. Rogan and Grayson (2003:1175) hold the view that the process of change is context-specific, hence implementation must take into account the context of a particular school with regard to its teachers, learners, leadership and environment. The same view is echoed by Berman (1980) & O'Toole (1986) cited by Brynard (2005:17) who also proclaim that "a context-free theory of implementation is not likely to produce powerful explanations or accurate predictions." To that effect, implementation of a curriculum depends on the context it is given by school leadership in a particular school. Some schools are in deprived contexts and find it very difficult to procure relevant and adequate resource materials like computers, computer laboratories, among others. Where there is no option to take, school leadership will sit back waiting for the government to bring in such resources because some communities cannot manage to buy such gargets and also to construct laboratories so required.

5.3 Commitment

The third variable is that of *commitment*. Effective implementation of the curriculum demands high level of commitment by school leadership. It is the responsibility of school leadership to engage the various stakeholders in the provision of buildings like classrooms, laboratories, dormitories, playground, among others. There is need for school leadership to get political will, government support, institutional support and total commitment by implementers of the curriculum, like teachers, in order to achieve its objectives. Brynard (2005) summarises the thinking on

the significance of commitment by saying that firstly, commitment is important at all levels through which policy passes. Secondly, that commitment will be influenced by and will influence all the other variables. In the light of what has been said with regards to commitment and in the context of this study, if school leadership is unwilling or unable, then little will happen (Brynard, 2005:18).

5.4 Capacity

Brynard (2005) further notes that *capacity* is the fourth variable. The issue of having school leadership with the capacity to implement the curriculum is critical through providing adequate resources. We need not have many learners who come to learn very little or nothing at all due to lack of leadership capacity. School leadership has the role to play in capacitating the whole spectrum of the curriculum implementers. The explanation of implementation capacity is viewed as the availability of and access to human, financial, material, technological and logistical resources (Nafungo, 2015). Failure to secure those resources is tantamount to implementation failure. It is further argued that that there are also the intangible requirements which are critical for transforming rhetoric into action, for example, leadership, motivation, willingness and endurance. When school leaders are equipped with craft competency, they have the implementation capacity which will enable them to be in a position to bring about the required results in providing the services required.

5.5 Clients and outside coalitions

Clients and the outside community are of importance for effective implementation of curriculum. The support of *clients and outside coalitions* is the final critical variable. Elmore in (Brynard, 2005:20) explains that implementation is affected by the formation of local coalitions of individuals who are affected by the policy. If teachers collaborate among themselves with the support of the school leadership, parents, among others, they will be empowered with the capacity to improve practice in the implementation of the curriculum (Sergiovanni, 2005:298).

It is crucial to identify both local and outside stakeholders in order to garner their support. The stakeholders include, inter alia; district schools' inspectors and local school communities. The schools' inspectors, who are responsible for a cluster of schools in a given District within Zimbabwe's ten Education Provinces, are capable of influencing change since they are government representatives at district level. Local school communities are important stakeholders as they are capable of providing adequate resources. Effective school leadership has to connect all these stakeholders so that they operate as a system for effective implementation of the new curriculum. Literature has demonstrated that it is imperative that implementers pay particular attention to all the critical variables that are cited above to guard against implementation failure.

6 KEY FACETS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW CURRICULUM

At this point it is imperative that i look at the key facets for the implementation of a new curriculum.

Key facets for implementation of a new curriculum

Who is disengaging the gear

(Adapted from Duran, Hepburn, Irvine, Kaufmann, Anthony, Horen and Perry, 2009:45**)**

Of importance is that the authors cited above point to the need for strong leadership to act as the driver for effective curriculum implementation. All the other factors pointed here are controlled and manipulated by leadership.

7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

With Zimbabwean educational system, curriculum changes are initiated and dictated from the government and then carried out in the schools with school leadership at the helm of the implementation process. In this section I look at the theories that undergirded the study. The two theories are transformational leadership theory and the collaborative leadership theory. These two theories complement one another.

8 TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP THEORY IN EDUCATION

Transformative leadership is one such style that can produce positive results within an organization. Research on school reforms show that highly successful reforms are often led by school leadership with the transformative leadership style (Bass & Avolio, 1994). School leaders who employ the characteristics of transformative leadership are viewed as those who:

- Stimulate interest among colleagues and followers to view their work from new perspectives
- Generate awareness of the mission or vision of the team and that of the organization
- Develop colleagues and followers to higher levels of ability and potential; and
- Motivate colleagues and followers to look beyond their own interests

> towards those that will benefit the group (Bass & Avolio, 1994, p.2)

Bass & Avolio (1994) further advance the argument that transformational leaders exhibit at least one of the following specific traits, also known as the *Four Is*:

- Idealized influence: set side their own agendas and are highly professional;
- Inspirational motivation: the organization has a clear view of the tasks ahead;
- Intellectual stimulation: values multiple perspectives and new ideas without negative feedback; and
- Individualized consideration: trusts their team to carry out assigned tasks and duties without micro-managing the process (Bass & Avolio, 1994, p. 3).

