The post-method pedagogy: In search of appropriate pedagogies for teacher educators of English in bilingual contexts

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Abstract

The legacy of colonialism regarding the pedagogy of English as a Second Language (ESL) has entrenched the use of received methods and age-old approaches without any regard for the local Zimbabwean cultures and their ethos. Those approaches were designed elsewhere for purposes unrelated to the bilingual contexts of Sub-Saharan Africa, including Zimbabwe. Instead, since curriculum climate is ever-changing, there should be a re-look at how ESL teachers are developed so as to enable their learners to become more proficient in English. This proficiency would better come from socio-cultural approaches that consider learners' local needs that would make them appreciate ESL as a means of communication relevant to their situation. This paper investigates the efficacy of the Post-method pedagogy in improving student teachers' classroom practices in ESL during Teaching Practice (TP). It attempts to hear the voices and agency of participants in order to understand the intricate process of teaching, mentoring and supervising student teachers. The study focuses on theory-practice gaps in ESL pedagogy during TP. Three groups of participants comprising even student teachers, seven mentors and seven lecturers, respectively, were purposively sampled and took part in the study. Data were collected from the three groups through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Thematic data analysis was used to identify, analyse and report patterns of gaps in methodologies. Results confirmed that there were theory-practice gaps in ESL instruction based on age-old ESL approaches. The paper recommended that teacher development programmes adopt socio-culturally sensitive approaches including Post method framework in order to bridge the theory practice gaps.

Key words: Old ESL approaches, ESL pedagogy, Post Method pedagogy, Received methods

Introduction and Background

Brown (1994:52) portrays the historical development of second language teaching as "the changing winds and shifting sands of language teaching." Implicit in this statement is that

second language pedagogy has come a long way, with its development being characterised by diverse pedagogical trends. Literature about teacher preparation has revealed a disparity between the theory taught in teacher education programmes and the subsequent practice of student teachers in the classroom (Cheng, Cheng & Tang, 2010; Korthagen, 2010). Several reasons including the quality of teacher development programmes, the discrepancy in responsibilities between the practicing schools and the teacher education institutions have been cited as some of the chief barriers militating against effective pedagogy, which, in turn, results in theory practice gaps (Dean, Lauer & Urquhart, 2005; Korthagen, Loughran & Russell, 2006; Valencia, Martin, Place & Grossman, 2009; Zeichner, 2010). Zeichner (2009), again, makes a strong case that teacher education continues to be characterised by a traditional approach whereby academic knowledge is viewed as the authoritative source of knowledge about teaching. Instead, stakeholders should bring different aspects of expertise that exist in schools and communities into teacher education so that these co-exist on a more equal plane with academic knowledge.

Not surprisingly, the pedagogic innovations of the 19th and 20th centuries were characterised by the rise and fall of a number of different instructional approaches and methods. This was an essential way to try and establish the best and most effective framework that would improve teachers' pedagogical practices in ESL classrooms. This is perhaps why Kumaravadivelu (2006) asserts that methods are too restricted to successfully explain the complexity of language teaching and learning. Hollins (2011:395) describes this scenario as "a complex and multidimensional process that requires deep knowledge and understanding in a wide range of areas". Notable among these approaches were Audiolingual, Silent Way, Community

Language Learning and Suggestopedia (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The weaknesses of these methods impacted negatively on language teacher education in general and the way teachers taught ESl. The result was the production of ill-prepared teachers whose perceptions were influenced by the technical rational archetypes that were deeply ingrained in Western European culture (McDonough, 2012).

The weaknesses of methods further prompted the desire among researchers to move towards establishing alternative pedagogies in ESL teaching that were more reflective, culture and context-sensitive. This is why scholars such as Stern (1992), Allwright (2003) and Kumaravadivelu (1994) have recommended changes to English Language Teaching (ELT) by suggesting that teacher education programmes required the re-examining of firmly entrenched traditions still evidenced in teaching practice. Stern (1992) proposes a three dimensional framework which focuses on various language components and how they combine into an integrated whole. Kumaravadivelu (1994) also proposed a framework consisting of ten macro strategies, including maximising learning opportunities and fostering language awareness to help teachers become more sensitive to classroom events and activities. This would help to develop the capacity to generate varied and situation specific ways of teaching.

