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# Teaching Practice Assessment by Video Lessons. Representations of Undergraduate Student Teachers at a Selected University in Zimbabwe.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This qualitative study explores the experiences of Zimbabwean University in-service student-teachers' in video teaching practice supervision during and in the post Covid 19 pandemic era. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents from one University. Data was collected using open-ended questionnaires from a sample of twenty-three part two in-service student-teachers on teaching practice. The qualitative data obtained was coded and analysed verbatim. The results showed that student teachers met innumerable problems that ranges from lack of recording skills, lack of advanced recording tools, electricity outages, unavailability and unstable internet services during video lesson teaching practice. Results also revealed that there was elimination of stress developing from physical assessment, introspection of one's personal teaching, teaching in the natural setting, enhancement of one's teaching skills and techniques. The study recommends provision of advanced recording tools, reliable internet facilities in the country's secondary schools, provision of reliable power backup services and training on lesson recording for enhancement of quality student practice and assessment.

Keywords: Teaching practice, Lesson recording, Student assessment, Video lessen, Covid 19

# INTRODUCTION

Teaching Practice (TP) is a key component of the Zimbabwean university teacher education curriculum, hence its compulsory inclusion to postgraduate diploma in Education studies, in-service, and pre-service undergraduate student-teachers' assessment. According to Davidson (2005), teaching practice is a system by which teachers in training are subjected to a systematic exposure to actual classroom situation. In agreement with this, Shaban, (2020), adds that, TP is one of the core courses in which teacher education institutions send student-teachers' to different schools to implement what they have studied under the supervision of experienced instructors. It equips student-teachers' with real classroom experiences in their second year of the University Bachelor of Education Degree programme. During teaching practice, a student-teacher is allowed to try the art of teaching before getting into the real world of the teaching profession (Msangya. et al, 2016). In the same vein, Elmabruk (2020), sees teaching practice as the opportunity given to trainee teachers to apply the knowledge and skills they acquired during the theoretical part of their preparation period in the hope to become proficient practicing teachers. Student teachers also know the value of teaching practice and they

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perceive it as the important aspect of their preparation for the teaching profession since it provides for the real interface between student hood and membership of the profession (Rakesh Ranjan, 2013 and Msangya et al, 2016).

Teaching Practice is key in university teacher education as it forms the basis for production of quality teachers endowed with the spirit of transforming learning in the schools they would teach later after completing their teacher training. Chikezie, (2017) concurs that; Teaching Practice (TP) plays a fundamental role in enabling prospective teachers to contribute immensely to the teaching profession. A quality teacher is central and has the potential to determine learner achievement either in primary, secondary or even in the higher education fraternity. Quality teachers in the schools develop in learners' innovative skills, thus promoting a positive thrust towards attainment of Education 5.0 philosophy and overall attainment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Teachers play an important role in shaping the future of individuals as well as of entire generations (Msangya,et al, 2016), and they can also influence the economic dynamism of the country by imparting skills that translate into innovation and productivity in the workplace.

Traditionally, lectures and or supervisors would go out to schools and physically supervise their students on teaching practice with the sole purpose of identifying their strengths and shortcomings to advice for enhancement of teaching and also assign and award a mark (grade). With the advent of Covid 19, Teaching Practice assessment was re-engineered, a paradigm shift instituted across universities in Zimbabwe from traditional physical face-to-face student teaching practice assessment to online and or video recording teaching practice assessment. Students on teaching practice were then required to record themselves whilst teaching and telemetrically forward, the video record to the assigned university supervisor or lecturer for assessment and grading. This was an effort to reduce the spread of Covid 19 at the same time allowing learning to continue in the midst of the pandemic without student-lecturer physical interactions. This paradigm shift on student teaching practice assessment received a considerable welcome by universities which they cherished for saving large sums of money which they traditionally spend on transport, accommodation and subsistence for lecturers and supervisors visiting student teachers placed all over the country and to some extent outside the country's boarders for their teaching practice.

