A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE ROLE OF ACTION RESEARCH IN IMPROVING TEACHER EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE: THE CASE OF THREE MASVINGO TEACHERS' COLLEGES

BY

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my wife, Tendai Mavundutse, who urged me on and endured many sleepless nights typing this thesis.

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ABSTRACT

In Zimbabwe, there is no school for teacher educators. People who become teacher educators do so after gaining primary or secondary school teaching experience. Teacher educators may not have the necessary means to determine what they know and what they do not know. For this reason, this study sought to evaluate the experiences of teacher educators who had undergone a two-year intervention training project on action research. This was a qualitative phenomenological study, whose data were generated through interviews, focus group discussions, personal life stories and observations. Six participants considered to be rich informants were purposively selected for this case study.

The study, guided by Fullan's (2007) theory of change, also involved an inductive process leading to the generation of themes, which was followed by an interpretive discourse analysis. Five major themes emerged from the study, namely: evidence of reflection, interactive classrooms/lecture rooms as a source of joy, the need to change traditional ways of educating teachers; poor remuneration for participants who attend gruelling MQEP workshops, and the need for the involvement of all stakeholders from planning to exit of donor-funded projects.

Implications drawn from the study include the need to incorporate action research into teacher education programmes or curricula. In that regard, the establishment of teacher educator institutions would help in the development of teacher educators. The study also notes the need for donor-driven projects to involve project beneficiaries so that both formative and summative evaluation strategies are collectively generated, to allow meaningful conclusions to be drawn from these projects. With respect to the Masvingo Quality Education Project, the major finding was that action research has the potential to improve teacher education.

Table of contents

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF APPENDICES

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ARC	African Risk Capacity
BQEP	Bikita Quality Education Project
Col.	College
D/PED	Deputy Provincial Education Director
DTE	Department of Teacher Education
LCD	Liquid Crystal Display
MoPSE	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
MQEP	Masvingo Quality Education Project
PTH	Primary Teachers' Higher
PTL	Primary Teachers' Lower
QEP	Quality Education Project
R.J.C.	Rhodesia Junior Certificate
SACMEC	Southern and East African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
Sch.	School
SCN	Save the Children Norway
SCN-Z	Save the Children Norway-Zimbabwe
Sub Std A	Sub-Standard A
Sub Std B	Sub-Standard B

Tr.	Teacher
T3	Teacher Grade 3
T4	Teacher Grade 4
Tot.	Total
QEP	Quality Education Project
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UZ	University of Zimbabwe
VP	Vice Principal

CHAPTER 1

THE SETTING AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by presenting the background to the study, the statement of the problem, and the major research question and sub-questions. The objectives of the study are covered by the research questions and the justification of the study. The chapter also includes the delimitations of the study, limitations of the study, and ends with the definitions of key terms and the chapter summary. I will begin by presenting the background to the study.

1.2 Background to the study

The quality of teachers in Zimbabwe and other southern and eastern African countries is documented in many sources. For instance, the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) (1995) established that children in fifteen southern and eastern African countries had very low reading levels at primary school level. With this concern about the quality of education, the World Education Forum in Dakar of 2000 came up with six goals to be realised if Education for All (EFA) was to be achieved globally by 2015 (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2005). The Dakar Forum (2000) acknowledged that achieving universal education without considering the aspect of quality would not be good enough. To this end, a holistic approach was necessary to ensure that both the qualitative and quantitative aspects to quality were addressed. For this reason, teacher quality and student performance should be dependent upon effective evaluation methodologies for those aspects that hinge on the quality of education (Hong & Lawrence, 2011).

The issue of quality education is also applicable to teacher educators in relation to student teacher performance, which ultimately cascades down to the primary or secondary school learner. UNICEF's (2000) characterisation of quality education includes, among other facets, the use by trained teachers of child-centred teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms

and schools and skilful learner assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities in the quality of education in schools (p.3).

From the quality of education above, I had a problem with the use of the term 'training' because if teachers are trained, quality may not be easily achieved, since training focuses on skills development at the expense of knowledge. Quality teachers must necessarily have both knowledge and skills and therefore need to be educated (Nager & Shapiro, 2007). The researcher further noted from the definition that quality teaching was reflected in quality interaction between learner and content, which was enabled by learner-centred methodologies. The quality of teachers was thus reflective of the quality of teacher educators and the reverse was also true. This was so because teachers became who or what they are because of the teacher educators who taught them (Nager & Shapiro, 2007).

As a result of the recommendations of the Dakar Forum of 2000, the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) also carried out studies whose results revealed concerns over the quality of primary education in three African countries (Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa) (Murimba, 2005). Murimba (2005) identified two SACMEQ goals relating to the quality of education. The first goal was to expand opportunities for educational planners to acquire the technical skills required to monitor and evaluate the quality of basic education. The assumption was that improving the quality of primary teacher education was likely to have a corresponding effect on the quality of primary school education. It was not only the educational planners who required technical skills, teacher educators also required those technical skills that education planners were exposed to. The second goal was to generate information that could be used by decision makers to plan and improve the quality of education at primary school and primary teacher education levels. While concerns such as good infrastructure, human and material resources and equity in the provision of education were also pivotal to the provision of quality education, teachers' characteristics and their view-points on

teaching and learning in the classroom (inside or outside) also needed attention (Johannessen, 2001). Teacher educators also required these technical skills because the teachers produced by teacher educators in teachers' colleges have a bearing on the quality of education received by their learners in respective learning institutions in the long run.

As if responding to the Dakar Declaration of 2000, Save the Children Norway (SCN) launched the Quality Education Project (QEP) in Ethiopia in 2002 through their international advisor on education, Dr. Polit Tove Nagel (Panday, Sapkote, Mbozi, Conjo & Mavundutse, 2006). The QEP in Ethiopia focused on training teachers in action research practices. The idea was to empower teachers so that they would be able to interrogate their own practices through self-reflection. The Quality Education Project (QEP) eventually spread to Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe respectively. In Zimbabwe, the QEP started with a needs assessment for which Save the Children Zimbabwe engaged the services of the University of Zimbabwe (UZ). Dr B. C. Chisaka and Mr O. Mavundutse of the UZ's Department of Teacher Education (DTE) were tasked to carry out the needs assessment in two of the districts selected by SCN, Rushinga and Bikita. The results of the needs assessment showed that primary school teachers had excessive flaws in the execution of their duties (Chisaka & Mavundutse, 2003). The needs Assessment Report shows that:

- teachers taught without schemes of work and lesson plans;
- teachers treated learners as homogenous, ie. there was no attempt to accommodate and cater for individual differences;
- learners were always blamed for their poor performance with teachers never seeing themselves as part of the problem;
- harsh discipline including corporal punishment was the order of the day; and
- learners' exercise books were generally carelessly marked or not marked at all.

Chisaka and Mavundutse (2003) also found out that although there was increased access to basic education for many children in difficult circumstances, “children were not learning as much as they should” (Chisaka & Mavundutse, 2003, p. 3). As a result of the Rushinga/Bikita Needs Assessment report, Save the Children Norway-Zimbabwe (SCN-Z), in partnership with the University of Zimbabwe, Department of Teacher Education (DTE), introduced the Quality Education Project (QEP) in Bikita District in January 2006. The Bikita QEP was intended to train in-service teachers, heads of schools, Education Officers and the Deputy Provincial Education Director (D/PED). This project ended in December 2007.

Given the fact that the weaknesses observed in in-service teachers might have been a result of the teacher education programmes that these teachers had undergone, another quality education project was launched in January2008. This project involved forty-five teacher educators from three Masvingo teachers' colleges. The project was known as the Masvingo Quality Education Project (MQEP) to differentiate it from the Bikita Quality Education Project (BQEP). The MQEP which had a two-year life span, ended in December 2009. Like the BQEP, the focus of the MQEP was to train teacher educators in action research practices. This was meant to help teacher educators move in a more professional direction and ultimately towards the extended professional practitioner (Beeby, 1966).

In view of the foregoing, McNiff & Whitehead (2005) suggest that action research is a practical approach to personal and professional development that enables practitioners everywhere to investigate and evaluate their work, and to create and improve their own theories and practice. It was also hoped that the skills acquired by lecturers or teacher educators through the MQEP would filter down to the student teachers they taught and, finally, to the children taught by the student teachers in schools (Nager & Shapiro, 2007). By introducing the MQEP, Save the Children Norway was also acknowledging the fact that teacher education was an unusual but

important area of focus which tended to be neglected in relation to research and practice (Harber & Stephens, 2010).

A UZ Department of Teacher Education team comprising Professor Overson Shumba, Dr. Chisaka and Mr Mavundutse were appointed to partner SCZ as facilitators in the MQEP. By the time that the MQEP ended in December 2009, no formative or summative evaluation had been carried out. However, I learnt that in 2010, two Britons, Harber and Stephens, were engaged by Save the Children Norway to evaluate the two quality education Projects in Zimbabwe (BQEP & MQEP). I learnt of this because I was one of the assistant researchers involved in data collection for that evaluation. My view is that Harber and Stephens' (2010) summative evaluation may not have done justice to each of the two projects. Since the two projects had been carried out during two different periods (2006 to 2007 for the BQEP and 2008-2009 for the MQEP and were therefore quite distinct), I am of the opinion that they should have been evaluated separately.

No monitoring was undertaken during the life cycle of the two projects. If it had been done, monitoring would have provided information to determine the project's impact and outcomes. Monitoring is a critical process that helps organisations to see value from the investment they would have made in projects from inception to completion (Kusek & Rist, 2004; Otieno, 2018). There was no interim evaluation carried out before the summative evaluation. Kusek and Rist (2004) note that, if monitoring and evaluation are carried out at the right time and place, they ensure the success of a project. The evaluation carried out for the two projects was merely intended to justify the funding that had been invested by the project initiators. It did not serve as a mechanism to track the project's progress. Furthermore, each unique and individual project required specific monitoring and evaluation mechanisms tailored to suit it (Andre, 1998). Given the fact that the MQEP and the BQEP were not homogeneous, they should have been evaluated separately.

In light of the foregoing shortcomings, I concluded that Harber and Stephens' (2010) summative evaluation was a source of a research problem and not a solution. I articulate the research problem below.

1.3 The problem

Harber and Stephens' (2010) evaluation involved the projects' initiator, director and manager, Dr. Nagel Tove, who also was the SCN Special Advisor for Education. This presented a self-review threat. Members of the International Resource Group from project countries, Ethiopia, Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe assisted in data collection for the evaluation. The MQEP co-facilitators from the University of Zimbabwe (UZ), who were part of the data collection team for the evaluation, were therefore interested parties. My opinion is that they should not have taken part in collecting data for a project in which they had served as facilitators. I attended the MQEP workshops as a DTE staff member understudying my seniors, Professor O. Shumba and Dr B. C. Chisaka, who were co-facilitators. I made the most of this opportunity to learn about action research itself.

Danzin and Lincolin (2011) opine that the involvement of interested parties in data collection for evaluation is prone to bias, which is likely to generate non-credible findings. Wild (1995) and Otieno (2018) view this kind of evaluation as conducted to fulfil the demands of those providing the funding and not the solution. The above-mentioned misnomers gave rise to the researcher's need to do an evaluation study on the MQEP.

1.4 Statement of the problem

The problem that identified was that no stand-alone summative evaluation was conducted on the MQEP. In the absence of a summative evaluation on any project or programme, it may not be possible to establish whether or not the project was successful. It may also not be possible to come up with an inventory of the skills that the intended beneficiaries gained from the MQEP,

the skills that needed to be enhanced and to draw lessons from each project as a separate entity (Wild, 1995). From this statement of the problem, the following research questions emerged.

1.5 Research questions

The following is the principal research question of this study: What was the contribution of action research to the development of teacher education in Zimbabwe?

In order to address the above question, the following sub-research questions emerged.

i) How did reflective skills manifest in teacher educators?
ii) What was the level and nature of interaction of the teacher and learner in action research-based settings?
iii) How did the Masvingo Quality Education Project (MQEP) influence classroom management and teaching strategies at teachers' college level in Zimbabwe?
iv) What considerations should be made when planning donor-funded intervention projects in teacher education?

With these research questions, the next section presents the justification of the study.

1.6 Justification of the study

Since no formative and summative evaluation had been conducted on the MQEP of 2008-2009, there was need to find if the project had achieved the intended objectives. The objectives were centred on empowering teacher educators with action research and reflective skills. Engaging in the study would thus provide information as to what specific skills had been gained by participants in the MQEP. This would also allow for the identification of existing gaps.

It was also necessary to establish the way in which the project was instituted, implemented and concluded, and to systematically document the gains and losses accrued throughout the life cycle of the MQEP. It was my view that this study would contribute to reforms in teacher education curriculum and policy in Zimbabwe, at both the individual teacher education colleges

and national levels. The results of this evaluative study may also influence future planning in teacher education.

I was part of a five-member team that included four SCN employees appointed to carry out a formative evaluation of the QEP in Ethiopia. My participation in collecting data for the Ethiopian QEP triggered considerable curiosity on my part as an individual because the data we collected for the Ethiopian QEP were processed analysed and presented by Tove Nagel. Since Tove Nagel was the initiator of both the Ethiopian QEP and the MQEP, I questioned her findings and therefore wanted to come up with my own evaluation of the MQEP and produce my own findings.

The QEP was the oldest project, having started in September 2002.The formative evaluation we carried out was meant to help SCN Ethiopia to decide whether the project was going to continue, and if so, in what form and direction. As part of data collection for the evaluation, some participants presented their reflections on their quality education experiences to an audience of about 500, which included the project evaluators. Some of the presentations not only surprised me, but also developed in me a keen interest in finding out how the quality education project had impacted on Zimbabwean quality education project participants in Masvingo. By way of example, a participant in Ethiopia stated that, “before we were teaching subjects, now we teach children” (Panday et al., 2005, p. 11). Another participant said, “I was blind but, because of the QEP, now I see” (Panday et al., 2005, p. 12). Having listened to participants in Ethiopia presenting their experiences and the transformations I observed participants going through, I felt motivated to follow up on the Zimbabwean MQEP through this study. Such transformations emerged from informal discussions in which teacher educators affirmed that their involvement in the quality education project had benefited them. They claimed that they had gained knowledge and skills they would use to improve the way they taught and interacted with learners and their families.

In April 2006, SCN set up the Quality Education Project International Resource Group at Manica Lodge in Mozambique. This group comprised twelve people, including six SCN staff and six partners from four countries in which the QEP project was running. Zimbabwe was represented by Professor O. Shumba and Mr Mavundutse (myself), with Dr. Chisaka coming in when Prof O. Shumba left UZ in 2007. The objective of the QEP Resource Group was to promote sustainability in the steadily-growing MQEP enterprise and to be able to take the project to scale within the individual countries' education systems. (Minutes of the 9th Quality Education Resource Group Training Masvingo Flamboyant Hotel 19-25, 2008). My membership to the International Resource Group meant visiting each of the QEP countries at least once a year for meetings, evaluation or simply to see what others were doing. The individual country evaluations culminated in a summative evaluation of the whole project in the four-member countries. The Zimbabwe QEP in both Bikita District and Masvingo Teachers' colleges was also evaluated but the results were inconclusive (Harber & Stephen, 2010). This inconclusiveness further justifies my study to find out the impact of the MQEP on teacher educators.

One of the objectives of the MQEP was to develop reflective practices within the project participants through action research. Davies et al. (2005) suggest that reflective practices are a necessary ingredient in the provision of quality education. Quality education is the process through which trained teachers use child-centred (learner-centred) teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skilful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities (Davies et al., 2005). If MQEP participants developed self-reflective and self-introspection skills, they may contribute to the quality of teacher education offered in their individual institutions. If these teacher educators, in turn, developed self-reflective skills in their student teachers through action research, the latter could also contribute towards the quality of education in primary schools.

In 2009, all the International Resource Group members (including myself) participated in the data collection of the summative evaluation led by Professor Clive Harber and Professor Davids Stephens of United Kingdom (U.K.). In all the four countries, my own observations and experiences were that the Quality Education Project put participants (teachers, Education Officers, Heads of schools and teacher educators) through a re-education exercise. I was therefore very keen to find out what the impact of the MQEP was on the improvement of teacher education in Zimbabwe.

1.7 Delimitations of the study

This study was confined to three teachers' colleges in Masvingo Province, because the participants in the MQEP all came from these colleges. These participants were teacher educators who took part in the Quality Education Project organised and funded by SCN-Z in partnership with the Department of Teacher Education (DTE) of the University of Zimbabwe. The three teachers' colleges were Morgenster, Masvingo, and Bondolfi. The study targeted teacher educators, who participated in phases one and two of the MQEP in 2008 and 2009. In phases one and two, participants were expected to go through all training sessions in action research conducted throughout 2008 and 2009. In that way, these teacher educator participants were able to provide a complete (unbroken) story of their experiences in the MQEP, which was conducted over two school calendar years.

1.8 Limitations

The three colleges that formed my study sub-sites were about three hundred kilometres from Harare, where I work. I carried out this study on a part-time basis working as a full-time employee, striving to balance between work and study demands. In order to do this, I had to work around the clock, including weekends. I did most of my individual interviews on Saturdays and Sundays and focus group discussions were held during week days, while my participants were at their workplaces. This also enabled me to observe normal college activities

and routines. Given the relatively long distance between Harare and Masvingo, undertaking regular site visits was therefore a challenge, more so since I did not have my own accommodation in Masvingo. However, I managed to book myself a small room at a modest and affordable lodge during my stay in Masvingo. This meant that I was not able to visit my study sub-sites as often as I may have wished. On the other hand, when my participants were on vacation, it was a challenge for me to meet some of them since they did not all reside within the vicinity of the college. Similarly, during the college semester breaks, I had to attend to full-time students at my own work place on the UZ campus. However, I countered this limitation by remaining on each sub-site for prolonged periods each time that I made a sub- site visit.

Financial resources also remained a limiting factor, because this study was self-sponsored. This further limited the number of visits to the study sites and even the length of my stays in Masvingo, because I did not have accommodation readily available there. However, I took advantage of my work visits to the colleges involved in the study. By this, I mean that the three teachers' colleges are in the UZ Scheme of Association that is responsible for conferring student teacher diplomas, and as such DTE staff, myself included, frequently visited them on business.

1.9 Definition of terms

In this study, the following terms shall be understood as defined below.

Action research

A form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices and the situations in which the practices are carried out (McNiff & Whitehead, 2005).

Andragogy

The art and science of helping adults learn, drawing upon their experiences, their desire to learn and their quest to apply new knowledge to solve problems **(Knowles**, 1970).

Teacher educator/lecturer

One who directs instructional learning to those undertaking a course to become teachers of primary or secondary school learners. The teacher educator is also a researcher and learner (Troyer, 1986).

Donor

An individual, or group of people or an organization that provides financial and/or material support to organisations, institutions, communities or individuals voluntarily to solve an existing problem and improve the lives of the recipient(s) (Tanga[1] & Mundau,[2] 2014).

Educational action research

A system of enquiry that teachers, administrators and school support personnel can use to study, change and improve their work with children/ learners/ students/schools/colleges (Elliott, 2001).

Project

A specific set of resourced operations that are not routinely designed to achieve a specific goal within a defined start and end point to signify the completion of the operation (Ward, 1995).

Pedagogy

Pedagogy is the observable act of teaching together with its attendant discourse of educational theories, values, evidence and justifications. It is what one needs to know, and the skills one needs to command, in order to make and justify the many different kinds of decisions of which teaching is constituted (Alexander, 2008 p. 29).

Reflection

A systematic enquiry into one's own practice to improve that practice and to deepen what one understands of it (Moon, 2006).

Reflective action

This is an active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it (Calderhead & Gates, 2005).

Teacher education

Refers to policies, procedures and provisions to equip would-be teachers with requisite knowledge and skills in order for them to undertake instructional responsibilities in any teaching and learning situation (Nagel, 1992).

Teacher training

This is a process that develops narrow proficiency in the skills or methods of classroom teaching (Rivlin, 1943).

Phenomenology

An approach that concentrates on the study of consciousness and the objects of direct experience ("phenomena") as they appear in our experiences and encounters or the ways we experience things, and how these relate to our own experiences (Smith, 2013).

1.10 Summary

In this chapter, the background to the study was provided based on the development of the BQEP, whose focus was on assisting teachers to improve their instructional execution and the MQEP, which sought to assist teacher educators to be reflective and improve their practices through action research. The summative evaluation conducted for the two projects, whose

features were completely different and served different target groups, also presented a platform from which the problem that justified the study emanated. The chapter further indicated the three sub-sites to which the study was confined. It was also highlighted that the study was limited to teacher educators involved in the training supported by SCN-Z in collaboration with DTE. Like studies on donor-funded and donor-driven projects and programmes elsewhere have revealed, (Adhiambo, 2012; Mugambi, 2016) involvement of more stakeholders was necessary. Besides involving the DTE only in needs assessment, decision on type of interaction and the actual training of teacher educators in action research, officials from the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education as custodians of teacher education in Zimbabwe should have been involved. Similarly, teachers' college administrators from the three researched colleges should also have been involved. This involvement of the administrators in my view, was going to enable them (the administrators), to make meaning out of the intended changes (Fullan, 2006). Besides administrators making meaning out of the change process, involvement in the planning and implementation of the project, even as participants would have empowered them to be able to assess sustainability at individual institutions after the MQEP ended.

Terms used recurrently in the study were defined. In the following chapter, a review of related literature was undertaken**.**

CHAPTER 2

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I reviewed relevant literature related to the development of teacher education in Zimbabwe from the colonial period to independence. This was necessary in order to establish the teacher education programmes that were on offer, as well as the mode of training and the curriculum used. The review also helped to clarify the concepts teacher training and teacher education. The history of the development of teacher education provided insights as to how exactly teachers were trained and the gaps that existed in individual teacher education programmes. Since this study aimed at examining the role of action research in improving teacher education, I also reviewed related studies to establish how action research has contributed to the development of teacher education in other countries.

Since the Masvingo Quality Education Project (MQEP), which forms the basis of this study, was donor-initiated and donor-driven, there was need to review studies that have evaluated donor-driven projects elsewhere, particularly in African and other developing countries. The selection of donor-driven projects in developing countries is based on the fact that my study was conducted in Zimbabwe, which is also a developing country. Whatever literature I reviewed must have attempted to address similar contextual issues.

2.2 History of the development of teacher education in Zimbabwe

As mentioned in the introductory paragraph of this chapter, the history of teacher education in Zimbabwe can be traced in many ways. For the purpose of this study, focus was placed on the colonial period from 1890 to 1980 and the post-independence period from 1980 to 2010. The greater part of the colonial period, 1890 to 1976, was characterized by teacher training with its own mode of developing teachers. From 1976, when Mkoba Teachers' College opened its doors to the first intake of pre-service learner teachers, there was a shift from teacher training to

teacher education (Chiromo, 2007; Chikukwa, 1977). This shift towards teacher education as opposed to teacher training persisted up until 2010 when my evaluation study started. This review of literature on the history of the development of teacher education in Zimbabwe focused on primary teacher education alone because the participants of my study are all drawn from the three primary teachers' colleges in Masvingo.

In Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, formal training of primary teachers started in 1937, with the introduction of the two year post Standard 3 (Std3) Primary Teachers' Lower (PTL) course (Chiromo, 2007). PTL qualified teachers were meant to teach the first two years of the primary school, Sub-Standard A and Sub-Standard B. Trevaskis (1967, p. 40) opines that "PTL trainee teachers were instructed in the use of pre-prepared scheme books and were expected to strictly adhere to the methods therein when they qualified." Trevaskis further notes that some deviation and experimentation was allowed, but only to those teachers deemed keen and able to do so (by inspection managers). Schemes of work were officially provided documents showing content to be taught, methods to be used by the teacher, activities to be done by learners, questions to be asked by the teacher and answers to be expected from learners (Trevaskis, 1967).

I interpreted these expectations of qualified teachers to suggest that there was very close and regular supervision and/or inspection by school inspectors and managers, who would thereby identify and license those teachers deemed "capable" of experimenting outside the prescribed schemes of work. I also interpreted Trevaski's (1967) observation to mean that those teachers who were deemed incapable of operating outside the prescribed schemes of work had no room for experimentation and therefore had to follow the provided schemes of work religiously. In my view, the latter group of teachers had no opportunity to explore other ways of delivering lessons besides those provided in the schemes of work.

Such expectations severely limited individual teacher creativity and did not take into account different situations and circumstances such as learner diversity and the operational environment. As a result, learners taught by the restricted teachers were treated the same and individual teacher and learner differences were not considered. The use of the prescribed schemes of work was mandatory because teachers were considered to be incapable of deciding what to teach and how to teach it. For the unqualified teacher, the schemes of work were certainly the means of ensuring adequate and appropriate teaching in terms of both content and methodology in lower primary school. In my opinion, those qualified teachers deemed incapable of experimenting outside the schemes of work were no different from untrained or unqualified teachers in that they both had to strictly follow the schemes of work.

The PTL course was offered at training schools like Daramombe, Umtali, Gutu, Lower Gwelo, Mtshabezi, Kwenda Mission, St Theresa, St Augustine's Penhalonga and St Faith Rusape (Chiromo, 2007; Atkinson, 1972).The entry qualification into the PTL course became Standard 6. However, the training methods basically remained the same. In fact, during the training, there was a book, *The Teacher and His Pupils* "which training teachers had to follow religiously" (Bone, 1972, p. 36). Like the schemes of work discussed earlier, the book, *The Teacher and His Pupils*, provided specific instructions that the teachers had to follow to the letter. These instructions related to questions to be asked, answers expected, teacher's standing posture and even how the teacher was to respond to pupils' correct and wrong answers. All these measures proved that the trainee teachers did not have the opportunity to operate independently.