Based on what has been presented above, this paper argues that there are deficiencies in the way pre-service teachers are prepared and developed in some Sub-Saharan countries including Zimbabwe. In particular, the Bachelor of Education (B-Ed) pre-service secondary student teachers of ESL pursuing studies at Great Zimbabwe University (GZU) at the undergraduate level in Zimbabwe are not an exception to this scenario. Indeed, these students encounter a

number of instructional and practice challenges during TP resulting in theory practice gaps. Seminal among their many challenges that we often hear of from supervisors are the anecdotal accounts of students on TP who are unable to confidently and effectively integrate the theoretical knowledge acquired during university tuition into practice.

The view expressed above syncs well with the views of McDonough (2012) who says that discrepancies in teacher preparation stem from the fact that teacher educators and their preparation programmes have not yet found a robust theoretical framework with which to help themselves and their pre-service teachers. Turner (2011) adds that teacher education programmes do not specify how theory should be applied in practice and that the practicum component of the Teacher education programme is about having the opportunity to develop their skills and not about using theories in practice. The result shows that there are persistent theory-practice gaps that characterise the teaching of ESL in bilingual classrooms leading to low educational outcomes among learners.

Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2005) state that teacher preparation curriculum needs to provide a framework to facilitate candidates' understanding of effective classroom teaching and learning, especially regarding ESL. Therefore, teacher development institutions ought to continually seek efficient ways to improve their curricula and instruction by designing credible programmes that could help produce competent and multidimensional teachers with the ability to integrate, synthesise and apply the acquired knowledge in the real context of teaching in different situations with a wide diversity of learners and varying conditions (Tomlinson, 2003).
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Problem statement

Literature about teacher preparation indicates an imbalance between theory and practice (Cheng, Cheng & Tang, 2010; Korthagen, 2010). This imbalance is the reason why teachers appear ill-grounded and lacking in the capacity to effectively integrate theory into practice in their ESL teaching methodology (Wren & Wren, 2009; Schulze, 2009). Unfortunately, it is the learners' educational outcomes that are doomed in that process (Dean, Lauer & Urquhart, 2005; Korthagen, Loughran & Russell, 2006; Valencia, Martin, Place & Grossman, 2009; Zeichner, 2010). This is why it is being argued that in the ever-changing dynamics of the school curriculum, teacher development should re-look at ways to enable ESL student teachers close the theory-practice gap by equipping their learners with the socio-cultural methodologies that would bring about better language learning results.

Purpose of the study and research questions

This paper investigates the effectiveness of the Post-method pedagogy in improving student teachers' classroom practices in ESL during TP in Zimbabwe. It attempts to hear the voices and agency of participants to understand the intricate process of teaching, mentoring and supervising student teachers, to gain a deeper understanding of the utility of Post-method in empowering participants. This is in the context where Motlhaka and Wadesango (2014) expound that the Post-method is primarily concerned with real life communication in the language classroom, engaging students with optimal opportunities to enhance their fluency in achieving their fullest potential beyond the classroom. Post-method is socio-culturally-realistic and contextually sensitive to ESL teaching (Motlhaka, 2015).

Issues of language and pedagogy in ESL contexts are worth investigating because the results could benefit the review of existing curriculum that seeks to improve pre-service teachers' practice. The research could also contribute to the debate on improving the ESL teacher development programmes and ways of promoting learner autonomy and academic achievement. The paper, therefore, attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What theoretical constructs are necessary in language teacher preparation programmes to support successful pre-service teacher ESL classroom practice?

2. What factors facilitate the practice of Post- method pedagogy in post-colonial ESL classrooms?

3. How would Post- method pedagogy help redress the existing theory practice gaps that leave ESL teacher practice largely ineffective?

Literature Review

The review of literature, first examines the importance of English as a target language of instruction, a language of career prospects and a language of global communication. In this part, we highlight the significance of communicative competence in different situations. This is important because of the advent of globalisation, which has had tremendous impact on different aspects of human life, including the process of teaching and learning (Bose, 2006; Safran, Helic, & Gütl, 2007). The English language teacher in Zimbabwe is part and parcel of the global world and, as such, has to be responsive to the demands of globalisation wherein conversational fluency in ESL is still considered a ticket to higher career prospects and reward in developing countries.

Next, we discuss the method to provide the contextual evolution of the Post method pedagogy to show how the characteristics of Post- method have influenced teacher efficacy in English language teaching. Finally, we examine the Episteme and Phronesis framework of theory and practice gaps to disclose the existing gaps in student teacher practices in ESL during TP.

