

Full Length Research Paper

Professional diffidence and ebbs in self-efficacy as lecturers undertake teaching practice supervision in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The experiences of students undergoing teacher-training have been scrutinised by many stakeholders in the education fraternity for a diversity of reasons. The main purpose of the current study was to examine the levels of professional self-efficacy on the part of college and university lecturers during teaching practice supervision. The study was theoretically anchored on a single psychological theory, namely Bandura's social learning theory. The descriptive survey and the phenomenological research designs were used as a form of methodological triangulation. Open-ended questionnaires were the data collection instruments. A sample of 34 teachers' college lecturers and 30 university lecturers all involved in teaching practice supervision took part in the study. The empirical investigation established that 58% of the respondents conceded that they sometimes felt unsure of how best to deal with some problematic teaching practice supervision situations. A substantial proportion of the research participants acknowledged that they were more confident to supervise students who specialised in subjects whose content they were familiar with. More than sixty-five percent of the lecturers recommended that practical subjects and other subjects requiring specialist or technical knowledge should be assessed by lecturers with the required professional and technical/ content knowhow so as to minimise assessment bias attributable to incompetence. The researchers recommended that workshops should be conducted to enhance lecturers' levels of confidence as they undertake teaching practice supervision amid the growing number of students and the accompanying challenges of an assortment of subject specialisation areas.

Key words: Teaching practice, supervision, specialist subject areas, self-efficacy, halo effect, assessment

Introduction

One noticeable rung in teacher-training is teaching practice where student teachers are supervised on several occasions while teaching, not necessarily by lecturers from their areas of subject specialisation, but by any lecturer from their respective institutions. In the entire process of transforming students from being neophytes in the teaching profession to qualified classroom practitioners, lecturers remain a vital and almost indispensable cog (McDonald, 2014). This implies that lecturers remain undeniable role models to student teachers throughout the teacher training process (Kufakunesu, Dekeza and Dzingo, 2013). There is a multiplicity of variables which lecturers have to deal with

as they undertake teaching practice supervision. For instance, in the modern set-up where there is mass production of teachers and diversity in areas of subject specialisation, it is possible that lecturers sometimes find themselves grappling with the mismatches between their areas of academic specialisation and those of their supervisees. Such a phenomenon can deplete the lecturers' levels of self-efficacy and professional confidence during teaching practice assessment. If the very lecturers who are expected to positively influence student teachers who are on teaching practice do a shoddy job or exude diffidence and uncertainty during assessment, the quest to produce a properly trained classroom practitioner is bound to be compromised. This research paper is an endeavour to unravel the extent to

which college and university lecturers teeter on the brink of professional dysfunction due to low levels of self-efficacy and confidence during teaching practice supervision.

Background to the Study

In essence, teaching practice refers to the various experiences to which student teachers are exposed when they work in classrooms and schools (Kufakunesu, et al, 2013:1554; Marais and Meier, 2004:221). According to Kiggundu and Nayimuli (2009:345) teaching practice is a crucial phase of teacher training which accords student teachers empirical experience in the real teaching and learning context. Perry (2004:4) and Kiggundu and Nayimuli (2009:345) as well as Kufakunesu, et al. (2013:1554) indicate that teaching practice normally elicits a diversity of affective responses such as anticipation, anxiety, excitement and apprehension in the student teachers especially at the inception of their teaching practice. According to Abdulkareem (2001:15), "supervision is the process of overseeing the ability of people to meet the goals of the organisation in which they work". Kufakunesu, et al. (2013:1555) view supervision as an artistic, democratic, humanistic, and inclusive leadership exercise which is geared to evaluate and improve all the aspects of the educational process.