In reference to the PTL trained teacher, Trevaskis (1976) quotes the Judges Report (1962), expressing the view that, however good he/she may have been, the teacher was not capable of producing his/her own schemes without a considerable amount of guidance and supervision. I

equated the PTL trained teachers to Beeby's (1966) stage of formalism that was characterised by ill-educated but trained teachers. According to Beeby (1966), such a teacher:

> … clings desperately to the official syllabus and the tighter it is, the safer he feels. Beyond the pasteboard covers of the official textbook lies the dark void where unknown questions work. The teacher is afraid of any other questions in the classroom but those he himself asks, for they are the only ones to which he can be sure of knowing the answers. This fact alone throws his teaching methods into the last century. If the pupils cannot be encouraged to ask their own awkward questions, most of the techniques of the good modern classroom become impossible. Activity methods and childish researches are shunned because they lead all too easily to the brink of the unknown (p. 61).

Beeby, as far back as 1966, was simply confirming the restrictive conditions under which ill-educated, trained teachers operated, and thus a fact which could be equally true of today's teacher. The only questions that the teacher was comfortable to ask were those in the schemes of work, supported or complemented by those in what was most likely the one and only text book available to them, *The teacher and his pupils*. The teacher would therefore not risk asking any other questions or allowing learners to ask their own questions, since such questions were likely to offset and confuse him or her. Allowing learners to engage in other activities besides those contained in the only textbook might also create confusion, not only for the learners, but also for the teacher. As if to support Beeby (1966), Bone (1972, p. 35) quotes the Chief Native Commissioner of Mashonaland expressing concern over African teachers in his assertion that:

There is one matter which calls for grave consideration, and that is the section of the native teachers. To teach and raise a backward race as we have here, we need highly trained teachers, and the practice of sending out native teachers with little training to undertake such a task is

foolish and should not be allowed. How can it be expected that these so-called native teachers, who have probably in their studies advanced as far as a European boy of (12) years, can undertake any degree of success a task that many of us would think impertinent to attempt (p. 35).

Notwithstanding the derogatory language and tone of the above citation by the Chief Native Commissioner, the fact remains that the PTL trained teacher had low academic qualifications (Std 3), which were in no way boosted by the quality of training and teaching resources at their disposal. Beeby (1966) summarises the teaching circumstances very well in his assertion that "symbols with limited meaning; rigid syllabus; emphasis on 3 Rs; rigid methods –"one best way", one text book; inspection stressed; discipline tight and external; memorizing heavily stressed; emotional life largely ignored." (p. 72).

There was more focus on enabling the poorly-trained teacher without regard for learner welfare. There was no lesson on children's emotional life and child psychology. Running parallel to the PTL course was the Primary Teachers Higher (PTH), which was a two year post Standard 6 (Std 6) course. The PTH qualified teachers were meant to teach Standard 1 (Std1) to Standard 6 (Std 6) classes. According to Beeby's (1966) model of teacher development, the PTL and PTH qualified teachers faced similar restrictions where teaching methods were concerned. The only difference was that the two groups of teachers operated at different levels.

With the raising of entry qualifications and change of teacher training programmes to Std 6 for T4 (former PTL) and Form 2 for T3, however, the former PTH course was a stage of transition (Beeby, 1966). At that stage, both groups of teachers were "better-educated and trained" (Beeby, 1966, p. 72), particularly for the classes they taught. T4 teachers taught Sub Std A and Sub Std B while T3 teachers were to teach Std 1 to Std 6. For these teachers, Beeby (1966) notes that:

> …there was more emphasis on meaning, but it is still "thin" and formal; syllabus and textbooks less restrictive, but teachers hesitate to use greater freedom, examinations often restrict experimentation, little in classroom to cater for the emotional and creative life of the child.

It should be appreciated that entry into teacher training programmes was determined by the highest primary school classes obtained at the time. There is evidence that by 1965, most of the few primary schools dotted throughout Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) ended at Std 3, the equivalent of today's Grade 5 (Atkinson, 1972; Bone, 1972; Chikukwa, 1977). Std 6 classes were offered at the few urban government and Mission Central Primary Schools. It is sad to note that while the activity method was not applied to the teaching of infant learners, at Sub Std A and Sub Std B and later, at Grade 1 and Grade 2, the young learners learnt best through activity (Beeby, 1966). However, McAulay (1975) suggests that learner teachers must be taught how to enlighten children rather than cram them with information.

According to Chiromo (2007), curricula for PTL and PTH were similar. This included primary school subjects like English, ChiShona or IsiNdebele, Mathematics, Craft Work, Music, Physical Training, Scripture and Gardening. Differences lay in the content (depth) and methodology (Chiromo, 2007). However, my earlier discussion on the methodology remains valid in that the Judges Commission Report (1962) acknowledges that the policy of controlling the nature of teaching through the provision of syllabi and schemes of work applied to both infant and junior primary school classes. In this way, the teacher was made a slave of those two official documents and learners remained passive recipients of content through chalk and teacher talk.

The focus of teachers and their concern with external examinations (Beeby, 1966) have remained the same today. Teachers think they must teach rather than facilitate learning.

Teaching involves giving learners information whereas facilitating learning is much more than that, to include encouraging student active participation and critical thinking. It is important to note that, according to Beeby's (1966) first three stages of the Dame School of ill-educated, trained teachers and transition, better-educated and better-trained teachers were characterized by teacher training, as indicated in the description of the teachers. What did this mean? Below, I briefly attempt an explanation of what teacher training entails in order to make the distinction between teacher training (which I think is out-dated, although it remains part of teacher education) and teacher education (which is what should be happening now). I also reviewed literature on teacher training so that I could bring in the aspect of teacher education.

O'Neil (1986) provides definitions, explanations and analysis of teacher training and teacher education that enhance my literature review. He says the word 'training' pertains to either standardised or specific duties. Hills (1982), meanwhile, opines that education deals with the acquisition of knowledge while training deals more with the application of knowledge. According to Hills' definition, elements of both training and education can be found within one learning system. Hills (1982) further suggests that:

> … training is a process of using a wide range of techniques to modify attitudes, knowledge or skill behaviour so as to achieve effective performance (usually defined as experienced worker standard) in a particular task or set of tasks It tends to be result-oriented, although within this constraint, much training emphasises the development of individual abilities (p.273).

The word 'training' is restricted to specific, systematic, standardised, well-defined, job or work-related, result-oriented practices. Consequently, training involves activities that relate to the mechanical, technical and vocational aspects of the teaching process, and which can aptly be described as rote ritualistic or repetitive. Even if training might be applied to particular aspects

of the teaching act, I suggest that the phrase teacher training should be avoided when referring to present-day teacher preparation programmes. In this regard, O'Neil (1986, p. 261) argues that, "the expression teacher training may have been appropriate at a time when teachers were technicians like during the PTL, PTH, T4 and T3 period in Zimbabwe, 1938 to 1974/5". I support O'Neil's (1986) argument because it is aligned to the Dame, Formalism and Transition period (Beeby, 1966).

As of 1976, the Certificate in Education (now Diploma in Education) was introduced at Mkoba Teachers' College (Chikukwa, 1977). This is, according to Beeby (1966), the *Stage of Meaning*. It marks the beginning of teacher education in Zimbabwe. Teachers were now well educated and well-trained (Beeby, 1966). In Beeby's characterisation of educated teachers,

meaning and understanding are stressed; somewhat wider curriculum, variety of content and methods; individual differences catered for; active methods, problem solving and creativity; internal tests; relaxed and positive discipline; emotional and aesthetic life, as well as intellectual; closer relations with community; better building and equipment essential (p.72).

This characterisation by Beeby (1966, p.72) provides a framework for teacher education. The opening of Mkoba on 12 April 1976 saw the introduction of a Certificate in Education (now Diploma in Education) course which was a post Cambridge School Certificate (CSC) ushering in primary school teacher education (Chikukwa, 1977). Teachers who qualified from this course would be able to teach all primary school classes from Grade 1 to Grade 7. This development also saw the establishment of the T3 Working Party which, as recommended by the Judges Commission of 1962, was tasked to consider a more suitable curriculum for the T2 and T3 courses (Chikukwa, 1977). In light of the foregoing, as early as 1943, Rivlin, cited in O'Neil (1986), had noted that:

> Teacher education refers to a whole range of activities that constitute preparation for, and improvement of members of the teaching profession. It includes pre-service education for those who are actually engaged in teaching. The elevation of quantitative and qualitative standards for the profession is reflected in the use of the term "Teacher Education" rather than the older term "Teacher Training". Whereas teacher training suggests the development of a narrow proficiency in the skills or methods of classroom teaching, teacher education connotes the broad professional preparation needed for the highly complex task of teaching in the modern world (Rivlin, 1943, p. 793, in O'Neil 1986).

Rivlin's (1943) definition and explanation in O'Neil (1986, p.262) dovetails with Beeby's (1966) description of teachers in Stage IV, the Stage of Meaning. This stage, like teacher education, is characterized by the teachers' understanding of higher professional expectations. Although changes have taken place from 1976 to the present day, teacher education in the University of Zimbabwe (UZ), Department of Teacher Education (DTE) Scheme of Association has met Beeby's (1966) Stage IV criteria. *The Handbook for Quality Assurance in Associate Teachers' Colleges* (2015, p. 26) summarises the teacher education curriculum as including four broad sections. For primary teachers' colleges, these broad areas are Teaching Practice (TP); Theory of Education (ToE), that is, Psychology of Education, Sociology of Education, Philosophy of Education, Educational Administration and Curriculum Studies); Main Subject (each student teacher specialising in one curriculum subject and studying it in depth); and lastly, Professional Studies which is made up of made up of four sub-sections. As per Beeby's (1966) characterisation, this is what constitutes a wider curriculum. The names attributed to these curriculum areas might have changed over the years, but the curriculum has remained more or less the same. This is what the current teacher education curriculum offers.

Teacher education, according to Munroe (1950), in O'Neil (1968, p. 263),

> …refers to the total educative experiences which contribute to the preparation of a person for a teaching position in schools, but the term is more commonly employed to designate the programme of courses and other experiences offered by an educational institution for the announced purpose of preparing persons for teaching and other educational services and for contributing to their growth in competency for such service (p.1374).

In Zimbabwe, the teacher education curriculum for would-be primary school teachers is therefore a combination of different courses and subject-based methods and instruction theory based on educational foundations culminating into school-based research. This research component is what motivated the Masvingo Quality Education Project that targeted teacher educators but would eventually filter down to the learner teachers. My study therefore intended to evaluate that project in terms of its success or failure so as to ascertain the contribution that action research can make to the development of teacher education in Zimbabwe. In the next section of this chapter, I analysed the concept action research.

2.3 Action research

2.3.1 The concept action research

For the purposes of my study, I did not dwell much on the origins of action research but just made mention of it in passing. I did not consider the origins very necessary because my study focused on the role of action research in the development of teacher education. There was, however, need to clarify action research as a concept.

Historically, the term action research has been long associated with the work of Kurt Lewin, who viewed this research methodology as cyclical, dynamic and collaborative in nature (Mills, 2013, in Hine & Lavery, 2014). The characteristics associated with action research provide a

more focused definition, which suggests that through repeated cycles of planning, observing and reflecting, individuals and groups engaged in action research can implement changes required for specific social environments (Hine, 2013, in Hine & Lavery, 2014). This last definition by Hine suggests cyclic action which occurs in three stages. This does not allow for what other scholarly authorities suggest constitutes a complete cycle of action research. Zuber-Sherrit (1995, p.13) in Hatten, Knapp & Salonga (1997), for example, provide a more acceptable four-stage, cyclical and spiral definition of action research. Action research as originally described by Lewin, constitutes a spiral of steps that include planning, action, observation and reflection.

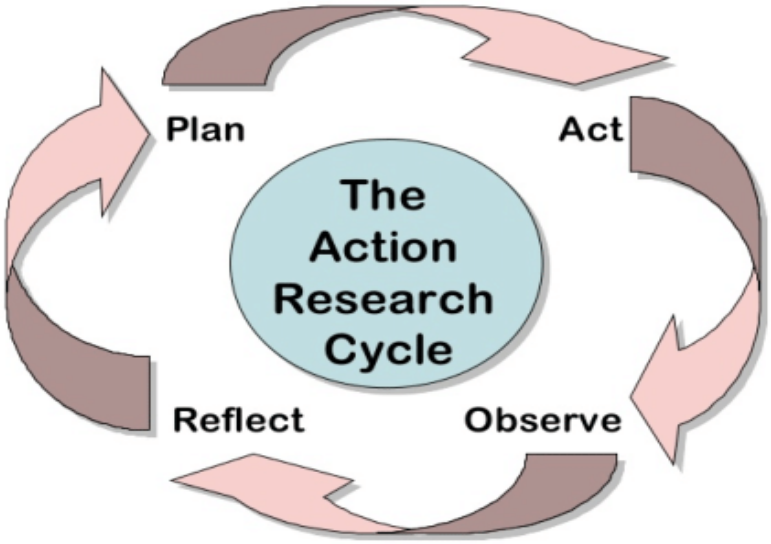


Figure2.1: The Action Research Cycle: Source**:** Nelson (2014)

The four stages are not dissimilar to the key components of an action research cycle conceptualised by McNiff and Whitehead (2008). In the action research cycle or spiral, a plan is developed by those who intend to carry out action research. This is a plan of critically informed action intended to improve the current situation or practice. The plan must be flexible enough to allow for adjustments and adaptation relating to unforeseen effects or constraints. The action researchers then implement the plan in a deliberate and controlled manner.

Researchers must necessarily observe the process so as to collect evidence for evaluation. After the researcher has planned, actioned and observed, there must be a moment for reflection. Reflection is a moment of thinking back, verbalizing the occurrences so as to draw meaning from observations made. In an attempt to distinguish action research from other forms of research, Kemmis and McTaggert (1988), in Hatten et al. (1997), comment that the steps in the action research cycle are carried out in a more careful, systematic and rigorous manner than is normally done in ordinary research.

More recent literature goes further to suggest that action research is a process of systematic inquiry that enables practitioners to find effective solutions to real problems encountered in their daily practices (Ferrance, 2000; Stringer, 2007; Frabutt & Holter, 2012, in Hine & Lavery, 2014).Masters (1995) had earlier opined that within all these definitions of action research are four basic themes: empowerment of participants; collaboration through participation; acquisition of knowledge and social change. It was my hope that the MQEP succeeded in developing, in my participants, the characteristics suggested by Masters (1995).

Grundy and Kemmis (1981), cited in Masters (1995, p. 3), state three minimum requirements for action research. These requirements relate to the goal of improvement and involvement, which characterises any action research project. In other words, action research has the potential to improve both the practices and the actual work of those who deploy it. In summary, then, action research has the following attributes:

- It takes as its subject matter a social practice, which is viewed as a strategic action amenable to improvement;
- It proceeds through a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting, with each of these activities being systematically and self-critically implemented and interrelated; and

- It involves those responsible for the practice in each stage of the activity, extending participation in the project gradually to include others affected by the practice and maintaining collaborative control of the process (Mills, 2013).

Action research is, therefore, not a library project during which one learns about a topic that interests him/her. It is not a problem-solving strategy which seeks to find out what is wrong, but rather a quest for knowledge as how to improve practice. According to Ponomariova[a] & Vasina[b] (2016), action research is a deliberate, solution-oriented investigation that is group or personally owned and conducted. It is this element of ownership of both problems and solutions that reinforces the empowerment of action researchers. In my study, I was trying to find out whether the MQEP participants felt that they had been empowered through action research skills training. In the term "action research", the linking of the words "action" and "research" highlights the essential features of this method, trying out ideas in practice as a means of increasing knowledge about or improving curriculum, teaching and learning (Kemmis & McTaggart,1988).

Although my study focused on the improvement of teacher education through action research, it should be noted that action research is not only confined to education-related fields. Indeed, "action research provides the means by which professional people (doctors, nurses, lawyers, engineers, accountants) may increase the effectiveness of their work" (Mills, 2013; Lingard, Albert, Levinson, John, Eaton, 2008; Stringer, 2008). Having analysed the action research concept let me now proceed to discuss the types of action research that practitioners can engage in.

2.3.2 Types of action research and when they can be used

Various authors identify and define types of action research differently. For this reason, there are variations in the way literature views and presents the types of action research based on the purposes, goals that each serves and values that each upholds. Generally, however, one can

isolate four main types of action research, namely traditional, contextual (action learning), radical and educational (Knapp & Salonga, 1997). Other variations include technical, practical and emancipatory action research (Knapp & Salonga, 1997), which can, however, be subsumed under the types identified by O'Brein (1998) above. Hendricks (2006) also makes a distinction between collaborative action research, critical action research, classroom action research and participatory action research. For the purpose of this study, reference was made to O'Brien's (1998) typology and in the process; a link was made with the other types mentioned above.

2.3.2.1 Traditional action research

This type of action research is attributed to Lewin's work within organisations (O'Brien, 1998). It is argued that the growing importance of labour management relations led to the appreciation of action research in the areas of organisation development, quality of working life (QWL),social technical systems (such as information systems)and organisational democracy. This type of action research seems to be more applicable to the natural sciences in that it deals with existing phenomena. It may therefore be most appropriate to refer to it as technical collaboration/scientific, technical or positivist (McKernan, 1991). Since the underlying goal of the researcher in this approach is to test a particular intervention based on a pre-specified theoretical framework, this was not relevant to this study.

Contextual action research, also sometimes referred to as action learning, is an approach derived from Trist's work on relations between organisations. In this type of action research, focus is on group relations as a basis for problem solving. It is contextual in so far as it entails reconstituting structural relations among actors in a social environment. This type of action research attempts to involve all affected parties and stakeholders, as each participant understands the working of the whole. "It stresses that participants act as project designers and co-researchers" (O'Brien, 1991, p. 8). In my opinion, this would suit most of the donor-driven intervention projects. However, this is not the focus of my study.

2.3.2.2 Radical or emancipatory action research

Hendricks (2006), Hatten, Knapp and Salonga (1997) and O'Brien (1998) generally agree that this type of action research is a social, collaborative process of action research. This type of action research is considered emancipatory in that the action researcher is able to explore practices outside the limits of his/her social structures. Kemmis and McTaggart (1990) also note that the action researcher's goal is to challenge alienation, unproductive work practices and power struggles and to be transformational (by changing both theory and practice).

Although O'Brien (1998) opines that this type of action research is often found in liberationist movements and international development circles, besides the radical component, this type of action research sounds relevant to my study. The emancipatory characteristic could be easily applied to the need for teacher educators to be freed from prescribed ways of teacher educating. Considering that teacher education tends to perpetuate traditional, unreflective and teacher centred pedagogy rather than challenge it (Harber & Stephens, 2010), applying radical emancipatory action research could bring the desired change.

2.3.2.3 Educational action research

This type of action research is grounded in the writings of John Dewey, who believed that professional educators should become involved in community problem solving. Its practitioners, like those in my study, "operate mainly out of educational institutions and focus on development of curriculum, professional development and applying learning in a social context" (O'Brien, 1998, p. 9). According to McTaggart (1997, p. 60), educational action research makes theory practical in order to improve practice. My teacher educator research participants are certainly concerned with theory as it relates to practice and practice as it relates to theory. In view of the foregoing, therefore, teacher educators must necessarily engage in educational action research if their work is to continuously improve.

Hendricks (2006) bolsters my argument by suggesting that educational action research is a system of inquiry that teachers, administrators and school support personnel can use to study, change and improve their work with children and in the schools. Hendrick`s (2006) avers that action research professionalises the work of educators because it gives them the opportunity to improve their practice and their professional development. Through the action research process, educators are able to generate knowledge about their practice and share that knowledge with their colleagues. Fullan (2002), in Hendricks (2006), is of the opinion that those that make use of key elements cited in the research cycle are capable of producing lasting and sustainable change in schools. This contribution by Fullan (2002) further justifies the selection of this change theory to guide this study. In the Masvingo Quality Education Project, teacher educators were trained in action research as it relates to instituting change in education in general and in teacher education in particular. As part of training, participants carried out action research projects to improve their own practice. It is these action research skills and other related transformations that those teacher educators acquired and experienced respectively. Elliot (1991, p. 54) highlights the role of action research in education in general (including teacher education) when he asserts thus, "action research integrates teaching and teacher development, curriculum development and evaluation."

Over and above this, action research encourages educators to work collaboratively. This is particularly important if an institution like a teachers' college is to achieve its intended goals, because the business of teacher educating is, by nature, collaborative. The need to pull together and solve institutional problems collectively cannot be over-emphasised. In each of the three Masvingo teachers' colleges from which participants in my study were drawn, it was necessary to find out if teacher educators developed a common view of facing institutional challenges. Action research has the potential to have professionals see with the same lens or breathe with their noses in the same direction. This is so if one considers the suggestion that action research

encourages educators to rethink the ways they evaluate their work, and the work of students. In the process, action research has the power to "re-vitalise educators' professional lives because it makes work exciting fun and rewarding" (Hendricks, 2006, p. 12). I was keen to establish if participants in this study would say the same of their own action research experiences.

Action research is also supposed to enable educators to develop the ability to articulate the choices they make and the methods they use, even if those methods are challenged (Masters, 1995). More important is the fact that action research helps educators get to know students, both academically and personally. This increases mutual understanding and respect among teacher educators, administrators and students (Hendricks, 2006, p. 12). In this study, interaction with college administrators, teacher educators and students was meant to help establish if action research contributed to relationship building. Anderson, Herr and Nihlero (1994) assert that participating in action research can stimulate collegiality, empower educators and give school or college personnel a voice in decision-making in educational policy and change. Anderson et al. (1994) further suggest that engaging in action research allows educators to become creators of their own knowledge about teaching and learning rather than being only consumers of research. Based on comments from teachers with whom she worked, Burns (1999) concluded that conducting research on their practice increased teachers' personal insights and self-awareness, helped them grow personally and professionally, enabled them to come up with solutions to institutional demands and allowed them an opportunity to systematically reflect on educational decisions they made. Throughout this study, I was curious to see if I would draw similar conclusions about participants for this study.

Action research can be undertaken individually, such as when a teacher or educator investigates an issue in his /her classroom. On the other hand, a group of teachers/educators can work on a common problem or a team of teachers/educators focuses on a whole institutional problem. One

of the drawbacks of individual research is that it may not be shared with others unless the practitioner chooses to present findings to others.

Teachers or teacher educators can also engage in collaborative action research. This occurs when several researchers from a school, college of education or university work together to study educational problems (Hendricks, 2006). Collaboration may also occur among teacher administrators. The goal of collaborative research is to utilise the expertise of collaborators and foster dialogue among institutional members or educational stakeholders in different settings. In that respect, O'Brien (1998) observes that it is often the case that university-based action researchers work with primary and secondary school teachers on academic and community projects. Similarly, teachers' college teacher educators can also work with student teachers and school teachers on professional issues. In my analysis of the impact of action research on participants in the Masvingo Quality Education Project (MQEP), I also wanted to establish the kind and nature of action research that my study participants engaged in. Collaborative action research brings together interested stakeholders in a way which would enable whole institutional improvement.

Action research is a more holistic approach to problem-solving than a single method of data collection and analysis. Thus, it allows for several different research tools to be used as the research is conducted. The various methods deployed such as document collection and analysis, observation, interviews, amongst others, would also reflect how much learning participants would have used some of these methods in their own action researches. Action researchers using multiple data generation methods and tools have high chances of producing credible results owing to the triangulation of their processes and procedures (Patton, 2002).

If properly deployed, action research may help participants in my study to improve or develop their curriculum, develop professionally and adopt action research as part of pre-service

programmes in their colleges. The active participation of teacher educators would be part of what makes action research a viable and useful triangulation tool. This is why the world over, action research has become the 'in thing' in education at various levels (Ferrance, 2006). The investment of time and energy by participants provides a sense of ownership and responsibility for the processes and outcomes. Action research activities and a corresponding mindset have become an integral part of the professional repertoire of many educators. Practitioners develop skills in analysing their own teaching methods and begin to unconsciously utilise action research principles in their professional and personal lives. Engaging in this evaluative study therefore enabled to gauge if the Masvingo Quality Education Project was worthwhile both in terms of the professional development of teacher educators and the resources invested in the project.

2.3.3 The role of action research in teacher education

Practitioners engage in action research in order to improve the quality of their work or practices. In the case of teachers and/or teacher educators like those in my study, the quality would be seen in the teacher educators' ability to own the decisions they make (Hopkins, 2002; Drudgy & Claithain, 2002, in Chisaka & Kurasha, 2012). Quality can be seen when there is an improvement in learner outcomes and performance. In the first place, for practitioners to be able to see that there is a problem that needs attention, they must have undergone moments of reflection which is not, however, a simple and automatic process or skill. With this in mind, action research within the teaching profession (including teacher education) can be defined as the process of collaborative inquiry conducted by stakeholders to understand and improve the quality of actions on instruction (Hensen, 1996; McTaggart, 1977; Mills, 2013; Schmuck, 1997, in Hine & Lavery, 2014).