Quite a number of researchers have further developed the original works of Bass & Avolio (1994) and now identify additional aspects of transformational leadership in the light of school reform efforts (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999; Oslen & Chrispeels, 2009). The additional aspects they bring forth include, inter alia (a) building a school vision, (b) garnering commitment through shared goals, (c) high performance expectations, (d) modeling best practices and important organizational values, (e) providing individualized support, (f) providing intellectual stimulation, (g) building a productive school culture, and (h) establishing structures to foster participation in decision making (Oslen & Chrispeels, 2009, p. 385). Marks and Printy (2003) strongly suggest that transformational leadership is most needed when schools are undergoing significant change or reform. This is the case with the Zimbabwean school curriculum which is undergoing an over whole review. Transformational leadership can thus become the key that unlocks the capabilities of people to work towards effective curriculum implementation (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008, p. 29) and has the most potential of helping an organization move forward towards successful change/ implementation efforts (Kirby, Paradise & King, 1992). Each participant then has to be nurtured (Kirby, et al, 1992) so that they are capable of meeting the implementation challenges and capable of doing the expected (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

9 COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION

Connected to transformational leadership in curriculum implementation is collaborative leadership in education. There are three distinct segments in collaborative leadership which include, among others, shared school governance, collaborative decisions and broad participation in efforts to evaluate the school's academic development (Hallinger, 2004; Heck and Hallinger, 2010). Collaborative leadership goes beyond transformational leadership in that the shared reform efforts target specifically at improving academic outcomes (Hallinger & Heck, 2010b). Collaborative leadership brings together all the key stakeholders in the decision making process and every one is responsible for the academic outcomes (Hallinger, & Heck, 2010a).

10 LITERATURE

Implementation of a curriculum policy on its own is a complex task that demands craftiness by those who are charged with that responsibility. Literature points to the fact that:

> There is broad agreement that implementation is a decidedly complex endeavour, more complex than the policies,

> programmes, procedures, techniques, or technologies that are the subject of the implementation efforts (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman & Wallace, 2005, p. 2).

Talented leadership is therefore needed in schools so that what is complex can be made simple for effective implementation.

Heck & Hallinger (2010) conducted a study which examined effectiveness of collaborative leadership in school reforms and found out that it brings stakeholders together within the school community in order to accomplish needed changes. In the same vein, Hockett (2015) carried out a study to examine the role of the principal in the successes and challenges of the implementing a new secondary school curriculum in Kenya. They found out that for the school with the highest level of implementation the principal's leadership role was a key factor in the transformational efforts and the deep systematic changes in the school. It was also found out that principals who motivated teachers made teachers invest their efforts and time in effective implementation of the curriculum.

Fullan (2001) maintains that principals are indeed integral to change efforts within schools. In the same vein, it is argued that leadership not only matters…the impact of leadership tends to be greatest in schools where the learning needs of students are most acute (Lithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom, 2004). There is a wealth of evidence to suggest that the quality of leadership positively enhances teaching and learning (Harris, 2004). There is not a single documented case of a school successfully turning around its pupil achievement trajectory in the absence of talented leadership. One explanation for this is that leadership serves as a catalyst for unleashing the potential capacities that already exist in the organization (Leithwood et al, 2008).

11 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was qualitative and was conducted in Masvingo province to investigate school leadership challenges in implementing the new curriculum. Approval letters to conduct the study were obtained in advance. In view of the unexplored nature of the research issue in this specific province of Zimbabwe and the associated complexity and sensitivity, a qualitative exploratory study was designed using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to seek views and perspectives of school leadership. A qualitative approach is often suitable when trying to understand the way in which participants make sense of a particular phenomenon, which in this case were the school leadership challenges in curriculum implementation in schools in Masvingo province.

12 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

12.1 We need effective school leadership for uncertain times

P1: These are uncertain times where we need re-tooled school leadership to clear misunderstandings teachers have on how to implement the curriculum.

P2: "What is troubling is that there is confusion and lack of clarity from Zimsec on the syllabi. Taking an example from the Geography examinations of 2018, even teachers were at sea in terms of what areas the students were going to be examined on, so the students just became guinea pigs".

P3: "Inadequate resources have been allocated to the education sector, it looks like it is not a government priority"

P4: "The major problems that come with the new curriculum are that there was inadequate consultation before its introduction.

P5: I find it very difficult to go and supervise lessons for things that I am not sure of as well, as head

The findings are pointing to the need for school leadership to create constancy of purpose in order to be effective in curriculum implementation. In one of his principles Deming highlights that leadership should create constancy of purpose for continual improvement of products and service …allocating resources to provide for long-range needs rather than short-term profitability, with a plan to become competitive, to stay in business, and to provide jobs. Deming advances the argument that doing your best is not good enough. You have to know what to do. Then do your best (Deming as cited in Neave, 2012). School leadership should not go about saying they are doing their best but should really know what they are doing and then do their best to ensure effective implementation of the curriculum.

12.2 School leadership is suffering from multiple meanings and conceptual complexity of the new curriculum

P1: I do not seem to follow the new learning areas that are being proposed

P2: It is not easy to interpret whatever has been given and you wonder how one can speak about the new matter with confidence.

P3: The whole truth lies on issues of correct interpretation. We needed to be given the depth and breadth of it to avoid guess work

It is noted that the fundamental human quest is the search for meaning and the basic capacity for this search is experienced in the …process of interpretation of the text (Macdonald as cited in Slattery, 2006). True search of meaning brings about the vision of what and how to implement. Lack of proper interpretation of texts might lead to lip service in the process of new curriculum implementation. The problem of how to improve teaching and learning has bothered educators at least since the inception of modern schools (Mitchell & Sackney, 2015). It is the responsibility of school leadership to clear the path for teachers and remove stumps and blocks that hinder effective implementation of the curriculum.

12.3 School leadership that fails to retrain teachers

P1: School leadership has not retrained teachers sufficiently to teach and handle the new curriculum with ease.

P2: Learning areas that have been introduced are just new to most teachers and this requires serious induction of programmes by school leadership.

P3: Some kind of new orientation is required but school leadership is not geared towards that.

Teachers are revealing their doubts, anxieties and difficulties in implementing the new curriculum. The practice of curriculum implementation requires continuous sharpening of pedagogical and didactic skills. For effective implementation, Deming advises that school leadership should institute training on the job. School leaders have to institute modern methods of training on and for the job, including deputy heads and senior teachers, to make better use of all staff (Deming as cited in Neave, 2012). Deming

further argues that teachers require new skills to keep up with changes in materials, methods, design, machinery, techniques, and service, among others. It is argued that:

> It is simply unrealistic to expect that introducing reforms … in a situation which is not basically organised to engage in change will do anything but give reform a bad name (Fullan, 1993, p. 4).

