



Understanding the barriers to successful curriculum transformation in teacher education in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

In 2023, Zimbabwe initiated a comprehensive curriculum transformation programme termed Education 5.0 in teacher education to align with the nation's social and economic goals. This qualitative study, which uses a case study approach, explores the policy gaps and challenges encountered by lecturers and heads of departments in implementing the transformed curriculum. The case study approach involved conducting interviews with key stakeholders to gather insights into their experiences. The findings reveal the various challenges encountered during the transformation programme and these include inadequate policy frameworks, lack of financial and material resources, insufficient technical and pedagogical support, and resistance to the rapid pace of reform. The study also noted the existence of a strong desire to address community needs and improve the relevance of teacher education thereby providing opportunities for success. The study concludes that the Zimbabwean experience highlights the need for an inclusive and carefully planned approach to curriculum transformation. Recommendations gathered from the study include the provision of in-service training for lecturers for them to appreciate the need for transformation, enhancing funding for staff development, and supporting teacher development institutions. Ultimately, the study offers critical lessons for policymakers and education practitioners involved in curriculum reform across Africa.

Keywords: Curriculum transformation, Teacher education, Policy implementation, Challenges, Zimbabwe

Introduction

Zimbabwe's teacher education curriculum has recently undergone significant transformation aimed at aligning it with the nation's Vision 2030 and Education 5.0. The primary objective of this transformation is to equip teacher education graduates with skills required to drive innovation, industrialisation, and economic development. The implementation of this transformed curriculum in Zimbabwe's tertiary education involves navigating numerous challenges that have a bearing on whether there will be a successful execution or not. This paper considers the complexities of this transformation and emphasises the various challenges that are affecting the implementation. The purpose is to correct the ongoing process and inform future efforts and strategies for curriculum adaptation.

Background

Curriculum transformation in teacher education is a critical process that reflects societal needs and national priorities. A curriculum is considered a key enabler in the attainment of national vision, which in the case of Zimbabwe is Vision 2030. The process involves a change in the objectives of learning such as the competencies, knowledge, values and attitudes that the students acquire from the curriculum (Gouëdard, Pont, Hyttinen and Huang, 2020). Zimbabwe's vision 2030 aims at transforming the nation into a knowledge driven and industrialising Upper Middle-Income Economy by the year 2030 (GoZ, 2018). Teacher education seeks to contribute to the attainment of this vision through the pillar of National Priority Area (NPA) on Human capital development and Innovation (GoZ, 2018). Thus,

the Teacher education curriculum was transformed to produce graduates who are relevant to the country's vision. This aligns with the view shared by Nzvimbo, Magijani and Zimhondi (2018) that the curriculum should be fostered and used as a catalyst for the nation's development. It also confirms that Higher and Tertiary Education institutions are the vehicles through which this national vision can be attained (Kurasha and Chibaya, 2013).

In Zimbabwe, curriculum reforms are guided by the *Education 5.0* framework that seeks to integrate five key pillars: teaching, research, community engagement, innovation and industrialisation (Mupeperekwi, 2019). Education 5.0, which started as a blueprint for the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education Science, Innovation and Technology Development (MHTEISTD) in 2019, represents a departure from the Education 3.0 framework that prepared graduates for employment through research, teaching and community engagement. This latest framework also seeks to address the residual deficiencies of the colonial education that produce graduates for the job market and focus on producing graduates who are job creators (Keche, 2022). Education 5.0 incorporates the two important pillars, innovation and industrialisation, into the tertiary education curricula and in that way foster entrepreneurial skills for the local industries, goods and services among the students (Murwira 2019). It also lays a deeper commitment to producing graduates who are academically equipped and capable of contributing to the economic and industrial development of the nation. Therefore, the framework addresses the call by Zvobgo (2019) that education needs to solve poverty, hunger, health challenges and inequalities.