During teaching practice supervision in Zimbabwe and other countries such as Zambia and Nigeria, lecturers are normally expected to supervise any student despite the area of subject specialisation. In Zimbabwe, student teachers do not have the right to select the lecturers who can supervise them while on teaching practice. Moreover, student teachers on teaching practice cannot determine when college or university lecturers are to visit them for supervision. Kufakunesu, et al. (2013: 1557) claim that a mismatch between a student teacher's subject specialisation and that of the lecturer can be a bone of contention during teaching practice supervision. A study by Kufakunesu, et al (2013:1563) established that 80 % of the respondents in the sample they used indicated that they preferred being supervised by lecturers from their respective subject specialisations. The majority of the research participants who supported this notion argued that it was much easier for lecturers in their subject areas to exercise objectivity and show them empathy as theorised by Carl Rogers (Thompson and Henderson, 2007:165). Student teachers majoring in Early Childhood Development were singularly vocal about this issue as they claimed that the peculiarity of Early Childhood Education issues sometimes eludes some lecturers from the general courses. The technical aspects of Early Childhood Development such as the importance of play can be viewed as trivial by some lecturers who did not major in Early Childhood Development. Such an experience is likely to disadvantage the Early Childhood Development student teachers (Kufakunesu, et al, 2013:1564). It is against such a background that a study meant to explore the possibility of vacillations in the professional self-efficacy of lecturers during teaching practice assessment was undertaken.

Wambugu, Barmao and Ng'eno (2013) established through research that there exists no difference between

student teachers' perceptions of teaching practice assessment by area of specialisation. The study found out that student teachers in various areas of subject specialisation were uniformly satisfied with the assessment methods they were exposed to. Similar results were also found by Alnaji (2000) who established that the extent to which student teachers benefited from teaching practice supervision was moderate regardless of their areas of subject specialisation. On the contrary, Bishir (2005) found out through a research study involving student teachers at the University of Ebb that the professional needs of student teachers in the primary school category were ignored while those of student teachers in the secondary school cycle were met. The contradictory outcomes of these studies warrant further scholarly inquiry into the issue. Moreover, the outlined studies left a gap with regard to psychological attributes of college and university lecturers during teaching practice supervision, hence the current study.

It came to the attention of Kufakunesu, et al. (2013:1564) that numerous student teachers were enthusiastic to be given as much constructive feedback after supervision as possible. The study revealed that post-supervision discussions normally imbue student teachers with more confidence in their professional operations coupled with insulating them from repeatedly making the same mistakes. According to McDonald (2014) a study undertaken by Fayne (2007) in America with a sample of 220 student teachers noted that their visiting lecturers took their time to listen, talk and give appropriate feedback. The study also confirmed the view that the visiting lecturers gave the student teachers useful and informative feedback. In cases where lecturers conduct teaching practice supervision with depleted levels of self-efficacy, it is highly likely that such lecturers may not be able to undertake fruitful post-supervision discussions. The zeal to ascertain the possibility of having lecturers who get engulfed by low ebbs of self-efficacy during teaching practice supervision acted as an impetus for undertaking the current study.

Ngara, Ngwarai and Ngara (2013) established that during supervision, supervisors normally focus on areas such as the use of skills like chalkboard writing, introducing lessons, class discipline and the use of teaching aids while relegating aspects such as the gradual incremental professional development of student teachers, novel instructional approaches adopted and stimulus variation. Bhargava (2009) established that the supervision of student teachers ignored crucial aspects of the student teacher as a member of the wider community. The study by Ngara, et al (2013) insinuates that lecturers are not perfect when they undertake teaching practice supervision. There remains the possibility that some lecturer variables can reduce the quality of the teaching practice supervision which they offer.

It was empirically established by Butler and Cuenca (2012), Darling-Hammond (2006) and Zeichner (2010) that when visiting lecturers are people who teach in the area of specialisation of the student teacher, there are greater chances for fostering and sustaining links and a common language between school and the initial teacher education provider. According to Ell (2011) the

New Zealand Teachers Council has made it mandatory that student teachers must be visited by lecturers who specifically teach in their degree programme in an attempt to improve the alignment of understandings between initial teacher education providers and schools. In Zimbabwe, it is possible for student teachers to be supervised by lecturers who never taught any modules in their degree programme during the elementary stages of their teacher training programme.