The playfield for change has to be level so that implementers do not face any hindrances. The net effect of lack of teacher orientation is implementation failure.

12.4 Lack of knowledge of the internal efficiency in curriculum implementation

P1: Our school leaders have not ordered adequate text books for use in the teaching and learning.

P2: Most teachers are just at sea in terms of what to teach and this is quite a serious drawback.

P3: The new textbooks have not been produced in adequate quantities for the teachers and learners. The introduction of a new curriculum has to be a holistic programme with all factors considered before it is implemented.

P4: We lack the basic materials to use in the implementation process and this is a challenge

P5:The teacher pupil ratio is just abnormal and teachers find it difficult to effectively implement the curriculum in such a scenario

School leadership has an important role in improving the learning capacity of learners, because they coordinate teachers in setting standards teaching the curriculum in relevant way, and providing additional support (Susy, 2008). Textbooks form a critical mass of the internal efficiency during implementation of a curriculum. Internal efficiency refers to the links between educational inputs (such as teachers, text books) and learning achievements (Human Development in South Asia (Haq and Haq, 1998). It is the responsibility of school leadership to ensure that the learner-textbook ratio enhances effective implementation of the curriculum. While Deming advises that teachers should do it right the first time and aim at zero defects in curriculum implementation but he raises critical questions. The first question relates to how anybody can do it right the first time if he/she is given neither the time nor the materials or equipment to make it feasible? The second question relates to how one can produce zero defects if what he gets to work on is already defective? (Deming as cited in Neave, 2012).

12.5 School leadership faces resistance from both teachers and parents

P1: There is a lot of resistance from both teachers and parents and school leadership cannot walk the journey without the support of these others.

P2: Teachers in particular have no mental pictures of what to teach in the new curriculum.

P3: Parents see this in the context of paying more money to buy new textbooks, new teaching and learning materials, among others.

P4: There is strong need for school leadership to get a buy in from teachers and other stakeholders

Resistance to change could be emanating from fear of loss of power, dominance and influence, which is called **loss**

of 'turf' (Gordon, 1998, p.20) in the scholarship of leadership and management. Both teachers and parents have been used to some way of doing things which is now changing due to the coming in of the new curriculum. Such change is normally resisted. Teachers are the key drivers in the implementation of any new curriculum. Their calculated participation might mean minimal effort or even zero input into the process. It is argued that three major influences of curriculum change include external influences, organizational influences and internal influences (Stark & Lattuca, 1997, p.331). It is necessary for school leadership to understand these influences since school leaders are the torch bearers in the implementation of the new curriculum.

12.6 School leadership finds the curriculum as overloaded

P1: While it is good to have a change in the curriculum but it is highly overloaded

P2: Even the ECD learners are expected to spend the whole day learning and this is questionable

P3: The psychology of learning requires that learners need not to be overloaded so that they grasp concepts easily but to our surprise the new curriculum does not give rest to teachers and learners

P4: This is not a simple change, it is really complex in that lots of learning areas have been introduced which make it difficult to understand where to start from and what to do next

P5: Each learner is expected to do a project and a task in every learning area and this is really an overload

The idea of overloading the curriculum is a hindrance to school leadership to make effective implementation of the new curriculum. It is not a simple change in any case. It is argued that change is at once simple and complex (Fullan, 1985, p. 391). Orchestrating change effectively requires small doses and if the curriculum is overloaded then implementation fails. A lot of motivation is needed to enable teachers to see implementation in a simpler way (Adair, 2006).

12.7 Lack of clarity of goals of the new curriculum

P1: The goals of the new curriculum are not very clear to many of us

P2: I find it very difficult even to think of what is to be achieved by this new curriculum.

P3: I wonder whether these learners would fit in other countries with their knowledge of these mass displays. What really are we supposed to produce?

The issue of lack of clarity of the new curriculum is being pointed to as a hindrance to effective curriculum implementation affecting school leadership. Miles and Louis (1990, p. 58) point to the need "for action images of what to do to get there". Vague goals may make it difficult for effective implementation of the new curriculum.

12.8 Lack of literacy to supervise some of the newly introduced learning areas

P1: There are quite a number of new areas that have been introduced in this new curriculum and you know what, I have never met such content before

P2: It requires a lot of knowledge of supervision to meet the demands of effectively supervising this new curriculum

P3: Some of us have never done supervision as a course and its really taxing to cope with these requirements

The above participants seem to be pointing to lack of the 'art' or expertise in supervising the new curriculum. Supervision of educational personnel is the fountain upon which effective curriculum implementation is based and requires connoisseurship or some art for it to be effective. Supervision is a process of facilitating the professional growth of a teacher, primarily by giving the teacher feedback about classroom interactions and helping the teacher make use of that feedback in order to make teaching and implementation more effective. Connoisseurship is a concept founded by Eisner who proposes that educators like critics of the arts, bring their expertise to bear in evaluating the quality of education (Eisner, 1998, p. 63). The word connoisseurship comes from the Latin *cognoscere*, to know (Eisner, 1998, p. 6). It involves the ability to see, not merely to look. To do this we have to develop the ability to name and appreciate the different dimensions of situations and experiences, and the way they relate one to another. We have to be able to draw upon, and make use of, a wide array of information. We also have to place our experiences and understandings in a wider context, and connect them with our values and commitments. The bringing together of the different elements into a whole involves artistry (Barone, 2010).

12.9 School leadership lacks accountability

There is a tendency by school leadership not to be accountable to the implementation process. When they are dealing with these issues with parents at meetings, teachers are not invited to share their concerns with the funders of the programmes.