The collaborative nature of the process, in the case of teacher education, means that it could involve a group of teacher educators within an institution or across institutions getting together

for a common cause, whose solution involves action research. Better still, if it involves stakeholders, teacher educators can carry out action research together with student teachers, in-service teachers, education officials and communities in an effort to find collaborative solutions to what they construe as "their problem(s)". However, if action research is applied to the field of education, O'Connor, Greene and Anderson (2017) see it as a tool that is used to help teachers or teacher educators uncover strategies to improve teaching practices.

If action research takes such a central role in improving teacher education practices, my study was keen to assess if those teacher educators who participated in the MQEP benefitted in a way that enabled them to change the face of teacher education. As McNiff and Whitehead (2001, in Sela & Harel, 2014) argue, action research is perceived as empowering teachers and teacher educators. Furthermore, Book (1996), Erickson (1986), Hensen (1996) and Zeichner and Noffke (2010, in Hine & Lavery, 2014) opine that teachers/teacher educators are empowered when they are able to collect their own data to use in making decisions about their institutions.

In terms of Fullan's (2007) theory of change, if the MQEP provided evidence that teacher educators were empowered, that would be stimulating and satisfying. If this is proven, teacher educators would have developed to become change agents (Fullan, 2007)). According to Rodgers (2002), a change agent is an individual who influences clients' innovation decisions in a direction desirable by a change agency. However, looking at the collaborative nature of action research beyond the MQEP, every stakeholder in the educational change is a change agent. In my view, this would be possible if, after the MQEP, action research knowledge and skills would be successfully cascaded to as many stakeholders as possible. In this regard, Fullan (2006) and Stiegerlbauer (1991) opine that:

There is enormous potential for true, meaningful change simply in building coalition with other change agents both within individual teacher education institutions and across institutions

In Beeby's (1966) Stage IV of Meaning, well-educated and well-trained teacher educators and learner teachers have the potential to form powerful coalitions capable of creating learning communities (Fullan, 2007). This description fits the calibre of learner teachers that my teacher educator participants are now educating. It would be interesting to establish if my teacher educator participants also underwent the critical four stage processes that constitute an effective change strategy. Fullan (1991, 1982) proposes that such change agents should be able to initiate change, implement the change process, and be able to realise or sustain action research activities after the MQEP. My study should strive to establish how far the MQEP initiative continued after the end of the two years of training. In other words, I should be able to establish sustainability levels therein.

So far in my conceptualisation of action research, I have tried to define it and discuss some characteristics of action research. In this respect, it was necessary to review more literature on the subject of reflection, which is pivotal to successful action research.

2.3.4 Reflection in action research

Hong and Lawrence (2011) aver that reflection is a significant component of self-study, as action research is also known. Mills (2003), in Hong and Lawrence (2011), also suggests that reflection is a powerful way to know about the self in research and practice and to unpack the very self in teaching practice. Reflective practice in teacher education allows teacher educators to explore how teachers learn by including "I" in an epistemology of reflective practice (Whitehead, 2000, in Hong & Lawrence, 2011). In other words, action research, also known as self-study, means studying one's own practice, but its definition varies according to role, practice and purpose of the researcher (Smaras & Freese, 2006).

To further understand reflection and its role in action research, Schon (1983) observes that, while engaging in action research or self-study, teachers/teacher educators examine and

problematise their own teaching by reflecting on their practice in what is known as introspection. In a study on teachers' learning, Fairbanks and LaGrone (2006) found that teachers' learning and teaching is transformed through theory and practice to support their research efforts. I was curious to find out how my teacher educator participants handled the theoretical knowledge and the practical aspects of action research. Were they able to translate theory into practice? In the process, were they able to critically interrogate their own practices? It was interesting to find out the kind of transformations that teacher educators went through. This can be determined through establishing the manifestations of reflection in my study participants.

If my teacher educators had indeed been empowered and transformed to some extent by the MQEP, they will be able to think more reflectively and be more emancipated. Emancipation is another characteristic of action research. In a study entitled "Action research as empowering professional development: Examining a district–based teacher research course", Martell (2014) established that upon completion of the course teacher researchers were able to:

- Do something that would change their practice;
- Be convinced of the importance and value of their knowledge as teachers; and
- Show outsiders and their peers that teachers are intellectuals, so as to earn themselves more respect for their profession.

Since the study participants were teacher educators by virtue of the level at which they operate, they should be able to surpass what the teachers in the above study were able to do, a fact which may be taken for granted. If the teacher educators manifest the characteristics associated with engagement in action research – being empowered and reflective, having been transformed and being able to make action research-based decisions – they would have been emancipated (Martell, 2014). According to O'Connor et al. (2017), teacher educators will have gained

control of their professional development. Henson (1996), in O'Connor et al. (2017), concludes that:

> When teacher educators have ownership of the research process, specifically action research, learning can occur in numerous ways including trying new strategies, evaluating existing programmes, expanding instructional repertoires, engaging in professional development and most importantly, helping teachers develop new pedagogical knowledge (p.2).

Action research thus plays an important role in the preparation and professional development of teachers and pre-service teachers (Halter & Frabutt, 2012; Perrett, 2003, in Hine, 2013). Hine (2013) concludes that:

Specifically, action research initiatives are used within teacher education programmes on national and international levels, namely in Australia and in the United States (p.4).

In conclusion to this section of the chapter, Hine (2013, p. 9) suggests that:

Teacher education institutions and universities must include action research as a core unit in teacher preparation programmes at diploma, undergraduate or postgraduate level as the action research sequence holds significant value to improving practice within classrooms, schools and communities.

2.3.5 Challenges associated with action research

Even though action research has numerous positive aspects, particularly in the development of teacher education, it also presents a few challenges worth discussing. Sela and Harel (2012) observe that teacher educators have less experience in conducting research than they do in teaching (unlike lecturers in universities),and this limits their ability to carry out studies on the teacher education process and perhaps to teach their students – the pre-service teacher - how to

conduct research appropriately. Scholarly literature reveals that this situation is beginning to change as growing numbers of teacher educators recognize the value of self-study in examining their practices (Heiman, 2004; Laughran, 2004; Zeichner, 2007).

Bailey (1999) Hine (2013) and Wong (1993) opine that teachers may find that action research is a time-consuming process. Conducting research and at the same time meeting teaching demands is not easy. As such, these demands may impede the methodological rigor of data collection and critique (Adams, 2006, in Hine & Lavery, 2014). Several authors also cite the conflict between teaching and researching as detrimental to the quality of instruction given mostly due to time constraints (Foster & Nixon, 1978; Wong, 1993, in Hine & Lavery, 2014). Lastly, because action research is carried out by individuals who are interested parties in the research, the validity of collected and analysed data may be questionably biased. Teacher researchers may also find it difficult to distance themselves from the situation being researched and therefore unable to attain an objective viewpoint (Brown, 2013). In the next section of this chapter, I reviewed literature on donor-driven projects.

2.4 Donor-funded projects: Background information

International donors have played a significant role in assisting communities or governments in developing countries to implement sectoral reform activities (Mlage, 2014). The MQEP, for example, was a donor-initiated, donor-funded and donor-driven intervention project targeted at improving teacher educators' practices through engagement in action research (Harber & Stephens, 2010). As such, it was important and necessary to review literature on donor-funded projects. In reviewing such literature, my major focus was on the sustainability and effectiveness of such projects (Homedes, 2001; Hak & Dahl, 2007).

Komalawati (2008) observes that donors use sustainability as one of the yardsticks in evaluating donor-driven projects. Similarly, Mlage (2014) avers that, a project is sustainable if

sustainability strategies are embedded in the project plan from the beginning, through implementation up until exit. Martha (2013), in Mlage (2013), defines sustainability as the ability of the project to remain in operation and to achieve its purpose long after the donor withdraws support. In my study, the concept of donor suggested by Shirlanne (2013), in Mlage (2014), was adopted. Shirlanne (2013) views a donor as an individual or group of people or an organisation that provides assistance intended to improve a situation or a system. In my study, the MQEP was meant to help teacher educators improve their practices through action research-related practices (Harber & Stephens, 2010). In my view, the MQEP thus provided a rare window of opportunity through which teacher educators could learn to systematically improve teacher education in Zimbabwe.

However, it is important to note that while donor work and support appear inherently benign and good, it has to be viewed and taken with circumspection, if donors for instance and a few stakeholders like the DTE facilitators in this case were left out to supervise the project, there is danger of concealing the weaknesses of the project propensity of not wanting to take account of the needs, concerns and capacities of intended beneficiaries. In the process, the intended beneficiaries should thus be involved in identifying their needs and coming up with strategies to overcome their pitfalls. (Adhiambo, 2012). At the same time if donor agencies mean good, they should harness the power of local leadership and community investment by building on existing asserts as essential components of any plan to enhance success and build sustainable socio economic, academic and professional future (Mlage, 2014). In this regard, working in partnership and /or collaboration with local authorities is not an option but a must in donor - funded and donor-driven interventions (Hofisi & Chizimba, 2013). The next section looks at factors influencing sustainability and effectiveness of donor-funded projects.

2.5 Factors influencing sustainability and effectiveness of donor-funded projects

Meyer (2002), in Oino, Towett, Kirini and Luvega (2015), view projects as social interventions within a given social system. The interventions change social structures and institutions of the system as well as social behaviour of its members. From this perspective, Harber and Stephens (2010) conclude that the MQEP was a well-conceived, innovative and important project with the potential to make a significant contribution to the quality of education in general and teacher education in particular in a developing country like Zimbabwe. In reviewing literature on the factors influencing effectiveness and sustainability of donor-funded projects, it should be acknowledged that various perspectives must be accommodated. I take this approach because there are no specifically laid-down factors that every evaluative study must necessarily address. However, I consider context to be a critical factor affecting and influencing project sustainability.

2.5.1 Beneficiary-based approach on project sustainability

Oino et al. (2015) acknowledge that community-based approaches for community development are among the best tools to achieving project sustainability. This view suits the MQEP because Oino et al. (2015) draw this conclusion from a study on sustainability of community-based projects in Kenya. In terms of context, Kenya, like Zimbabwe, is a former British colony, a developing country and an African country. Instead of referring to community, I narrow my focus on the beneficiaries, who are the teacher educators involved in the MQEP project. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2008), in Oino et al. (2015), see a community-based (beneficiary-based) approach as a way of working in partnership with persons of concern during stages of the project cycle.

Beneficiary or community-based project capitalise on the resilience, capacities, skills and resources of people concerned (ARC, 2001) which the project initiators (donor(s) build on, relying on local, cultural or institutional practices to develop strategies for the success or

sustainability of the project (UNHCR, 2008). Available evidence shows that during the MQEP, participants were simply told to attend training without any involvement in or receiving any explanation of the planning stage of the project (Harber & Stephens, 2010). Newman et al. (2002), cited in Oino et al. (2015), found out that community-level involvement from planning was critical for improving project outcomes quality.

In Zimbabwe, Cleaver (1999), cited in Oino et al. (2015), also established that empowerment and the long-term effectiveness of participation approaches were complex given the exclusion of beneficiaries from all stages of the project. Owing perhaps to the perceived complexity of instituting donor-driven projects in Zimbabwe, SCN- Zimbabwe adopted a non-consultative approach to the MQEP. The donor simply planned quietly and surfaced at implementation stage (Harber & Stephens, 2010).

2.5.2 Community acceptance and project ownership

Racino (1999), cited in Oino et al. (2015), suggests that community acceptance refers to local acceptance of the intended project, including associations, clubs, civic organisations, public space, with access to public transportation, parks and its arts centres. However, I limit community acceptance to the acceptance of the project by teacher education institutions and their total communities in Masvingo. By total communities, I mean all staff members working in teacher education institutions, student teachers therein and any other stakeholders working with those institutions.

According to the African Development Bank (2001), cited in Kuria and Wanyoike (2016):

> Stakeholders are persons or groups who are directly or indirectly affected by a project, as well as those who may have interest in a project and/or the ability to influence outcome, either positively or negatively. Stakeholders may include locally affected communities or individuals and their formal and

> informal representatives, national or local government authorities, politicians, religious leaders, civil society organisations and groups with special interests (p. 480).

In the MQEP, stakeholders that should have been considered included the responsible authorities of the three teachers' colleges, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education Provincial Office, Masvingo Municipality or City Council officials and local universities. These are organisations that had something to do with teacher education in one way or the other. The responsible authorities are the owners of the individual institutions. Masvingo City Council houses the three teachers' colleges and therefore provides critical civic services including some practising schools. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education are the custodians of all practising schools in Masvingo town, district and province. Therefore, not only the participant teacher educators, but also all relevant parties were likely to benefit. In light of this Harber & Stephens (2010) opined the following:

> A more invitational and explanatory style of recruitment may help facilitate attitudinal and behavioural change. This may also help to explain the evidence of both 'weak' and 'strong' forms of influence by the MQEP – the difference between superficial and deep or rhetorical and real change (p.79).

Coupled with the lack of stakeholder involvement and lack of more acceptable teacher educator project involvement procedures, Harber and Stephens (2010) also note an attitudinal, status-related impediment to the success of the MQEP, remarking that:

In some circumstances, higher occupational status, i.e., employment in higher education/teacher education does sometimes seem to be a hindrance for people's motivation to learn because they think they already know it all and are reluctant to concede otherwise (p.79).

There is also the question of how long it takes to genuinely change a teacher educator through the MQEP training. In the MQEP, there were three interventions in a year over two years, each lasting three days (Harber & Stephens, 2010). In-between the interventions, there was a one-day back-stopping professional support session, where the MQEP participants shared experiences and received feedback from colleagues and facilitators. One might ask: Was this enough? This back-stopping professional support session was important, especially in the light of anticipated resistance to change the status quo among teacher educators (Harber & Stephens, 2010). It therefore makes sense when Oino et al. (2015, p.762) advise that:

Participatory methods can be used to guarantee the inclusion of agreements between teacher educators, and the provision of appropriate information at each level and for different purposes.

2.5.3 Monitoring and evaluating the sustainability of donor-funded projects

Based on a study entitled 'Assessment factors influencing sustainability of donor-funded projects in Nakuru County, Kenya, Kuria and Wanyoike (2016) concluded that:

The effectiveness and sustainability of participatory monitoring and evaluation require that it be embedded in a strong commitment towards corrective action by communities, project managers and other stakeholders in a position to act (p.478).

In addition, Hodgkin (1994), also cited in Kuria and Wanyoike (2016, p.478), opines that, "Monitoring and evaluation is particularly important for sustainability, since it allows an on-going review of project effectiveness." Djalalinia, Owlia, Malekafzali, Ghanei, Babamahmoodi & Peykari, (2014) define project monitoring as the continuous and periodic review and overseeing of the project to ensure that input deliveries, work schedules, target output and other required actions proceed according to project plan. If monitoring strategies had been put in place in the MQEP, the negative findings by Harber and Stephens (2010) might have been avoided. By way of example, Harber and Stephens established that in the MQEP,

> … training should not have been thinly spread so that only a few individuals are trained in each institution. Emphasis should be placed on whole institution training, including senior managers. Also, future recruitment to the QEP training with the whole institution should be more explanatory and invitational in style (p. 91-92).

Harber and Stephens' (2010) observations imply that the MQEP had no monitoring and evaluation strategies put in place at the planning stage. Several possible reasons can be proffered for this. The donor representative might have treated the intervention project as exclusively hers (ownership). In this case, she did not want any "interference" for fear that she would be exposed. It is also possible that funds budgeted for the project were not enough to finance supporting activities such as monitoring and evaluation. If this was indeed the case, it would be disappointing, considering that the SCN representative had funds set aside to fly periodically from Oslo to Harare. This seems ironic to me, since the UZ DTE staff members working as co-facilitators with the SCN representative could have been tasked to assume monitoring and evaluation responsibilities to cut costs. However, for reasons best known to the initiators of the project, this was not done. One cannot rule out as a reason the lack of trust and/or the fact that the SCN representative thought the local academics were not knowledgeable enough about action research. I draw this conclusion based on the claim by Harber and Stephens (2010) that:

Prior to the expansion of the MQEP, there was need to focus on the training of trainers due to an international shortage of people trained in those areas (Action Research) and capable of training others (p.92).

This may have been a genuine finding by Harber and Stephens' (2010) evaluation of the same project, but it could also have simply been a presumption that action research was not known

in Africa. As Oino et al. (2015) established in Kenya, where project ownership is exclusive, those in control are less likely to respond positively to the needs and ideas of the wider group. This seems to be apparent in the MQEP, in which all planning, implementation and exit plans remained the privileged knowledge of one person, the SCN representative. Rightfully, Oino et al. (2015, p. 762) conclude that, "research shows that donor-led and top-down projects generally fail because they do not lead to stakeholder ownership and commitment". I was therefore keen and anxious to find out if that was the case with the Masvingo Quality Education Project.

2.6 Summary

The review of literature has revealed that donor-driven intervention and developmental projects help disadvantaged and needy communities. However, just because needy communities or beneficiaries may not be able to fund themselves, it does not mean donors should own the projects. Beneficiaries should be involved in project planning so that there is transparency in all stages from planning, implementation right up until exit in a quest to ensure project success.

Involving beneficiaries develops a sense of ownership in them and ensures their buy-in. Monitoring and evaluation processes and procedures must also be embedded in the project plan. This should help to make evaluation results credible, leading to credible decision making. This does not, however, mean that all evaluations are balanced in analysis.

Project sustainability also depends on resource commitment and the close involvement of stakeholders. In this regard, donor-led and top-down projects ordinarily fail to ensure sustainability. On the MQEP, previous evaluation literature points to the need for initiators of the project to have involved participants more than was observed. Institution-wide training would have yielded better results than focusing on small numbers in each institution. In this way, the project would have had more impact and would have been more effective. Having completed the review of literature, I presented the methodology in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to critically examine the role of action research in improving teacher education. This was done by carrying out a phenomenological study of the experiences of teacher educators from three teachers' colleges in Masvingo. The teacher educators participated in the quality education project between 2008 and 2009, an intervention strategy meant to develop reflective practices in teacher educators through action research methodologies. The teacher educators were trained in two phases, which are referred to as phase 1 and phase 2 in this study. As teacher educators, these participants also taught and supervised student teachers in teaching practice (TP) and research projects.

This chapter therefore presents the theory guiding the researcher's choice of method, data generation tools, instruments, procedures followed in the use of each tool, research ethics, sampling procedures, selection of participants, the research sub-sites, the methods of data analysis and interpretation and the presentation of results.

3.2 Research design

This study was a qualitative evaluative case study guided by phenomenology. The Masvingo Quality Education Project (MQEP) was carried out between January 2008 and December 2009. As such, obtaining information from teacher educators who were trained through that project required that I gain an appreciation of the project participants' lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). I therefore decided to apply the qualitative approach to my phenomenological study because I was studying the phenomenon of action research as experienced by teacher educators trained together over a period of two years. Indeed, Becker (1986), in Denzin and Lincoln (2011), opine that qualitative researchers study people doing things together in the place where these things are done.

Teacher educator participants trained in action research methodologies were drawn from three sub-sites, Morgenster, Masvingo and Bondolfi Teachers' Colleges. Since the three teachers' colleges were being studied for one reason over the same period of time, the study was therefore a case study with three physical sub-sites. A sub-site refers to an individual teachers' college. Furthermore, because teacher educators from the three institutions were brought into the Masvingo Quality Education Project, the research design was classified as a qualitative case study. The case study was also qualitative in nature in that, in generating data, In-depth non-numerical data generation methods instead of numerical data generation ones were used (Sara, 2018).

The qualitative data generation methods and tools that I used included individual in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, life stories and observations. These methods are explained and discussed later in this chapter. By applying these four data generation methods and tools, I was able to access an individual participant's personal experiences during the MQEP. In this respect, my study qualifies as a phenomenological one. Sara (2018, p. 2) suggests that, "Phenomenology is interested in the *individual* experiences of people". Although my participants were trained in the MQEP as a group, each one of them had individual experiences of what training in action research meant. It was the account of these lived experiences that I intended to solicit from my participants.

In keeping with phenomenological studies, I carried out lengthy, in-depth interviews with participants, interviewing each participant several times, as shall be discussed later, before subjecting all six participants to prolonged focus group discussions. I sought to further verify data drawn from individual participants' life stories through formal and informal observations that I made as researcher. Thereafter, I catalogued my data and subjected them to indexing for the purposes of generating recurring themes. That way, I succeeded in triangulating my data generation analysis methods, further justifying my selection of the phenomenological case

study. From the above described research design, I was able to come up with evaluative conclusions of my participants' experiences in the MQEP. In that regard, Patton (2002) aptly summarises that:

What these various phenomenological and phenomenographic approaches share in common is a focus on exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as a shared meaning. This requires methodologically, carefully and thoroughly capturing and describing how people experience some phenomenon-how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it and talk about it with others (p.104).

In this study, I sought to examine how participants of the Masvingo Quality Education Project described things and their experiences through their senses (Husserl, 1913, in Patton, 2002). From this study, I bracketed, analysed and compared the experiences of the participants to examine the essence of the action research phenomenon and whether it had potential to improve teacher education.

Having discussed and justified the research design, I now present the theory guiding this study.

3.3 Fullan's theory of change

The phenomenological case study was guided and directed by Fullan's (2006) theory of change. The Masvingo Quality Education Project was an intervention project aimed at transforming teacher educator practices by engaging in action research methodologies (Harber & Stephens, 2010). As such, Fullan's (2006) theory of change helps to provide bench-marks for change and the change process and may be applied to the process of change in education reform-related strategies.

Fullan's (2006) theory of change was chosen because it focuses specifically on "the human participants taking part in the change process" (Ellsworth, 2001, p.1). From the onset, this

theory of change was very appropriate to this study, which examined whether teacher educators involved in the MQEP action research intervention had been transformed in a way that would impact on the development of teacher education in Zimbabwe. The MQEP was also intended to impact on the professional and personal lives of individual teacher educators (Harber & Stephens, 2010).

Fullan (1991, 1982) proposes four broad phases in the change process, namely initiation, implementation, continuation and outcome.

Figure 3.1: The Four Phases of Fullan's Change Process: **Source:** Sarah Fitzpatrick's website https://twitter.com/sarahfitz?lang=en

I was therefore keen to find out how teacher educator participants were acquainted with the above-mentioned four steps that lead to change. In other words, this study needed (although not the main focus) to establish teacher educators' involvement at the MQEP planning stage or initiation, beginning with a needs assessment, if there was any. I wanted also to make an assessment of participants' involvement during the implementation phase of the project. This was meant to show that participants went beyond just attending training workshops in order to learn about action research practices upon the exit of the MQEP donors. Fullan (2012) avers that beneficiaries ought to sustain the project by continuing to make use of the skills learnt and developed during the project's life time. This view is consistent with Mugambi's (2016) recommendation that if they are empowered, beneficiaries should be able to sustain projects after donor exit.

Fullan (2012) suggests that continuation to the third phase in the change process is a decision to institutionalise an innovation based on the reaction to change, and this may be negative or

positive. Continuation, according to Fullan (2012), will thus depend on three major factors, namely:

- the change gets embedded/built in the structure (through policy/budget/timetable);
- the change generates a critical mass of administrators or teachers, who are skilled and committed to change; and
- the change has established procedures for continuing existence.

Richardson (1998) presents a contrary view, arguing that teachers (including teacher educators) do not change but actually resist change. These contradicting views by Fullan (2012) and Richardson (1998) made my study worthwhile as I was keen to find out which view was most applicable to my study.

In the last phase of his theory of change, Fullan (2012/2006) focuses on the outcome. By outcome, Fullan (2012) refers to the gradual and consistent behaviour, skills and attitudinal change of those involved in the change process. Since the MQEP was a living experience, the formative changes may not be unearthed by my study, because it was a summative evaluation. All the same, the participants should be able to document these formative changes, especially in their life stories. Fullan's change theory also anticipates changes in skills, thinking and committed actions. The data I sought to generate was supposed to be awash with evidence of action research skills, such as reflective thinking and statements of commitment to one's work. At the end of it all, the study like those on donor-funded projects by Adhiambo (2012), Mlage (2014) and Oino et al. (2015) establish whether participants report and reflect commitment to and ownership of their professional problems as a result of training in action research.

Ultimately, Fullan (2006) warns that the change process is complex. This warning enabled me to learn and appreciate that I should not have expected that the two-year journey of the MQEP participants in this action research intervention project to have been a bed of roses. The study

sought to find out if Fullan's (2006) theory of change had a bearing on the results of the Masvingo Quality Education Project. In the next section, I present the philosophical theory guiding the methodology.

3.4 Philosophy guiding the methodology

There are several theoretical orientations that explain, justify and support the qualitative research paradigm. These theoretical orientations include the phenomenological perspective, symbolic interactionism and ethno-methodology (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This study concerned itself with establishing the impact that training in action research methodologies had on teacher educators. In other words, the study sought to describe participants' basic lived experiences (Van Manen, 1990). As such, the researcher found the phenomenological approach to research most suitable for this study. Aspers (2009) observes that, the empirical phenomenological approach builds upon the phenomenology of philosophers such as Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, and the sociologist Alfred Schutz. Empirical phenomenology was considered to be most appropriate for this study because its main idea is that, "Scientific explanation must be grounded in the first-order construction of the actors (the participants), that is in their own meanings" (Aspers, 2009, p.1).

The anticipated improvement in teacher education referred to earlier was to be achieved through the training provided to teacher educators. This training involved engaging them in action research methodologies in order to develop them into reflective practitioners. This implied studying human phenomenon as experienced in consciousness, cognitive and perceptual acts, as well as how teacher educators could be valued or appreciated (Wilson, 2002). In other words, by choosing the phenomenological approach, the researcher was trying to understand how teacher educators construct meaning in non-subjective ways.