The place of English in academic and professional settings

In developing countries, English has become a dominant language in areas of education, modern knowledge, scientific research and global communication (AL-Khalil, 2015). Crystal (1997:2) observes that "a language achieves a genuine global status, when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country." Implicit in the statements above is that the global status English has assumed means that a high level of proficiency is critical on the part of teachers. Learners of ESL, therefore, need to succeed academically in order to gain new opportunities towards sharing and exchanging knowledge experience or ideas with subjects from the global world (Todorova & Todorova 2018;Richards & Rodgers, 2001:20).Becoming a student teacher of English, therefore, means becoming part of the world-wide community of professionals with shared goals and discourse of professional practice (Richards, 2008). In light of this, there is need for student teachers to be proficient in ESL. Proficiency is gained through academic and professional studies as well as practical experience to gain "enhanced expertise" in ESL classrooms (Coady, Harper & de Jong, 2013: 89).

The concept of a method

A method is "an umbrella term comprising design approach and procedure and it also refers to the broader relationship between theory and practice in language teaching" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 86; Richards & Rodgers, 2014).These scholars consider a method as a kind of path to be

followed; it is organised sequentially and assigns roles for teachers and their learners. According to Nunan (2003:5) "Methods are based on a set of assumptions and beliefs regarding the nature of language and learning." Brown (2000:170) asserts that "methods give an oversimplified assumption that what language teachers do in the classroom can be conventionalized into a set of procedures that fit all contents." Implicit in the above statements is that methods are developed in specific educational, social and cultural contexts. As such, they cannot be exported wholesale and used in educational settings with different philosophies and beliefs. This is because the methods would not be responsive and sensitive to the experiences, expectations and needs of a given group of learners and teachers. Kumaravadivelu (2001) echoes similar sentiments by asserting that methods inherited from abroad cannot be equally applicable in different situations due to the diverse contextual needs of trainee students, teachers, parents, teacher educators, educational institutions, and the concerned authorities.

The Direct Method, Silent Way, Community Language Learning and teaching, Suggestopedia and Grammar Translation methods are typical examples of age old approaches and methods that have seen their better days (Larsen - Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 1986; 2014). These and other succeeding methods were proven to have limitations that made language practitioners and learners unable to achieve the best proficiencies in ESL. They fell short of expectations in achieving the oral proficiency needed for functional and interactive purposes in bilingual situations like Zimbabwe. Richards and Rodgers (1986:59) confirm the limitations of one of these methods by saying that "students were often found to be unable to transfer skills acquired through Audio-lingual approach to real communication outside the classroom". This is also the reason why Kumaravadivelu (2006; 1994) thinks that methods

were a mere transfer of a body of professional knowledge to prospective teachers, knowledge that may not even be relevant to their local needs. Each time a method did not yield the desired result, a new method would be designed to supersede the previous method. This is perhaps why Rivers (1991: 283) believes that "what appears to be a radically new method was more often than not a variant of existing methods presented with the fresh paint of a new terminology that camouflaged their fundamental similarity."

Based on what has been presented above, it can be argued that the methods era is presently considered a narrow view of developing language teachers as it assumes that there is a "one size fits all best practice" that all teachers can follow. The language teacher education system steeped in the method era is likely to be flawed with inadequacies emanating from the model of preparation aimed at transferring a generic set of pre-determined, pre-selected, and pre-sequenced bodies of knowledge from teacher educators to learners without considering their specific needs and situations. This is possibly why teacher development in Sub-Saharan countries, including Zimbabwe, whose current method of preparing teachers has a strong bearing on those methods that were designed elsewhere, presented challenges for novice teachers during TP.That situation continues to determine the trends and patterns in our current teacher preparation programmes.

Kumaravadivelu (2006) laments that pedagogical barriers are related to the content and character of second language teacher education programmes which stand as a harmful hurdle blocking the effective construction and implementation of any curriculum. We also contend that there is need to adopt a robust framework including the Post-method that could help redress

the barriers of effective language teaching. Our view concurs with the views of Darling-Hammond et al. (2005:395) who report a basic relationship between "teacher effectiveness and the quality of training teachers have received in subject matter and content-specific teaching methods." Lawes (2003:27) supports the point above by saying that "if language teachers do not even begin to have some understanding of educational and applied subject theory, they will be mere technicians and feel themselves to be such."