Upon receiving the video record, the supervisor or lecturer goes over it, assessing it to note strengths and shortcomings of the student teaching during lesson execution to allow for feedback on student pedagogy and eventual grading. According to Shaban, (2020), the teaching practice program aims to, provide student-teachers' with an opportunity to apply what they have already studied in previous semesters, evaluate the student potential as a teacher, provide them with constructive feedback, practical experience in school to overcome the problems of discipline and enable them to cope with unfamiliar situations. As it concurs with aims of Shaban, (2020), the Zimbabwean universities teaching practice also intends to improve and equip student-teachers' with 21<sup>st</sup> century and contemporary teaching skills that motivates and enhance students engagement in the learning process. However, video recording teaching practice supervision and or assessment posed more challenges than opportunities for both student teachers and supervisors and or lecturers at the university under study. This has prompted the researchers to undertake a study of this nature, to explore the complexities and experiences bedevilling student-teachers' during video recording teaching practice supervision and or assessment. The study also proffers recommendations to alleviate the complexities encountered during video recording teaching practice supervision.

When teachers reflect on their practice, they can identify areas of strength and areas of growth—both of which can improve the quality of their teaching (Jaeger, 2013). However, university in-service undergraduate student-teachers' in the Zimbabwean context, are today faced with competing debilitating factors to achieve this end. Many student-teachers' can not reflect on their teaching practices due to realities associated with video recording. Although, by incorporating video recording into a teacher's reflective practices, the teacher can revisit the lesson or activity as if they were instantly transported back to that classroom (Gibbons et al, 2019), and it can promote personal growth, be a cost-effective form of professional development (PD), and be used by evaluators to measure teachers' strengths and weaknesses. Gibbons et al (2019) further noted that preservice teachers, mentor teachers, and university supervisors used video reflection in different ways, all geared

ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume VIII Issue IX September 2024



toward improving instruction and growing as a professional.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Teaching Practice (TP) was integrated and became a major component in the Zimbabwean university teacher education curricula assessment since time immemorial. In-service students doing a two-year Bachelor of Education degree program would proceed on teaching practice in their second year of study, while counterparts doing a four-year pre-service degree would go for teaching practice in their third year of study. Previously, lectures would visit student teachers at their respective school's country wide for TP assessment and grade assigning. With the advent of Covid 19, movement was restricted to curb the spread of the pandemic whilst TP assessment had to continue. As a migratory strategy, universities introduced video recording TP supervision and or assessment, a transition from traditional face-to-face assessment and this subsequently became the new normal. However, it has been noted with concern that, this practice posed a handful of challenges on all key players either students or lecturers in the university setting. This study sought to explore how effective the concept of video lesson recording as a university tool for teaching practice assessment, has been from the perspective of student teachers.

# **Research Questions**

The study analysed pre-service university undergraduate part two students' representations during telemetric and or video lesson recording assessment during their TP and therefore, the following research questions (**RQS**) guided this study.

**RQS1.** What are the challenges and opportunities befalling pre-service student-teachers during online videotaping TP assessment?

**RQS2**. What form of students' support can be harnessed for effective online video lesson recording teaching practice assessment?

#### **Theoratical Framework**

The study explores the experiences of Zimbabwean University undergraduate in-service part two student teachers as they adopt and implement video lesson recording TP assessment, a new invention and interaction following the advent of Covid 19 in the year 2019. This study resonates with the nursing transitions theory work of Afaf Ibrahim Meleis that started in the mid-1960s and ended in the 1980s. The theory realises student teachers as patients, who are unable to manage transitions related to interventions and interactions. The Transitions theory comes in as a panacea to support and guide student teachers with transitions that comes with video lesson recording. Transitions theory targets at ushering a background to identify the experience of students who have to confront, live with, and cope with a situation that requires the development of new skills and behaviours, (Meleis, 2015). Changes across all educational settings cannot be avoided, and it is necessary to determine the changes with the help of appropriate facilitating and inhibiting steps that can be offered (Bohner, 2017). When faced with such inventions and interactions, student teachers on teaching practice perceive and respond to these changes in a unique way. Teaching practice supervision was traditionally done face to face and now that it is done through, video lesson recording and posting the video recording to supervisors and or lectures for assessment, and student teachers now perceive differently these changes. The main thrust of the nursing transitions theory applied to education, is to guide universities and faculties on how to prepare lecturers and student teachers for andragogy and assessment transitions brought in by the advent of Covid 19, in this case, a transition from traditional face to face to video lesson recording teaching practice assessment. This implies that once faced with new changes people should have a deep and clear understanding of what they ought to do, so that they become prepared for the change mentally otherwise they will not adopt it, (Sithole and Hahlani, 2022). The transitions theory provides universities and faculties an opportunity to understand the needs of students and lecturers hence prepare them for the emerging andragogy and supervision practices (video lesson recording Teaching Practice assessment).

ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume VIII Issue IX September 2024



## **METHODOLOGY**

The study focused at video recorded lesson supervision experiences of part two undergraduate in-service student teachers on teaching practice in post Covid 19 pandemic era. The research was conducted in the Faculty of Science and Technology Education of a selected university in Zimbabwe. A qualitative research methodology design was adopted by the study to solicit data from the contributors either part two pre-service student teachers on teaching practice. An open ended google form questionnaire was distributed to twenty three student teachers on TP through a google classroom platform. Students were invited to join the class using their student email accounts, student personal Gmail accounts and or provided link. Nineteen students out of the twenty-three successfully joined the class, responded to and returned the assigned questionnaire. This approach was adopted since it enabled easy access of the targeted population of pre-service university part two students' teachers on teaching practice and who are geographical scattered all over the country and or even abroad.

## **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data obtained by open-ended questionnaires were analysed using the content analysis strategy. Data provided by the student-teachers was coded into related units to come up with thematic components that are related. Related thematic components of data were then presented and analysed for verbatim, using pseudonyms for confidentiality.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study explored the experiences of part two undergraduate in-service student-teachers of a selected university in Zimbabwe during their transition journey towards video teaching practice supervision a response to the advent of Covid 19 pandemic. Results of the study show that student teachers were mainly challenged in video capturing and submission of the lesson online to a distant lecturer. Data collected from participants were analysed through the following revealed themes: what are the challenges University undergraduate part two students' face during transition to online teaching practice supervision, and what form of students' support can be harnessed for effective adoption of the videotaping teaching practice supervision interventions and interactions.

# Challenges faced in the transition towards videotaping teaching practice supervision.

Study findings reveal that student teachers were not prepared for the transition either to have their lessons assessed through videos at the expense of traditional face-to-face supervision. Student-teachers as participants of the study see eye to eye, as they responded to the open ended questionnaire sent to them on the google classroom learning platform, soliciting on their perceptions on the intervention and interaction:

As part two students on teaching practice, we thought lecturers were to visit us physically at our schools for assessing us as we teach. To my surprise, I was allocated a teaching practice supervisor, to whom I was requested to send videos of my teaching, lesson plan, schemes of work and log book, by the university work based supervision coordinator. **Student 4** 

Student teachers also concur that:

We were not formerly made aware and inducted on the new intervention and interaction mode of assessment we are bound to embrace, "Videotaping teaching practice supervision" hence I was expecting the usual traditional visits at my respective school by teaching practice supervisors. **Student 2** 

In support of student 2 participants also agree that:

We were not procedurally informed of the transition onto the new work based (videotaping) teaching practice

ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume VIII Issue IX September 2024



supervision invention and interaction mode. There is need to empower students on teaching practice on how intervention should be embraced and allow a smooth transition since the videos could not capture all the classroom skills of the teacher as policy hinders the teacher to record students. **Student 7** 

These utterances by student teacher respondents clearly reveal that they were unprepared to adopt the newly introduced intervention for teaching practice supervision since the transition just come as news to them. Students were not hinted or even inducted to the new interactions of teaching practice supervision to be effected on them. Students claim that the adhoc transition and implementation of the new invention and interaction supervision style negatively impacted on the quality of their teaching practice learning and also impact on the quality of teacher produced by the university. The sudden transition into the supervision style has frustrated some students on teaching practice who eventually failed the course due to non-submission and failure to adopt the invention and interaction and the information on the transition also filtered sometime late to some students practising in the other side of the country not well serviced wireless connectivity.