Whatever transformations this study established to have occurred may not, however, be wholly attributable to the above-mentioned training given to the participants. Even if there was evidence of reflective thinking having taken place, it may not be professionally and academically proper to attribute this exclusively to action research practices. Wilson (2002, p.10) says, by applying phenomenological approaches to research, "the people in question tell their own story in their own terms of the phenomenon as it is lived." This means that the phenomenological approach helped the researcher to appreciate and understand the effects of training in action research methodologies through the lived context of the (teacher educators) participants. This enabled the participants to question their own practices, which is the hallmark of action research. If teacher educators show the capacity for self-introspection, their potential to improve teacher education would be enhanced.

In pursuance of this objective, attempts were made to eliminate everything that represented prejudgment or presupposition (Husserls, 1970, in Moustakas, 1994). The challenge for me as a researcher, according to Moustakas (1994) was to understand things as they were as well as their meanings and essences in the light of intuition and self-reflection. Phenomenology was thus transcendental because it adhered to what the researcher could discover through reflection on subjective acts and their objective correlations.

Another reason why the phenomenological approach to research was chosen relates to its commitment to descriptions of experiences rather than explanations or analysis. As a result, data about experiences, my own thinking, intuition and judgement were primary evidence of scientific investigation (Moustakas, 1994). In this phenomenological study, I was interested in finding out if action research had changed practices of teacher educators who were trained for two years in my presence as trainee project facilitator. Furthermore, since my current job has a lot to do with monitoring the standards and quality of teacher education in Zimbabwe,

engaging in this study would be of benefit to me to understand and appreciate teacher educators' perceptions about their own practices. Over and above that, the study was envisaged to assist me identify the gaps and opportunities that the Department of Teacher Education (DTE) as a quality controller and quality assurance agent needs in order to improve teacher education in Zimbabwe.

My interest in the research question also derived from what Husserl, in Moustakas (1994, p.), refers to as "intentionality *noema* and *noesis*." *Noema* is the way in which the methodologies were experienced. In this study, as participants reflected on what was "seen", they would start to grasp meanings of their individual worlds that had been concealed. The challenge for both the participants and the researcher was to look, look again and keep looking again and then carry out reflection in order to obtain complete descriptions. To arrive at essence of a phenomenon, one had to unify the *noema* (external perception) and the *noesis* (internal perception) (Moustakas, 1994). In addition, Schutz, in Wilson (2002, p.11), opines that:

The ordinary person acting in the world is in a biographically determined situation, doing what he/she does according to the system of relevancies that enables them to select, from the environment and from interactions with others, those elements that make sense for the purpose at hand.

Schutz took issue with the Marxism sociology of knowledge as expressed by Mannheim (1994), which represented knowledge as a product of material social conditions. Instead, as reflected in my study, Schutz demonstrates that "knowledge is derived from people's practical experience of the world (Wilson, 2002, p.13).

Yet another reason for the selection of the phenomenological approach to research was the fact that it provided an explanation and justification for the methodology and method(s) the

researcher deployed for this study. For the phenomenologist, the world one chooses to explore is one of inter-subjectively constructed meanings. In this respect, Wilson (2002) suggests that approaches include conceptual analysis, which is at the base of 'coding' activities in all methods for analysing qualitative data. In my study, the emphasis was on understanding the participants' experience of the world and their situation. As a result, narrative accounts and qualitative interviews were suitable data-gathering methods, as shall be discussed later in this chapter.

The phenomenological approach thus demanded that the researcher discover the world as it was experienced by those involved in it. It was focused on the nature of human experiences. Consequently, Wilson (2002) observes that phenomenology is not a hypothesis testing code of research (although it may result in hypotheses that one may wish to test by other means). Rather, the researcher is urged to get as close as possible to what participants were experiencing in the behaviour being investigated. Observation, qualitative interviews and document analysis are widely used in phenomenological research.

Furthermore, phenomenological concepts underlie virtually all those schools of thought that hold that it is necessary to understand the meaning attributed by persons to the activities in which they engage in order to understand their behaviour. For this reason, Aspers (2009) suggests that what is done in qualitative methods such as interview techniques, analysis and the use of computer packages for qualitative analysis can be used by the empirical phenomenological researcher. Having justified my choice of theoretical perspective for my study, I now turn to a description of the research sights.

3.5 Research sub-sites

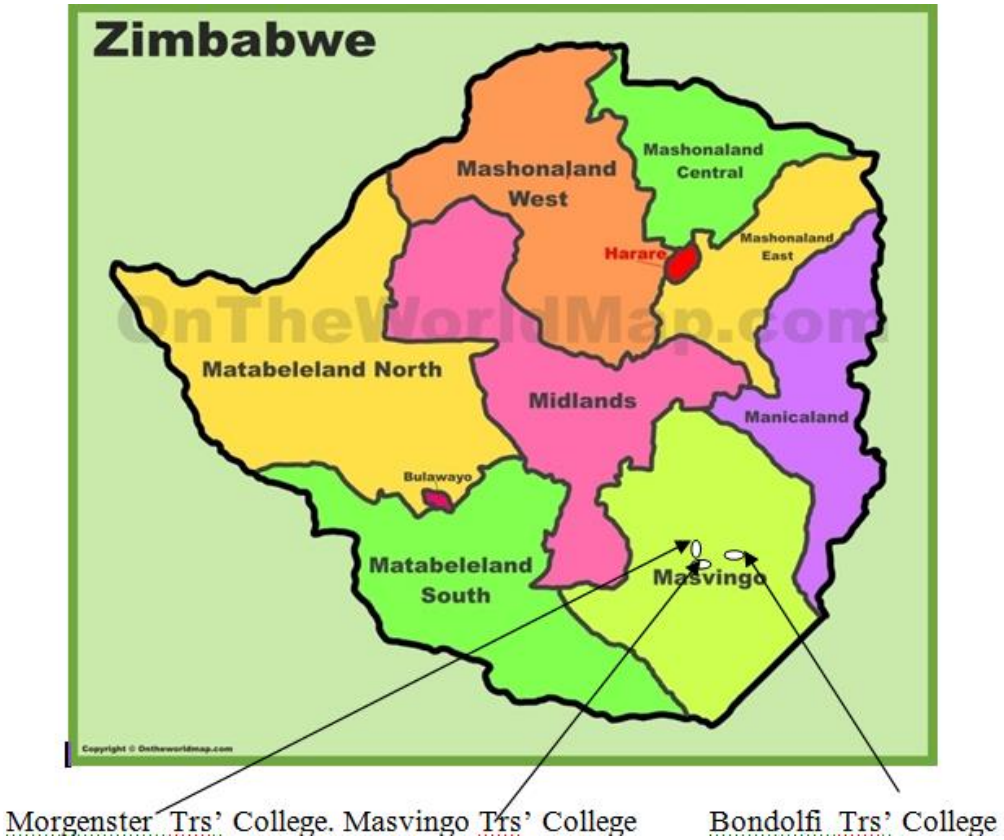
This study was carried out in multiple sub-sites. The individual sub-sites were Morgenster Teachers' College, Masvingo Teachers' College and Bondolfi Teachers' College. Two of the research sub-sites were private teachers' colleges under two different church denominations,

while the third sub-site was a public teachers' college. For various reasons, the three study sub-sites had different cultures, including the fact that they fell under different responsible authorities.

Masvingo teachers college is the largest of the three in terms of student and lecturer population, but it was the youngest in terms of when it was established. Morgenster teachers college is on a vast mission establishment that housed several other institutions such as a referral hospital, a theological college, a primary school, a high school and a school for the deaf and dumb. It is the only teachers' college in Zimbabwe that has offered all primary teacher education programmes in the country from pre-colonial times to date

Bondolfi is a private teachers' college, and was the smallest of the three in terms of student and lecturer population. This research sub-site was located on a fairly small mission establishment that housed a teacher's college, a primary school and a clinic. The three sub-sites differed in terms of their size, age, experience in teacher education, and many other respects. In relation to this study, however, these seemingly overt differences were not very significant because the phenomenon under investigation was looked at from an equal point of view. Considering that each college provided two participants to this study, it means that the sub-sites were treated equally. Figure 3 shows the location of the three sub-sites in Zimbabwe and in Masvingo as a province. This information is provided for the purposes of geographically identifying the research sites.

Figure 3.2: Provincial Map of Zimbabwe



Source:www.google.com (modified to indicate the research sub-sites)

Table 3.1: Characteristics of Each of the Three Sub-sites

	Morgenster Teachers' College	Bondolfi Teachers' College	Masvingo Teachers' College
Responsible Authority	Private	Private	Public
Age at time of study	108 years	47 years	36 years
Staff establishment	96	78	110
Number of participants in the study	2	2	2
Distance from Masvingo Town	35km	25km	5km

Two teacher educators from each of the research sub-sites participated in phases 1 and 2 of the MQEP for a total of two years. These six teacher educators were purposively selected as

participants in the study because they were the most experienced in terms of their participation in the MQEP hence had more insights and data on what the researcher was researching for.

3.6 Entry into the research sub-sites

It was relatively easy for me to gain entry and access into the three research sub-sites because, as a staff member of the University of Zimbabwe Department of Teacher Education Scheme of Association, I relate to and work with teacher educators quite often. In fact, as is the case for every lecturer in the Department of Teacher Education (DTE), teachers' colleges are our second workplace. From 2010 to 2012, I was programme coordinator for Bondolfi Teachers' College, and as from January 2013, I was appointed programme coordinator for Masvingo Teachers' College. Being programme coordinator entails being the link person between the respective college(s) with the University of Zimbabwe and working with the college so closely that one becomes part of it. Since joining the DTE in December 2002, the researcher has also been to all the three teachers' colleges several times to examine academic and teaching practice. These links and official visits facilitated my access to and entry into the three research sub-sites.

While access to and entry into the study sub-sites was not a problem, research procedures and ethics compelled me to formally introduce myself to each of the college administrators and explain the purpose of my presence in their institutions. I also had an introductory letter to this effect from the Chairperson of the DTE (See Appendix 1). Each of the three principals was quick to take advantage of either tea time or other gatherings where most of the lecturers were present to introduce me to their staff and explain the motive of my visit. Everybody welcomed me warmly and made me feel immediately at home as I did when I went to colleges on official DTE business. This acceptance facilitated my entry and data generation visits for the purposes of this study.

Stephens (2009, p.69) quotes Bogdan and Taylor's (1975, p.19) assertion that "the ideal research setting is one in which the observer obtains easy access, establishes immediate rapport with informants, and gathers data directly related to research interest". For this particular study, my access into the research sub-sites and acceptance by participants had started long before embarking on this study since I was understudying a facilitating team on action research methodology. In other words, I was simply fulfilling the claim by Schostak (2002), in Stephens (2009, p. 69), that acceptance assumes that, "the researcher moves from the world of design, planning, to the real world of field work with participants".

The research sub-sites had been visited several times before embarking on sustained data generation. There were several reasons for these visits, namely the need to establish and verify whether the targeted participants were still at their workplaces. This was necessary in view of the fact that training in action research phases 1 and 2 had taken place between 2008 and 2009. It was pleasantly surprising to find that most of the targeted participants were still at their workplaces. Only one from Bondolfi Teachers' College had changed jobs, but he was still easily accessible because his family lived at the research sub-site. However, for convenience in data generation, this targeted participant was replaced with another one who had had an equal amount of experience in the MQEP. The visits and replacement of participants allowed what Stephens (2009, p.69) refers to as "finding bearings and an opening up of opportunities to interact with a range of settings within which the research purpose lives and breathes."

The nature of access to the research sub-sites invariably informed the direction and shaping of this study. Access was also a component of progress focusing on shaping the content of the research. It also enhanced the relationship between the 'I–and–we' of the researcher-researched relationship. As Schostak (2002, p.16-17, in Stephens, 2009), says, such a relationship, between

the I-and–we, operates on two levels, the informal and formal. One needs the other if access is to be profitable and of benefit to the researched community as well.

The formal dimension was established very easily. It was concerned with bureaucratic and hierarchical procedures for obtaining clearance to undertake research in and reside on the sub-site. As explained earlier, it was made easy because of the already established relationship between me, as researcher, DTE and teachers' colleges in the Scheme of Association. The informal dimension, meanwhile, was concerned with matters of establishing rapport and ensuring legitimacy (Stephens, 2009).

Many of the events that took place during the formative stages of this study were not pre-planned but were the result of capitalizing on the opportunities that presented themselves. For instance, I was one of the trainers in both phases 1 and 2. Secondly, I was one of the data gatherers for the evaluators of the project towards the end of 2010. Access and acceptance were therefore very easily achieved. As an insider who had been a learner facilitator, I knew a lot about what had happened during the MQEP training workshops. However, I had to hear about this from the study participants and be as objective as possible in gathering data from them during interviews and FDGs. I could neither show agreement or disagreement with the participants' statements but just took them as they were made.

During the eight months of data generation, the first month was used for entry, gaining acceptance and explaining the purpose of my prolonged stay at each of the sub-sites. The last month was used for winding up, re-visiting research sub-sites for verification, clarification and tying up of the loose ends of my data generation. At each research sub-site, I held an initial familiarization meeting with the two teacher educator participants and told them that I was going to be part of their staff for eight months. During the eight-month period, I requested to observe their routine activities as they went about their college business.

3.7 Participants

Participants for this study were sampled from the two Masvingo Quality Education Project. The project was referred to in this study as Phase 1 and Phase 2. As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this study, Phase 1 was conducted in year one from January to December 2008 while Phase 2 was conducted in year two which was January to December 2009. Six teacher educators, two from each of the three teachers' colleges in Masvingo participated in the two-year MQEP. Forty-five teacher educators, fifteen from each of the three teachers' colleges in Masvingo had participated in the MQEP. However, only six teacher educators were sampled from the two phases. These six had participated in all the training sessions, including feedback sessions, for the two years without missing a single one. Collectively, the six participants were therefore considered to be rich informants.

3.8 Sampling

Purposive sampling was used in this study. This sampling procedure was chosen for several reasons. In phenomenological studies, once researchers have mapped their field of study, "they selectively choose persons, situations and events most likely to yield fruitful data about the research question" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p.433). Therefore information-rich participants were sought. This study investigated whether engagement in action research methodologies would improve teacher education. Purposive sampling was also holds that, in phenomenological studies, the participants need to be carefully chosen to be individuals who have experienced the phenomenon.

In my view, training in action research could be equated to getting medical treatment. In order to see if the treatment has worked, there is a need to engage those who received it. As Aspers (2009) opines, the main idea of empirical phenomenology is that scientific explanation must be grounded in the first order construction of the actors. The actors were therefore purposefully selected to be participants in this study. This was in keeping with the assertion by McMillan

and Schumacher (2001) that purposive sampling is a strategy to choose small groups of individuals likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon of interest. It was important and necessary to point out that the six participants who took part in the Masvingo Quality Education Project were also selected on the basis of having completed their individual action research projects, which were done as part of training in the Masvingo Quality Education Project.

The six teacher educators had also supervised student teachers in project work which was a course requirement for student teachers. Phenomenologists believe that multiple ways of interpreting experiences are available to each of us through interacting with others (Greene, 1978). The interaction between the teacher educators and their students during project supervision gave me new insights as a researcher. Phenomenological field workers therefore view selection and sampling strategies as dynamic and ad hoc rather than static or a priori parameters of populations for a research design (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The same authorities further suggest that purposive sampling is a process conducted simultaneously as one generates data.

It therefore follows that qualitative research investigates the why and how of decision-making, not just what, where, and when. In that respect, smaller, focused samples are more often needed than large samples (Creswell, 2003). One of the demands of phenomenology is "to produce explanations that are grounded in the subjective experiences of real people" (Aspers, 2009, p.4). This was achieved by using a smaller sample given its advantages insofar as data generation and analysis of findings were concerned. From the sample, it was also clear that in-depth interaction between the researcher and the participants was possible. The next section presents the interactive data generation methods and instruments that were used for this study.

3.9 Methods, instruments and procedures for data generation

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p.405), "Qualitative phases of data generation and analysis are interactive research processes that occur in overlapping cycles". What follows is a discussion of the data generation methods used in this study and specific procedures that were followed for each data generation method.

Interpretive, phenomenological studies require the researcher to investigate experience as lived by those being investigated. In that respect, Van Manen (1990, p.2) suggests that "researchers need to describe their experience as they lived it". He further notes that the researcher must describe the experience from inside, almost like a state of mind, the feelings, the mood and the emotions. In this study, therefore, Interactive data generation methods that included interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), participants' life stories and observations were used. As Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggest, triangulation was employed because many sources of data are better than a single source. In fact, multiple sources led to fuller understanding of the phenomenon that was under study.

3.9.1 Interviews

The research participants participated in individual interviews as need arose and, occasionally, we would arrange to go to one of the research sub-sites for focus group discussions. Participants were notified of the focus group meeting times in advance for planning purposes, and that transport would be provide to and from the focus group discussion sessions. As individual interviews that averaged one hour per session per participant or focus group discussions that lasted an average of two hours per session were conducted, the work activities of participants were also observed. In fact, observations went on at any of the research sub-sites and as such, I always carried along with me a cell phone, which I used as a camera and video recorder as well as a notebook in case I needed to jot down something, especially those things I observed or heard unintentionally.

For the individual interviews and focus group discussions, over and above writing notes, a tape recorder was used to ensure that the proceedings (discussions) were captured in as much detail than and as accurately as possible. Whenever I was on the research sub-sites, I dressed in a manner similar to that of the informants to avoid standing out in any way. Both in-depth and focus group interviews were conducted outdoors so as to enable me to observe the goings-on around the research sub-sites.

For the in-depth interviews, a set of open-ended questions in no particular order to serve as a guide during the interviews were in place. The major questions were for teacher educator participants being trained in action research, and included the following:

- Can you please explain your memories of the Quality Education Project?
- What is your conception of quality teacher education?
- What would you say were the main lessons and experiences you gained from the Quality Education Project?
- What are your general views about action research?
- How would you say the action research training changed your professional views and practices?
- How do you think your participation in action research influenced classroom management, teaching strategies and general interaction with colleagues and students in your college?
- Are there many major differences between lecturers who participated in action research training and those who did not in the way they conduct college business?

The above sample questions were not always asked as they appear here. I would always try to read the direction of the interview and adjust my questioning accordingly.

McMillan and Schumacher (2002, p.443) define in-depth interviews as "open-response questions to obtain data of participants' meaning of how individuals conceive of their world and how they explain or "make sense" of the important events in their lives." In this phenomenological study, it was necessary to obtain descriptions of participant experiences, and this could be done meaningfully through interviews. Guided by the research questions, I generated data using what Moustakas (1994) refers to as long interviews with each of the participants. According to Moustakas (1994), a long interview is an informal, interactive process that utilizes open-ended comments and questions.

There were several reasons why I conducted interviews. As Patton (2002) opines, we cannot observe feelings, thoughts and interactions. In this study, in-depth interviews were therefore used to clarify, complement, supplement and corroborate data generated through observations. The interviews were necessary because "we cannot observe situations that prelude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people view the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world" (Patton, 2002, p.341). The purpose of carrying out interviews was thus to enable the researcher to enter into the participants' perspectives. Phenomenological researchers conduct interviews to find out what is on someone's mind, to gather their stories (Patton, 2002; Silverman, 2011; Aspers, 2009). Over and above trying to find out what was on someone's mind using interviews, Kvale (1996, p.14) also regards interviews as "an exchange of views between two or more people on a topic of natural interest".

During this study, six one-hour interviews were conducted with each of the six teacher educator participants in the MQEP since, amongst other reasons there was need to establish participants' views on their experiences in teacher education. This was necessary because the training in action research methodologies was intended to enhance participants' practices so that they would operate in a manner that sought to achieve quality teacher education. In other words, phenomenological interviews were carried out which, according to McMillan and Schumacher

(2001), are specific types of in-depth interviews used to study the meanings or essence of participants' understanding of their lived experiences.

Part of these lived experiences included training in action research methodologies by the six selected participants. The intention was to investigate what they had experienced, how it had been experienced and the meanings that the interviewees had assigned to the experience (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Stephens, 2009; Silverman, 2011). Interviews were also used as a method of generating data because of their flexibility, which enabled me as a researcher to pursue information in whatever direction it appeared to be going (Patton, 2002). There were four questions that guided the interviews. One of the questions was: What are your perceptions on the Masvingo Quality Education Project?

This question sought to establish the experiences of each of the six participants before, during and after they had participated in the action research workshops. Further it also sought to establish if there were any changes that teacher educators thought and felt had taken place in their practices as a result of training in action research. Similarly participants were able to provide reflective evaluations of their experiences. This phenomenological expectation agrees with what Patton (2002) proposes when he says:

What does the project look and feel like to the people involved? What are their experiences in the project? What thoughts do people have concerning the project and, what changes do participants perceive in themselves as a result of the project? (p.341)

On the other hand, in-depth interviews were also intended to solicit the participants' evaluative perceptions on the organisation and implementation of the MQEP. Generally, interviews would help to obtain participants' views on the main benefits they had accrued from participating in the MQEP. The questions asked made this study an evaluative phenomenological qualitative study.

The other question asked required participants to share their views on how participation in the Masvingo Quality Education Project had influenced their (participants') classroom management skills and teaching strategies at teachers' college level. This was a reflective question which gave participants room and space to air their individual thoughts in an evaluative manner again. The idea was to give interviewees a framework within which to respond and one that allowed elaborations and further probes. As Patton (1990) opines, clarification probes are necessary and possible. If, for instance, I was not sure what the interviewee was talking about or what they meant, I gently asked for clarification, emphasising that I was the one having difficulty in understanding what was being said and it was not the fault of the interviewee. For instance, I would say:

- I am not sure I understand what you mean by "getting changed." Could you please help me understand what that means?
- I am having a problem understanding your explanation of you being "reflective." Could you please say more about this?
- I want to make sure I understand what you mean. Would you describe it for me again, please?

One can imagine, from the examples of clarification probes cited above, how long each of the interviews took. This was particularly true if something observed needed to be clarified through an interview. Although there were broad guiding thematic questions, the interview questions emerged from the immediate context and were asked "in the natural course of things" (Patton, 2002, p. 349). There were no pre-determined specific questions as such. This, in my view, increased the reliance on questions. Interviews were built on and emerged from observations, and interviews were matched to the individuals and circumstances (Patton, 2002; Huberman & Miles, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The challenge that arose, however, was that data generated from the interviews appeared difficult to organize and analyse. The data were also

voluminous and had been generated from a wide range of questions in keeping with situations and circumstances.

Despite the above-mentioned challenges, the perspective that things cannot be felt to be known in advance or felt to be known without internal reflection and meaning, was achieved. The objective of qualitative interviewing – which was to capture how those involved viewed their experiences, their world, and their individual perceptions – was achieved. For the interview guide, please see Appendix 3.

3.9.2 Focus group discussions

The six teacher educators selected to be trained in action research as part of the MQEP were brought together during focus group discussions. FGDs were an additional data generation technique that were employed to come up with credible and trustworthy data and enhance the triangulation of data generation methods and techniques.

Let me begin by defining and justifying the use of focus group discussion(s). Silverman (2011) views a focus group discussion as a way of generating qualitative data by engaging a small number of participants in an informal group discussion (or discussions) focused around a particular topic or set of issues. McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p.455) suggest that a focus group discussion or interview is "a strategy for obtaining a better understanding of a problem or an assessment of a problem, concern, new product, programme or ideas by interviewing a purposefully sampled group of people rather than each person individually". Patton (2002) simply says a focus group interview is an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic. The group usually comprises six to ten people with similar backgrounds.

The above view by Patton seems to be very consistent with the way the researcher employed focus group discussions which involved the six purposefully selected teacher educators. Common characteristics among them were that they were all teacher educators. The six

participants were all teaching at primary teachers' colleges in Masvingo. Each of the six participants supervised student teachers in research-related activities. The six participants had all been trained in the Masvingo Quality Education Project, which was the major critical characteristic of the focus group members.

The researcher also used focus group discussion(s) in line with Patton's (2002, p.138) view that "focus groups can be used at the end of a programme, or even months after programme completion to gather perceptions about outcomes and impacts." The Masvingo Quality Education Project was a programme that ran for two years. My evaluative study sought to establish the impact of the MQEP a year after it ended.

Another reason for engaging in focus group discussions was to create a social environment in which group members would be stimulated by each other's perceptions and ideas. In so doing, the researcher felt like he would increase the quality and richness of data generated through a more efficient strategy than one-on-one interviews (McMillan & Schumacher; 2001). The objective was to get high quality data in a social context where participants could consider their own views in the context of the views of others. In the process, I also thought I was participating in the democratization of the research process, allowing participants more ownership over it, and promoting more dialogic interactions and joint construction of more poly-vocal texts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). By so doing, I also avoided the risk of closing the investigation prematurely based on my understanding of particular issues and topics. I was trying to avoid being persuaded too easily and too early by limited evidence obtained from individual participant observation and in-depth interviews.

In the focus group, the way participants positioned themselves in relation to each other as they discussed or processed questions, issues and topics presented to them presented a complexity in that they could influence each other's responses. The researcher was astute and used such

complexities to enhance the quality of the outcomes. The researcher's thinking was that such dynamics would be relevant "units of analyses" in the study (Kruger & Casey, 2000, in Patton, 2002). In the same vein, Kruger and Casey (2000), in Patton (2002), observe that interactions among participants enhance data quality. Participants tend to serve as checks and balances on each other, making it possible to weed out false or extreme views. As this happened, I was able to quickly assess areas of agreement and those of disagreement.