P1: School leadership is not emphasising on scaling-up programmes to make them realistic on the ground

P2: I do not see their level of commitment on funding of specific programmes

P3: Programmes like No Child Left Behind, Early Reading Initiative, Performance Lag Address Programme, among others, are now just being ignored

Scholars have noted high stakes of accountability era among implementers of curriculum policies in several districts. To that end, Jacobsen & Young (2013) advanced the argument that many there is need to consider the politics of accountability among policy implementers for its effective implementation. This is in line with Anderson's (1975, p.79)'s observation that "policy is made as it is being administered". At the helm of policy administration is the school leadership. Young & Lewis (2015) also highlight that it is the responsibility of those at the helm of policy implementation to see "what works".

The complexity of managing the old curriculum and the new curriculum at the same time

P1: The coming in of the new curriculum did not mean the end of the old curriculum. School leadership are in a dilemma of how to manage two types of curricula at the same time.

P2; The changes are rather too revolutionary and revolutionary changes require a lot commitment and resources and in our case these are not available.

School leadership is at the helm of curriculum management. Positive leadership should recognise that its role is to steer their school on a positive course through the sea of change ((Everand, Morris and Wilson, 2004). Curriculum management is an academic leadership, instructional leadership of the core business of the school, teaching and learning process. It requires literacy in

interpretation and execution of the curriculum policy statement. Implementation does not simply involve following a set of curriculum instructions or replacing "old" practice with "new" practice but is a process of fashioning the curriculum in such a way that it becomes part of the teacher's way of being (Valero and Skovsmore, 2002, p. 3).

13 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

School leadership is the major change agent in curriculum change and implementation and should be responsible for ensuring that effective curriculum implementation is taking place in their schools. For school leadership to be able to do that, they need to be well versed in curriculum matters so as to offer proper supervision and guidance. Schools with leaders that have limited knowledge are at a challenge. Problems of ineffective curriculum implementation are still being experienced due to lack of orientation of the new curriculum content and it calls for several workshops for professional development by key stakeholders like school leadership. Capacitating of critical stakeholders should be the key if implementation is to be done with fidelity. There is need for school leadership to establish small curriculum advisory committees and these committees would table implementation strategies for discussion to the whole staff. Well structured discussions at staff meetings are also critical based on the understanding that the basis of the discussion is to suggest what can be done within the constraints rather than to raise complaints about implementation. In order to improve efficiency of school leadership, it is important to adopt and emphasize on decentralized system. School level decentralized system is believed to improve schooling efficiency. It is also critical for school leaders themselves to concentrate on establishing more knowledge about the complex interactions in the process of curriculum implementation.

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POLICY DEVELOPMENT: ZIMBABWE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE MALE CIRCUMCISION POLICY

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on Zimbabwean teachers' perceptions of the development and implementation of the male circumcision policy of 2009. Male teachers constitute a significant part of the teaching force in Zimbabwe, and their perceptions in relation to the circumcision policy is important as they are a key component of any policy initiative in schools. Teachers are also among many mediators of culture. Given the fact that circumcision in Africa is deeply imbedded in culture, they should be allocated a role in the whole process of policy development. Drawing extensively on the qualitative methodology through purposive sampling, 10 teachers were recruited to participate in the study. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews and qualitatively analysed through the content analysis method, which resulted in the development of themes. A key finding is that the context within which policy is implemented is critically important. From the data gathered, this was not factored in the male circumcision policy.

Key words: **Policy, culture, teachers, male-circumcision policy, implementation**

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the Zimbabwe male circumcision policy of 2009, which was introduced as one of the strategies to curb the increasing HIV-AIDS infection rate at the time (Ashengo, Hatzold, Mahler, Rock, Kanagat, Magalona & Dhlamini, 2014). The paper argues that while some key factors that facilitate successful policy implementation were considered in relation to the male circumcision policy, not much attention was given to the role of culture and teachers in the whole policy process. Based on the data collected and review of the literature, the policy could have achieved more if considerable attention was given to culture and teachers.

Culture plays a dominant role in the life of a society (Mackie, 2018; Motti-Stefanidi, 2018). In Zimbabwe, the majority population groups [the Shona, Ndebele and Manyika tribes who make about 95% of the population] do not practise circumcision as part of their cultural practices (Shumba & Lubombo, 2017; Mangombe & Kalule-Sabiti; 2018; Matumbu, & Chimininge, 2019). Despite this reality, the circumcision policy aimed at having 3.4 million males going for medical circumcision by the year 2017. But despite this ambition, numbers were not increasing as was initially anticipated. For example, by September 2016, they showed that approximately 732 000 males went for medical circumcision – a figure far below the target of 3.4 million males (Mateveke, 2017; Feldacker, Bochner, Murenje, Makunike-Chikwinya, Holec, Xaba & Tshimanga, 2018; McGillen, Stover, Klein, Xaba, Ncube, Mhangara & Odawo, 2018). When this reality emerged, studies (Chikutsa and Maharaj, 2015; Kasprzyk, Tshimanga, Hamilton, Gorn & Montaño, 2018; Patel, Kaufman, Dam, Van Lith, Hatzold, Marcell, & Seifert Ahanda, 2018) began to emerge questioning the effectiveness of the policy. But these studies did not look at the role of teachers in its formulation and implementation. Hence, the need for this study.

It is important to note that policy making is made up of three key stages: initiation/development, implementation and evaluation – all very critical in their own right (Juma & Clark, 1995; Sutton, 1999; Cloete, & de Coning, 2000; Exworthy, 2008; Khan & Rahman, 2017). For a policy to achieve its targets, these three key pillars should be carefully thought out and well-articulated. In addition, at the heart of a successful policy development, it is important to consider the context within which it is to be implemented. Failure in this regard will result in targets largely not being achieved (Khan & Rahman, 2017). It is the central argument of this article that in the case of the Zimbabwe Male Circumcision Policy of 2009, the context within which the policy was to be implemented was not fully factored in. In fact, teachers' perceptions were ignored. Teachers are important as they can provide insight into how the process could have unfolded, and to an extent, improve the numbers of those going for circumcision.