The introduction of the Education 5.0 blueprint is of great significance. It necessitated changes in teacher training curricula that align the teacher training programme with the Education 5.0 framework. Curriculum transformation focused on changing content taught and the quality of the graduates from teacher education programmes (Ndamba and Chavarika, 2023; Shay, 2015). It also encompasses the practices and processes that universities use in its engagement with major concerns that include the need to make education

more African-focused (Koma, 2018). Thus, Education 5.0 contributes to the decolonising agenda seeking to address the deficiencies of colonial education (Keche, 2022). However, there has been limited attention towards assessing the impact of changing the curriculum in teacher education in Africa to improve people's lives. In addition, although there exists various research on curriculum reforms (Mendy and Madiope; Mahabeer, 2018; Zivave, 2023), especially in post-colonial Zimbabwe, regarding teaching and learning content, little is known about the role of curriculum change within the broader national vision for 2030, which is based on Education 5.0.

Curriculum Decolonisation and Relevance

The decolonisation of education is central to Zimbabwe's curriculum transformation. Decolonisation involves moving away from colonial-era education models that often perpetuate foreign ideals and reshaping the curriculum to reflect the cultural, economic, and social realities of the African context (Le Grange, 2016). This aligns with the argument by Ramonyai, *et al.*, (2022) that curriculum reforms in Africa must prioritise local knowledge systems and address socio-economic disparities if they are to be truly transformative. The transformation is essential to fostering innovation and industrialisation, which are the core tenets of Education 5.0 in Zimbabwe. In addition, the shift in higher and tertiary education from a knowledge-based curriculum to a competence-based model is expected to produce graduates who are more responsive to societal needs.

Other existing studies highlight the characteristics of curriculum changes at tertiary level and their social and economic significance to nations. A study by Kurasha and Chabaya (2013) which emphasises the importance of transforming higher education to address societal needs and goals concludes that curricular transformation in higher and tertiary institutions serves as a vehicle for a country's national vision. Akojee and Nkomo's (2007) study carried out in South Africa argues that curriculum transformation should provide an impetus for societal progress and the amelioration of past inequities. This implies that teacher education curriculum should focus on

content, pedagogy and coheres with the overarching national aspirations of a given context to drive the nation's vision and agenda.

Finally, the curriculum for individual institutions is guided by policy frameworks. Each institution is allowed to maintain a degree of autonomy on the curriculum. However, there are challenges in attempts at reconciling institutional self-sufficiency with national obligations of efficiency, equity, and redress (Ramonyai et al. 2022). Consequently, the planning, design and implementation of curricula remain as a complex endeavour.

Addressing the mismatch between the Education 5.0 framework and teacher education programmes

Zimbabwe's curriculum transformation sought to resolve the deep-seated social disparities evident in the social, religious, and economic tapestry of the nation. The main objective of this transformation was to adopt a curriculum anchored upon the pillars of Education 5.0. The teacher education programme was not spared in these designs. Nonetheless, the nation and sectors such as education had to contend with the residual legacies of colonial social, political, and economic discrimination, and the persistent class, race and gender divisions, as well as institutional dynamics entrenched within the Zimbabwean society.

While the discourse around curriculum transformation in teacher education has garnered limited attention globally (Mendy and Madiope, 2020; Mahabeer, 2018; Flores, 2016), the implementation of such transformative efforts has been plagued by various challenges (Blignaut, 2021; Flores, 2016; Ogunniyi and Mushayikwa, 2015; Futrell, 2010). History indicates that efforts to transform the curriculum in some countries have failed to achieve the desired goals. A study by Ngobeni, Chibanda and Divala (2023) shows that efforts at transforming the curriculum in South Africa to democratise education and eliminate inequalities have largely failed to achieve the desired results. Consequently, the education sector in South Africa is marked by inequalities and impacted by the existing unemployment and societal dysfunctions (Ngobeni et al. 2023). Similarly, efforts to transform the curriculum in

Japan to a 'relaxed' curriculum that values individuality and free thinking in Japanese classrooms faced challenges, such as differences in the interpretation of the concept of individuality, and this led to its abandonment (Cave, 2016).