My decision to use focus group discussions was also motivated by what Clifford (1998), in Denzin and Lincoln (2011), calls hermeneutics of vulnerability. This refers to the constructive relationship between the researcher and participants or the researched. In this relationship, Clifford notes that self-reflexivity becomes the tactic as the researcher and the researched experience multiple and contradicting positional views of all participants. At the same time, my imperfect control of proceedings was also tested as I received a lot of contradicting views, all of which were individual units of analysis that were building blocks to my final findings. This enhanced the quality of data generated because self-reflexivity encouraged "reflection on interpretive research as the dual practice of knowledge gathering and self-transformation" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.559). This seemed to fit very well with the phenomenon being investigated since action research was supposed to have developed reflective practices in the participants.

Focus group discussions were held four times at each of the three sub-sites. I would ferry four participants from the other two research sub-sites to the third sub-site. I used my own vehicle for this and it worked out very well because it afforded me the opportunity to be mobile and work as long as I desired. There was no pre-prepared set of questions, as discussions usually followed after I had observed something or sought to verify something that had arisen during the in-depth interviews. On average, the discussions lasted about two hours a session, and the discussions were all tape recorded with the consent of all participants.

I devoted eight months to the entire data generation process. During these eight months, I used a cyclic approach to visit the research sites. I visited in weekly cycles, and after eight months of data gathering, each research site had been visited for a cumulative period of three months of intense data generation. However, it should be noted that with qualitative studies, data generation may not have a clear-cut entry and exit time frame.

3.9.3 Observations

Where observations were concerned, the main objective was to establish the level and nature of interactions of teacher educators, student teachers and teachers. There was no observation guide used. I merely went out with an open 'cheque'; equipped myself with a pen, notebook and camera. I used my cell phone as both a camera and a video camera to ensure that I captured every observed occurrence deemed relevant or contradictory to the study or to data generated from other methods. This consideration was made in respect of Wilson's (2002) claim that observation is a fundamental method of data generation.

Like ethnography, phenomenology also demands that the researcher be grounded in the culture of the object(s) of study. This implied that to ensure optimal observation, I needed to know and understand the daily routines of each of the three sub-sites. These routines included health breaks, lesson times, assembly times and any other activities that would add value to my data generation. With these routines in mind, I followed MacMillan and Schumacher's (2001) suggestion that observation requires field residence or the presence of the researcher in the field or site for an extensive period. My fieldwork was therefore a labour-intensive inquiry. I generated data through both participant observation (when I attended lectures) and direct, informal, non-participant observation when I visited the colleges on business not specifically related to my research.

Participant observation enabled me to obtain participants' perceptions of events, processes and experiences relating to their actions before, during and after being trained in action research methodologies. These perceptions or constructions assumed three forms, namely verbal, non-verbal and tacit knowledge. My focus was to observe non-verbal cues that included facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice, body movements and other un-verbalised social interactions. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001), tacit knowledge is personal, intuitive knowledge that is difficult or impossible for the individual to articulate; instead, the person demonstrates this knowledge by actions or by created objects. I therefore felt that the participant observation method would be effective because it enabled me to observe as many activities as I could as many times as it was possible to do so at each research site.

As already mentioned, the main purpose of the observations was to document the nature and level of interaction of teacher educators socially and during project supervision. Moreover, observational data were meant to describe the settings that were observed, the activities that took place in those settings, people who participated in those activities and the meaning of what was observed from the perspectives of those observed (Patton, 2002). Although these interactions involved every teacher educator including those outside my sample, I focused my attention on those in the sample. The purposively sampled teacher educators were each observed six times teaching one and a half hour lessons as per their respective timetables. The purpose of observing teacher educators teach was to document classroom management and teaching strategies. Observing lecturers who were trained in action research and those not enabled me to generate insights that might or might not link to what participants said during interviews. In other words, I was able to corroborate field observation data with interview generated data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). During the eight months on site for data generation, I tried to do what Lenkin (1968, p.172) asserts in Huberman and Miles (2002) that is to have:

> A long period of intimate study and residence in a well-defined community employing a wide range of observational techniques including prolonged face-to-face contact with members of local groups, direct participation in some of the group's activities, and a greater emphasis on intensive work with informants than on the use of documentary or survey data.

In this study, the groups referred to above by Lenkin (1968) in Huberman and Miles (2002), as 'local groups' were the participants in the three sub-sites, Mogenster, Masvingo and Bondolfi teachers' colleges. During the eight months of data generation, one week (five working days) was spent in residence at each sub-site before moving to the next so that data generated would make findings credible. Once on site, I observed as much as I could without an observation guide or schedule to ensure I took note of all that which occurred and picked other salient issues that were not usually easy to note if observation was guided. I wrote down as many of the observations involving my study participants as I could, and I always carried around a notebook and a video camera so that recordings could be made and listened to when I had time and during interpretation of data. Where I thought I needed evidence to support what I had observed, I also took photographs, so that the notes I wrote, and the photographs complemented each other.

What was observed were mainly behaviours (routines and ceremonies) such as assembly times, movement between lectures, the nature of project supervision and sometimes meal times in the dining halls. This was especially possible at private teachers' colleges (Mogenster and Bondolfi), where the majority of student teachers, including research participants, lived in student residence. As Stephens (2009) suggests, during my stay at each of the study sub-sites. A reflexive notebook was always kept in which relevant observations were jotted and these were later used for reflections. As I was waiting to conduct interviews, I would observe something and simply put it down in writing. In other words, field notes for observations had

no specifically designated times as I documented relevant data I came across. This was consistent with McMillan and Schumacher's (2001, p.437) observation that "participant observation is really a combination of particular data collection (now data generation) strategies: limited participation, field observation, and interviewing and artefact collection." For this study, participant observations were conducted simultaneously with interviews and document analysis. In the following section, I will discuss the fourth and last data generation method I employed: life stories.

3.9.4 Life stories

Participant teacher educator life stories were provided to me as I entered the study sub-sites right at the beginning of data generation. This was because I had specifically requested for the individual life stories ahead of data generation time. In this study, life stories were treated like documents because, as Stephens (2009) opines, life stories concern the relationship between two interdependent worlds: that of the individual and his/her unique life story and that of the past, present and future contextual world through which the individual travelled. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) view life stories as documents that serve as sources of rich descriptions of how the people who produced the materials think about their world. What therefore remained to be done after collection was simply to analyse the life stories. Having discussed the four data generation methods, techniques and the procedures that I followed, I now present the data generation cycle.

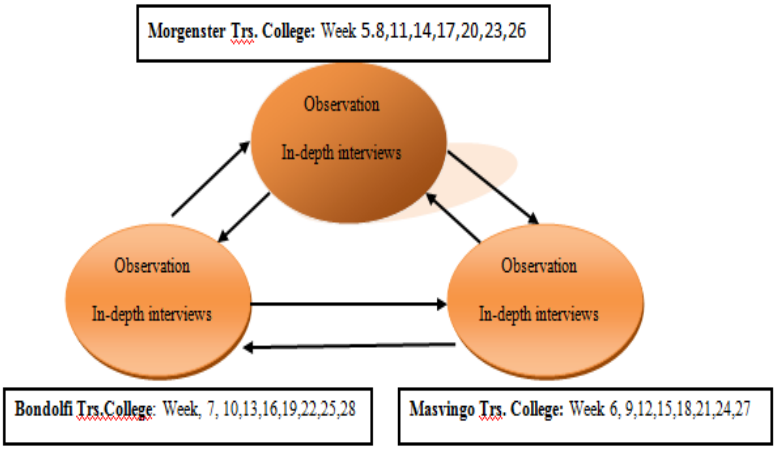


Figure 3.4: Data Generation Cycle**: Source:** Researcher generated (2013)

3.10 Data analysis and interpretation

McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p.461) observe that qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organising the data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among the categories. Most categories and patterns emerge from the data, rather than being imposed on the data prior to data generation. Bogdan and Biklen (2007, p.159) refer to data analysis as "the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes and other materials that you accumulate to enable you to come up with findings." These scholars further suggest that data interpretation refers to "developing ideas about one's findings and relating them to the literature and to broader concerns and concepts."

While it was relatively easy to explain the difference between data analysis and data interpretation, it was difficult to separate the two in the process of carrying out this qualitative phenomenological study. During the initial generation of data through observations, I collected data broadly; pursuing and recording everything I thought would help me understand the research settings. However, after three to four visits to each of the research sites, I felt I had developed a research focus based on "what was feasible to do and what was of interest to me" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p.161). I narrowed the scope of data generation and focused on

interaction patterns that specifically included and involved the research participants. These interactions occurred both in and outside the classroom. I also developed what Bogdan and Biklen (2007) refer to as analytic questions. This was done by assessing the questions (listed earlier in this chapter) that I had taken with me into the field. The use of analytic questions was made because I was interested in the minute details of interactions rather than general social processes. Since data generation was carried out in three sub-sites, a great deal of analysis in the field was done. In this way, questions were generated and answers sought as I moved from one sub-site to another in a bid to develop what Glaser and Strauss (1967), in Bogdan and Biklen (2007), refer to as formal theory.

Data generation sessions were planned in light of what had been found in previous observations, interviews and focus group discussions. This implied regularly reviewing my field notes as I planned to pursue specific leads in the subsequent data generation sessions. Self-targeted questions such as the following were asked: What do I know? What is it that I do not yet know? What else should I ask about? Each time something occurred that reminded me of other research sub-site(s), I recorded these mental connections. When words, events or circumstances recurred, I noted it in my observer's comments. Similarly, if I felt or thought I had a breakthrough in understanding something that was previously obscure to me, I recorded and elaborated on it. If I noticed that certain participants had something in common, I also noted it. As Bogdan and Biklen (2007, p.163) suggest, "The idea was to stimulate critical thinking" about what I had seen and/or experienced and not to be a recording machine. These observation comments were meant to make interpretation relatively easy.

Having taken these preliminary steps, I then applied five steps developed by Pope, Ziebland and Mays (2000). This is a framework developed for the analysis and subsequent interpretation of results in applied or policy-related qualitative research. Pope et al. (2000) aver that this frame

is applicable in qualitative studies, where the aim and objectives of the investigation have been typically set in advance.

Although this study was not guided by objectives as such, its research questions could be equated to the research objectives because both direct or guide the research. For the purposes of this study therefore, the principal research question was:

What was the contribution of action research to the development of teacher education in Zimbabwe?

From the above question, the following sub-questions emerged:

i) How did reflective skills manifest in teacher educators?

ii) What was the level and nature of interaction of the teacher and learner in action research-based settings?

iii) How did the Masvingo Quality Education Project (MQEP) influence classroom management and teaching strategies at teachers' college level in Zimbabwe?

iv) What considerations should be made when planning donor-funded intervention projects in teacher education?

With the above research questions providing direction and objectives to be achieved in this study, data analysis using the framework approach was justified. The application of the framework was also justified because, according to Pope et al. (2000), it reflects the original accounts and observations of people studied. This approach enabled me to generate theory through inductive analysis and interpretation of data. The framework that I applied consisted of five steps. As advised by McMillan and Schumacher (2001), qualitative analysis is a relatively systematic process of selecting, categorising, comparing, synthesizing and interpreting data to provide explanations of the single phenomenon of interest. The phenomenon investigated by my study was action research. The five-step framework I followed

included familiarisation, identification of themes, indexing, charting and mapping and interpretation.

I familiarised myself with data through immersion in the various forms of raw data. These were data from observations contained in field notes, photographs and video tapes. Data from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were also tape recorded and supported with notes that I made. Summaries of life stories were also available for analysis. In qualitative research, there may not be a standard procedure for data analysis. This study was primarily inductive, with deductive flashes based on discourse analysis coming in now and again. I moved back and forth between analysing raw data and recasting tentative analysis at each phase of constructing and building to more abstract levels of synthesis. This process is supported by McMillan and Schumacher (2001).

After I had thoroughly familiarized myself with the raw data, which also included listening to tapes, transcribing, reading transcripts, studying notes and revisiting life stories, I engaged in the second stage of data analysis and interpretation. This stage involved identifying a thematic framework. This meant identifying all the key issues, concepts and themes that I could examine and reference my data. In this respect, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) note that, as the researcher reads through his/her data, certain words, phases, patterns of behaviour, participants' ways of thinking and events repeat and stand out. I revisited my research questions derived from the responses as well as issues raised by participants, along with views and/or experiences that recurred in the data. The end product was a detailed index of the data which labelled the data into manageable chunks. When this was done, I indexed the data into themes. While Pope et al. (2000) call this indexing; other scholars call it coding (Bogdan &Biklen, 2007; Stephens, 2009; Patton, 2002).

At the indexing or coding stage, I systematically annotated the transcripts with numerical codes. In addition, I supported the coded data with short text descriptors to elaborate the code or index. This process was an attempt to use analytic categories to describe and explain social phenomenon. By doing this, I was able to generate theory (ground theory) as I developed hypotheses from the ground/the research field. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) say initial codes are derived from research questions, hence my earlier argument that my framework was based on my research questions.

Having indexed my data, I then went on to charting (Pope et al., 2002). McMillan and Schumacher (2001) refer to this stage as templating. Here, I re-arranged the data according to appropriate indices to which they related in the process forming charts in table form as shown in Figure 3.6. On one chart, for instance, I had several entries from different participants/informants expressing similar views or points. At the end of the process, each chart contained distilled summaries of views and experiences by participants. The charting process thus involved a considerable amount of abstraction and synthesis for crystallization.

The last activity carried out in data analysis and interpretation was mapping and interpretation. The charts created assisted me to define concepts, map the range and nature of phenomenon and create typologies leading me to establishing relationships. The relationships or connections between themes helped me to provide explanations for the findings. As mentioned earlier on, Pope et al. (2002) argue that indexing the data creates many categories or units. These categories were then further refined and reduced in number by grouping them together. I did not use the cutting and pasting approach because my analysis and presentation of data were done manually. The five steps explained above are summarised in Figure 3.5 below.

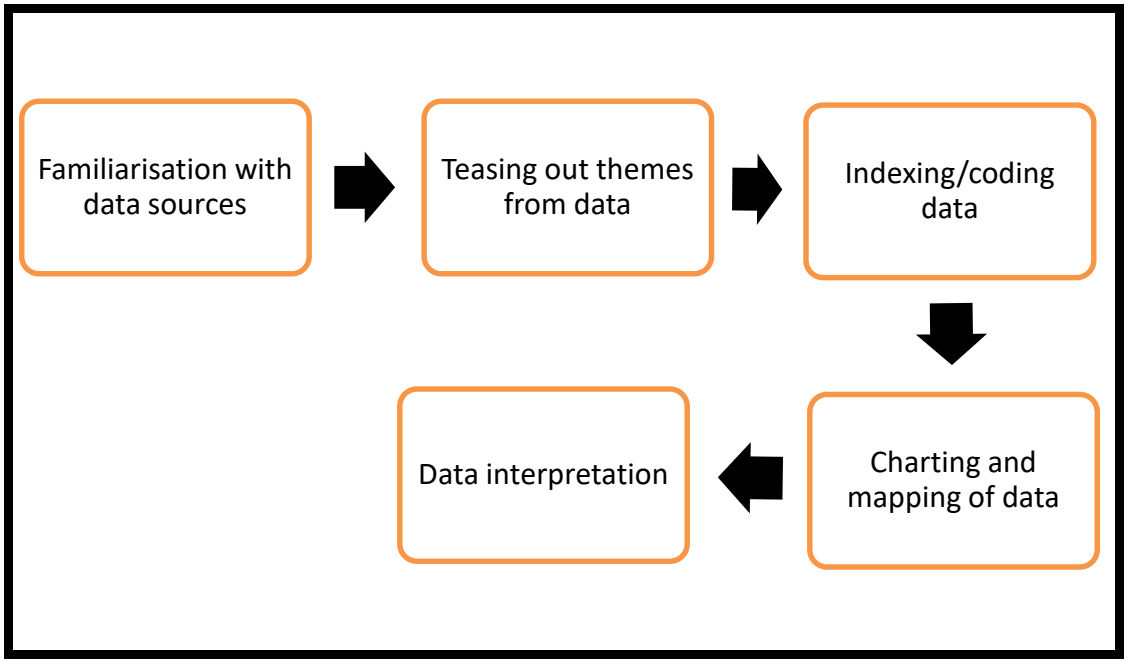


Figure 3.5: The Five Steps of Data Processing

Source: Researcher's Interpretation of Pope et al.'s (2002) five steps of data processing model.

Below, I present my own understanding and interpretation of Pope's et al. (2002) model of data processing, which I adopted for this study.

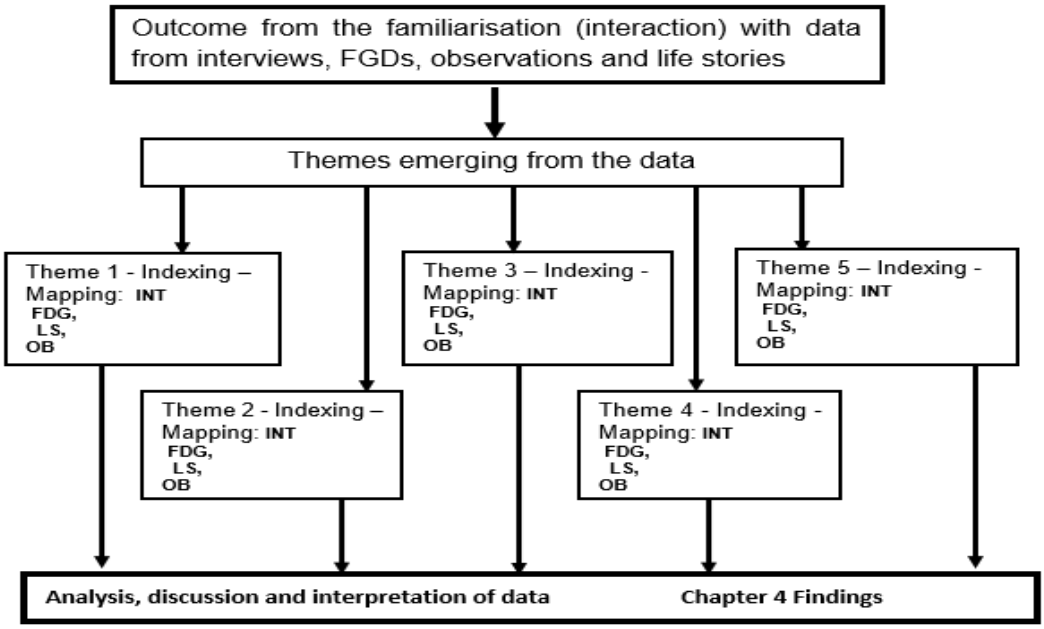


Figure 3.6: A Consolidated Data Indexing/Coding: Charting/Mapping and Interpretation Matrix
Source: Researcher generated (2018)

KEY to indexing/coding**:**

INT: Interview

FDG: Focus Group Discussion

LS: Life Story

OB: Observation

As data was analysed, each category was further divided into sub-categories. For instance, the category on participants' perspective contained sub-categories for each different perspective. However, as McMillan and Schumacher (2001) observe, pre-determined categories were only starting points. Participants' actions and explanations also provided emic perspectives (participants' view points). The etic (outsider) categories such as my concepts, ideas and explanations were also considered, although not as a priority. This was so because in phenomenological studies, as Moustakas (1994) suggests, reports of life experiences in the first person are what make phenomenological research valid. The categorisation of participants' views, which Patton (2002) calls in vivo coding, was therefore deemed more important.

Categories were also arrived at using two criteria, namely internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity. Internal homogeneity refers "to the extent to which the data that belong to a certain category hold together or dovetail in meaningful way. On the other hand, external homogeneity refers to the extent to which data that belong to a certain category fail to hold together due to external influences that the researcher has no control over. In this respect, credibility was thus affected by both external and internal homogeneity" (Patton, 2002, p. 465). To combat the problem associated with credibility, I then worked back and forth between the data and classification I had done so as to verify the meaningfulness and accuracy of the categories including the placement of data into categories. This process was followed by presentation of findings, which is described in the next section of this chapter.

3.11 Presentation of findings

This study tried as much as it could to present participants' views, experiences and actions exactly as they were obtained during data generation. I considered this to be consistent with qualitative research in general and phenomenological research in particular. This approach to presentation of results was also consistent with what Moustakas (1994) calls "epoche", which means refraining from judgement. The researcher thought this approach to presentation of results was effective because "epoche epitomises data base, evidential and empirical research orientation of phenomenology" (Patton, 2002, p.485). Furthermore, results were also presented in matrices and charts supported by thick descriptions that included excerpts, verbatim extracts from interviews, focus group discussions and life stories. One central idea was that the phenomenological researcher had to understand the person or persons he was studying in an endeavour to grasp what phenomenologists call meaning structure. This referred to the web of meaning constituted by actors (participants). Since language was viewed as the medium of both objective and subjective meaning, there was need to provide detailed and thick descriptions expressing participants' mental attitudes. This approach to presentation of results was in line with Schtuz's (1976) view, in Aspers (2009), that meaning is not transmitted atom by atom, but rather it is holistic and web-like. Participants' views and behaviours, therefore, ought to be presented as much as possible in their original form. Results from observations were also presented in thick descriptions supported by still pictures or photographs. Transcriptions from both audio and video tapes supported observation results.

Documentary data were also treated like artefacts in that, here and there, chunks of information were extracted and placed to support results. All this was done in an effort to discover the world "as experienced by those involved in it" (Wilson, 2002, p.18). The need to present findings in as original a manner as possible also arose from Moustakas' (1995) view in Patton (2002, p.8) that:

> Being in, involves immersing oneself in another's world: listening deeply and attentively so as to enter into the other person's experience and perception...I do not select, interpret, advise or direct. I enter with the intention of understanding and accepting perceptions and not presenting my own views or reactions.

In presenting findings, an effort was also made to check the results against research questions. This was meant to ensure that all research questions had been addressed and, if not, the researcher revisited the data available or went back into the field. An effort was also made to relate to literature previously reviewed and to other related studies in order to establish similarities and differences before conclusions could be drawn.

3.12 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are of paramount importance in research. They set the norms and standards for the conduct of research and help researchers to discern what is right or wrong and ethics govern the dissimilarity between up to the mark and off the mark behaviours (Hedgecoe, 2008). The nature of the qualitative research design I opted for demands that I seriously consider, observe and uphold ethics. My study is a phenomenological qualitative study, whose data ought to be presented through discourse analysis. Although ethical considerations and principles may be documented and talked about between researchers and participants, their application is something else altogether (Shanthi, Alice, Lee, Kean, WahLajium & Denis, 2015). The relationship I already had with the participants took care of all the ethical issues as participants trusted me because we had worked together in the MQEP. It was therefore easy for me to get whatever information I needed relating to the MQEP without fear, suspicion or mistrust from my participants (Shanthi, WahLajium & Denis, 2015). The observance of ethics helped my participants to cooperate with, trust, accept and be open with me (McMillan &

Schumacher, 2001). Furthermore, these ethical standards assisted participants in my study to bolster up my research study.

Figure3.7: Research Ethics (Summarised)

Source: Researcher generated (2012)

In the following paragraphs, I present and discuss the diagrammatically summarised ethical considerations in Figure3.7.

3.13 Statement of subjectivity

I was conscious that, as researcher, I was also a member of the UZ DTE's Scheme of Association, and it was therefore important that I did not take advantage of this. Lemmer (1989) observes that the researcher's view of the environment and the world including norms and values are not easily detached from the research process. These norms and values, which form part of the researcher's viewpoint, may be so entrenched that detachment is difficult. Although deliberate and voluntary efforts had been made to push aside all personal viewpoints and subjectivity as I conducted the research, this study was very likely to be subjective given that I was part of the UZ DTE staff overseeing quality control in teacher education within these research sub-sites. I had to make sure that even when I took advantage of visiting the sub-sites on DTE business, I remained objective and separated work and personal issues as much as I

could. I made every attempt to ensure that my interactions were strictly research-related whenever I visited the research sub-sites to carry out my research study.

3.14 Credibility and trustworthiness

To ensure that research findings are credible and trustworthy, Lincoln and Guba (1985) present several approaches that can be employed. They suggest triangulation of sources of data as well as triangulation of methods of data generation. Furthermore, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest the use of thick descriptions, member checks, peer debriefing and sustained or prolonged engagements with research participants to ensure credibility and trustworthiness. Following is the description of how each of the suggested methods enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of my study.

3.14.1 Triangulation

The triangulation of data generation methods also helped to reduce the risk of transferring biases associated with my core business as DTE lecturer. Triangulation was achieved by asking similar questions to dissimilar study participants, generating data from divergent sources and making use of contrasting methods to answer these research questions. For my study, the triangulation data generation methods used included observations, interviews, focus group discussions, life stories (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Clifford, 1998; Patton, 2002). To buttress these data generation methods, I also used diverse sources of data supported by suitable data generation instruments. As researcher, I was also a critical or pivotal data generation instrument for my study (Wilson, 2002).

3.14.2 Thick descriptions

Holloway (1997) avers that Ryle (1994) was the first scholar to make use of thick descriptions and was followed by Geertz (1973) in the field of ethnography. Holloway (1997) describes thick descriptions as detailed accounts generated from the study where the researcher creates

clear patterns of customary and communal relationships (emic perspectives) and puts these in context, enhancing the cultural meanings.