The Post-method condition

Kumaravadivelu (1994:170) says that Post-method condition "is a sustainable state of affairs that compels us to fundamentally restructure our view of language teaching and teacher education". It urges teacher educators to review the character and content of classroom teaching in all its pedagogical and ideological perspectives and prompts them to streamline teacher education by refiguring the reified relationship between theory and practice. Kumaravadivelu (2016) uses the term pedagogy in a broad sense intending to cover not only issues about classroom strategies, instructional materials, and curricular objectives but also many historical, political and socio-cultural experiences that more or less influence TP. Post method is a "flexible, dynamic, and open-ended" concept of teaching that is different from traditional approaches of teaching (Chen, 2004:18 cited in Cheng, 2006:97). It is a movement that has emerged from the discontentment with the language teaching methods which had heavily influenced second language education from the late 19th century to the late 20th century (Scholl,2017).The implication in the above definitions is that teacher education needs to be 'revisioned' in the Post-method era, and to move away from the traditional master-apprentice model towards a practice driven model. Teacher education should aim to develop more

autonomous and transformative intellectuals who are able to analyse their contextual needs more critically and respond to local problems by devising their own local solutions and methodologies (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

Post-method is a tenable framework that allows teachers to have their voices heard (Schuck, Aubusson, Buchanan & Russell, 2012). Hence, teacher education institutions need to reform their teacher preparation programmes in a way that empowers both language educators and the attendant and prospective ESL teachers to devise for themselves systematic, coherent and relevant alternatives to method. When intertwined with critical pedagogy, Post-method signifies student-autonomy as it seeks to create democratic classrooms and authentic learning experiences that contribute to existing curricula (Motlhaka & Wadesango, 2014).This is perhaps the reason that Chen (2014) and Hall (2011) say that Post-method emerged to respond to the demand for the most optimal way of teaching English free from the method-based restrictions and from a growing recognition that teachers' own sense of plausibility should be the rationale for pedagogic decision-making and that more consideration should be paid to contextual factors.

The Pedagogic Principles of Post-method

For Kumaravadivelu (1994; 2006a) Post-method is a development of a pedagogy that he visualises as a three-dimensional system made up of three pedagogic parameters: particularity, practicality, and possibility. These parameters are generated by practitioners on the ground, are sensitive to local needs and situations based on the lived experiences of the learners and

teachers. This new context-sensitive pedagogy demands a previsioning of teachers' roles as post-method practitioners (Rashid & Khatami, 2014).

Particularity entails a true understanding of the linguistic, social, cultural, political, and educational factors that determine learning and teaching in a specific context. It is the chief constituent of Post-method that refers to a context sensitive pedagogy. Kumaravadivelu (2006a:171) argues that we "must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular socio-cultural milieu."

The parameter of possibility makes teachers aware that their concepts of themselves and their communities are really influenced by the language they speak or study (Gholami, Bonyadi & Mirzaei, 2012). That parameter advocates for a practice where teachers are not mere technicians who replicate prescribed curricular and enact imposed policies (Abad, 2013). Instead, it considers the critical dimension in which the broad socio-political, historical and economic conditions affect the lives of the learners, the teacher and the learning environment and the institutional forces that shape identity formation and social transformation (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

The principle of practicality relates to the relationship between theory and practice by breaking the well-established division of labour between the theorists as producers of knowledge and teachers as consumers of that knowledge. That division does not give room for self-conceptualisation and self-construction of pedagogic knowledge on the part of the teacher

(Kumaravadivelu, 2012). Kumaravadivelu (2001) proposes that there should be conformity between theories and practices. In other words, teachers' theories should complement practices in their classrooms (Zakeri, 2014).

Effect of the Post method on ESL instruction

Literature about Post method pedagogy shows that it provides opportunities for teachers to adopt a reflective approach to their own teaching. Hubball, Collins and Pratt (2005: 60) define Post-method as "thoughtful consideration and questioning of what people do, what works, what doesn't, and what premises and rationales underlie their teaching as well as that of others". This is important because reflective teaching has promoted learning effectiveness (Taghilou, 2007). It encourages growth and improves pedagogical knowledge and professional development for pre-service teachers (Rodman, 2010).According to the general perception of the Post method era, instead of looking for which language teaching method is the best to follow, the language teacher must find the most effective strategies and techniques to enrich their teaching repertoire.