Understanding the role of culture and teachers in policy implementation has been studied across the world (Howlett, McConnell & Perl, 2017; Manson, 2019; Luo & Xia, 2020). Major findings point out that contextual factors such as culture play a vital role in its success or failure (Greenspan, Walk, & Handy, 2018). However, much attention is not given in literature to its role in the implementation of male circumcision (Thomas, Skovdal, Galizzi, Schaefer, Moorhouse, Nyamukapa, & Gregson, 2020). This information is critical in Zimbabwe, as many teachers do not embrace circumcision. We therefore argue that in order to understand the implementation of this policy,

teachers' views are critical (Coburn, 2016; Ham & Dekkers, 2019). For example, Nguyen and Bui (2016) have elegantly acknowledged the agentive role of teachers as a critical factor in implementing policy. Other scholars have also argued that teachers have the potential to exercise their transformative roles in implementing and responding to policy changes (Menken & Garcia, 2010). Therefore, it appears that this consideration is critically important in policy formulation.

We are fully aware that there is a growing body of literature (Khan, 2016; Howes, Wortley, Potts, Dedekorkut-Howes, Serrao-Neumann, Davidson & Nunn, 2017) that points to the difficulty of specifying exactly what policy failure is as many variables are involved in this exercise. As Hill and Hupe (2009) point out, policy could be affected by the design, or implementation difficulties, monitoring or even resource allocation (Pülzl & Treib, 2017). Notwithstanding the challenges around what precisely constitute policy failure, we argue that in the case of the Zimbabwe male circumcision policy, context in the form of culture seem to have had a bearing on the disappointing figures of males going for circumcision. For example, Chikutsa and Maharaj (2015) in their study that investigated people's representations of male circumcision that may influence its uptake, found that the uptake of circumcision among men has been below expectations. They also argue that circumcision is not a common practice in Zimbabwe, except among the Vamwenye and the Chewa who are considered immigrants from Malawi.

Awad, Sgaier, Ncube, Xaba and Mugurungi (2015) note that Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC) policy needs to be reevaluated because there is a shortfall of approximately 2.52 million from the target that was set in 2009. They suggest scaling-up male circumcision and reprioritizing the 15-34 year olds as the main target of circumcision which will have a greater impact on HIV-AIDS infection rates.

The key issue, remains that the policy is not achieving its stated goals and it is the central argument of this paper that the context in which the policy is to be implemented was not given much attention when the VMMC was developed. In the same vein, the immense role that teachers play as cultural mediators was not given much attention. It could be argued that the designers of the policy were highly ambitious on their set targets. Perhaps these targets were unrealistic. From the data we sourced, we think that culture played an important part in males not turning up in large numbers for circumcision as it is not part of their everyday life.

2 SOCIOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

As Raymond Williams (1989:93) argues "every human society has its own shape, its own purposes and its own meanings". He sees culture as everyday life or a whole way of life; the common meanings and practices that are fundamental to one's existence. The concept culture has undergone a number of developmental stages over the years. For example, culture as a process, as a product and as practical (Williams, 1989). These stages have survived into our own period. The scope of this article will not allow for a detailed discussion about defining which one is correct. However, we think Raymond Williams (1989) provides a useful analogy of the concept. He divides culture into four categories namely, the commercial culture, the proletariat culture, family, neighborhood, society culture and majority-values and minority ideals. Of these three, we found the latter category more appealing to us. The majority- values and minority

ideals notion of culture argues that norms and values of the majority often overwhelm those of the minority. Thus, our rationale for choosing culture as the conceptual framework for this study is that it helped us to undergird the position of teachers (the majority of whom does not subscribe to male circumcision) as agents of change in the implementation of any new initiative.

We found this conceptual framework helpful to understand how Shona teachers reacted or mediated in the implementation of this policy (**Williams**, 1989). This is particularly relevant in this study as the extant literature (Kasprzyk, Tshimanga, Hamilton, Gorn & Montaño, 2018) shows that the dominant ethnic group in Zimbabwe, Shona, does not practise circumcision as part of their cultural activities. But now that they are faced with the possibility of death due to HIV-AIDS infection, will the Shona males adopt the practice?

Under certain conditions, individuals can make or remake culture because of their right to think independently, hence the notion that culture is not static. Ratner (2019) argues that people are not passive recipients of a reified entity called culture, rather they play an active role in making and remaking culture. In this context, teachers as meaning and culture mediators influence individual young Zimbabweans to change their attitudes and accept circumcision against their cultural norm of shunning circumcision.

Thus, teachers play an important role within the whole cultural enterprise in that they serve as notable cultural mediators and transmitters in the eyes of the community. Given their pronounced presence in communities/villages, and silent and expressed roles in embracing or resisting changes, we argue that they should have been broadly consulted on the male circumcision policy both in its initiation and implementation.

3 TEACHER AGENCY

Teacher agency can be defined as the capacity initiatives to bring about change (Anderson, 2010; Toom, Pyhalto & Rust, 2015). Pantic (2015) argues that teachers are considered to have agency when they act strategically in cultural and social contexts, and are regarded as agents of change when they purposefully and skillfully draw on their agency to shape curricula, take control of their work, and strategically transform and refine their teaching worlds (Wang, Mu & Zhang, 2017).

Therefore, it is important to point out that teachers' views/perceptions are not taken as valid and meritorious in and of themselves. Their views are analysed by considering suggestions by the dominant literature to be main issues involved in the whole practice of male circumcision. But it is argued here that their views are important because they are individually and collectively affected by the policy. Therefore, we need to hear and value their voices because they act as critical cultural mediators (Williams, 1989) and their social capital plays an important role in curriculum development and messaging in schools (Modipane &Themane, 2014).

