

## The Implementation of Art and Design Teacher Preparation Professional Studies Curriculum in Zimbabwe: Opportunities and Challenges

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### Abstract

*This is an evaluation of the Art and Design professional studies curriculum in Zimbabwe Teachers' College. The main focus was to establish the extent to which the planned and the implemented curricular meet the constitutive demands of Art and Design professional studies at teacher education level. The study aimed to ascertain the effectiveness of the programme to prepare a Competent Art and Design primary school teacher who can implement a comprehensive visual art education recommended by the Nziramasanga commission of 1999. A qualitative case study design was employed in which observation, document analysis, interviews and questionnaire were used to collect data. Six lecturers from three teachers' Colleges participated in the study. The study revealed that the Art and Design professional studies curriculum knowledge constitutive interests are not comprehensively constituted in the colleges' planned curriculum and consequently in the implemented curriculum. The vocational technical education approach is not valued at teacher preparation level. Results indicate that this is due to several conditions that surround its planning and implementation. Hence, other approaches to the planning and teaching of professional studies. Art and Design have been recommended.*

## Introduction

Curriculum innovation and implementation inevitably involves the teacher. The emphasis of the technical – vocational curriculum from primary school level meant overhauls in the teacher preparation strategies as well. To date the broad professional studies curriculum in Zimbabwe teacher education is divided into three syllabi, namely A, B and C. Syllabus A introduces student teachers to professional ethics and practices such as codes of conduct in the teaching professional and general teaching methods. Syllabus B is basically concerned with teaching methodology and subject content. Syllabus C is the research component of professional studies. This study focuses on professional studies syllabus B (PSB) which is the art and design teacher preparatory course pursued by all learners' teachers. Hirst (1979) suggests that theory in education fails to provide adequate answers that clarify some extremely complex classroom practice issues or problems while professional studies (PS) aims to adequately develop the daily expertise of the teachers. The high content mastery of Art and Design knowledge, which is done through Academic study courses, does not necessary provide answers for the primary school Art teacher in subject application and classroom management. Academic study in Zimbabwean teacher education is subject content in – depth specialization. Professional proficiency in teaching Art and Design at primary school level is therefore more greatly shaped by PSB.

Several documents have been written to guide the planning and implementation of PS in Zimbabwe teacher education. In 1978, the Teacher Education Planning and Regulations committee published a document that informed the planning and implementation of PSB (then Applied Education). In 1986, the Teacher Education Review Committee (TERC) formulated that student take up Art and Design as one of the elective subjects at college level. Later, the Nziramasanga report of 1999 emphasized the need to improve the status of art and design from primary level. In 2006 the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Zimbabwe produced a handbook which outlines the mandatory value of PS. This evaluation study therefore sought to assess the PS ideals, of Art and Design primary school teacher preparation are reflected in the PSB syllabus goals, aims, content selection and implementation in the three selected teachers' colleges in Masvingo Zimbabwe.

## Professional Studies and knowledge types

The discussion pivots on the scientific theory of knowledge. Polanyi in Hirst (1979) alludes to three types of knowledge which comprise conceptual, sensory information and images that can be brought to bear on content mastery in an attempt to make sense of something that one learns. This is non-verbal knowledge or information that can be apprehended by sensory organs such as touch, smell or sight. This knowledge can be gained through practical works done in Art and Design. Bergman (1997) coined the phrase 'technical knowledge' whose meaning is synonymous with 'practical knowledge.' Practical knowledge can be split into two, namely, procedural knowledge (knowing how) and declarative knowledge (knowing that). 'Knowing how' performing an activity constitutes and 'knowing that' entails the thought that guides and directs the action. 'Knowing that' constitutes 'propositional knowledge, which legislates for reflection. This is the basis for critical thinking when evaluating an action or practice. Academic

Study Art content at teacher education level in Zimbabwe focuses on craft knowledge only. Craft knowledge is synonymous with procedural knowledge (knowing how). It is knowledge that informs practice or action in creating artifacts. Teacher education in Zimbabwe has traditionally distinguished courses that are designed to enhance craft, tacit knowledge and technical knowledge. These are academic study 'A' and academic study PSB respectively. This study focus on how much attention is given to teaching craft and tacit knowledge and technical knowledge comprising teaching methods and critical thinking skills that mould a reflective art teacher through PSB. All these forms of knowledge when combined, work together in problem solving and reflective thinking.