During study visits, a lot of data was generated based on what had been observed, which included the teaching and learning resources used, the interactions and the level of content mastery of my participants. As already mentioned all the data generated were written in a note book and tape-recorded interviews which were considered to be long using a phone and a video camera to be used later, during the interpretation and analysis of the generated data. Creating thick descriptions of data enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of my data.

3.14.3 Prolonged engagement

The sustained sessions that were held with participants in their respective research sub-sites afforded me the opportunity to understand each participant and appreciate their individual viewpoints. This process took seven months, which I think was reasonably long for better identification of each participant's work ethic. The sustained sessions also allowed for informal discussions and observations to run concurrently.

3.14.4 Member checking

Getting participant feedback is a critical aspect of ensuring credibility and trustworthiness in research. Member checking was undertaken by asking participants to verify the generated and transcribed data by reviewing it. My participants were grateful to be involved in this process because they would be given the opportunity to counter check and confirm their input and voluntarily fill the gap in those areas they deemed necessary. Member checking added value to the data being generated.

3.14.5 Peer debriefing

Over and above the foregoing, I also worked with three teacher education colleagues whom I considered to be unbiased and neutral regarding my study. These colleagues had a lot to

contribute as they looked at my methodology, the generated themes and the draft report. They were quite useful as they proffered advice on how to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of my study. They did this by picking out the points that had been over or under-stressed, descriptions that were unclear and widespread errors and misconceptions, as well as any unfair judgements or assumptions that I may not have realised as a researcher. Through debriefing, my colleagues probed my thinking and that gave me confidence and assisted me to ensure data generated were credible.

3.15 The researcher as an instrument

As is characteristic of the qualitative research methodology, I was the key instrument in this study, in my capacity as researcher. This required me to adapt to the contexts under which my study participants operated. In order to make a positive impact as I deployed various data generation methods at my disposal, I was required to know how to ask questions and to take note of any behaviours that participants exhibited. Whenever I suspected that there was something amiss, I carried out member checking to verify divergent views. I remained open-minded and calm as I interviewed and observed my participants. This allowed participants to pour "out" as much as they could. My questioning was not suggestive or intended to influence participants' responses and viewpoints in a particular direction. With this kind of mood that I exhibited, the chances to probe further was very easy because I empathised and sympathised with participants where and when it was necessary, bolstering their confidence in me as a researcher.

While I had many advantages as a pivotal instrument, this did not mean that there were no flaws that could lead me to being subjective. Polman (1977, in Tuettmann, 1999), observe that the researcher, as an instrument, is not liable to getting rid of him or herself but encourages the researcher to use his or her presence for maximum participation of participants.

Notwithstanding, it is not easy to completely remove one's personality from one's work and it was even more difficult in my case as coordinator of one of the research sites. Under these circumstances, I made every effort to ensure that my personality did not take precedence over my study's focus (Stranger & Friend, in Jackson, 1987). Enabling my participants to freely participate was critical as it ensured that I had to create an enabling and supportive environment in which participants could open up and share on issues related to my study (Tuettermann, 1999).

3.16 Confidentiality

To ensure confidentiality, I attributed pseudonyms to participants in my study. This was particularly necessary to protect institutional and participant privacy and guard against any potential bodily and psychological trauma (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Denzin &Lincoln, 2011; Hoeyer, Dahlager & Lynöe, 2005). As a way of building confidence in participants, I also informed them of the purpose of the study and verbally assured them of confidentiality of the data they provided me. However, it is difficult to be certain that everything that a researcher promises participants remains confidential. Informing participants therefore helped them to decide whether or not to participate in the study (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Patton, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Although I was also cognisant of participants' desire to have individual copies of the research report, I was careful not to make any promises in this regard.

3.17 Neutrality

Neutrality refers to the extent to which findings are a reflection of what was generated through participants and the study sites than basing findings on inclinations for or against opinions and inspirations (Lincoln & *Guba,* 1985). Furthermore, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that confirmability should be the principle that guides neutrality. Confirmability is premised on the acceptance that research is generally never objective but centres on what the findings should

denote as far as possible, the particular circumstances under study as opposed to the opinions, favoured theories, or inclinations of the researcher. Confirmability should be as indicated by the views on the findings from data at hand and justice done to the data so that the reader is in a state to confirm how satisfactory the findings are (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.18 Informed consent

In view of the fact that this was a phenomenological study which sought to establish individual human's lived experiences, it was imperative that each of the participant's consent was sought and granted. The consent implied that participants would willingly take part in the study. However, participants could also freely withdraw their participation if they so wished. As part of the process of seeking consent, individual participants were assured that there were no risks in participating in this study.

The physical, emotional and mental safety of participants was guaranteed by the researcher as the questions they were going to be subjected to during data generation were considered harmless by the researcher. All participants acknowledged that they felt assured by the language used in the written and signed letter of consent. Getting their individual consent was easy partly because the researcher and participants were already familiar with each other as partners in the UZ Scheme of Association. Consent was extended to recording interviews, the taking of videos for focus group discussions and students' project consultation times, which were conducted by the teacher educator participants. The next section presents the summary to this chapter.

3.19 Summary

This chapter has discussed the theory which guided this study. Schutz's phenomenological theory was presented as a guide for the study. This theory emphasises that people involved (participants) in a study tell their own story in their own terms. Consistent with phenomenology, data generation methods suggested include observation, interviews, focus group discussions

and life stories. Ethical considerations were also discussed, as were the data presentation methods and procedures. The next chapter presents the findings.

CHAPTER 4

4.0 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I present and discuss the findings of the research project entitled, *A critical examination of the role of action research in improving teacher education*. In doing so, I answer the research questions I raised in Chapter 1, which read:

i) How did reflective skills manifest in teacher educators?

ii) What was the level and nature of interaction of the teacher and learner in action research-based settings?

iii) How did the Masvingo Quality Education Project (MQEP) influence classroom management and teaching strategies at teachers' college level in Zimbabwe?

iv) What considerations should be made when planning donor-funded intervention projects in teacher education?

Table 2 below presents the participants' biographical data. The data are relevant to the presentation of findings, as will be illustrated in this chapter.

Table 4.1: Biographical Data of the Participants

Participants' names & Their colleges	Academic Qualifications	Professional Qualifications	Teaching experience years			Grade
			Schoo	College	Total	
Tapiwa Morgenster	Bachelor of Arts Master Arts(Philosophy)	Doctor of Education Certificate in Education	15	15	30	Principal Lecturer
Tawonei Morgenster	Ordinary level	Master of Education (Psychology) Bachelor of Education (Primary) Diploma in Education (Primary)	6	8	14	Principal Lecturer
Takayedza Masvingo	Ordinary Level	Master of Education(Teacher Education Bachelor of Education (Biology) Diploma in Education (Technology) T3 Teachers' Certificate	13	25	38	Principal Lecturer
Tendai Masvingo	Advanced Level	Master of Education (Philosophy) Bachelor of Education (Primary) Diploma in Education (Primary)	14	8	22	Principal Lecturer
Tatenda Bondolfi	Bachelor of Science, Family and Consumer Studies	Post Graduate Diploma in Education	2	8	10	Principal Lecturer
Tazivei Bondolfi	Ordinary Level	Master of Education(Curriculum Studie Bachelor of Education (ChiShona) Certificate in Education (Primary)	10	12	22	Principal Lecturer

4.2 Findings

The findings were presented through an inductive process in which themes or categories were identified from the data and then analysed in an interpretive manner through discourse analysis. Discourse analysis in qualitative research is an analytic technique rather than a theory. It is

concerned with the investigation of language as it is actually used (Mills, 1997 in Griffin, 2007). Although I refer to language, it is possible to review discourse analysis as a method for examining all sorts of sign systems such as visual and behavioural ones and not only verbal ones (Mills, 1997).

The interpretive analysis suited this study, since it was guided by phenomenology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). I presented the findings in quadruple style. I made a data-based claim or hypothesis, which was then tested through interviews, focus group discussion, life story and observation extracts, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness and credibility of my findings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). I also analysed the extracts using discourse analysis and gave interpretive meanings to them. Finally, views from different scholars were brought in to bolster the interpretations herein.

First, I identified themes or categories by clustering the data. In so doing, five major themes emerged. I teased out the similarities and contradictions embedded inside the themes as I critically examined the role of action research in improving teacher education. It emerged from my five themes that, although there were weak points in the Masvingo Quality Education Project (MQEP), the themes identified pointed to a successful intervention project. These themes identified are presented in the following section.

4.2.1 Themes emerging from the study

The five major themes were: 1) evidence of reflection; 2) interactive classrooms/lecture rooms are a source of joy for teaching and learning; 3)the need to change traditional ways of educating teachers;4) gruelling workshops that are abysmally remunerated; and 5) conception and ownership of donor-funded intervention projects.

4.2.1.1 Evidence of reflection

This theme addressed question one: How did reflective skills manifest in teacher educators? Teacher educators revealed that they were not initially reflective in their practices. However, the utterances made by teacher educator participants during interviews revealed that they were beginning to be reflective. Their individual life stories cement and support the idea that they were more reflective in or about their practices, behaviour and general interaction with student teachers. Initially, my observations show the absence of reflection by the teacher educators. However, through continued observation and interaction, I noted a gradual change in teacher educators, suggesting a gradual development of reflective skills. This was borne out in an interview with one participant, Tapiwa, who said,

I see things differently. I was quantitative. Qualitative research is ignored. It is overlooked. People ignore it.

The words 'I *see things differently'* suggest that Tapiwa had awakened to a new world brought about by his participation in the Masvingo Quality Education Project (MQEP). Perceiving things differently indicates Tapiwa's quantitative research experiences as he acknowledged ignorance about the need for reflection in his daily operations as a teacher educator. I can say my participant was beginning to have new insights as a result of his participation in action research (Sela & Harel, 2012). When he uttered the words *I was quantitative,* Tapiwa sounded mentally startled and regretful of having been enslaved by quantitative research, which does not open up one's mind. I made this interpretation because in quantitative research, any analysis that researchers make is not subject to interpretation because they are more descriptions of what exists (assuming that they are accurate) (Neill, 2007)

Tapiwa further acknowledged that '*qualitative research is ignored'.* This realization aptly illustrates an appreciation of the reflective nature of qualitative research and could be attributed

to Tapiwa's participation in the Masvingo Quality Education Project since, by his own admission; he was a quantitative researcher before participating in the MQEP. It looks like Tapiwa did not see quantitative research as promoting reflective skills. Moreover, the statistics from surveys are analysed using appropriate statistical application software to unravel significant relationships or differences between variables (Neill, 2007; Stewart, 2016; Patrick, 2015).

In the phrase '*It [qualitative research] is overlooked and not put into practice'*, Tapiwa was also suggesting that teacher educators had no knowledge of action research as they were not practising it. My interpretation is that they were not simply overlooking qualitative research, but they had no knowledge of it. However, having gone through the MQEP training, Tapiwa had developed reflective thinking and he realised that teacher educators (himself included) were not reflective before the project. Although the participants like Tapiwa may have been well grounded in quantitative research methods, they did not seem to have developed reflective skills.

Tawonei's statement during interview reinforces Tapiwa's views. According to Tawonei,

At the training in action research, we had doubts. However, as we went deep into training in action research, it dawned on me that action research made sense. I began to see my own weaknesses as a teacher educator.

Tawonei's very first sentence in this extract, "*At the training on action research, we had doubts",* could imply that the doubts they had when they were training in action research were now fading because they were seeing that action research was doable. The phrase '--- [*we had doubts]'* acknowledged that participants were not sure that action research would enhance reflective thinking. Like Tapiwa, Tawonei viewed training in action research as an eye opener.

This was evident in the phrase '*it dawned on me that action research made sense'.* The phrase was again an indicator that Tawonei had had an Aha! moment. This was the beginning of reflective thinking, as evidenced in Tawonei's acknowledgement that "*I began to see my own weaknesses as a teacher educator."*Indeed, despite his six years as a school teacher and eight years as a teacher educator, Tawonei did not know his weaknesses. His realisation of his own weaknesses was a positive development, which might have been a result of his participation in the MQEP.

The ability to perceive and reflect on one's own weaknesses was the beginning of empowerment. This kind of empowerment is reflected in the confidence registered in Tawonei's statement, during an interview that, *"The issue of reflection is critically reflecting on everything you do, then you have more chances of success or improvement".* As an action research-trained teacher educator, Tawonei also acknowledged that *the issue of reflection is critical.* His voice sounded confident and empowered.

Scholarly evidence suggests that action research elicits change. In a study on the effects of action research, O'Connor, Greene and Anderson (2017) conclude that teachers who have been trained in action research appear empowered and confident in terms of their practices and decisions.

In his life story, Tawonei corroborated the above-mentioned evidence on the development of action research skills when he wrote:

I now reflect upon my practices, I have now come to realise that as a classroom practitioner, I am not there only to pass on knowledge but that I can actually create it.

The phrase '*I now reflect upon my practices'* is further evidence that my participants were ignorant of the need for reflection or they may have not reflected on their practices prior to their

participation in the MQEP. For example, the sub-phrase '[*I now reflect ...]'* clearly shows that before, as implied by the word *now*, teacher educators were not reflective, but they are '*now'* able to reflect. This perception by participants points to a successful MQEP. The teacher educators' ability to reflect on their own practices was a positive sign because, if they could question their practices, they would be able to identify their weaknesses. This change in mindset occurred in the classroom, which is good because, as Tawonei states in his life story, '*I have come to realise that as a classroom practitioner'*. The need to transform practice is meant to transform the classroom, which implies a deliberate effort to change one's class and classroom management skills. One would, in my view, not want to institute change that is retrogressive or negative, and change should certainly be progressive or positive.

This implied that action research has the potential to transform and empower teacher educators who, in turn, would transform teacher education. I make this argument cognisant of Tawonei's statement in his life story that, '*I am not there only to pass on knowledge, but that I can actually create it'*. Reflection helped Tawonei appreciate his place and role as a teacher educator. He was not there merely '*to pass on knowledge'*. The idea of teachers or teacher educators viewing themselves as fountains of knowledge, who know it all, was now being questioned. This kind of teacher or teacher educator, who focuses on acquiring knowledge in this twenty-first century, resembled Beeby's (1966) classification of teachers in what he called formalism (Stage 2), which was characterised by ill-educated, ill-trained teachers. In that respect, Beeby (1966, p. 76) says of this teacher:

A teacher with fifty to eighty children in a small but bare room, with no equipment, but a blackboard, a piece of chalk, and a few miserable, dog-eared texts, with not enough pencils and pieces of paper to go around,---can scarcely be expected to encourage the unfolding of personalities and the emergence of creative minds.

This was not the kind of teacher/teacher educator that Tawonei now envisioned in his life story. He said he could now *'create knowledge'.* This was the typical outcome of action research-based pedagogy and andragogy. The teacher/teacher educator was a creator of research-based knowledge and involved learners also in knowledge creation. The creation of knowledge should be possible if one is a teacher-researcher. This is why Goodwin, Smith, Souto-Munning, Cheruvu, Ying Tan, Reed and Taveras (2014) suggest that, besides modelling teaching, teacher educators should be researchers and scholars. The apparent development of one of the characteristics of reflection by my participants as a result of their involvement in the MQEP should enable them to become effective teacher-researchers.

As a professional in teacher education, it was heartening though to note that the participants, in a focus group discussion, acknowledged that learners at various levels contributed to their own learning. The general sentiment was that '*learners contribute to their learning and if given a chance, they can construct knowledge'*. By stating that learners contribute to their learning, teacher educators were also appreciating and acknowledging that learners, in this case student teachers did not come into college empty-headed or ignorant about or in the subjects they learn, and even about teaching itself. From the time they started school to when they finished secondary school; student teachers have gained knowledge and had experiences which feed into their teacher education programmes. Reflective teacher educators should deliberately tap into that knowledge and these experiences. If they do not, as Goodwin et al. (2014) assert, this would explain why unqualified teachers teach in the way that they themselves were taught.

In making their assertion, Goodwin et al. (2014) refer to a study on 28 novice teacher educators done by Murray and Male (2005), which established that teacher educators faced challenges that included that of carrying out research. With this in mind, and from the results of my study

so far, it can be said that training teacher educators in action research was a positive step towards improving teacher education.

Schon's (1983) idea of a teacher as reflective practitioner resonates well with one of the objectives of the MQEP, which was to develop reflective thinking in teacher educators (Harber & Stephens, 2010).

If, however, teacher educators were viewed as teachers, which they are, Zeichner (2008) argues that all teachers are reflective in some sense. He further opines that teachers need to know the academic subject matter they teach and how to transform it to connect with what learners already know so as to promote better academic performance. Effective teacher educators should therefore not merely pass on knowledge. They should also devise teaching approaches that enable learner teachers to be involved in knowledge acquisition and to develop a lasting understanding and conceptualisation of what they learn, unlike what happens when they are just "given" information.

In her life story, Tatenda wrote, "*Teaching with a passion, marking meticulously and guiding students well symbolises quality teacher education."*Tatenda used powerful language that was symbolic of an action research practitioner. For instance, '*teaching with passion'* implies high levels of love for and commitment to one's job. However, this may not necessarily mean that one who had passion for the job was reflective or that one who did not reflect had no passion for his/her job. Passion comes out of concern about and care for learners. The above-mentioned characterisation of quality teacher education by Tatenda also acknowledged that her reflection developed after her participation in the MQEP.

The '*meticulous marking'* referred to in Tatenda's life story was synonymous with reflective marking carried out by a practitioner who had professional concern for the learner. The practitioner may, for example, practise communicative marking, accompanying ticks or crosses

with comments or remarks. This kind of practitioner marks with the individual learner in mind. By '*guiding students well'*, Tatenda suggested that the practitioner was a guide. Ordinarily, a guide leads those he/she guides to safety, provides valuable information, helps learners move from cognitive dis-equilibration to equilibration (Crain, 1986). What Tatenda says in her life story epitomises quality teacher education, and a research participant who has not developed reflective skills is not likely to be able to define quality teacher education as was done in the phrases analysed above.

The over-arching observation I made was that the study participants were very aware that they needed to show that they had become conscious of action research. One participant while supervising a student in a project for instance, said, "*I take it that you are almost done with your project? Would there be anyone having challenge."* This teacher educator participant expects all students to be through with their projects, as suggested by the question *"I take it that you are almost done with your projects?"* However, upon reflection, the teacher educator also accommodates and invites anyone who might not have completed his/her project by asking "*Would there be anyone having challenges?"* Also implied in this question is the teacher educator's willingness to provide further assistance or guidance as earlier discussed. I also interpreted from the same question that teacher educators were now reflective in habits of mind and viewpoint (Bissessar, 2015).

I saw a bottom-up, teacher educator-driven change in which the teacher educator invited learner teachers to indicate when they needed assistance. This was good for effective teacher educator-learner teacher relationships, as the teacher educator dispelled the learner teachers' fear, creating a healthy and trust-filled learning atmosphere. The resultant sound interpersonal relationship between the teacher educator and student teachers brought them closer. It also created confidence in the learners in that they felt supported in their learning. The possibilities

of collaborative learning were also enhanced, paving way for collaborative action research between student teachers and their lecturers.

While the teacher educator participants may not have been aware that they had now developed reflective minds, the question "…*Would there be anyone having challenges?*" provided evidence of that development, and this, in my view, was evidence of the professional growth stimulated by action research. This participant also demonstrated confidence that he or she could impact on students' performance through project supervision. The question "*Would there be anyone having challenges?"* spoke not only confidence, but also a sense of empowerment and accountability, which was heartening to note. By inviting learner teachers to indicate what their challenges were, teacher educators showed their awareness that they were also accountable for the success or failure of these learner teachers. However, being empowered does not necessarily translate to being accountable, although the two have a symbiotic relationship arising from action research-induced reflection. As Segedin, (2011) observes:

It is unclear if teacher accountability led to teacher empowerment, if teacher empowerment led to teacher accountability, or if the position of teacher accountability and teacher empowerment is continuously oscillating (p.54).

This study did not go on to establish if the link between empowerment caused by engaging in action research had translated to accountability. I acknowledge this as one of the limitations of the study. It may therefore be necessary for further research to be undertaken to establish whether the collaboration between Save the Children-Norway, the University of Zimbabwe and the three Masvingo Teachers' Colleges translates into participant empowerment that leads to accountability. Empowerment should ideally be accompanied by accountability, but this study did not examine this aspect, because this was not the focus of interest. However, despite this limitation, findings seem to point to a successful intervention project. In any research study,

the researcher cannot study everything related to their focus, and in the present study, focus was to determine if the MQEP was a success and in so doing, to establish if action research had the potential to improve teacher education in Zimbabwe. Diversion from this focus would imply another study.

Another indicator that the MQEP participants were ignorant of reflection until their involvement in the action research training came from interview statement by Tapiwa which said, "*As I travelled along with action research, I realized it was the thing because it tells you the true story*." The phrase '*As I travelled'* suggests personal involvement, which is consistent with Burawoy's (2015) social travelling theory, which suggests that one ought to be "in it" to benefit from it. Implied in this is that one ought to actually conduct action research in order to fully appreciate and put into practice the action research knowledge and skills. Participant realised that engaging in action research was not an event. Rather, it was a journey and a process that sought to understand and make sense of one's situation. This is what reflection is all about. In an evaluative study in Ethiopia similar to the MQEP, Nagel (2015) found that before being schooled on action research practices, teacher educators did not bother to reflect on their own practices and professional beliefs. The participant realised that engaging in action research was possible if one became reflective; and that reflection aided one understands of their world.

When participant Tapiwa said "--- *I realized it was the thing [action research] because it tells you the true story"*, this implied that this teacher educator used to believe in something else that was not qualitative research. Action research had helped teacher educators to develop critical lenses and inquisitive minds, and as Kinchelo (2003, p.56) opines, this helps the teacher educators to "gain a sense of authority over their education system". Gaining a sense of authority over one's work enables teacher educators to make informed decisions in order to improve the teacher education system. The above-mentioned sense of authority also enabled teacher educators to reflect on action and reflect in action, leading to situation-specific

solutions. Ultimately, the idea of perceiving theory and practice as two separate worlds disappears (Gomm & Hamersley, 2002, in Harel, 2012). Similarly, English (2006), in Harel (2012), presents teachers' research as a way in which teacher educators can get inside information about the educational field, or what study participants refer to as '*the true story'*. In this way:

The bodies of knowledge created through action research studies give teacher educators a voice, which previously had often been silenced, taken over by academia, by the educational establishment or by political leadership (Harel, 2012, p.3).

Bolstering the viewpoint discussed above, Takayedza's life story presents the impact of action research thus:

When one knows what one is doing [action research], one becomes confident and will develop a positive attitude towards one's work.

The phrase '*[when one knows what one is doing]'* implied that one acquired knowledge as a result of self-study through action research. When one becomes confident, one gains autonomy in terms of what to do and how to do it. Lack of autonomy occurred when teacher educators relied on researches conducted by academics that were divorced from practice. From this study, the finding was that action research benefited teacher educators because they gained confidence in their work. They assumed control of their circumstances. This was in keeping with Fullan's (2006) suggestion that, "People need to internalize the process of change, the change itself and the unexpected effects of the change, including relationships". Further ignorance of reflection prior to participation in the MQEP was revealed by Tendai's life story. She wrote,

Since assuming this approach of reflecting on whatever I do, I find myself able to address numerous challenges faced by students and fellow lecturers.

The gist of '*since assuming this approach of reflecting on whatever I do---*' was that, prior to her participation in the MQEP, Tendai might have been ignorant of action research and therefore of the need for reflection. However, her involvement in the MQEP transformed her practices such that she did not only reflect on her work, but on whatever she did. This could be aggrandizement, but if it was true, it meant some transformation had taken place in my participants' personal and professional lives. The assertion about reflection '*on whatever I do*, seemed to suggest giving thought to everything one does and everything one is involved in. However, this sounded too good to be true, as reflection does not manifest so easily. However, if a teacher never questioned the goals and values that guide his/her work, the context in which he/she teaches or never examines his/her assumptions, then it was my belief that this individual was not engaged in reflective teaching (Zeichner & Liston, (2005).Reflecting on whatever one does may also signify that action research and reflective practices had been adopted by my teacher educator participant. Even if there might have been some exaggeration, traces of action research-related thinking, practices and behaviours had become part of these participants' professional qualities.

In this regard, Hensen (1996), in O'Connor et al. (2017), holds that:

Conducting action research puts teachers in control of their professional development. When teachers have ownership of the research process, specifically action research, learning can occur in numerous ways, including trying new strategies, evaluating existing programmes, expanding institutional repertoires, engaging in professional development and developing pedagogical knowledge (p.2).

Thus, through the MQEP, teacher educators not only learnt about students and colleagues, but they also learnt about themselves (Ferrance, 2000). The study established that teacher educators and teachers in general who engage in action research found that their ways of thinking had

shifted to improve their instructional practice (Ferrance, 2000). Without the reflective skills initially exhibited by my participants, teacher educators were not likely to know what they did not know.

This was because the transitional space between being a school teacher and becoming a teacher educator was riddled with challenges. For this reason, Tendai, with fourteen years of school teaching experience and just eight years of teacher education experience, certainly benefited from the MQEP. Murray and Male (2005), in Goodwin et al. (2014), found that some of the transitional challenges between being a teacher and teacher educator are associated with developing a professional identity as a teacher educator, learning new institutional norms and roles, working with adult learners (like student teachers). If this was the case, my study participants must have benefited from the MQEP, which I continue to envision as a success.