Nonetheless, there are some success stories in curriculum reform noted in some parts of the world. For example, Finland witnessed curriculum transformation success because of adequate stakeholder engagement and the bottom-up approach to curriculum implementation (Gouëdard, 2020). Consequently, countries that do not make adequate stakeholder engagement during their efforts at curriculum transformation experience an uninspiring and ineffective change in programmes of study (Ngobeni, 2023). This highlights the necessity of this study to identify the challenges associated with curriculum transformation, address them and consider possible ways to achieve a successful curriculum change.

Rationale of Curriculum transformation in Zimbabwe

The current curriculum reform effort was initiated after an observation of a discordant mismatch between the tenets of Education 5.0 and the curriculum offered in the country's teacher training colleges. The principles guiding the curriculum transformation had their merits and the intended effort was theoretically justified, however, several factors could complicate its implementation. It was within this context that the clarion call for curriculum transformation in teacher education grew ever louder. Consultations were undertaken in the years 2022 and 2023 with teacher colleges mandated to craft a curriculum that would be anchored upon the principles of Education 5.0. Subsequently, the first cohort of college students imbued with the reviewed Education 5.0-compliant curriculum were enrolled in various institutions across Zimbabwe in 2024. This auspicious curriculum saw the introduction of novel modules such as Research, Innovation and Industrialisation and Citizenry in Teachers Colleges while the main subjects were given a new thrust rooted on the pillars of the Education 5.0 philosophy. These changes reflected the teacher education sector's unwavering commitment to the

societal reconstruction and development programme.

As a result, this paper presents a critical examination of specific challenges that have arisen in the implementation of curriculum transformation within Zimbabwe's teacher education institutions. The primary objective of this study is to scrutinise the policy and implementation challenges inherent in the new curriculum framework, and to interrogate the gap between the policy directives rooted in the education 5.0 philosophy and the actual realisation of curriculum transformation on the ground. By probing into this pertinent issue, the paper seeks to shed light on the complex realities and hurdles that have emerged during the implementation phase of the curriculum reform agenda in Zimbabwe's teacher education landscape. This analysis will provide invaluable insights into the multifaceted nature of the challenges faced and thereby, suggest recommendations on future strategies and interventions seeking to bridge the divide between policy aspirations and the practical execution of curriculum transformation.

Capacity Building Theory

The study draws on the capacity building theory, which emphasises the need for a strengthening of institutional and individual capabilities to address challenges effectively (Freire, 1996). The theory postulates that, sustainable development, especially in resource-constrained environments, requires investment in human resources, infrastructure and organisational processes. This theory is relevant to this study because it provides a framework for understanding the systemic and structural challenges faced by Zimbabwean teacher education institutions. It helps us to understand capacity building in education as a process of empowering teacher educators and communities. Its focus on enhancing the supervisory and administrative capacities of lecturers and heads of departments enables these institutions to manage the demands of the transformed curriculum in a better way. This is also confirmed by Zeleza (2017) in his observation that African universities often struggle with resource deficits and underdeveloped

research infrastructures, which hinder the effective implementation of educational reforms.

However, the introduction of a new curriculum, as in the case with Zimbabwe's Education 5.0, necessitates a more profound transformation. As Zivave (2023) aptly points out, the implementation of a novel curriculum requires a fundamental shift in principles, teaching approaches, and that of methods employed by the lecturers. In this context, a successful implementation of the Education 5.0 curriculum necessitates a pedagogical transformation among the lecturers. This transformation can be achieved through a process of assimilation and accommodation, whereby the lecturers can internalise the new principles, approaches and methods, and adapt their teaching practices accordingly. Without this essential process of assimilation and accommodation, lecturers may struggle to effectively implement the curriculum changes envisioned by the Education 5.0 framework.

Consequently, this conceptual paradigm examines the obstacles inherent in the execution of curriculum metamorphosis and considers the challenges related to policy enactment, the administration of the curriculum, availability of resources requisite for curriculum implementation and the nature of the instructional leadership (Manzi, & Moreeng, 2024) accountable for the adoption of novel curricular policy. The study also unpacks the nature and challenges in the monitoring and reinforcement of policy execution, and the professional development of personnel (Zivave, 2023; Chabaya, 2022).