Mukorera (1999) defines PS as a process of intellectual enquiry and analysis leading to the development of professional knowledge and non-specific classroom skills. Intellectual enquiry is the skilled and active interpretation, analysis and critical evaluation of observations and practices. Critically thinking involves reflection. Dewey in Eisner (2002) stresses that, critical thinking is the active, persistent and careful consideration of various forms of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and further conclusions that it draws. It is therefore the role of professional studies to mould a teacher who can interweave all necessary forms of knowledge in his or her professional practice.

In visual art education, critical and reflective practice is an inherent characteristic that can be effective in developing a competent and reflective Art and Design teacher. Kangai (2000) concludes about art education that a lot of cognitive, symbolic and discursive tools which are generally dormant can be exploited in training students at teacher education level. These help improve critical thinking. Several critical models have been developed to date by different theorists such as Howard Gardener's Arts PROPEL and Eisner's Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE).

Gardener's Arts PROPEL (1995) demonstrates the connection in art education between manipulative skills and the mind. Arts PROPEL stresses the process of product and involvement of the process of perception and reflection (Davies and Gardener, 1992). The process of production entails the craft knowledge and perception in the Arts PROPEL is the conceptual and sensory information. The reflection is the legislated by technical knowledge (knowing how and knowing that) which guides performing an action and evaluation of an action or process. Professional studies can exploit this potential of critical thinking and reflection.

Chimedza (1999) carried out a survey to establish whether the Theory of Education and professional studies syllabi meet the needs of students with special education needs are integrated in the regular school system. The syllabuses were found not adequate in that regard. Aims and goals of the syllabuses studied showed that there was little planning for special education needs. Similarly this research aimed at finding out whether the Art and Design professional studies curriculum is designed to meet the PS criterion for professional competence in teachers. Very little has been researched in this regard in Zimbabwe.

## Methodology

A case study research design involving three primary school teachers' colleges was used in the study. A sample of three lecturers – in charge (LICs) of Art and Design, one from each college, and three other lecturers, one from each college, were purposively sampled because they were knowledgeable about the phenomena under study. Thus a sample of six lecturers was used. Participant observation was used with the aid of checklist to control observation. Document analysis was used to analyse schemes, plans, record books, official documents, syllabuses. Interviews were used to solicit information from the three LICs. Questionnaires were used as complimentary data collection tool, to solicit qualifications and experience of lecturers and their opinions on the quality and effectiveness of input provided by PSB curriculum implementation.

## Findings

### Knowledge constitutive interests on aims and objectives

From the data collected it has emerged that most students who enroll to train as primary school Art and Design teachers through PSB curriculum study in Zimbabwe teacher education have little or no art background. An average of 92.7% of the PSB Art and Design students last did Art and Design at primary school level. The PSB Art and Design syllabii of the three teachers' colleges studied evidently aim, to close the technical knowledge gap created by this lack of art education in the general education system.

Professional knowledge are deliberately planned and set to address professional needs in teacher education.

Results are illustrated on Table I below:

**Table 1. Knowledge domains covered in Aims of PSB Art and Design Syllabuses**

College	Technical Knowledge Related aims	Professional knowledge related Aims	Other aims	Total No; of aims
A	3(50%)	1(17.1%)	2(33.3%)	6
B	1(20%)	3(60%)	1(20%)	5
C	1(20%)	3(60%)	1(20%)	5
Average	30%	45.1%	24.1%	16

An average 30% of the aims are set to develop the technical knowledge of the student teachers with aims such as “to promote creativity in students”. Another average of 45.9% of the aims in PSB focuses upon professional knowledge. Some aim phrased as “To equip student teachers with

the basic skills of teaching Art education to primary school pupils”. The remaining 24.1% of the aims do not explicitly fall into the 2 categories stated above. There are also unclear aims, such as, “to develop among students an awareness and appreciation of national identity and sense of patriotism”. Therefore, on the whole, less than 50% of the total aims focus on professional knowledge related issues.