Grudnoff and Williams (2010) and Hagger, Burn, Mutton and Brindley (2008) posit that some teacher education programmes can be rated as too theoretical and that instructional programmes at provider colleges and universities are rather too idealistic (Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson and Fry, 2004). According to Russell and Chapman (2001) and Toomey et al., (2005) there are some teachers in schools who feel that college and university lecturers are to some extent out of touch with reality and preoccupied with theory at the expense of pedagogical practice. When college and university lecturers are treated by teachers at the schools where they intend to assess students on teaching practice with such a mentality, one wonders if such attitudes by school teachers do not stain the professional confidence of the lecturers.

McDonald (2014) reports that Koerner, Rust, and Baumgartner (2002) undertook a study involving 21 student teachers, seven university based supervisors and 21 associate teachers. The study revealed that there were missed opportunities by visiting college and university lecturers in the supervision process. Such a phenomenon was attributed to variables such as observation visits that were too short, little follow up and discussion and a lack of constructive feedback at the end of each supervision exercise. Although the study established that visiting lecturers played a critical role in the triad of support, their roles were given the least recognition by the student teachers who took part in the study (McDonald, 2014). Although the outlined study generated vital outcomes regarding the role of college and university lecturers in the context of teaching practice supervision, it did not tackle the issue of professional diffidence on the part of the lecturers. Consequently, the current study was geared to bridge that gap.

McDonald (2014) maintains that visiting college and university lecturers sometimes do not realise how crucial the role they can play during teaching practice supervision is and the impact their presence has at a given school. Zeichner (2005:123) argues that college and university lecturers should deliberately think consciously about their role as teacher educators and engage in the same sort of professional self-study and introspection to determine the extent to which what they do during teaching practice supervision meets the needs of the student teachers. According to Beck and Kosnik (2002) habitually visiting schools can go a long way towards elevating the level of lecturers' awareness of the complexities in the teaching and learning progress for student teachers

Another study which chronicles the utility of teaching practice supervision to student teachers was undertaken by Maphosa and Ndamba (2012). The study established that teaching practice supervision helps student

teachers to put into practice the teaching methods promoted in their teacher education curriculum, evaluate their teaching and reflect on their instructional practice. According to Tillema (2009) teaching practice supervision aims at offering information feedback to assist each student teacher to gain insight into his or her performance so as to take stock of the already attained level of professional growth. Moreover, student teachers are assessed in order to provide information on how well they are performing to identify difficulties and alert them to areas that need to be revamped (Maphosa and Ndamba, 2012; Nyaumwe and Mavhunga, 2005). Assessment during teaching practice also serves as a sieve which ensures that only those student teachers who have attained an acceptable level of professional proficiency are allowed into the teaching field (Chakanyuka, 2006; Maphosa and Ndamba, 2012). Given the crucial nature of teaching practice supervision as outlined above, it is imperative that college and university lecturers undertake the assessment exercise to the best of their abilities. It can be argued that lecturers can only perform their duties well when they believe in their own professional competence and are saturated with professional self-efficacy. It is in the current study that the issue of lecturers' levels of self-confidence and self-efficacy during teaching practice supervision is scrutinised.

Theoretical Framework

The current study was based on Bandura's cognitive social learning theory particularly focusing on the principle of self-efficacy. Bandura (1990) maintains that self-efficacy is a crucial determinant of human functioning in practically all areas of human existence (Bandura, 1990). Self-efficacy is the belief by people that they can undertake a given task and produces the desirable results (McLean, 2003:31; Swartz, et al, 2011:133). People with a high level of self-efficacy normally exert much effort to ensure that their initial belief in their own abilities is fulfilled (Santrock, 2004:226). Self-efficacy can be transmitted from educators to their students (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2001:800). An educator with a high level of self-efficacy is open-minded, creative and has good organisational skills (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001:800). This to some extent implies that high levels of self-efficacy on the part of supervising lecturers can positively elevate the levels of self-efficacy on the part of their supervisees during teaching practice.