Statement of the problem

Teacher education programmes play a crucial role in shaping a country's future by developing educators who can address national needs and nation's vision. In that understanding teacher education programmes in Zimbabwe's tertiary education institutes had to undergo a transformation to gear themselves towards the nation's vision 2030 and education 5.0 blueprint. Despite its importance, curriculum transformation can be hindered by various implementation challenges. As a result, an evaluation of these challenges is essential to the establishment of

proactive solutions and ensuring effective curriculum reform.

This study is motivated by the above considered presence of challenges in curriculum transformation. The following research questions inform this evaluation of the challenges and intended establishment of ways to achieve effective curriculum reform:

1. What factors have driven the reform of the teacher education curricula in Zimbabwe?
2. Which challenges are encountered in the implementation of curriculum transformation in teacher education in Zimbabwe?
3. How can the challenges faced in implementing the transformed curriculum of teacher education in Zimbabwe be effectively addressed?

Methods

This study adopted a qualitative approach that uses a multiple case study design to explore the challenges faced by lecturers and heads of department in implementing the transformed teacher education curriculum. This methodological orientation is well-documented in the literature as an effective means of probing real-life or organisational phenomena (Yin, 2003). That the investigation deals with a human-social phenomenon, which are the challenges associated with the transformation of Zimbabwe's teacher education curriculum, justifies further the choice of a qualitative approach and case study design. The case study method enables an in-depth exploration of a particular condition to ascertain how individuals experience it (Jones & McEwan, 2000). Consequently, the present inquiry seeks to critically examine how the relevant stakeholders grapple with the challenges of implementing the new curriculum in Zimbabwe's teacher education system.

The qualitative case study was conducted at three teachers' colleges in Zimbabwe that were purposively selected as the case sites. The chosen design and its catering for an investigation across three selected teachers' colleges renders this a multiple/collective case study. The consideration

of experiences from three Zimbabwean teachers' colleges sought to ensure that findings from the study would not be contextual but could be applied in a broader context of teacher education in Zimbabwe. However, the researchers were still cognisant of the limitation related to the generalisability of findings drawn from case studies. The overarching goal of employing a qualitative research approach was to explore the social meanings ascribed by the participants to the phenomenon under investigation.

Data were collected and analysed in ways typical of a qualitative research approach was to explore the social meanings ascribed by the participants to the phenomenon under investigation. Data focusing on the experiences with the new curriculum and the associated challenges were gathered through in-depth interviews with 10 lecturers. Purposive sampling was used to identify lecturers with at least five years' experience in teacher education. The selection criteria ensured that those selected would be able to share their experiences with the old and new curricula. Invitations were made through word of mouth and the researcher sought consent from the participants. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data and identify key challenges in and potential solutions to the teacher education curriculum transformation. Thematic analysis is a process in which themes and patterns are identified within qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). In addition, the researchers utilised the Braun and Clarke (2006) six-phase guide to thematic analysis. This process followed various stages, which are data familiarisation, generation of codes, search for themes, review of themes, definition of themes and a final write-up. The analysis of relevant documents involved the authors' extraction of excerpts that were directly germane to the research questions.

Results

The responses presented and analysed in this section were gathered from interviews of lecturers drawn from three teacher training colleges. These provided insights on the challenges faced by the lecturers in implementing curriculum transformation within Teacher Education in Zimbabwe. The teacher training

institutions were coded CL1, CL2 and CL3. In addition, each participating lecturer was coded 'L' with the 10 participants accordingly coded as L1, L2, L3, L4, L5, L6, L7, L8, L9 and L10. The coding was used to ensure anonymity and protect the privacy of the study participants. Three research questions guided the formulation of themes and subthemes. The actual words spoken by the participants in response to the individual interview questions were captured verbatim and indented for vividness in the presentation to enhance the qualitative nature of the inquiry. The themes and analyses derived from the interview data augmented the results obtained through document analysis and thus, aided in providing a vivid and comprehensive explanation of the issues under study.