Participants of the study also alluded on the following in expression of their unpreparedness to adopt video supervision interactions during teaching practice:

I only heard of the video lesson supervision interactions for my teaching practice a week after the schools close and the date for the first submission had already lapsed. As such, I just video tapped myself teaching no one to make a late submission, get a grade/mark and be guaranteed of no repeat. **Student 15** 

Utterances by students 3, 7, 12, 13, and 19 shows unplanned transition and implementation of the supervision technique emerging due to Covid 19 outbreak, by the university and faculty as evidenced through lack of effective communication to all interested stakeholders. This resulted in students not meeting the set deadlines for submission of work and worse still propelled students into cheating and malpractices by sending dummy video lessons for the sake of passing the assessment yet compromising quality. Other participants had this to say:

I had no video camera or a phone to record the lesson proceedings at the time I was asked to submit a video tapped lesson by my assigned supervisor. As a result, I had to use a friend's phone with a very low memory. The phone require that I record in high quality which later makes the video file bigger in size making it hard to transfer online using my own data and the receiving end have challenges as well in downloading it. **Student 19** 

In support of the above students' views, other respondents remarked that:

I had challenges of finding a phone with a good picture quality and sometimes a friend recording the lesson would handle the phone upside down only to realise it later when the lesson is done. **Student 18** 

Analysis of the above student teachers' remarks indicates that, they had a torrid time in producing a standard video lesson for grading by their supervisors. These results depict that students lack the appropriate and relevant interactive technologies and skills training (nursing) to embrace video lesson supervision during their teaching practice. Student teachers' in this predicament therefore submitted poor quality lessons to their lecturers/supervisors eventually affecting their performance grades. Basing on questionnaire results, student teachers' also share the view that:

Captured videos were too large and very difficult to compress and send telematrically. I could not find a video compressor which could compress my lesson to a Gmail size video. As such, I had to upload it on one drive and share a link with my supervisor and the second one I had to share it using a USB drive. The said hindrances negatively influenced the wide adoption and transitions to video recorded lesson supervision. Student 17

Video teaching practice supervision according to utterances by student shows that they encounter challenges

ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume VIII Issue IX September 2024



of large files being captured for the lessons. Student teachers therefore, require a video compressor to reduce the file size for easy submission and accessibility by the lecturers, who bemoan accessibility challenges. This continuously implore a burden on student teachers as they strive to adopt and embrace their video lessons inventions. Faced with this transition mess, late and non-submission of video recorded lessons was witnessed on most pre-service part two undergraduate students on teaching practice, which affected completion of their studies within the stipulated time periods.

Most part two in-service student teachers of the university, particularly those practising in the country side share the view that:

Network was a major constraint inhibiting transition into video lesson submission. There is no internet connectivity at most school of the country side and our school environment is not well serviced by wireless network. This possess challenges in getting communications regarding the invention and interactions from the university and worse still sending documents telematrically to teaching practice supervisors. Worse still, most ended up submitting the recorded lessons physically to supervisors which is against the stipulated procedure by the university. **Student 14** 

Poor, unreliable and no internet connections across some parts of the country remains a major threat towards fidelity implementation and transition to video-recorded lesson supervision by practising university students the country over. Higher costs of data, travelling and subsistence costs are experienced by student teachers in their attempts to submit their video recorded lessons physically and timeously for evaluation. Moreover, student teachers on teaching practice had this to say as they responded to the questionnaire:

I did not receive any feedback from my supervisor for all the video recorded lessons, lesson plans, schemes of work and log book I submitted to the supervisor and only to see the final mark at the end of semester examinations. Feedback like discussions done during face to face supervision are crucial for continuous improvement of my teaching practice and I grossly missed these discussions throughout my teaching practice experience. Feedback, Discussions and comments from the supervisor could have reflected and improved my pedagogy skills. Student 5

Video lesson supervision according to student teachers' responses to the questionnaire had a challenge with transition since supervisors do not give instant feedback and at times do not provide feedback at all. Students caught in this net will eventually complete their teaching practice unaware of their teaching strengths and weaknesses and cannot improve on them. This has a bearing on the quality of the supervision style and eventually the produced teacher.

## Required support for effective implementation and transition to video recording supervision technique.

Intensive support on the student teacher side is called for to ensure effective implementation of videotaping lesson assessment as teaching practice grading tool, at the same time producing effective high quality teachers for both local and international schools. Responding to online questionnaire administered to them, student teachers of a selected university, on teaching practice suggested the following support be granted to them for effective integration of video lessen assessment during their teaching practice:

**Provision of technological gadgets**-students showed concern over lack of technological hardware's for video tapping to embrace faithfully video lesson assessment. In response to the questionnaire, practicing student teachers has this to say:

Some of us do not have video cameras to video tape ourselves teaching. We therefore appeal for support in acquiring such important technologies in our teaching practice. The government and our university must work hand in gloves to sure video cameras for us to use during teaching practice. **Student 10** 

Video cameras are costly for incapacitated practicing teachers hence aid from the powers that be is vital.

ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume VIII Issue IX September 2024



Government through universities' intervention in securing these cameras for students will be a good starting point in embracing video lesson technique as tool for effective student mentorship during their teaching practice. Student will use appropriate tools for the job rather than using their low memory cell phones.

**Training-** questionnaire responses also reveal that practicing student teachers lack video tapping, compressing and sending skill as they lament that:

Most of us lack proficiency in video recording, compressing and sending. This resulted in some videos recorded upside down, by contracted friends and only to be discovered when the lesson is over. More so, very large files were submitted for assessment which is data consuming on the sender's side and posse downloading and viewing challenges on the assessor's side. **Student 12** 

Training prior teaching practice in this case is inevitable. Universities in the country are mandated to develop video recording, compressing and sending module to be taught to student teachers as they prepare for their teaching practice. Short courses and workshops in this regard are also essential to impart video recording, compressing and sending skills to student teachers preparing to go on teaching practice.

**Provision of internet-** the government is mandated to provide internet all schools of the country or in all cluster centres to enable easy sending of video lessons to the mentors. In call for a hand in this regard, student teachers share the view that:

We teach in remote schools of the country which are not serviced with electricity worse internet connections. Lack of this vital service made it strenuous and costly to send the required video lessons to our mentors for assessment. We implore the government, and responsible schools to electrify schools' country wide and even service them with reliable internet: **Student 7** 

Inconsistent provision of internet services in the country's schools is one of the major impediment to the effective adoption of video lesson assessment during teaching practice. Lack of internet services for sending videos stress students and affects the quality of their teaching practice.

**Lack of feedback-** students in their responses to the questionnaire noted lack of feedback from mentors as one of the challenges encountered for quality teaching practice, and they have this to say:

Some mentors assessing our video lessons do not provide feedback for our assessed lessons. The quality of our teaching practice deteriorate in this regard since we cannot improve on our weakness and build on our strengths. The university, should put measures in place that ensure instant feedback is to students teaching practice. **Student 11** 

Checks and measures must be put in place to ensure that supervisors provide feedback for student teaching. Submission of graded video lessons and comments attached could probably be submitted to the TP coordinator who will check and forward the comments and video to the respective student.

## CONCLUSIONS

In good spirit, Zimbabwean universities, can model quality in-service teachers through a transition from face to face towards video teaching practice supervision. However, the quality of teachers produced is deteriorating due to a myriad of challenges encountered during transition towards the implementation of the videotaping supervision interaction mode. As in-service student teachers practice at schools they are currently teaching, placement challenges are surpassed in this transition journey, but other challenges associated with telemetric (videotaping) teaching practice supervision still persist. Instead of getting valuable experience through video teaching practice supervision, students teachers are hampered and stressed by lack of technological gadgets to capture and compress video lessons, lack of skills to capture videos, lack of connectivity for submission of video lessons, high cost of data for sending video lessons, lack of feedback from supervisors, adhoc

ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume VIII Issue IX September 2024



communication regarding assessment procedures by the university, lack of student teacher support, and strict policies against recording students in the lesson among others. Instead of reinforcing theory concepts learnt, the video lessons assessment experience may make teaching practice appear irrelevant, since it is plagued with challenges on the student teacher side, (Makoema, S, 2017).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Given all these challenges befalling in-service student teachers on video teaching practice supervision at the university, appropriate intervention strategies must be sought and effected with urgency if the nursing transition (video teaching practice supervision) has to be adopted as an intervention that foster the intended attributes in student teachers. Government through respective universities should facilitate this transition by providing technological gadgets like video cameras to student teachers, train student teachers on video tapping, video compressing and telematric video submission skills prior their teaching practice, provide internet connectivity to all schools in the country, and plan for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that enhance and campaign for video lesson supervision during teaching practice. Supervisors in this case lecturers, must be staff developed on video lesson supervision to capacitate them with transition skills that enable them to assess video, assign grades, and provide immediate feedback, and engage students in virtual discussions of lessons supervised so that they build on their strengths at the same time improving on their service delivery and wide adoption of video lesson supervision intervention.

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