Bandura (1990:316) defines self-efficacy as people's "beliefs in their capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to exercise control over task demands". Thus, self-efficacy judgements are not concerned with one's skills, but with one's judgements of what one can accomplish with these skills. The level of an individual's self-efficacy can be determined by variables such as previous experiences, vicarious reinforcement and social persuasion as well as physiological and emotional states (Powell, Bordoloi and Ryan, 2007; Schulze, 2010:434).

According to Schulze (2010:434), a person's previous experiences act as the most powerful determinant of a person's self-efficacy. Taking stock of

one's previous accomplishments can boost one's expectations and self-efficacy while previous failures or frustrating experiences can dampen hope for success in future. This implies that lecturers who had previously been undertaking fruitful teaching practice supervision in a variety of areas are bound to remain confident whenever they undertake such supervision. On the other hand, previous difficulties encountered during teaching practice supervision are likely to cast long negative shadows on the professional competence of lecturers whenever they supervise student teachers (Schulze, 2010:434).

Schulze (2010:434) posits that a person's self-efficacy can be improved by vicariously observing a model registering success in undertaking a given task. Such vicarious modelling is highly probable particularly when the observer and the model have real or imaginary similarities. An individual's self-efficacy can also be positively influenced by coaching and positive evaluative feedback on a task one would have performed. Schulze (2010:434) names this variable social persuasion and proceeds to remark that it is generally easier to decrease a person's self-efficacy than to increase it.

A person's physiological and emotional states can influence his or her level of self-efficacy. Negative emotions such as stress and anxiety coupled with physical fatigue can negatively impinge upon a person's self-efficacy (Schulze, 2010:434). Given that college and university lecturers sometimes travel for long hours to reach schools situated in very remote areas, one wonders if the resultant emotional and physiological states do not negatively influence their self-efficacy levels as they conduct teaching practice supervision.

Major Research Questions

The study was centred on the following major research questions directed at college and university lecturers:

- To what extent can you rate yourself as sufficiently equipped to supervise student teachers majoring in academic disciplines which are different from your area of academic specialisation?
- Have you ever encountered cases where your confidence ebbed away while conducting teaching practice supervision?
- How does the previous performance of a given student teacher influence the way you rate the student teacher?

Research Methodology

As a form of methodological triangulation, the researchers used two research designs which are the descriptive survey and the phenomenological research designs. Kufakunesu (2011:31) and Sidhu (2001) define a descriptive survey research design as an investigation technique in which the researcher concentrates on describing and interpreting the existing phenomenon in the process of effects, attitudes, processes and beliefs. The descriptive survey was deemed appropriate because it gave the research participants the opportunity to pour out their hearts regarding their levels

of professional self-efficacy while conducting teaching practice supervision.

The phenomenological research design was simultaneously used together with the descriptive survey research design. Kufakunesu and Dekeza (2017:54) elaborate, "the phenomenologists are concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspective of people involved". In support of this, Kufakunesu, Ganga and Chinyoka (2012:124-125) indicate that in phenomenological research, the lived experiences of the individuals who are participating or those who at some point participated in the situation or subject being explored are examined. Chilisa and Preece (2005:142) together with Groenewald (2004:44) emphasise that the phenomenological research design delves on studying people's experiences in an attempt to garner the meticulous details of their social circumstances. The phenomenological research design was appropriate in the current study because it accorded the researchers the opportunity to explore the perceptions of college and university lecturers regarding their levels of professional self-efficacy as they undertook teaching practice supervision.

From a population of more than 500 lecturers involved in teacher education in Zimbabwe, a gender balanced sample of 64 lecturers who had been undertaking teaching practice supervision was selected. The study focused on four provinces in Zimbabwe, namely, Masvingo, Manicaland, Bulawayo Metropolitan and Harare Metropolitan provinces. Of the 64 lecturers who took part in the study, 34 were teachers' college lecturers and 30 were university lecturers. Twenty college lecturers worked at teachers' colleges which trained primary school teachers while the remaining 14 lecturers worked at secondary teachers' colleges. The stratified random sampling method was employed to generate a sample which is to a great extent representative of the population. The stratification was done on the basis of a number of variables such as gender, nature of teacher-training institution and professional experience.