The analysis revealed three primary themes, reasons for curriculum transformation, challenges in implementation, and potential solutions, in line with the declared research questions. The next section discusses the findings:

Reasons for Curriculum Transformation

It is vital for the lecturers to understand the reasons for curriculum transformation to achieve a smooth implementation of the teacher education curriculum. The implementation of a transformed curriculum in teacher education requires lecturers' input and cooperation. As such, curriculum transformation and implementation involve new content and new teaching approaches that suit the objectives of the teacher education programmes in line with Education 5.0. Three sub-themes emerged as causes of curriculum transformation as discussed below.

Decolonising the Curriculum

Participants, especially L1 and L2, highlighted the need to decolonise Zimbabwe's teacher education system. This is because the education system has been dominated by colonial pedagogies. L2 remarked that,

The colonial curriculum focused on producing employees, not innovators. We need a curriculum that aligns with our local context and promotes innovation.

It was through this disenfranchising colonial curriculum (le Grange, 2016) that Africans were made to believe that white-collar jobs are the solution to African poverty. This continued after Zimbabwe's independence from colonial rule and hence, the need to decolonise the sector. The principle here is that a decolonised teacher education curriculum with transform teachers' colleges into centres of industrialisation and innovation. Observations from the current study suggest that curriculum transformation in the country's teachers' colleges provides the best way to control the means of production and black empowerment.

Alignment with Education 5.0

The introduction of Education 5.0 necessitated a realignment of the teacher education curricula with national development priorities, particularly innovation and industrialisation. L6 noted that,

The shift from education 3.0 to 5.0 required a complete overhaul of the curriculum to meet the needs of the country's socio-economic development.

This indicates that the impetus for curriculum transformation in teacher education was imperative to realigning the programmes with the country's educational philosophy, which is heritage-based and relevant to the nation's priorities. The shift in policy within the MHTEISTD, from a STEM-centric approach to a broader education-focused framework, has catalysed the radical transformation of teacher education.

Addressing Societal and Economic Needs

The curriculum transformation was driven by a need to address Zimbabwe's socio-economic challenges. Participant L6 noted that,

The new curriculum aims to prepare teachers to respond to the country's economic needs, particularly in the areas of technology and innovation.

Thus, the curriculum transformation in teacher education was necessitated by emerging issues that include deepening poverty, gender equality, environmental sustainability, and

technological issues that need to be addressed. This observation is affirmed by Kurasha and Chabaya (2013) in their highlighting of the importance of transforming higher education to address societal needs and goals. These emerging challenges have led to the revamping of the curriculum to suit the current needs. This is because the inherited colonial teacher education programme was designed to suit the colonial dispensation rather than those of post-independent Africa.

In this context, participant L3 submitted that,

Transformation in teacher education has been necessitated by the new way of teaching in terms of content and methodology.

This connotes that transformation in Zimbabwe's teacher education curriculum has resulted in a change of content. This is evidenced by the introduction of new modules suitable for the current teacher education curriculum that include the Research, Innovation and Industrialisation, Transformative Psychological, Sociological and philosophical perspectives and Citizenry for National Development. These modules are different from the erstwhile and aborted Western-oriented teacher education content in that, most of them reflect African-centred content and methodologies.

Thus, the transformation of the country's teacher education curriculum was undertaken to customise the content and methodologies to the needs and aspirations of Zimbabweans. The participants argued that the abolished teacher education curriculum was lecturer-centred and did not address Afro-centric issues such as Indigenous Knowledge systems [IKSs], Indigenous Religion [IR], and the value of practical skills. Furthermore, the aborted curriculum in teacher education did not educate trainee teachers to be innovative and industrial. It was revealed during interviews that the content of the old teacher education curriculum was biased towards Eurocentric knowledge and values and did not cater for the needs of Africans whose knowledge and skills are punctuated in Unhu/Ubuntu. Overall, the participants argued that colonialism and the oppressive curriculum content

contributed to the constitution of a negative employee mentality in teacher education.