Kumaravadivelu (1992) also voices a similar issue when he says that subjective understanding may arise from student teachers' own experiences as learners and teachers, and also through professional education and peer consultation. As they teach, student teachers continually experiment and get the independence that constitutes 'sense of plausibility'. Therefore, language teaching stems from the independent efforts of teachers in their own classrooms wherein this independence is brought about by reflecting upon own teaching. Therefore, Post-method teachers are encouraged to develop and create their own methods as they gain

experience based on their classroom contexts and knowledge of other methods and approaches. Teachers should be autonomous analysts, strategic researchers and decision-makers who are able to generate location-specific, classroom-oriented innovative practices.

Episteme and Phronesis

Episteme is theory with a big "T" and implies the theoretical expert knowledge derived from scientific understanding. It is cognitive and propositional in nature and, as such, is applicable to a variety of situations and formulated in abstract terms (Kessels & Korthagen, 2001: 21). On the other hand, Phronesis is a theory with a small "t", "it is practical wisdom, knowledge of particularities of a situation and knowledge of the concrete not the abstract". It is perceptual and uses rules only as summaries, guides and requires enough experience (Kessels & Korthagen, 2001: 27).

From an understanding of the above statements, the concept of practice could perhaps be best translated as a 'concrete practical professional undertaking in a real learning professional situation, a learning environment with materials, tools and actors in which a career is practiced" (Kessels & Korthagen, 2001:21).

The professional worker in that environment has been developed to act professionally, on the basis of practical knowledge. Therefore, a student teacher can also be considered as someone who practises a profession (Verloop, 1995). The teacher education institution provides the *Episteme-* theory, skills, and theoretical knowledge about teaching through coursework. The school provides the *Phronesis-* the field setting where such knowledge is applied and practiced; and the beginning teacher provides the individual effort that integrates it all (Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Moon, 1998: 160).

Theoretical knowledge includes the exploration of language learning/teaching theories and content knowledge while practical knowledge is acquired through reflecting on prior experience as language learners and direct teaching experiences (Drever & Cope, 1999; Golombek, 1998; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Roberts, 1998).The two should have a strong compatible relationship wherein teachers make decisions of implementation on the basis of situations during practice and apply theory into practice (Schon,1983). However, while it may sound obvious that theory can be translated into practice, Dye (1999) laments that turning theory into practice is not a mechanistic straightforward process because the realisation of teacher education goals in terms of integrating theory and practice is occasionally impeded by the conformist and conservative influence that practical training can have on student teachers (Zeichner et al.,1987).

Research Methodology

This paper used the interpretive research paradigm together with the qualitative approach. Interpretive research paradigm is a research philosophy which is premised on the view that reality is subjective and can therefore be understood by interacting with or observing the individuals who experienced or are experiencing it (Smith, 2018). Qualitative research is an approach in which data analysis is done narratively or descriptively without employing inferential statistical procedures such as hypothesis testing or correlational methods (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This paper employed a qualitative case study design to examine the efficacy of Post- method pedagogy in informing B-Ed secondary pre-service student teachers' practices in ESL during TP. Simons (2009) describes a case study as "an in-depth exploration from multiple prospects of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution program or system in life." In this paper, case study was used in line with Stake (1995)'s view that

researchers who have a genuine interest in the case should study it when the intent is to better understand the case. The case study design was significant because it helped researchers to explore the participants' experiences and understanding of those experiences (Silverman, 2013).

Sample and sampling procedure

Purposive sampling also known as subjective or 'judgment sampling' method was used.Twenty one participants comprising seven lecturers, seven mentors and seven student teachers of ESL were selected to take part in the study. Teddlie and Yu(2007: 77) say that "purposive selection is the technique mainly used in naturalistic inquiry studies, and is defined as selecting units (for example, individuals, groups of individuals, institutions) based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study's questions". Researchers choose the samples because they have particular features or characteristics that enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and questions that researchers wished to study (Bryman, 2012). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with each of the seven lecturers, mentors and student teachers (Dane, 2010) and, then, through focus group discussions, with student teachers (De Vos et al., 2012). According to Kufakunesu (2011:31) an interview is a conversation between a researcher and a research participant in which the researcher will be gathering information for research. De Vos et al. (2012:360) define focus group discussion as "a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive non-threatening environment." The purpose of conducting interviews and focus group discussions was to promote a comfortable atmosphere of disclosure in which participants

could share their ideas, perceptions, experiences, and views about a topic (Kruger and Casey,2000).