After considering variables such as the level of literacy of the research participants, the need to maintain anonymity and the hectic professional programmes of the lecturers, the researcher used open-ended questionnaires as data gathering instruments. Swartz et al (2011:29) and Kufakunesu (2011:34) point out that a questionnaire is a document which contains relevant questions that the researcher intends to pose to the research participants. According to Kufakunesu and Dekeza (2017:54) a questionnaire is a list of methodically and carefully structured questions prepared by the researcher to elicit responses from research participants for the sake of data collection. The lecturers completed the questionnaires when it was convenient for them and all the distributed questionnaires were returned.

Research Findings

The empirical investigation generated the following major research findings in line with the major research questions:

- All the 64 research participants rated themselves as confident and imbued with self-efficacy to undertake teaching practice supervision when supervising student teachers majoring in the lecturers' areas of subject specialisation.
- Forty-two out of the 64 lecturers, that is, 65.625%, admitted that supervising students majoring in specialist subjects such as Early Childhood Development, Special Need Education, practical subjects and some science subjects can result in half-baked assessment when the supervision is undertaken by a non-specialist.
- Fifty-eight per cent of the respondents conceded that they encountered at least one occasion where they felt devoid of confidence in undertaking their professional duties during teaching practice supervision especially when dealing with sticky situations where a lot of variables are at play.
- Only 39% of the research informants acknowledged that the scores earned by student teachers in preceding assessments tend to persuade them to confirm the established trend especially if the student teachers' previous scores are too low or too high.
- The impact of physical and emotional states on lecturers' levels of self-efficacy during teaching supervision was acknowledged by a relatively small proportion of the research participants.

Discussion of Findings

The gathered data revealed that all the 64 lecturers who took part in the study rated themselves as adequately qualified to undertake teaching practice supervision in general. They argued that it was part of what they have been trained to do as lecturers. In defence of their positions, some lecturers maintained that the several workshops which they had attended at their respective institutions have equipped them to confidently undertake teaching practice supervision. According to the college and university lecturers, the fact that the supervision instruments which they used clearly outlined what to look for when one is supervising student teachers made their work quite clear and simple. Therefore, they declared that their professional self-efficacy to conduct teaching practice supervision remained high. One college lecturer remarked:

Undertaking teaching practice supervision is part of my job description just like conducting lectures. Therefore, I rate myself as quite confident to generally supervise student teachers.

Fifty-seven out of the 64 research participants remarked that they were confident to supervise student teachers teaching any subject different from their area of subject specialisation as long as the subject was not highly specialist or technical in nature. All the 14 lecturers from primary school teachers' colleges actually declared that they were comfortable to supervise student teachers

teaching any subject in the primary school curriculum. The other 43 respondents pointed out that at secondary school level most subjects were generally understandable and they always managed to establish whether meaningful learning was taking place or not. In support of this view, one university lecturer remarked:

Subjects such as all the humanities and sciences and some practical subjects such as Agriculture are understandable to most lecturers. Therefore, one virtually remains confident to supervise student teachers teaching these subjects.

The results of the empirical investigation also revealed that 42 out of the 64 respondents expressed the view that student teachers teaching specialist subjects such as Early Child Development, Special Needs Education and practical subjects such as Technical Graphics, Fashion and Fabrics and Woodwork were better off when they were supervised by lecturers from their respective subject specialisations. While acknowledging that it was easy to ascertain if a student teacher in any subject area has up-to-date teaching practice records, aspects such as the student teacher's level of content mastery were better ascertained by lecturers from their subject areas. This is consistent with the results of a study conducted by Kufakunesu, et al. (2013:1563) in which the respondents pointed that it was generally expedient to ensure that student teachers teaching specialist subjects are supervised by specialist lecturers. The results of the current study also tally with what Bishir (2005) established regarding the importance of subject specialisation as a determinant of the quality of teaching practice supervision. Nevertheless, the findings were in contradiction to the findings of the studies by Wambugu, et al (2013) and Alnaji (2000) in which the issue of subject specialisation was found to be immaterial among student teachers. The research participants conceded that their levels of professional confidence tend to vacillate when supervising a student teacher teaching a subject which the lecturer has least knowledge in.