Given this backdrop and the slowness in the number of males going for circumcision, our study wanted to understand teachers' perceptions on the policy. We think this information may be useful to provide answers to questions about why are the numbers not increasing as expected.

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since we wanted to understand the nature of the problem from an insider

perspective, i.e. teachers' perceptions with regard to the implementation of male circumcision, we followed a qualitative approach research methodology, which allowed us to unearth their perceptions of the implementation of male circumcision policy in Zimbabwe. We are advised by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) that qualitative research is a product of descriptive cultural knowledge of a group, and offers provision as far as possible of inside accounts. Within this qualitative research approach, we adopted a case study research design.

We adopted the purposive sampling strategy. Denscombe's (2000: 35) useful description of a purposive sampling strategy is as follows: "purposive sampling operates on the principle that we can get the best information through focusing on a relatively small number of instances deliberately selected on the basis of their known attributes. Resultantly, we selected specific teachers as described hereunder.

A total of ten teachers (designated teacher 1 to 10) were chosen from five schools (designated school A to E). The teachers met three criteria: having some understanding of policy issues because of teaching HIV and AIDS education in a rural school in their schools; being 35 years old and above, and being eligible for circumcision. These criteria were crucial as they were at the centre of implementation of the policy.

Issues of access to the field and ethics in research were adhered to in the sense that we applied for ethical clearance for the study from the University of Limpopo Ethics Committee, which we obtained graciously. We then approached the Ministry of Health and Child Care in Zimbabwe for permission because it has the legal authority of male circumcision for HIV prevention policy. We also approached the Director of the National AIDS Council of Zimbabwe for permission to conduct our research. The Council referred us to the Medical Research Council of Zimbabwe, which is a legal board that authorises researchers in matters concerning all health ethical issues that protect people in communities, and we were granted permission. Permission was also sought and granted by the Zimbabwe's Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to gain access to the targeted sample of schools and teachers in Masvingo District.

Data collection techniques in the main involved individual face-to-face interviews with teachers and documentary analysis. The first set of data were collected through individual interviews, and the second was collected through document analysis, which included HIV/AIDS policy documents and life science school syllabuses. To adhere to confidentiality of research participants, each teacher was given a number [from 1 to 10] and when they are quoted in the data analysis, we have inserted the number and date and year when the interview took place as in Interview, participant 1 (03 May 2016). Ten teachers were approached individually at their schools. The purpose of the study was explained to them after which consent forms were signed. Data was analysed using constant and comparative themes. Four major themes emerged: culture**,** healing process, prevention (wrong messaging) and role of education.

5 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Before looking at the data on the major theme of culture within the male circumcision policy, there are certain key elements of policy that need to be taken care of if a policy is to be regarded as sound. Data was analysed through themes that in the main emanate from the literature review. The section that follows is structured according to

these themes. The discussion of findings below focuses more on culture and teachers within the overall policy development and implementation. The discussion of other aspects that play an important role in policy will be brief as the purpose here is to spend more time on culture and teachers.

One of the most important and critical variables for successful policy development and implementation is that a policy should be well grounded in concrete issues that affect society and therefore require action (McConnell, 2014). One of the findings of this study is that the Zimbabwe Male Circumcision Policy of 2009 came into being as a result of prevailing social and medical conditions at the time. Reports showed increased HIV-AIDS infection rate, which called for urgent steps to be taken to arrest the situation (McConnell, 2014). On this point, the policy was not symbolic. Instead, it was based on concrete social problems that need remedying. While the male circumcision policy was clearly informed by prevailing social conditions and required actions from those in government, the problem seems to have been an unrealistic target of 3.4 million in about six (6) years. Target setting is critical in policy development. The male circumcision policy seems to fall short on this aspect. But for now, it is important that it be acknowledged that the policy was well grounded. Thus, research findings and analysis point to the fact the male circumcision was, in many ways and to varying degrees, based on solid foundation and material conditions of high HIV-AIDS infection rate in Zimbabwe.

Besides policy being grounded on concrete issues affecting society, it is also the case that policies should be characterised by broad consultation both in the initial stages of development and later during implementation. Briefly, there should be stakeholder consultation on a broad space so that there is general buy-in on the matter. It is often suggested that policies sometimes fail to achieve their key objectives mainly because some of the key stakeholders who are critical in successful implementation were not brought on board. On this score again, the Zimbabwe Male Circumcision Policy included broad consultations with medical practitioners, traditional leaders and ordinary community members often through multi-media platforms. The only apparent shortcoming was the neglect of teachers and women in the entire consultation process. Both material and human resources were taken care of although not to a large extent.

For policies to achieve their intended objectives/goals, they should be accompanied by well thought out and carefully designed implementation strategies (McConnell, 2014). In the case of Zimbabwe male circumcision policy, for example, the ordering of goals was not, to a large extent, taken care of. Health facilities were prepared and staffed with professional stuff to carry out the circumcision, and the necessary resources were provided to realise the objectives of the policies (resources in terms of funds and relevant and qualified people).

From the data gathered, the issue of culture in influencing males to go for circumcision was identified by all the interviewees. A closer look at a sense of culture from the data shows that it is dual in nature. Firstly, they pointed to the majority ethnic group who does not practise circumcision as part and parcel of their cultural practice. The second aspect had to do with the entrenched practice where older men were put off by being circumcised by female medical practitioners. Male circumcision is something done by males as a cultural practice. Perhaps in the early years of

development, it will be accepted as it is done to those below ten (10) years.

In various ways and to varying degrees, all the interviewees indicated that the dominant population group in Zimbabwe, (Shona), does not practise circumcision as part of their cultural practice. This explains why many males are not opting for the circumcision as planned by the Ministry of Health and Child Care. For all the interviewees, there was agreement that much cannot be achieved with the policy since the dominant ethnic group does not go for circumcision. One of the teachers put it:

> The Shona culture prohibits circumcision and they think it's ridiculous. The Shona don't believe in circumcision. Culture of the Shona does not support it. The Shangaan did it not for HIV protection but for other reasons. The general populace, three quarters were not going for circumcision I think culture should adapt to change for circumcision (*Interview, research participant 8 (09, May 2016*).