Presentation of Findings

Participants' responses to individual and focus group interview generated large quantities of data. This paper, therefore, proposed to adopt the data excerpts approach which organises findings around raw data such as meaningful extracts of conversation exchanges during meetings, or other forms of dialogue that can be analysed (Reay et al., 2019). The significance of this approach is to illustrate and to preserve its richness as well as to respect the integrity of the exchanges generated. The approach further preserves the emic nature of the research setting in theoretical discussions (Reay et al., 2019). The paper, thus, selected and presented several large strands of excerpts of data relating to the Post -method and the Episteme and Phronesis framework of theory and practice gaps. These should be viewed as 'illustrative stretches' of discourse produced by participants in their responses to semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (Willett, 1995: 480). Participants' voices are indicated in italics to clarify the source of the discussion.

The identities of participants are given at the end of the excerpts and can be distinguishable by the first letter before the hyphen wherein **L** stands for lecturer, **St** for student teachers and **M** for mentor.

Below are raw data excerpts produced by respondents:

We develop our student teachers in ideal situations which do not exist in the rural areas where the majority of student teachers will be deployed. Student teachers should be trained to cope

with the various teaching environments they find themselves in. We, of course, must be mindful of the fact that they are going to meet challenges so we should prepare them to teach in those areas and if we do it that way, may be the gaps will be minimised. They must be reflective enough to see their problems so that they can rectify them. **L-Nd**

Teaching practice simply means being practical in what one does instead of being idealistic. Student teachers should learn to deal with pedagogical issues practically and that does not require Piagetian theories. If one is teaching in a typical remote rural area where the parents are impoverished and schools not well resourced what theories can be applied in such situations? **L-Go**

I have respect for knowledge of theories but at the same time I have problems with them in that they were developed far away from us and also by people whose cultural, social and, religious orientations were very different from our own. So, it was only reasonable to think that such theories would not wholly apply to our situation and when they don't then, we do what is practical. **M-Pl**

Yes we learnt quite a lot about theories of second language acquisition but when we come to schools for teaching, we don't really see where these theories come in so we don't worry about them. Most of what we do is learning to teach by discovery. In other words you just discover that pupils are enjoying the lesson and are actively engaged in it without the application of any specific theory. **St-Fo**

During my first days on TP, I did not know anything. So at first I started by collecting information from university through a colleague. Then, later on, I started to think for myself and I realised I did not need anything from college in other words I would actually discover what to do in the classroom because the knowledge you had did not work? **St-Be**

TP is good because you learn so many things. Sometimes you discover that certain things work well while others don't. For example, you see your colleague using a teaching strategy and when you try it in your own class, especially for classes that have been streamed, it does not work for you and your scholars. **St-Fo**

I think a theory of practice involves continual reflection and action **ST-Na.**

The student teachers' continual reflection and action constitute one side of practicality. **L-Si**

Sometimes, what works in one class does not work in another class even if students are at the same level and at the same school. You have to investigate with ways of teaching, of your pupils and their learning to and develop your own style of teaching and learning. **St-Nk**

TP affords student teachers the opportunity to try out things and to see differences and similarities in the way schools operate, for example, what is applicable in one school may not be applicable in another school, especially if such schools fall under different responsible

authorities. It is the student teachers' responsibility to note such things and to act or behave accordingly. **L-Nh**

Discussion of findings

This paper attempted to establish and document the consistencies or inconsistences otherwise prevailing between the B.Ed. pre-service secondary language programme theoretical knowledge acquired during university based tuition and the expected standards of pedagogical efficacy reflected in the student teachers' ESL practices. As stated earlier in the introduction section, the findings revealed positive and negative results of the language teacher development programme that needed to be enhanced and mitigated, respectively. The overriding message derived from negative findings revealed critical challenges leading to theory- practice gaps in student teachers' classroom practices in ESL during TP. Seminal among those challenges included failure on the part of student teachers to apply subject matter knowledge into practice, lack of understanding of the technical implications of Episteme and Phronesis by all participants of teacher development from student teachers to mentors and even lecturers themselves. Inability to see the missing link between theories and practice meant failure to adopt a reflective approach which defines what had to be done, what worked and what did not work. Student teachers ofn TP lacked the technical capacity, not having been given the mechanistic step-by-step training to impress their hosts in ESL instructional practices. This is a level of theory practice gap that requires to be bridged.