The fact that specialist areas such as Early Childhood Development and Special Needs Education normally have a supervision criterion which is to some extent different from that used in other subjects was cited as a serious source of discomfort on the part of the non-specialist lecturers. Specialist terms such as, 'portfolio', 'anecdotal records', 'needs assessment' and 'community engagement project' were cited as examples of terms which can elude lecturers while undertaking teaching practice supervision. The lecturers who took part in the study recommended that specialist subjects should be supervised by the respective specialist lecturers for the benefit of the student teachers. The 42 respondents admitted that they were bound to be devoid of confidence especially during the post-supervision discussion with the student teachers. McDonald (2014) and Fayne (2007) established that feedback given during the post-supervision discussion was very crucial to virtually all student teachers. Moreover, the lecturers lamented that their confidence levels were lowered by the prospect of being asked

something highly technical by the student teachers. One lecturer confessed that there were times when lecturers put on a brave face in front of student teachers yet inwardly they would be unsure of themselves. The lecturers also admitted that it was very easy to peg a student teacher's mark at a level which is too low or too high in cases where one is not familiar with the finer details of the subject being taught by the student teacher. The results confirmed the insinuations made by Ngara, et al (2013) who pointed out that sometimes lecturers were not sure of themselves during teaching practice supervision. Even the findings by McDonald (2014) and Koerner, et al (2002) regarding the possibility that sometimes post-supervision discussions were not of the expected quality because of variables attributable to the lecturers were to some extent confirmed.

The current study established that 75% of the research participants conceded that they at some point encountered situations which could be rated as problematic during teaching practice supervision. Examples which were given include cases where a student teacher had very good teaching practice documents but faltered in the lesson delivery, student teacher with disorderly teaching practice documents but very well in lesson delivery and when the student teacher is away from the station for unclear reasons and the documents found are not up to date. However, only 58% of the respondents revealed that such tricky situations managed to have a dent on their self-efficacy and confidence levels. The remaining 17% of the respondents pointed out their confidence levels were not fazed by the tricky situations which sometimes crop up during teaching practice supervision. They argued that since the supervision instruments have marks for the various aspects which a supervisor has to look at, it was not a problem if a student teacher scores high marks in one aspect and low marks in another. On the other hand, some respondents admitted that inconsistent achievement by a student teacher on the different aspects considered during teaching practice supervision sometimes caused the lecturer to give a mark which is too low or too high. In trying to elaborate this, one university lecturer remarked:

If a student teacher has good records but delivers a lesson awkwardly, the lecturer may be tempted to reduce the marks awarded to the student for the good records as a result of being frustrated by the poor lesson delivery. However, the lecturer may feel psychologically guilty for lacking objectivity while simultaneously trying to defend himself or herself by pointing at the poor lesson delivery. Such a situation can negatively impinge upon the lecturer's confidence.

Regarding the influence of a student teacher's previous performance on the mark awarded by lecturers, 61% of the lecturers pointed out that they were not in any way affected by a student teacher's previous performance. They argued that each supervision visit was independent of the previous or future ones and therefore lecturers should award marks strictly on the basis of the work presented on the day of the visit. However, 39% of the respondents admitted that there was a temptation to

maintain the status quo especially if the previous assessors rated the student as distinctive. This group of respondents indicated that it was possible to rate a student as outstanding as a result of being influenced by the student teacher's performance in previous supervisions. As far as student teachers with poor previous scores were concerned, the majority of the lecturers maintained that they rated their work objectively guided by the supervision instrument without being sentimental in any way. However, 19% of the lecturers who took part in the current study pointed out that they were sometimes tempted to award low marks fearing being accused of favouritism and laxity. This category of respondents remarked that one wishes such students are supervised by someone else because their objectivity tends to be clouded by the student teacher's past previous performance. In a way, they acknowledged that their professional self-efficacy was to some extent soiled by the student teachers' streak of poor previous scores. This subjective way of undertaking teaching practice supervision is a confirmation of the findings undertaken by Owusu and Brown (2014) in which student teachers lambasted some lecturers for lacking professional objectivity during teaching practice supervision.