These views were shared by all interviewees. Given the limitation of space in this article, we cannot go into detail quoting each teacher. Suffice to say that the central message conveyed was that culture plays an important role in the lives of the society, and that the dominant population group does not practise circumcision as part and parcel of their everyday cultural practices.

Another point was that males, especially adults, find it difficult to be circumcised by female doctors. What this point out is that traditional beliefs are still held high by a significant number of men in the country. This has a negative impact on the policy on male circumcision achieving its targets:

> Look, some nurses were given training on circumcision to have proper skills but I have observed that eehhh males are shy to be circumcised by female nurses. This is a problem as many men would have come for circumcision turn away if they realise that a female nurse will do the procedure (*Interview, research participant 1 (03, May 2016*).

The research participant concluded that this aspect reduces the number of those who want to be circumcised. The point being made here is that culturally, circumcision should be performed by men rather than women. But in some cases, medical circumcision is performed by female medical practitioners.

Another participant stated that the rejection of circumcision is dominated by Christian beliefs in which members of the community draw much from the Holy Bible:

> Huuuum on culture is dominated by the Bible, which opposes circumcision. It dominates their minds. So, for circumcision as at early ages the law in Deuteronomy urged but with Christ, he opposed it. People are dominated in mind by Churches and they oppose it (*Interview, research participant 6 (05, May 2016*).

Further analysis of the data also brought to light the human right issue in the sense that circumcising children cannot be construed as voluntary as they are not yet adults. The policy insists that circumcision should be voluntary.

The argument advanced by the research respondent has merits in the sense that anyone who is underage cannot be regarded as having made a voluntary decision to go for male circumcision as this

responsibility lies with the parents. Since the male circumcision policy is voluntary, issues of human rights come into play here.

6 HEALING TAKING LONG

From the interview data with teachers, it also emerged that there were genuine concerns of surgery not going well as a result of heavy bleeding and wounds taking long to heal. While it is not mentioned by all teachers in compared to the issue of culture discussed in the preceding paragraphs, four teachers identified heavy bleeding and the prolonged period of healing as another issue that discourages large numbers of males to opt for circumcision. When we factor in the fact that the policy was targeted at those who were already sexually active in order to reduce infection, the issue of being 'sick' for days due to bleeding may indeed negatively affect the number of those who want to go for surgery. We are also talking about men who are 30 years old and above here.

> Some say it's good while others say it's bad [because of] the incidences of those who bleed after circumcision. People have negative view from such experiences and may not want to go for it. I saw some people being given certificates after circumcision and some were shy. But only a few manage to be circumcised (*Interview, research participant 1 (03, May 2016).*

The participant went on to say the following: "According to people, I think if one is circumcised and comes back complaining of pain it becomes a challenge". Another research participant (02) suggested that there is a perception "of fear and pain by many students as some think they can die from the procedure and there is no adequate medication for protection. Some people bleed or swell after circumcision. There must be adequate medication to avoid the pain" (*Interview, research participant 3 (03 May 2016).*

In a nutshell, there are concerns about surgery, the accompanying pain and bleeding, which may put off some of those interested in the intervention. In South Africa, there have been reported death cases in a number of circumcision schools during winter months, especially from the Eastern Cape. But in this case, surgery is not performed by medical practitioners. This has led the Department of Health to introduce medical practitioners in the "Winter School" (Kaseke, 1991).

7 EMPHASIS ON PREVENTION

Analysis of teachers' views further showed concerns with public messages that are detrimental to the objective of the intervention itself in the sense that those who are circumcised may not think about other strategies of prevention. They may assume that they are sort of immune from getting infected or infecting others. As one of the participant suggested:

> Sometimes I think those that are circumcised think they have been given authority to indulge in sex and practice it more often. Like, circumcision should not promote promiscuity. Mmmm I get a sense that those circumcised think they won't be infected because the fear of getting STI now reduced because they are circumcised. I am very concerned here and we should guard against sending wrong messages (*Interview, research participant 10 (10, May 2016).*

The point here is that there should be emphasis on prevention, and circumcision should not be misconstrued as providing protection from getting infected. It is not a bullet proof to HIV-AIDS infection.

Essentially, there are concerns that being circumcised should not be regarded as an end in and of itself, rather as one of the means towards the reduction of HIV-AIDS infection. It does not necessarily mean that once circumcised, one will not get infected or infect others with the disease. Thus authorities charged with the implementation of the policy should take steps to ensure that this message gets across to the population – that circumcision is only one strategy among many, and should be taken together with others such as condom use.

8 ROLE OF EDUCATION

All the interviewees in this study emphasised the important role of education in changing societal practices, or what is often called the transformative power of education. In many ways and to varying degrees, teachers argued that education plays an important role in breaking cultural barriers and in doing away with taboos. The interviewees were of the view that teachers were not given a pronounced role in the whole policy process. As participant 4 pointed out:

> For me I think there should have been a consultation with schools and teachers as education is important in carrying out lessons for the youth. It is not only by seeing what teachers are doing but also being taught through life skills what students must do and not do. Do you get my point; schools are very important in driving messages? (*Interview, research participant 4 (05 May 2016).*

Another research participant put it as follows: "Education can change attitudes and no one can argue against this. It is proven that education is very important" (*Interview, research participant 10, (10 May 2016).*

Still another teacher had this to say: "Life skills in schools is important and should be supported by all, but at the same time we should watch against the age of the learners so that the children are given wrong content" (I*nterview, research participant 10, (10 May 2016).*

Most teachers argued that education can transform society, and therefore, should have been given more attention in the policy on male circumcision. Unfortunately, this was not the case. This is a limitation on the part of the policy. Broadly speaking, schools and teachers in particular play an important role as agents of transformation and the preservation of everyday practices (culture) in society.