The above mentioned is a level of theory practice gap that requires to be bridged. Besides, student teachers acknowledged how difficult it was for them to integrate theory into practice

especially when confronted by something that lecturers had not specifically talked about during university tuition.(cf excerpts by *St-Be and St-Fa*.) This demonstrated a real dilemma for student teachers where they lacked logical and practical wisdom to transfer their university acquired knowledge and skills into practical problem-solving skills. They also lacked the ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-classroom settings. Student teachers looked at this theory - practice gap as a point of extreme difficulty since they discovered that they could not quickly see university narratives speaking directly to the TP expectations. The unavoidable consequence was that the schools-based instructional practice was generally marred with miscues and conceptions replete with pedagogical assumptions. These assumptions were based on professional orientation at university which practically was not really developed by the lecturers, but perhaps by the western colonial education system. On their part, mentors seemed to suggest that if they and student teachers confined themselves to prescribed theories when teaching, then their pupils might not succeed in their education.

Lecturers believed that the diversity of experiences student teachers had, including their own educational background, personal and university experience and TP experiences could constitute a wide enough knowledge base in ESL to enable student teachers translate theory into practice. Further to that, lecturers appeared to have had too many assumptions about the extent to which student teachers' learning and understanding were congruent to the theoretical underpinnings of the teacher development programme. Some lecturers seemed to point out that the way student teachers were developed was so idealistic that it was difficult for them to deal with the actual contextual learning situations especially in the rural settings. This is where, straight away, the mismatches and gaps that began to manifest themselves had to be understood

within the wider scope of curriculum legitimacy in the postcolonial context. The lecturers were not fundamentally restructuring their views of language teaching or streamlining teacher education by refiguring the relationship between theory and practice.

In view of the findings, the implication was that there was need for all stake-holders to transit from generic teaching, mentoring and supervision to specific practices informed by reflective models including the Post-method that could provide a robust focus for developing pre-service secondary teachers of English. This is consistent with Korthagen et al. (2006:1020)'s view that no coherent body of knowledge exists about central principles underlying teacher development programs that are responsive to the expectations, needs and practices of student teachers.

On the positive side, findings revealed that student teachers applauded the fruitful TP experiences that saw them make substantial progress in their classroom practice and in their way of knowing. It provided them the opportunity to apply the knowledge acquired in the initial phase of preparation and the school-based curriculum they were immersed in. All participants seemed to agree that classroom experiences made student teachers realise that some ways of solving classroom problems taught at college did not always work in real classroom situations and that pedagogical problems were not always solved by adherence to prescribed notions. This realisation enabled them to adjust their teaching according to the specific needs of their situations. Again, this was complementary with the view of Kumaravadivelu (2003) that for any language pedagogy to be relevant, it must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in particular sociocultural milieu.

Conclusion

This paper investigated and documented the theory-practice gaps between the current second language teaching theories and the efficacy of the Post-method pedagogy in minimising those gaps in ESL classrooms of pre-service secondary school student teachers during TP. Findings, confirmed the presence of theory –practice gaps predominant at every stage of the process of B. Ed secondary language teacher development in Zimbabwe. All stakeholders were involved. This was an indication that the connections between the Episteme and Phronesis framework of theory and practice gaps in the teacher development process were not adequately addressed at the different levels that pre-service teachers went through. There was lack of cohesion between the knowledge acquired from university and the expected standards reflected in student teacher classroom practices in ESL. This confirmed the point that integrating theory with practice is not an easy task for novice teachers, especially when weak mechanisms are employed. Findings as well as empirical literature showed that Post-method pedagogy is a viable, effective and practically driven theoretical framework that could make student teachers reflective practitioners who could make strategic choices and draw on their own experiences of language instruction to devise pedagogical approaches that place student learners at the centre of teaching and learning.

Based on the findings, the paper recommends that:

- stakeholders work cooperatively to mitigate the theory- practice problem; first by establishing a deeper insight and knowledge about the cause of the problem then,

secondly, by adopting sustainable theoretical frameworks that are locally appropriate and socio-culturally responsive to the needs of learners.

- stakeholders in language teacher education rethink their teacher preparation programmes so that teachers' knowing is acknowledged and mined in order to create coherence between theory and classroom reality.

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