Thirteen percent of the lecturers acknowledged that there were situations where they were influenced by the halo effect while undertaking teaching practice supervision. Drummond and Jones (2010:36) define the halo effect as a situation whereby the ratings are to some extent affected by the good impressions of the examinee. More explicitly, halo effect is a situation whereby variables apart from the observation or evaluation impinge upon the outsider observer's ratings (Hennington, Bradley, Crews, and Hennington, 2013:2). This group of lecturers revealed that student teachers who rushed to welcome them upon arrival at the station or those who quickly acknowledged their shortcomings were likely to be treated with more lenience than their dodgy or argumentative counterparts. The lecturers indicated that they sometimes felt unsure of their decisions especially when they try to establish whether being dodgy on the part of student teachers should be interpreted as lack of preparedness or a natural consequence of anxiety which emanates from thinking about the prospect of being supervised as postulated by Perry (2004:4) and Kiggundu and Nayimuli (2009:345) as well Kufakunesu, et al (2013:1554). These few research participants admitted that although they proceeded to supervise the student teachers in such situations, they were not sure if they were performing their professional duties to the best of their abilities.

In response to questionnaire items regarding the impact of physiological and emotional states on their professional self-efficacy with regard to teaching practice supervision, the lecturers unanimously agreed that teaching practice supervision trips in Zimbabwe were generally arduous and energy sapping. Examples of challenges which made teaching practice tours dreary and energy depleting include poor road networks and the wide geographical scatter of some schools. Forty-seven out of the 64 lecturers claimed that although teaching practice supervision tours were stressful and tiresome, they always made sure that they performed

their professional duties to the best of their abilities. However, the remaining 17 lecturers responded differently. They reported that there were some situations where one gets so tired that one begins to wonder if one is still mentally prepared to objectively supervise student teachers. In other words, these 17 lecturers conceded that a person's professional self-efficacy can be enervated by one's emotional and physiological states as indicated by Schulze (2010:434). One lecturer in this category remarked:

Imagine yourself getting to a school with all your body covered in dust. A mere glance at you confirms that you are plagued by fatigue and the staff members at the school look at you in a manner tinted with sarcasm. That way you are persuaded to feel jittery and all you want is to hurriedly supervise the student teacher and go away to a place where you can freshen up and rest.

Concluding Remarks

The current study established that lecturers generally feel confident to undertake teaching practice supervision in cases where specialist or highly technical subjects are not involved. A significant proportion of the college and university lecturers who took part in the study pointed out that their levels of professional confidence normally get stained when supervising student teachers majoring in specialist areas which the lecturers had little or no academic knowledge of. Some of the lecturers who participated in the study were honest enough to admit that they once encountered problematic situations during teaching practice supervision which dampened their professional self-efficacy. A small proportion of the respondents pointed out that their integrity to undertake objective teaching practice supervision was shaken by the student teachers' previous performance especially in cases where the previous performance was too low or too high. Physiological and emotional states were implicated by a relatively small percentage of the research participants for triggering negative surges in professional self-efficacy on the part of the lecturers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the empirical investigations in the current study, the following recommendations were made:

- College and university lecturers should regularly conduct seminars and workshops to deliberate on how best to undertake teaching practice supervision in cases where there is a mismatch between the subject specialisation areas of the student teachers and lecturers.
- As much as possible, student teachers teaching subjects requiring specialist knowhow or other technical expertise should be assessed by lecturers from their respective subject areas.
- Effort must be made to insulate lecturers from the negative effects of physiological and

emotional states by assigning them to visit schools which are geographically adjacent to each other. Alternatively, lecturers need to be tasked to visit a reasonable number of schools at a given time so that they are not stretched beyond elasticity, that is, they are not physically drained, a situation which can negatively affect their professional self-efficacy.

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