One of the lecturers interviewed said, “*Our students are not competent artistically as they came to college, hence deliberately we have to increase their mastery to significant levels before considering much on how they teach the art*”. The other two lecturers also shared the same views as quoted above. Therefore, PSB syllabuses are deliberately planned with an inclination towards content mastery. Proctor (1984) in Shumba (1997) suggests that a professional study amalgamates theory studies with professional knowledge and skills. The syllabi studied are not comprehensive on various knowledge domains which are necessary to equip a teacher in order to be an effective and reflective teacher.

## Knowledge constitutive interests on assessment weighting

The notion that the PSB Art and Design curriculum aims at closing the technical knowledge gap created by lack of secondary Art education is also supported by the value placed on practical artworks in assessment weighting. The syllabii studied indicate that the final assessment is based on combined practical works and theory assignment marks. According to the three LICs interviewed, the theory constitutes the professional knowledge.

**Table 2. Final assessment scheme weighting for practical work and theory**

College	Final Assessment weighting		Total %
	Practical marks %	Theory marks %	
A	90	10	100
B	60	40	100
C	50	50	100

The assessment weighting between theory and practical work show a bias towards practical work in colleges A and B as shown in table 2 above. At college A for example, 90% of total assessment marks are derived from practical assessment and only 10% from theory. However, college C has equal weighting in both categories.

The final assessment weighting shows there is focus mainly on technical art knowledge, (know how) rather than professional knowledge that informs the practice of teaching art. The process of curriculum implementation at teacher education level is constrained at the syllabus design level where the important topics are various forms of knowledge to be taught to learner teacher is not

included in the planned for. The learner teachers are not exposed by default to the various forms of knowledge that should inform their practice.

Precise Art and Design PSB learning outcomes are hardly measured and observed in assessment approaches employed in the teachers' colleges studied. There is over emphasis on technical art knowledge at the expense of knowledge domains required for effective professional practice. The practical work assessment procedures are also prone to subjectivity. They are heavily dependent on practical assignments that are in most cases done outside the lectures without lecturers' supervision due to lack of physical space. LICs indicated during interviews that due to large numbers of students in the PSB classes vis – a – viz working space, practical assignments are done at home.

## Time allocation

Information from document analysis and interviews reveal that time allocated for PSB Art Education in the three colleges is not enough to fully cover the intended goals. This is well illustrated by results in Table 3 below:

College	Model	Hours / Week	Total hours / Year
A	2-5-2	1 hour 30 mins	58 hours 30mins
B	3-3-3	1 hour 30 mins	58 hours 30mins / 85h
C	2-5-2	1 hour 30 mins	58 hours 30mins

College A and C studied following the Zimbabwe Integrated Teacher Education Course (ZINTEC) 2-5-5 model (Mamvuto,2013). Art PSB was taught throughout the residential terms, but effectively it is three terms. The last term was usually reserved for revision and examinations. Therefore equal, three terms translate to 39 weeks x 1 hour 30minutes = 58 hours 30 minutes contact hours for PSB Art and Design through the three year course. At college B, time was affected by the fact that Art was considered as an elective subject during the third year. Electives are subjects in which students have a choice to pursue studying during the third year. Art was paired with Home Economics for choice. Lectures were conducted once every fortnight for electives ie PSB. All LICs interviewed concurred that the time allocated for PSB was not enough at all.

## Conclusion

- In conclusion the syllabus designed for Art and Design PSB curriculum does not meet the prerequisites for professional studies education, namely to develop a critical reflective teacher who can integrated diverse sources of knowledge and solve professional problems. The syllabus lack in depth content to develop confidence and problem-solving capacities in the learner teachers. It also lacks breath to encompass all knowledge domains that inform the professional knowledge that the learner should have before going into practice. The time allocated for PSB Art and Design was not adequate. There is

shortage of material and equipment for the large PSB classes. This compromise the quality of teacher produced at these three colleges under study.

## Recommendations

- The research recommends that the teaching of Art and Design PSB can be presented as a cognitive problem – solving activity organized around art subject content and professional pedagogical events.
- Art and Design can be considered as a core subject in PSB in order to have more contact time for all students in the first and third year.
- Colleges should build infrastructure provide resources such as furniture and art teaching and learning material and equipment.
- Teachers' colleges should adopt critical studies models into the formal teaching of Art and Design PSB at teacher education level.

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