9 DISCUSSION

Our study sought to investigate teachers' perceptions of the development and implementation of the male circumcision policy of 2009 in Zimbabwe. The study followed the qualitative research where case study design was used. Generally, we found that teachers in our sample were not disposed to the male circumcision policy.

Our results are consistent with other studies (World Health Organization, 2009; Seloana, 2011; Kuppens, Ibrahim & Langer, 2018) elsewhere in the world, which found that teachers were variance with male circumcision. However, contrary to our findings, Halperin, Fritz, McFarland and Woelk (2005) found that adult males in sample were propitious to male circumcision. Additionally, the study by Hatzold, Mavhu,

Jasi, Chatora, Cowan, Taruberekera and Njeuhmeli (2014) also found that among male respondents, 11.3% reported being circumcised and 49% reported willingness to undergo VMMC. However, factors that were motivators and barriers varied. They included including fear of HIV testing, partner refusal, reluctance to abstain from sex and myths and misconceptions (Mavhu, Langhaug, Hatzold, Benedikt, Sherman & Cowan, 2011). What is novel in our study is that culture was not elevated in these studies.

It is thus suggested that when the male circumcision policy was initiated, serious interrogation should have gone into how the majority population group (Shona), with its non-circumcision cultural practices, would embrace and encourage its members to undergo medical intervention in order to reduce infection rates among the population. It is not enough that as people see the HIV-AIDS infection rate increasing, they will automatically embrace and support any intervention measure, especially given the entrenched and century-old cultural practices that are difficult to change (Kripke, Chen, Vazzano, Thambinayagam, Pillay, Loykissoonlal & Njeuhmeli, 2016).

The discussion also pointed to the fact that teachers were of the view that the voluntary male circumcision policy was undermining human rights in instances where boys below the age of 12 were circumcised. It is correct that those below the age of 12 are still under the care of their parents and cannot independently take decisions. There are debates and literature on culture and human rights issues in Africa and India. There is a need to strike a balance between the two without necessarily judging cultural practices as oppressive and patriarchal, and worse, backward.

It is also the case that several interviewees of the study raised valid concerns about surgery going well but still with a lot of bleeding, and worse, with the wound taking extended time to heal. The second theme of prolonged healing, and in other cases even death, cannot be ignored or wished away. As such, effective communication and ensuring that skilled personnel to undertake the intervention is critical. Adequate medication is also essential to reduce bleeding and pain.

The central role of education within the whole way of life (culture) should not, and cannot, be overlooked or trivialised. Giroux (2019:18) and many others before him argue that "pedagogy is capable of awakening consciousness, challenging common sense and creating modes of analysis in which people discover a moment of recognition that enables them to rethink the conditions that shape their lives". Through education, and particularly the work of teachers, people are able to reflect on their practices, and more importantly "rethink the conditions that shape their lives" (Giroux 2019; Hooks, 2011). Along this line of reasoning, cultural practices of being averse to circumcision are transformed.

Interviews with teachers foregrounded the role of education in changing cultural patterns. Teachers play a critical role in this respect. Unfortunately, the role of education in general and teachers as agents was silent from the enactment of the policy on male circumcision.

10 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

These findings have at least three implications for policy development and implementation. Firstly, that for any policy initiative in schools to take roots, it must take teachers on board. Equally, teachers should be both willing and ready to be part of such efforts. In the case of this policy, it appears that the readiness and

willingness of teachers was not adequately solicited. For example, teachers as foot soldiers of this policy were not part of the culture of the practice of male circumcision. Secondly, for any policy initiative to flourish, there should be adequate resources such as finances. Our findings did not find this to be the case. Whereas both material and human resources were taken care of, they were not enough to upscale the policy given the economic meltdown of Zimbabwe at the time of the implementation. A lack of adequate resources is at the heart of the non-achievement of every policy implementation. Thirdly, our findings have highlighted the need to consider the context under which a policy is to be implemented. We have argued that the fact that the Shona, Ndebele and Manyika tribes who make up about 95% of the population do not practise circumcision as part of their cultural practice was a strong threat to its success. We can conclusively say that teachers from these tribes were ignored at the peril of this policy and so was the transformative nature of education - critical pedagogy. Policy makers and legislators should take teachers seriously if they are to use schools as centres of any social change, including the male circumcision policy in Zimbabwe. These are important lessons to draw from these findings.

11 CONCLUSION

This paper looked at the Zimbabwe male circumcision policy of 2009 and noted that the policy came into being given concrete social and medical conditions of increased HIV-AIDS infection rate. This had to be curbed. There was broad consultation and piloting of policy intervention so that potential challenges during implementation could be anticipated and factored in before full implementation of the policy. Substantial resources were also channeled towards policy intervention to make it a success. From the perceptions of interviewees of this study, the cultural context of non-circumcising majority population was highlighted as having an impact on the number of males opting for circumcision. Teachers also argued that, given its traditional overtones in many African countries, male circumcision should be conducted by males. The data also indicated genuine concerns about pains after surgery and a prolonged healing process. But, issues of pain and bleeding after surgery pale in comparison to the benefits of being circumcised because preventative measures to reduce infection rates are important factors to consider if this policy is to succeed. It was further noted that the messaging in some cases was problematic as it tends to essentialise male circumcision to the exclusion of other equally important preventative matters in HIV-AIDS infection.

The transformative nature of education, specifically critical pedagogy which inculcates modes of thinking that enable actors to rethink the conditions that shape their lives, was emphasised in the whole policy intervention project, changing attitudes and behaviour. Teachers should be given a pronounced role in some of these interventions as they play an immense role as cultural mediators. Failure on this aspect results in policies that affect teachers falling far short on meeting their stated goals and targets.

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