Challenges in Curriculum Implementation

The crux of the study is situated in the challenges affecting curriculum transformation in teacher education. The participants were interviewed on challenges affecting curriculum transformation and its implementation in Zimbabwe's teacher education system. The participants' views proffered solutions that might assist in improving the teacher education curriculum. Several sub-themes were noted and these include shortage of relevant learning material, resistance to the curriculum reform, policy inconsistency, lack of technical support, lack of professional development, lack of funding, pedagogical deficiencies and top-bottom approaches. These are discussed below.

Resource Constraints

One of the most significant challenges that was identified by the study respondents is the lack of financial and material resources to support the new curriculum. L4 stated that,

The curriculum requires a lot of resources, but institutions are left to rely on their tuition fees to fund these changes, with little government support.

These sentiments were also noted by L6 as indicated in the statement,

Curriculum transformation in teacher education is held back by lack of financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient learning material.

This suggests that colleges are operating with limited funding, scant infrastructure and inadequate learning material, which affects the whole process of curriculum transformation and its implementation. There were other obstacles that were encountered and these are resource constraints, resistance to change, and lack of technical support.

Therefore, Zimbabwe's experiences are marked by several challenges. Interviews with lecturers and heads of departments, as shall be explained below, revealed that the rapid

implementation of the transformed curriculum created a significant strain on existing institutional resources. These findings concur with earlier findings by Zivave (2023), in which participants cited the lack of technical and financial support as a major hindrance to the successful delivery of the new curriculum.

Resistance to Change

Some lecturers resisted the new curriculum due to the associated technological and methodological changes demanded by the transformation. This is evidenced by the sentiments made by L1,

I've been teaching for 30 years. The new curriculum demands a lot of new skills that I don't have, and it makes my job harder.

Such resistance to change could be because the new teacher education curriculum requires technological orientation and andragogy (as a teaching methodology). In addition, participant L1 explained that,

You cannot expect me to start teaching a new course at my age or start to use this modular system which also require online classes.

Hence, those with gaps in technological and andragogical skills that are needed in driving this teacher education curriculum transformation are bound to embrace a combative approach and resist change.

Lack of Technical Support

The implementation of the new curriculum was also hampered by a lack of technical support from the MHTEISTD. Technical support was envisaged in terms of technology integration and technicalities that include supervision of Research, Innovation and Industrialisation. L5 explained that,

Curriculum transformation requires technical support, but that's been slow to come, which makes it difficult for us to implement the changes effectively.

Participant L3 also noted concurrence;

You are asked to supervise 10 research innovation and industrialisation students, but you

have a flimsy understanding of innovation processes, and you are not so sure what qualifies to be an innovation or not.

This lack of technical support is possibly caused by a lack of qualified personnel who can lead the transformation of the teacher education curriculum. This reality has bred 'curriculum overload' a point submitted by L7 in their opinion that,

The curriculum is too loaded for the student as well as the lecturer. Most departments are short-handed and a case in point is my learning area where I am working alone.

Consequently 'curriculum implementation fatigue' creeps in.

It should also be noted that the implementation approach did enable a positive transformation. The observations made by L2 are instructive here;

The curriculum was hurriedly implemented, and [few] lecturers are expected to implement a wholesale of changes to the curriculum in a short period. We were expected to design modules, teach modules, set examinations, and mark examinations within a short period.

Therefore, the use of the centralised 'top to bottom approach' to curriculum implementation by the MHTEISTD through the University of Zimbabwe has adversely affected the uptake and implementation of the curriculum change programme.

Furthermore, the absence of relevant educational materials and textbooks has forced lecturers to rely on outdated resources, which are often misaligned with the new curriculum objectives. These challenges are consistent with findings from other contexts, where curriculum transformation in higher education has been plagued by similar obstacles (Ramonyai, Marumo, Skhephe and Matashu, 2022; Blignaut, 2021; Shay, 2015).