During the FGDs, participants spoke with one voice in their assertion that, *"With action research, you can confidently make decisions."* Although participants did not suggest that they individually and/or collectively did not make decisions before taking part in the MQEP, the issue here was the kind and quality of decisions they made. Prior to the participation in the MQEP teacher educators made uninformed decisions. Calderhead and Gates (2005) suggest that professionals engage in reflective processes as they frame and reframe problems. Zeichner and Liston (2006) believe that the slogan of reflective teaching has been embraced by teachers, teacher educators and educational researchers all over the world today. It would therefore be a serious professional exclusion if Zimbabwean teacher educators were to continue to be left out of action research-based practices. In that respect, the MQEP was quite relevant and opportune.

So far, evidence from data drawn from interviews, life stories and focus group discussion data have provided evidence of attitude change by teacher educators. The same data also provide evidence that suggests the success of the MQEP.

My findings so far are consistent with what O'Connor et al. (2017) found out in their study of thirty-four graduate students. These scholars established that, just as happened in the MQEP, the graduate student participants in an action research project changed and will continue to change as teachers. O'Connor et al. (2017) quote one participant in their study as stating, *"It (action research) has reshaped how I look at new programmes. I look at the research and determine if it fits my students."*Basing instruction or decision-making upon the needs of learners or students and questioning the validity and/or reliability of educational programmes are valuable outcomes of the action research process. Clearly, therefore, much as my study participants may not have been aware of reflection as a practice, it does not mean they did not know the concept. I say so because in the ChiShona language, for instance, there are several terms that mean reflect. These include *cherechedza, wongorora, nyatsofungisisa, cheuka, zeya, nzvera* and *rangarira.* The findings showed that participants were at first ignorant of the English term "reflection", but this did not mean they did not practise some reflection before, albeit unconsciously and frequently, perhaps. I say so because of the existence of the ChiShona equivalent terms to reflection. However, my study findings suggest that the MQEP was a key driver in influencing and developing reflective teacher educators.

Action research-based knowledge becomes critical to teachers and/or teacher educators, as supported by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999, p.262), in Goodwin et al. (2014), in their assertion that:

> Knowledge-for-practice consists of knowledge about content/subject-matter, learning theories, human development pedagogy, assessment, educational foundations, social and cultural contexts of schools and schooling as well as knowledge of the teaching profession and teacher education. The knowledge is situated and constructed in response to the particularities and context of

> teachers' and teacher educators' teaching space. It is developed over time through experience and deliberate reflection into one's teaching experience.

I view teacher educator participants as having transposed from making questionable assumption-based decisions to action research-informed decisions. This, as Richardson (1998, p.3) suggests, "Requires teachers/teacher educators who are inquirers, questioning assumptions and consciously thoughtful about goals, practices and contexts".

Teacher educators under the MQEP project exhibited marked differences in perceptions and behaviours between them and those not trained in action research. In an interview with Tatenda, she ruled out the possibility of collaborative action research between those trained in action research and those not trained in action research as she believed they were incompatible. Thus, Tatenda suggested that non-action research-trained teacher educators were devoid of reflection when she stated that:

Lecturers who were not trained in action research are not as reflective as those of us who were trained. We differ even in the way we treat student teachers. More workshops to help teacher educators develop reflection would be welcome.

Tatenda's bold declaration that "*lecturers who were not trained in action research are not as reflective as those of us who were trained"* reveals an apparent division between those who 'have it' (the ability to reflect) and those who do not. There was also a sense of superiority amongst those teacher educators who were trained in action research over those who were not, as suggested by the phrase "--- *are not as reflective as those of us who were trained"*. However valid this assertion may be, as an action research-oriented teacher educator, Tendai should have demonstrated that she was both reflective and accommodating. She could have been more diplomatic in her comparison because, if such an utterance had reached the ears of '*those who*

were not trained' in action research, the relationships between the two groups could have soured, creating a rift among staff members in individual institutions. The spirit of oneness proposed earlier on by Tatenda through collaborative action research would have therefore remained an illusion.

When change is being instituted, however, Tendai's utterances sound normal and expected. In fact, they are supported by the observations by Fullan (2006) in his theory of change that, change does not happen when you place changed individuals [those trained in action research] into the environment. You ought to create a new environment and new settings. What Tendai expressed was exactly what Fullan feared when he averred that change did not happen when you place changed individuals into the environment. As a 'reflective' person, Tendai could, in expressing her opinion, have avoided offensive language that could easily disrupt co-existence in an institution or institutions. Institution here refers to any one of the three Masvingo teachers' colleges involved in the MQEP, and institutions refer to all three of them. In this regard, Fullan (2012) opines that, when an organisation experiences change, people therein need to let go any previous ideas at the same time maintaining new ideas under control.

Tendai also encouraged workshopping when she said: *"More workshops to help teacher educators develop reflection would be welcome".* The words '*more workshops'* indicate that Tendai had participated in the initial MQEP workshops. The question that quickly came to my mind was: Who would facilitate at these subsequent workshops? While Tendai encouraged more workshops, possibilities that she perhaps saw herself as one of the potential facilitators could not be ruled out hence she said "--- *would be welcome*". I would have thought my study participants would have generated an environment conducive to collaborative research. They would have done well to plan cascading workshops, even if these were not factored into the MQEP initial plans. I would have expected my study participants to have been heedful, self–effacing and indulgent to those not trained in action research. Thus, as Hatten, Knapp and

Salonga (1997), quoting Zuber-Skerritt (1992, p.12) warn, "The results and insights gained from the action research should not be of theoretical importance only but should also lead to practical improvements in the problem areas identified".

The above-mentioned sense of superiority of the action research-trained teacher educators was reinforced in the assertion by Takayedza in an interview that, *"Failure to reflect is a dangerous weakness. This is why even farmers, politicians and everybody else should reflect to avoid previous pitfalls"*. Takayedza further claims that, *"students who have been taught and trained in action research-oriented settings can use it [action research] in their social, school and personal lives".* This was because, while the observation by Takayedza sounded logical, action research settings did not automatically transform those who learnt in them to become action research-oriented individuals. This did not happen through osmosis nor was it a mathematical equation in which learning in action research settings equalled application of action research-based practices.

Takayedza's claim did not, however, reveal that teacher education appeared not to be concerned with producing reflective teachers. This raised the question: Do teacher educators themselves teach in a reflective manner? This did not happen by chance; there must be a deliberate effort to help teacher educators be reflective and teach in a reflective manner. I made this conclusion notwithstanding the consideration that Hatten, Knapp and Salonga (1997) note, that teacher education, which fosters genuine teacher development, should only be supported if it is connected to the struggle for greater social justice and contributes to the narrowing of the gaps in the quality of education available to students from different backgrounds in every country in the world.

Takayedza's phrase "*failure to reflect is a dangerous weakness,"* may sound insulting to those who were not in the MQEP. In fact, it was not only the absence of reflective thinking that this

participant judged to be dangerous. In my view, the person who did not have reflective skills or thinking could also be dangerous as the decision he or she made may also be abrupt, with negative consequences. In the same vein, with regards to teachers who did not have reflective practices working among those who did, Richardson (1998) raises this question:

Do learners benefit from teachers acting alone, making changes as they see fit, within the confines of their classroom? If all teachers make decisions automatically, the schooling of an individual student could be quite incoherent and ineffective. This, too, suggests that help, direction, or encouragement provided to the staff rather than individuals could be necessary to promote change that is valuable to the learner (p.3).

This citation made reference to the teacher, but this could equally be true of teacher educators. Autonomous decisions that were not based on research may be dangerous. The help and direction that could professionally benefit the teacher and their students at any level of education resided in reflective practices embedded in action research. In Takayedza's view, "*everybody else should reflect to avoid previous pitfalls*". Failure to reflect so as to "*avoid previous pitfalls"* is why teacher education was a part of the problem rather than the solution of poor quality in education. This was because teacher education tended to perpetuate traditional, unreflective and teacher-centred pedagogy" (Harber & Stephens 2010, p.13).

The most experienced of my participants, Takayedza, who had thirteen years of school teaching and thirty-three years of teacher educating, expressed disdain towards a teachers' college Vice Principal who lacked reflective practices. He commented during an interview that, *"An action research-trained Vice Principal (VP) would not have charged fellow innocent lecturers. He thinks he did well because he has no introspection"*. Takayedza provided a brief background to an incident at one of the teacher education institutions, stating that:

At one institution, a Vice Principal incorrectly accused lecturers of absenting themselves from lectures. The Vice Principal identified those lecturers he thought were ring leaders. Without evidence, the Vice Principal proceeded to charge these lecturers.

This extract above further exemplifies the dangers of not being reflective. This scathing attack on the VP was indicative of the participants' appreciation of the role of action research in transforming individuals. In his view, the action of the VP illustrated the ignorance that came from one's lack of introspection. As a result, my participant expressed his disapproval in the statement "*an action research-trained Vice Principal (VP) would not have charged innocent fellow lecturers".* This disapproval was further justified by the fact that this Vice Principal had charged '*innocent*' lecturers. If it was true that the lecturers who were charged were innocent, it goes back to Richardson's (1998) claim that "If all teachers make decisions autonomously, the schooling of individual students could be incoherent and ineffective". The Vice Principal's action was the result of irrational, ill-informed and baseless decisions, yet research in general and action research practices in particular provide sound decision making if one is exposed to them.

This section of the chapter has presented findings that show that my participants developed reflective thinking behaviours and practices as a result of their participation in the MQEP. The evidence provided came from the various data generation methods. Initially, the MQEP participants were unaware of action research and its ability to develop reflective habits in those who practise it. The participants benefited both theoretically and practically, learning the theory on action research, which they carried out practically through action research projects. Despite the contradictions from my participants discussed herein, I believe that the data presented so far points to the success of the MQEP. The next session presents the second theme, Interactive classrooms/lecture rooms: A source of joy for learners.

4.2.1.2 Interactive classrooms/lecture rooms: A source of joy for teaching and learning

This theme addressed the question: What was the level and nature of interactions between the teacher and learner in action research-based settings?

Generated data revealed that teacher educators were witnessing activity-packed lecture rooms as a result of the transformation they have undergone. Data from interviews and life stories were analogous, revealing consistency amongst participants in their viewpoints on the importance of having interactive classrooms to stimulate active learning. Tatenda, who was generally soft-spoken during interviews, stated:

I am prepared to open up and get more meaningful participation from my class. I am sensitive to their difficult and different behaviours. I encourage my students to feel free to participate and contribute during classes. Before the MQEP, I was not that. I was the teacher.

Since this study was an evaluative case study, I would not have done justice if I failed to evaluate, make judgment and draw inferences from the contributions made by participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Tatenda's statement that she was "*now prepared to open up and get more meaningful participation from her class"* gave the impression of a teacher educator who, in the past, stood doggedly by what she thought or would have said, and did not accommodate the alternative views of student teachers. Her word had always been final because she had a closed mind. Tatenda's transformation was in keeping with Hine's (2013) observation that action research fosters openness to new ideas and learning new things as a result of the development and apotheosis of reflective teaching and thinking arising from participation in the MQEP. Although it may not be wholly correct to attribute Tatenda's transformation to her participation in the MQEP, this participation may have contributed to it.

The self-evaluation done by my participants arose from self-introspection (Chisaka & Kurasha, 2012), which is what makes a teacher a reflective practitioner (Zeichner, 2008). The fact that

my participants realised that they might be impeding student participation in class was evidence for educational reform. The teacher educators realised they were not alone in the classroom/lecture rooms and that student teachers had something to contribute to the learning situation. In this way, improvement and change in teachers or teacher educators occur as practitioners learn more about their teaching and instruction (O'Connor et al., 2017). Action research is the impetus for changes in teachers, including the changes in their confidence, which leads to professional growth and improvement (Sax & Fisher, 2001; Johnson & Button, 2009). As evidenced in Tatenda's contribution cited above, as they apply action research processes, teacher educators and any other practitioners not only learn about the need for students to participate more meaningfully but also learn about themselves.

Action research methodologies learnt during the MQEP impacted on the teacher educators, with the benefits also trickling down to the student teachers, as they now were afforded the opportunity to contribute to the learning and teaching processes in a constructivist mode. The empowerment and emancipation of the teacher educator through his/her participation in action research cascades down to the student teachers. In light of this, the development of interactive approaches acknowledges that education should be a vehicle for social justice, a route to a more equitable and participatory democracy (Nager & Shapiro, 2007).

Empowered and emancipated teacher educators know their students and the communities from which they come. Such teacher educators are actively aware that learning is an active process, and will therefore not simply transmit knowledge, skills and attitudes. However, he/she strives to encourage thoughtful and reflective student participation in a democratic process (Nager & Shapiro, 2007). This is what my teacher educator participants did after undergoing training in the MQEP.

The recognition of students' individuality is reflected in the statement *'I am sensitive to their difficult and different behaviours'*. Only a practitioner who is aware of individual differences can be sensitive to the characteristics that make their students unique individuals. Education, including teacher education, can only provide and contribute towards social justice if practitioners treat learners as unique individuals. By bringing his/her profound understanding of each individual student teacher, the teacher educator thus directs or guides learner teachers, selecting and exploiting learning opportunities best suited to individual students (Nager & Shapiro, 2007). This is particularly important and necessary in respect of student differences such as age, sex and backgrounds, amongst other things.

The teacher educator is clearly pivotal, but he or she must create a complementary and enabling environment that propels individual student teachers to reach their full potential. In action research-based teacher education settings, enhanced lecturer/student and student/student interaction become the benchmark.

While enhanced lecturer/student and student/student interaction become the benchmark in action research-based teacher education settings, Chandler et al. (1991), in Cornford (2002), however, found reflection that comes through knowledge and practice of action research not significantly related to teaching performance. Other studies found evidence of attention to reflection in action research reports by student teachers well below expected levels (Gore & Zeichner, 1991 in Cornford, 2002). It follows therefore that "….*encouraging my students to feel free to participate and contribute during classes"* may not necessarily be a product of one's participation or training in reflective practices inherent in action research. On the other hand, Tatenda acknowledged that before participating in the MQEP, she was *the teacher*. In other words, she was a know-it-all, and treated students like empty vessels. If teacher educators dish out information to student teachers, there is the danger that the latter will simply recline and

watch. Failure to stimulate student teachers through active involvement may result in teacher education institutions churning out passive, docile, redundant and unmotivated teachers. Not only should teacher educators liberate student teachers so that they engage in construction of knowledge, they should also teach them action research itself so that they also develop reflective skills (Hong & Lawrence, 2011).

Closely related to Tatenda's interview extract is a testimony from Tawonei's life story. He wrote:

My relationship with learners has changed in that I now understand that learners can also come up with their own view points. They are not supposed to just take in whatever I say as if they do not think.

Prior to participation in the MQEP, Tawonei's lessons were lecture-dominated and he had poor relationships with student teachers which had since changed. The change observed by Tawonei is acknowledged and documented in literature. Heiman (2004), in Harel and Israel (2012), for example, remarks that, "This situation is beginning to change with the growth in numbers of teacher educators who recognize the value of self-study (action research) for the examination of their practices." Tawonei's claim that '*his relationships with learners had changed' was* therefore consistent with relationships in action research-based settings.

For a start, the teacher educator's behaviour, teaching methods and general treatment of student teachers must change for the better. Tawonei, with eight years teacher education experience only, stated that, *"I now understand that learners can also come up with their own viewpoints".* The phrase '*I now'* suggests that prior to participating in the MQEP; he placed himself and his viewpoints above those of student teachers. Like Tatenda, Tazivei saw himself as a reservoir of

teacher development knowledge and therefore used to '*tell*' them how to do it. The telling approach is not progressive, especially with adult learners.

As Murray and Male (2005, p.137) observe, "Becoming a teacher educator clearly draws on, but cannot be limited to the knowledge and understanding of schooling accrued through practice." The acknowledgement that *"learners can also come up with their own viewpoints"* suggests an appreciation for learners' active participation. Mills (2013) supports teacher educator research, indicating that educators conducting research gain insights as well as reflective practice affecting positive change in the classroom. All action researchers, regardless of their particular school of thought or theoretical orientation, should be committed to a critical examination of classroom teaching principles (Mills, 2013). It is therefore critical that both teacher educators and student teachers engage in collaborative research since the ultimate objective is to ensure maximum benefits for the school learner.

As part of their own reflective practices, teacher educators who claim to be engaging in interactive learning should appreciate the need to re-design lecture rooms into interactive spaces (Negrea, 2016). This was necessary because, like a group of writers calling themselves The Room 241 Team (2012) notes, while students often lose interest during lecture-style teaching, interactive teaching styles promote an atmosphere of attention and participation, enabling learners to *'come up with their own viewpoints'.* This is also similar to what participant Tawonei previously submitted. However, this was only possible if the teacher educators realise and focus on the students' independent activity, the organisation of self-learning environments and experimental opportunities (Yakovleva & Yakovlev, 2014). Learning should therefore be made interesting, exciting and fun. Literature suggests that telling, which is consistent with lecturing, is not teaching, and listening is not learning (The Room 241 Team, 2012; Merlo, 2017; Smith 2011). If teacher educators are reflective, empowered and emancipated, as data on my study indicate, their teaching should also develop reflective, reflexive, creative, innovative and

cognitively adventurous student teachers. Interactive lecture rooms would facilitate the development of such characteristics in student teachers.

Literature also suggests that reflective learning methodologies are not common in higher education and that they are not also applied in previous levels of education (Colomer, Pallisera, Fullana, Burriel & Fernandez, 2012). Notwithstanding this thinking, Colomer et al. (2012) also note that reflective learning processes encourage critical thinking and students' analysis of their own capabilities. In so doing, students are also able to propose solutions to the challenges and obstacles they encounter. This ability to visualise challenges and advance alternatives is possible if both the teacher educator and student teacher engage in what Schon (1983) calls reflection-in-action. Smith (2012) suggests that this kind of reflection is fast and intuitive, taking place in the situation and working as a self-correcting tool. With reflective teacher educators, lessons should be well-planned and well-organised such that this quick thinking and flexibility by students become tools for effective teacher development.

At this point, there may be need to interrogate some of the interactive methodologies at the disposal of reflective teacher educators. The teacher educator is supposed to be a facilitator and not a lecturer, and interactive methodologies are therefore intended to promote learner participation. Questions that the lecturer (facilitator) may ask are meant to stimulate discussion among learners. This is particularly important as research-based evidence shows that people will listen meaningfully for only fifteen to twenty minutes (Ponomariova & Vasina, 2016). In fact, Ponomariova & Vasina (2016, p. 8624) claim that "discussion is one of the oldest teaching techniques used by the greatest teachers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Kamensky and Pestalozz."

Interactive lecture rooms would also be characterised by brainstorming, a technique praised for its potential to generate inactive ideas from within those involved and engaged in it.

Brainstorming, research claims, is very efficient because one person's thoughts often stimulate those of another or others (Ponomariova & Vasina, 2016). If one person's thoughts do stimulate those of others, participant Tawonei had reason to claim that,… *students are not supposed to just take in whatever I say (the lecturer) as if they do not have minds of their own*.

The process of mental development, as Dewey contends, "is essentially a social process, a process of participation, and the learners in the Dewey school learned not only skills and facts but also how to work as members of a community of cooperative inquiry", regardless of the level of education (Westbrook, 1999: 106, in Nager, 2001, p.12). If young learners become members of communities of inquiry by learning through interactive methodologies, teacher educators trained in action research and reflective practices should be able to propagate communities of inquiry. Similarly, their products, the pre-service teachers, taught through interactive methodologies, should also be able to build communities of inquiry. When this happens, as the results of my study suggest, action research would have contributed to the development of teacher education.

There was a general consensus during focus group discussions that "*students were beginning to question whatever they did".* Participants also expressed the view that, "… *at college level, students needed more time to be taught. Positive results were emerging as shown by systematic approaches to whatever they did."* If students were beginning to question what they did, it suggested that this was a recent development, a culmination of changes that may have taken place in lecturers, as a result of corrective measures having been taken to improve the way they operate. If '*students were beginning to question'*, this suggested that inquisitive teaching/learning conditions have now been created. Teacher educators should capitalize on students' questioning because this contributed towards desired interactions between the teacher and learner. The students' ability to question the lecturer or what they learn was characteristic of interactive lecture rooms and reflective of freedom of expression and social justice (Smith,

2012). Questioning creates high levels of two-way communication either between the teacher and the learner or between learners themselves, and this helps the teacher or lecturer in several ways.

The Room 241 Team (2012) suggests four benefits that accrue from interactive teaching based on students' questioning, observing that:

Teachers making use of interactive teaching styles are better equipped to assess how well students master a given task. Applying methods that involve two-way communication (like questioning) will enable the teacher to make quick adjustments in processes and approaches. Interactive instruction enhances the learning process. Student motivation is also heightened through interactive methodologies. Two-way teaching dispels student passivity (p.2).

Interactive classrooms enable both the lecturer and students to get feedback from each other. This, in my opinion, is how both students and lecturers assess each other. It dispels the notion that a lecturer knows it all, and a student only learns from a lecturer. Questioning implies that someone will answer, making question-and-answer sessions interactive. For a lecturer or student to ask questions or answer questions, some deep thinking associated with reflection should have taken place. However, it is necessary to note that it depends on the nature of the question- answer session. Some can be very superficial, just looking for the "correct", while others can be very deep like the Socratic method which requires students to think very critically.

Zeichner (2008) however, raises concern that reflective teacher education has done very little to foster genuine teacher development and enhance teachers' role in education reform to assist teachers to value the need for interactive classrooms. My major concern in the face of claims of the success made by teacher educators is the focus of reflection. Literature emphasises a focus on practitioners being inward looking (Zeichner, 2008; Smith, 2012). In this view there appears to be no deliberate effort to reflect on the social conditions of schooling that influence

the practitioners' work in order to ensure that classrooms are highly interactive. It therefore makes logical and psychological sense that interactive learning environments should be enjoyable. This is the social aspect of schooling at whatever level. Advocates of interactive classrooms (Smith, 2012; Nagrea, 2016) suggest that a teacher does not have to be an expert and answer all questions because learners can address questions as well.

As part of the interactive methodologies, group work is also encouraged. On the use of group work as an effective interactive method, Fullan (2006) advises that it is the interactions and relationships among people, not the people themselves that make the difference in an organisation. So, when teacher educators and student teachers interact in well-organized groups, change becomes possible. Change is made possible because these groups of teacher educators and student teachers collectively become learning communities. In the same vein, according to Fullan's (2006) change theory, effective learning communities share knowledge and collaborate, often making a breakthrough decision. Sharing and collaboration are part of the interactive processes, and if there is a breakthrough, it means that success is realised. It is therefore not appropriate to suggest that at teachers' college level student teachers need more time to be taught. Rather, they need more time to engage in collaborative learning. Work groups, among other interactive methodologies, are therefore the driving force behind interactive teaching (Fullan, 2006).

Closely related to group work are buzz sessions. In small groups of three to six, learners are allowed five to ten minutes to consider a specific problem or question. Like group work, buzz sessions provide opportunities for learners to obtain feedback from multiple perspectives. Learners also have the opportunity to reflect on both their own perspectives and those of others in the group. Self-correction is also possible in the process. The teacher educator's role is that of facilitator while students learn as they teach each other. In this way, deep thinking skills

consistent with reflective thinking are developed and/or enhanced. Tatenda's life story extract provides more insights on interactive lecture rooms, as she wrote:

The MQEP has improved my relationship with my students. I am more interested in what they say, as we share the lecture and I go deep into learning from whatever they comment, especially those who criticize issues.

The extract above reveals cause and effect occurrences. The phrase *my students* reflects an element of possession, and the idea of owning students may be professionally inappropriate in that all students in a teachers' college belong to all lecturers. However, Tatenda now feels like she owns the students because of the change in relationships. She has become close to the students, and this has contributed to a healthy student-lecturer relationship that, in turn, stimulates effective teaching and learning. The idea of owning students is accompanied by a sense of responsibility which, in my opinion, could have been action research-induced. In acknowledging how the MQEP had improved her relationship with her students, Tatenda elsewhere in this chapter is cognisant of her poor working relationship with students prior to her participation in the MQEP. This realisation came as a result of introspection (Chisaka & Kurasha, 2012). Coban (1988), in Richardson (1998), argues that teachers need outside mandates that help them change because they have to do whatever is within the prescribed guidelines or else they will be incompetent, leading them to failure. The MQEP promoted this positive change in lecturer/student relationships, adding to the dimension of ownership of the teaching processes for my participants as well as their students as they engaged in action research.

The change in Tatenda is reflected in the phrase '*I am more interested in what they say as we share the lecture ....'* which revealed a change in the degree of interest she had in what her students say as they share the lecture. Moreover, the teacher educator was not alone as she delivered the lecture, she shared it with students. I am impressed by the idea of sharing the

lecture. The teacher educator creates a level playing field in which both the lecturer and students contribute to teaching and learning. There was involvement, engagement, participation and collaboration. This shift in praxis was consistent with what Smylie and Conyers (1991, p.12), in Richardson (1998, p.3), observe when they say that the concept of teaching has shifted from industrial model to a "complex, dynamic, interactive and intellectual activity."

In my view, Tatenda demonstrated a change in attitude towards students, as evidenced in the statement '*I go deep into learning from whatever they (student teachers) comment, especially those who criticize issues'*. If a teacher educator is prepared to go deeper into learning, he/she appreciates that student teachers know something worth learning and sharing. This level of respect and deep sense of appreciation were developed through reflection. In this regard, research has shown the importance of teacher educators modelling the kind of thoughtfulness and responsiveness they expect from student teachers to demonstrate in the future (Loughran, 1996, in Zeichner, 2008).