Potential Solutions

Participants were asked to suggest solutions to the challenges faced in the implementation of the new curriculum in teacher

education. Their responses highlighted several matters and these include aspects related to the production of learning materials. The participants suggested that the government and institutions should invest in the production of relevant textbooks and e-books for the new curriculum. L1 recommended that,

Lecturers should be funded to develop content that aligns with the new curriculum.

An increase in technical support from the relevant ministry (MHTEISTD) was also recommended. Thus, L3 emphasised that,

We need ongoing support from the ministry, particularly in areas like assessment and module design.

Several lecturers also indicated that they were not properly trained during the in-service Training and as such they felt ill-prepared to teach the new curriculum. They went on to call for more professional development opportunities. This evidenced by the remark by L7,

Workshops and in-service training are essential for equipping us with the skills needed to teach the new modules.

The study informants also disclosed that college lecturers are not well remunerated and that this harms the implementation of the curriculum transformation in teacher education. As a result, the participants called on the government to improve the welfare of lecturers through better remuneration and other benefits since they are the cornerstone of the country's human resource base.

Finally, the study revealed that the implementation of the transformed teacher education curriculum is underfunded. This observation highlights that there is a need to adequately fund the entire teacher education curriculum transformation process. As a way forward, curriculum transformation requires a lot of financial, material, and human resources. Hence, the government needs to inject more funding into teacher education curriculum transformation implementation. At the same time, colleges may form partnerships with the private sector to ensure that they have enough resources to

assist in the implementation of the curriculum transformation programme.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the complexities of implementing curriculum transformation in Zimbabwe's teacher education institutions. The challenges encountered are not unique to Zimbabwe but reflect broader trends in curriculum reform across Africa. As noted by Ramonyai et al. (2022), resource constraints and resistance to change are common obstacles in curriculum transformation efforts. Other studies also acknowledge that curriculum design and implementation remain a challenge in the programmes seeking curriculum renewal in higher education (Zivave, 2023; Ramonyai et al 2022; Shay, 2015). Hence, several challenges affecting curriculum transformation implementation in teacher education have been noted.

A shortage of relevant learning material and resistance to curriculum reform have been noted as problems affecting curriculum transformation in teacher education. In addition, policy inconsistency and failure tend to impede curriculum transformation in teacher education. In this regard, Sayed and Jansen (2001) opine that policy failures are occasioned by poor approaches to curriculum implementation. The top to bottom approach to curriculum implementation is also cited as contributing to the failure of curriculum reform in countries such as Japan and South Africa (Cave, 2016; Ngobeni, 2023; Gouëdard, et al.2020). Ironically, Zimbabwe failed to draw on lessons from these experiences in the implementation process and continued to be haste and did not afford adequate time for stakeholder consultations. This view is also held by Shay (2015) who observes that in many African countries, curriculum reform is often implemented hastily, and without adequate stakeholder consultation or preparation. This can lead to poor implementation outcomes and reduced buy-in from educators. Zimbabwe's experience mirrors many of these challenges as confirmed by lecturers and heads of departments in their responses that the rapid implementation of the transformed curriculum created a significant strain on existing institutional resources.

In the same vein, Zivave (2023) argues that curriculum transformation implementation is affected by policy decisions that are made by those in power to control the education system. This is the dark side of curriculum centralisation and inadequate stakeholder involvement, which impede successful execution. Such an approach led to failure in Japan as it caused ambiguity in terms of the vision with regards to the curriculum (Gouédard,2020)

Resistance to change was also noted as one of the major impediments. This is largely attributed to lack of technical support, lack of professional development, lack of funding, pedagogical deficiencies, and top-bottom approaches. This was exposed as driven by lack of adequate stakeholder engagement in implementing curriculum reforms. The lecturers who are expected to implement the transformation also suffered from a lack of developed capacity. The foot soldiers of the transformed curriculum need to be taken on board and capacitated from the onset so that they appreciate the need for curriculum reform.

The resistance to change is also hinged on the lack of technical resources to support the implementation. Technical resources in this case include staff development and ICT resources, which are considered essential in the modular system.

The reality is such that the challenges faced during the implementation of curriculum transformation need to be addressed so that teachers churned out by Zimbabwe's teacher education institutions remain competitive and of high quality. Chabaya (2022) and Fullan (2014) argue that dealing with curriculum development transformation glitches can lead to positive achievements in curriculum implementation and, in turn, a new teacher identity and consciousness for all teacher education institutions. As a result, the production of learning content material, increased technical support, and in-service training need to be addressed for a successful implementation of the transformed curriculum in Zimbabwe's teacher education. Increased motivation of college lecturers, funding of teacher

education curriculum transformation, and increased staff deployment are also solutions to the above-noted curriculum transformation challenges.

The need to decolonise the curriculum and align it with national development priorities has been a central theme in Zimbabwe's education reforms. The content, teaching approaches, and assessment procedures of teacher education in Zimbabwe have changed in line with Education 5.0. In this way, teacher education curriculum transformation has supported economic development by equipping Zimbabwean graduates from teachers' colleges with the skills that enable them to play a more central role in economic growth as job creators rather than job seekers (Mlambo, 2004). However, the success of these reforms depends on addressing the logistical and technical challenges identified in this study.

Several studies highlight the significant role played by curriculum transformation. Akojee and Nkomo (2007) and Jansen and Sayed (2001) assert that curriculum transformation should provide society with the impetus to progress and improve the past. The introduction of a new curriculum, which is heritage-based aims at decolonising teacher education (Le Grange, 2016). In-service training is particularly important for helping lecturers adapt to the new demands of the curriculum. As noted by L7, many lecturers feel ill-prepared to teach the new modules focusing on innovation and industrialisation. The provision of continuous professional development and funding to institutions ensures that lecturers are equipped to deliver the new curriculum effectively. Furthermore, the study revealed the need to customise Zimbabwe's teacher education curriculum to suit the societal and economic needs of the country and to re-align teacher education with global changes. This resonates with the view held by Khan and Law (2015) that the curriculum should respond to the changing economic situation in an affirmative and learner-centred way. However, this process needs to adopt a bottom-up approach which affords adequate stakeholder engagement for its successful implementation.

Conclusion

This study adopted a qualitative research approach in its analysis of the challenges encountered during the curriculum transformation efforts across three teachers' colleges. The transformation of Zimbabwe's teacher education curriculum is a necessary step toward aligning the country's education system with its national development goals. It has been observed that the impetus for curriculum transformation is multifaceted and as such stems from the need to decolonise the teacher education curriculum and realign it with the Education 5.0 philosophy. It also seeks to customise the programmes to suit the socio-economic needs of the country, recalibrate teacher education in accordance with global changes, and aims to modify the learning content and methodology to enhance relevance.

It was also noted that, while the lecturers appreciated this need for change, they had problems with the implementation process owing to several challenges that they encountered. These challenges include resource shortages, resistance to change, and lack of technical support. The challenges can be attributed to a lack of meaningful consultation, insufficient political will from the government, and a rushed implementation process within the Zimbabwean context. As a result, the curriculum transformation process can avert these implementation pitfalls by involving several stakeholders and employing a mixed-methods approach to implementation strategies. Crucially, the reform process must be closely monitored and adequately supported with the necessary resources to prevent programme failure or loss of interest among the implementers. Hence, we submit that the success of the curriculum transformation can be achieved after the challenges noted from the analysis of the data gathered have been addressed. The strategies that can be used to address the challenges include the provision of adequate investment in resources, technical support, and in-service training for lecturers. In addition, the Zimbabwe teacher education curriculum can be tailored to foster international partnerships and collaborations so that it stays abreast with global educational trends and best practices.

Limitations

The researchers acknowledge that there are limitations related to the collection of qualitative data and use of the case study design. These limitations include generalisability. Hence, the findings from the studies apply to the three institutions sampled for the study and may not be generalised.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no competing interests.

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