The transformation in behaviour and attitude shown by my participants depicted through Tatenda's life story seems to be premised on a deficit model of change. The MQEP appears to assume that reflection and change were on-going processes designed to help develop and support a change orientation. This kind of a change orientation was evident in Tatenda's life story extracts. The change manifests in interactive lecture rooms characterised by a teacher educator's appreciation and encouragement of active student participation. If action research helped teacher educators to see logic in active student involvement, I can safely claim that the MQEP was a success and that action research had potential to improve teacher education.

Even as I acknowledge the success of the MQEP through perceived teacher educator transformation, I wonder whether the interactive student teacher participation developed in them the ability to cascade the effects of action research. Teacher educators should develop in

student teachers the ability to also activate the innovative genius in the primary and secondary school learners they will teach. The teachers' ability to awaken students' curiosity would be evidence of the power of action research to improve teacher education.

So far, data evidence has pointed to the benefits emanating from action research-based lecture rooms. To this, focus group discussions provide evidence of the gains resulting from teacher educators' participation in the MQEP. In this regard, teacher educators made reference to '*open-mindedness and respect for the learners' beliefs, attitudes, feelings, values and knowledge'*. This implied openness to and respect for student teachers' diverse characteristics. Teacher educators now perceived themselves as open-minded and attributed this to a newly acquired respect for students both as persons and as teachers in the making. Such perceptions of students were likely to influence how teacher educators treated students. In the course of my study, teacher educators spelt out specific areas in which they demonstrated respect for students, which included student *beliefs, attitudes, feelings, values and knowledge*.

Teacher educators acknowledged respect for student teachers' diversity, which made professional and academic sense since teacher education colleges were national institutions housed in regions and these regions were diversified. Students enrolled in these institutions were bound to come from various parts of the country. By respecting student teacher diversity, teacher educators were likely to accommodate diversity because the students they taught would also differ in many other attributes including language and ethnicity. The appreciation of student diversity was also echoed in another FGD extract in which participants agree that *'problems are situational/contextual and hence should be treated differently'*. This whole extract revealed how teacher educators had developed an understanding of the uniqueness of learners since action research-oriented practitioners developed rare qualities in their perception of learners and situations. In addition, the inference I drew from the FGD extract above conforms to that of Johnson (2012), in Hine and Lavery (2014), which asserts that:

More specifically, the nature of action research departs from the 'traditional' scientific/research approaches of determining a generalized solution that can be applied to all contexts (p.1). Stringer (2008, p.1), in Hine and Lavery (2014), holds a contrary view, namely that action research is based on the proposition that generalised solutions may not fit particular contexts or groups of people and that the purpose of inquiry is to find an appropriate solution for the particular dynamics at work in a local /given solution.

That being the case, by involving student teachers in active learning through interactive methods, teacher educators would be able to select teaching methods that were not merely interactive, but one which were also necessarily suited to the subject(s) or concepts being taught, the number of students involved, and the amount of time and the technological equipment available. In this regard, information communication gadgets such as computers and i-phones can provide learners with opportunities for stimulating their minds as they manipulate them, in the process enriching learner's knowledge as they search through them (Bikowski & Casal, 2018).

From the lesson observations that I made, particularly in what were referred to as 'mass subjects' (because of the large numbers of up to five hundred students who attended them all at the same time), I noticed regular use of PowerPoint presentations. Presentations were made by teacher educators and students, too. However, on enquiring, I was informed that this particular mode of lesson presentation had started before teacher educators attended the MQEP workshops. However, I observed that Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) projector-powered presentations intensified after the MQEP, although it was not clear whether PowerPoint driven lectures were a result of the MQEP or simply the availability of relevant technological tools in teachers' colleges. Whatever the cause, I was impressed to witness the use of a form of lesson presentations that captured the attention of large numbers of students.

Wong (2016) supports the use of technology by saying that more visual elements that come with the latest educational technology are so designed to appeal to different learning styles. Students who are more visual or hands-on learners will gain a great deal more from a more interactive classroom. In their study entitled, *Setting up the interactive educational process in higher education*, Panomariova and Vasina (2016) concluded that clear and scientifically grounded organisation of educational processes in higher education institutions is a prerequisite for the delivery of professionally organised lessons. My teacher educator participants practically demonstrated this professionalism as a result of their participation in the MQEP. For this reason, I could claim that teacher educators' pedagogical considerations stimulate interactive lecture rooms (Zeichner, 2008). Zeichner (2008, p.1) sees the application of such reflective practices in teacher education as contributing to a "narrowing of the gaps in educational quality between students of different ethnic, racial and social class backgrounds."

Based on the results from this study so far, I could say that action research had the potential to improve teacher education. The MQEP transformed, empowered and emancipated teacher educators as evidenced by their data-based claims. For that reason, I maintain my stance and thesis that the MQEP was a success. Teacher educators may differ in levels of reflection and its application, but data generated by this study provided grounds to claim that the MQEP was a successful intervention.

Theme 2 has dealt with interactive classrooms/lecture rooms being a source of joy for learning. The next theme relates to the need for teacher education to shift from traditional methods of educating teachers.

4.2.1.3 The need to change traditional ways of educating teachers

Participants not only made reference to their enjoyable interactive experiences in lecture rooms, they also mentioned the need to change traditional ways of educating teachers to accommodate

classroom interaction. These perceptions answered the research question: How did the MQEP influence classroom management and teaching strategies at teachers' college level? Data relating to that finding is drawn from interviews, focus group discussions and life stories. Tazivei, for example, wrote:

My teaching practices have been affected, I think positively, since I can evaluate myself and reflect after working with students. My traditional approach has since changed.

The words 'my *teaching practices have been affected'* is Tazivei's acknowledgement that there was a change in the way he taught, which he attributed to his experiences during the MQEP. Asked to add detail to how his practices had been affected and what affected them, Tazivei said '*by the action research project'.* He claimed that during the MQEP workshops, he began to see (reflect) that he was not giving students space because he thought he knew it all. He went on to say:

I would tell student teachers how to do it (teaching), what methods to use and the kind of questions I would encourage student teachers to ask.

The life story was underpinned by interview contributions from Tawonei. Tawonei said "*I would tell students how to do it"*, a possible reference to Tawonei prescribing methods and techniques of transmitting knowledge to school learners for learning to take place.

This prescriptive type of thinking by Tawonei was consistent with what happened when teachers were trained and not educated during the colonial period which I alluded to earlier on. However, since the opening of Mkoba Teachers' College in 1976, teachers are being educated more than they are being trained. According to Ndawi and Masuku (2006), the opening of Mkoba Teachers' College ushered in the idea of teacher education in which teachers are supposed to be "well-educated" and "well-trained" (Ndawi & Masuku, 2006).

Exactly one hundred years since Zimbabwe, the then colonial Rhodesia, was founded by Rhodes, some teacher educators are still training teachers in the prescriptive manner demonstrated by Tawonei. For this reason, such teacher educators ought to be called teacher trainers. The prescriptive nature of teacher training was confirmed by a retired teacher, Mr J.G. Muguti, whom I interviewed on 25 December 2011, and who trained at Morgenster Training School in the 1930s. He said, "*The prescriptions in the schemes of work were supposed to be strictly adhered to by every teacher".*

After the Dadaya Scheme, "the book", *The teacher and his pupils*, written by Byrne (1961), and referred to by Travaskis (1967) as the teachers' manual, was used to train teachers, and provided specific instructions that trainee teachers religiously followed. The instructions included, inter-alia, questions to be asked, expected answers, teacher's standing posture and the teacher's responses to learner's correct/wrong answers. In my opinion, this was what Tawonei seemed to be saying he was doing until he attended the MQEP workshops. Thereafter, Tawonei stated '*I think positively and check to see how well prepared I am for the lecture, evaluate myself and reflect on my methods of teaching. My traditional approach has changed'.*

For teachers to be able to evaluate themselves, they need to have developed introspective skills. This was the stage my teacher educator participants claimed to have reached owing to their participation in the MQEP action research workshops. As teacher educators examined their own practice (introspection), they gained a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses (Goodwin et al., 2014). By saying '*I think positively and check to see how well prepared I am for the lecture…'* Tawonei might have now realised, upon reflection, that there was a difference between training and educating a teacher. Having made this realisation, Tawonei reported that *'my traditional approach has changed'*, thus reflecting his graduation from being a teacher trainer to a teacher educator. Whether Tawonei knew the difference between teacher training

(traditional approach) and what he adopted after that change may not be clear. My assumption was that the MQEP teacher educators had been transformed, but it was not clear whether they (teacher educators) knew the difference between what they understood to be traditional teacher training and the progressive methods of educating teachers. In an interview probing Tawonei's life story claims, I found out that there was not much of a difference in him between traditional and contemporary teacher education as I had observed him teach during my study when, in some cases, the lecture method dominated. However, I was roused by Tawonei's assertion that "*Modern teacher education should strive to develop teachers who are adaptable, creative and resourceful*", which showed his awareness that teacher training tends to be instructional rather than developmental (Nager, 2007). Modern teacher education talks of teacher preparation as opposed to both training and educating (Nager, 2007). The realisation of the need to shift from traditional approaches was in sync with Nager's (2007) view that good teaching must inform decisions about how to prepare teachers to meet the needs of learners in schools.

The transformation from traditional to progressive teacher preparation approaches resonated very well with the issues I discussed in Theme 2, which focused on interactive classrooms, where the teacher/lecturer played a facilitator role and allowed student teachers to actively participate in learning. What my teacher educator participants seemed to have been participating in was a teacher education programme that demanded the development of fundamental competencies.

Competent teachers would have been eager and keen to observe, constantly questioning old procedures in light of new insights triggered by reflection, able to see the world as a potential source of learning opportunities and base future learning on past and present experiences (Nager, 2007). During a focus group discussion, participants expressed this view of a modern

teacher. They said, '*A modern teacher moves with the times and is inclusive taking cognisance of learner diversity and employs learner centred pedagogies. The modern teacher is adaptive'.*

The contrast between training and education by and large determined the use of traditional and/or modern methods of educating teachers. It was imperative to distinguish between teacher training and teacher education before placing traditional and modern teacher educating methods into perspective. I made this argument because in the FGDs, the participants used the terms teacher training and teacher education interchangeably. Initially, I referred to Hills (1982) who views the two concepts thus:

Education deals with the acquisition of knowledge. Training deals more with the application of knowledge. Thus, within one learning system, we can find elements of both (p. 273).

It was important to note that training was a process that used a wide range of techniques to recast learner teachers' attitudes, knowledge or skills in order to achieve effective performance in a particular task or set of tasks. Generally, training was result-oriented and emphasised the development of individual capacities. On the other hand,

Teacher education refers to the whole range of activities that constitute preparation for improvement of members of the teaching profession. It includes pre-service education for those who have not had teaching experience and in-service for those who are actually engaged in teaching. The elevation of quantitative and qualitative standards for the profession is reflected in the use of the term "teacher education" rather than the older term" teacher training." Whereas teacher training suggests the development of a rather narrow proficiency in the skills or methods of classroom teaching, teacher education connotes the broad professional preparation needed for the highly complex task of teaching in the modern world (Rivlin, 1943, p.793).

The definitions of teacher training and teacher education provided above reflect a positive change in attitude, which was very similar to the change, not only in attitude but also in perspective, reflected by my teacher educator participants. The shift from teacher training to teacher education should necessarily be accompanied by a repositioning of teacher education methodologies. It was also obligatory to underscore that in teacher education, there was also an element of training. This was so in respect of skills such as chalkboard work which requires demonstration and imitation. Because of such teacher education skills requirements, even though the phrase "teacher training" was an antiquated concept, the expression "training college" has been widely accepted as an anachronism for some time (Blishen, 1969; Good, 1973; Page & Thomas, 1977; Gordon & Lawton, 1984). My participants' use of the expression teacher training alongside teacher education can thus be said to be part of the teacher educators' professional vernacular. There was clear inconsistency in the use of the two concepts. Either the title of the institution is a misnomer or the programme itself is incorrectly labelled. O' Neill (1986) claims that, a unanimous decision on the use of the terms teacher education and teacher training is long overdue. The confusion must cease, and there must be consensus in the titles of educational institutions and their respective programmes. Teacher educators ought to decide as a matter of urgency.

My basis for having a lengthy discussion on the terms 'teacher training and teacher education' dovetails with teacher educators' call for a shift from traditional teacher educating methods to modern methods. An examination and analysis of what constitutes traditional and modern teacher educating methods thus remains necessary. The changing world of the learner, the impact of new technologies and the changing demands of the world of work have implications for the kind of teaching and learning that goes on in schools and teachers' colleges. However, in the case of Zimbabwe, I could not ascertain if technologies have been adequately factored

into teaching and learning at various levels in their diversity. This perhaps would require a separate study.

Katitia (2015) argues that for the best learner achievement or performance to be achieved, there should be proper teacher preparation. This concurs with my participants' FGD stance that, '*Teacher educators and ultimately teachers should improve their practices, which will cascade down to improving the learners' performance'.* By referring to themselves, my participants concede that they need to change their teaching methods. Traditional teacher trainers have depended mainly on the lecture method, which is renowned for delivering concepts and large volumes of information in a short space of time. The lecture method is also favoured for its ability to convey information that is generally difficult to present in another way, other than through the lecture method (Behr, 2006).

It should be highlighted that the lecture method neither ascertains learner understanding nor feedback. Learners in a lecture are generally docile and passive, with the lecturer appearing to be the know-it-all. Due to the passive presence of learners, the possibility of them getting bored and therefore not gaining much from the lecture is very high. The lecture method is also said to have the lowest retention value of all teaching techniques (Andrea & Wainright, 2009). Teacher educators argued that, '*the lecture method is the best for mass classes, as often is the case everywhere else except during Main Study and Professional Studies "B" / Applied Education classes'.*

Interactive methods were said to effectively counter the weaknesses of the lecture methods. However, my participants were not able to articulate these weaknesses in detail, although they were able to mention some of the interactive methods. Some of the interactive methods have been presented and discussed under Theme 2: Interactive classrooms/lecture rooms: A source of joy for teaching and learning. One of the modern teaching methods at various levels of

education that was not discussed earlier was facilitation. The teacher educator leads by setting the stage and triggering active student teacher involvement in a process in which learner teachers share knowledge and ideas. The teacher educator does not have to be an expert by answering all questions, as learners can address some of the questions, too. In addition to question-and-answer sessions, during the lesson, learners can also engage in brainstorming, think pair and share episodes, and buzz sessions (The Room 241 Team, 2018).

In his life story, Tapiwa wrote:

The Quality of Education Project (MQEP) is a project meant to equip educators with skills and knowledge on how to effectively carry out researches which are different from the conventional (traditional) way. One should doubt him/herself in everything that he/she does.

Tapiwa's personal evaluation of the MQEP was, in itself, reflective. This was not because Tapiwa had always been reflective since, as we know, this was the participant who once said in an interview, '*I was quantitative and qualitative research is overlooked'*. Tapiwa viewed the MQEP as an intervention project meant *'to equip educators with skills and knowledge'*. According to Tapiwa's reflective evaluation of the MQEP, most teacher educators did not possess the *skills and knowledge* which were provided by participation in the MQEP. The MQEP was about training in action research knowledge and skills, which teacher educators were assumed not to possess. These skills and knowledge would *effectively* help the teacher educators accomplish research which was different from conventional or traditional research. Tapiwa's reflective perception was that teacher educators used to do traditional or conventional research but that, in his opinion, was not reflective because it did not unravel classroom problems. Such research was dissociated from practitioners' own practices and was therefore research for the sake of research rather than problem-solving research.

Effective research would be that which provided situational solutions to problems. Without mentioning it, Tapiwa sounded as if he was referring to engaging in action research because it was the one form of research that was relevant to classroom practice. Perceptions expressed by Tapiwa reflected conviction, reform and that action research could turn around teacher education. As part of modern methods of educating teachers, action research provided inquiry-based learning (Nagel, 2014). Teacher educators like any other teachers, needed research-based and research-informed knowledge and needed to be open to acquiring and assessing local evidence (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2015).

The transformation experienced by my teacher educator participants was thus aptly summarised by Loughran (2014) in his assertion that:

> Teacher educators are criticised for, and often critical of, being left on their own, but they almost have to be left on their own to construct their own professional knowledge of practice. At the same time, this does not mean that every teacher educator needs to start from scratch, but it does require them to transform their perspectives (p. 3).

It was evident from Tapiwa's life story that not only cognitive transformation, but also pedagogical transformation occurred in teacher educators. Loughran (2014) rightfully observes that, although teacher education is complex work involving curriculum, pedagogy and research, most teacher educators are provided with little professional development support or mentoring in most teacher education programmes. Based on Loughran's (2014) perspective, I could confidently say my teacher educator participants got the appropriate professional support through the MQEP basing on the data so far presented under this theme.

While the teacher educators claimed to use new teaching methods during their lectures, my lesson observations revealed that, besides the use of PowerPoint, their instructional activity was

still dominated by teacher talk and note taking by student teachers. The major point of departure was small group seminars, characterized by student teacher and teacher educator discussion. Teacher educators still prescribed teaching techniques that student teachers should go and use during teaching practice. The main techniques suggested by teacher educators included group work and child-centred methods. These techniques were not demonstrated by teacher educators but simply mentioned or dictated. The incorporation of interactive methodologies is not deliberate; it is often by chance (Nager, 2007).

4.2.1.4 Gruelling and abysmally remunerated workshops

The theme to be dealt with in this section addressed the question: What considerations should be made when planning donor-funded intervention projects or programmes in teacher education?

Evidence from data obtained using the four data generation methods indicated that participants worked hard during the MQEP workshops. In their evaluations of the workshops, participants' views and perceptions were that they should have been rewarded in various forms for the training in action research.

I found it contradictory and perplexing that teacher educators expected to be paid for being trained. This training equipped them with knowledge and skills that nobody can take away from them, as evidenced in the claims they made above about the programme. Regrettably, this was not the line of thinking my teacher educator participants displayed. By way of example, in his life story, Takayedza wrote:

Challenges to be addressed include, among other things, minimising attrition. There are too many drop-outs from both facilitators and participants. If I were you, I would consider giving a few dollars as well as improving on transport arrangements.

Participants for this study viewed dropping out of the MQEP workshops by both facilitators and participants as challenges though the initiators of the intervention might not have construed these issues as such. This was apparent in the phrase quoted above. The insights I gained from these evaluative statements by the participants is that they were disgruntled because Save the Children Norway, the funders and initiators of the intervention expected them to attend workshops without remuneration. Remuneration would be a way of *minimising attrition*, and non-remuneration led to many participants and facilitators dropping out of the project, as revealed in Takayedza's statement that *"there were too many dropouts from both facilitators and participants*". I established, however, that only one facilitator had dropped out of the MQEP owing to other commitments. If these participants dropped out of the MQEP, I imputed this to several practicable factors that are discussed in the ensuing paragraphs.

While my participants may have had reasons for expecting to be paid over and above acquiring action research knowledge and skills, I established that their desire arose from their inadequate involvement in the siring of the MQEP. Participants were not consulted in the planning of the project and were not informed about the conditions for participating in the MQEP. Oino, Kirui, Towett and Luvega (2005) quote Meyer's (1988) observation that:

From a sociological and anthropological standpoint, projects are primarily social interventions within a given social system, arousing social processes which change at least to some extent, the social structures and institutions of this system and the social behaviour of its members (p.759).

The MQEP was a community project intended to transform teacher educators' practices through action research. The participating institutions, their superintendents and the participants themselves should have been empowered in terms of information, ingenuities and resources for the smooth running of activities to ensure sustainability during and after initial training (Oino

et al., 2015). The World Bank (2008) defines empowerment as the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. From the World Bank (2008) perspective, capacity building requires supporting, or rather, enabling motivators.

It might not be surprising therefore that, my participants anticipated monetary incentives as reflected in Takayedza's statement presumably directed at the initiators of the project, "*If I were you, I would consider giving a few dollars".* My participants sounded focussed on money, which was understandable given that the MQEP started in 2008, a time when Zimbabwe was experiencing very serious economic challenges. The dropout rate alluded to in Takayedza's statement may have therefore been a consequence of unfulfilled participant expectations. This is why I insisted that the conditions for participation should have been made clear to them right from the start. In this regard, Hofisi and Chizimba (2013) established that, donor-funded projects were more sustainable if their design had in-built strategies and procedures well known by those involved. The spirit of credence, bribery and/or fortuitous participation unveiled by teacher educators seemed to suggest that their participation was not in good faith. My assumption was that, being workshoped and gaining knowledge and competences free of personal costs save for time, would have been motivation enough. After all, the workshops were scheduled and attended during working hours. It was not an extra responsibility that could justify their insistence on receiving remuneration. The meaning or logic behind this idea was not clear. It may have suggested that payment could be demanded in compensation for inadequate training.

Nevertheless, the participants' financial demands appeared legitimate when one reads through Tapiwa's interview statement, which read:

There was lack of consistency in participation by lecturing staff. Some indicated that they were no longer interested because the MQEP facilitators did not at least provide a little remuneration as a token of appreciation to participants.

Lack of consistency in attendance by the lecturing staff suggested that these participants were ignorant of the project's intent. Also implied in Takayedza's life story was the fact that the teacher educators were attending the MQEP workshops for the wrong reasons. I gathered from Takayedza's life story that, if the initiators of the project had told participants that there would be no payment for attending, those who did attend would have been very genuine, committed and willing to learn. Voluntarily, perhaps some participants may still have attended considering that those who attended were nominated by institutional administrators to attend.

Notwithstanding the threats to drop out by some of the teacher educators, those who did make time to attend found value in the workshops. The words '*some members*…', reveal that not every teacher educator expected to attend absented him/herself or pulled out completely. Rather than valuing what the MQEP was doing for them in terms of empowering and emancipating them by giving them action research knowledge and skills, the participants wanted to be 'shown appreciation' by the project intervention facilitators. In Tapiwa's words, *"… At least provide a little remuneration as a token of appreciation to participants".* My question would be: Who should have appreciated who, and for what reason? I would have expected the participants to appreciate the initiators of the project and the facilitators for enhancing their professional knowledge and skills.

The demands for incentives by my teacher educator participants were not exceptional in a change process. Indeed, in his theory of change, which guided my study, Fullan (2006) notes and warns that change creates disequilibrium which can be uncomfortable. People ought to make sense of the process for themselves. Those participants who took time to reflect on the

aims of the project did acknowledge that they indeed benefited from it (See themes 1,2 and 3 in particular). Fullan (2006) further opines that institutional leaders must appreciate the initial challenges of trying something new. In addition, Fullan encourages leaders to view resistance as a positive force in the change process (Fullan, 2006). What is necessary is for those in leadership to re-culture the organisation during the change process. Re-culturing, in this case, refers to changing organisational or teacher educators' mindsets so that they gear up for transition. Evidence from a focus group discussion indicated that those that participated in the MQEP felt that action research was demanding given the other responsibilities teacher educators were expected to undertake. This did not, however, in any way suggest that participating in the MQEP did not benefit them professionally. In support of this Hine (2013) observes that action research, by its very nature, is a time-consuming process over and above one's occupational demands.

During focus group discussions, the need to *motivate participants through payment of stipends* was also highlighted. There was no reference made to participants dropping out of the project due to lack of *motivating participants*. While this was a legitimate concern, I still thought the motivation should have been to acquire skills and knowledge from participating in the MQEP.

From Tapiwa and Takayedza's interview and life story contributions, it was clear that this project was conducted during a period of economic melt-down in Zimbabwe. Participants were severely constrained by the national economic doldrums and individual financial status. As Tatenda articulated in her interview, *"The economic melt-down in the country led to high participant turn-over."* This was further endorsed by Tazivei's life story, in which he revealed that:

Because of harsh economic conditions which are a great obstacle, they [teacher educator participants] are dropping out going to look for greener pastures and not attending workshops because they say they are not gaining anything in terms of money.

As I said earlier on, the MQEP was conducted against a backdrop of difficult economic conditions in Zimbabwe, and some teacher educators' participation in the project was therefore motivated by a desire for monetary perks. It was, however, contradictory for participants to claim that participants dropped out because they were not gaining anything yet they acknowledged having gained action research knowledge and skills. Evidence to this effect came from Tawonei's life story, in which he wrote:

This project (the MQEP) has had positive results in my teaching. I now reflect upon my practice, I have now come to the realisation that as a classroom practitioner, I am not there only to pass on knowledge, but that I can actually create it.

The extracts discussed under themes one and two show that, despite the absence of monetary and other incentives, the MQEP was a success in that participants gained insights and developed reflective practices which effected positive change in their classrooms (Ado, 2013). By saying this, I was not downplaying participants' demands and/or suggestions that monetary incentives would have made a qualitative impact on participant gains. Lessons from donor-funded community projects in Kenya recorded by Oino et al. (2015) reveal that:

While donor funding can act as a temporary driver for social change, maintaining the social change is challenging…unforeseen circumstances may threaten the initial uptake of innovative projects… (p. 758).

Total participant involvement, from needs analysis to sustenance after exit, should have been considered. In this regard, Oino et al. (2015) further recommend that, It is important to have

community members identify their own needs, analyse factors that lead to those needs and draw up Community Action Plans (CAP) to address them.

Oino et al.'s (2015) experiences in Kenya have a bearing on the conception of the MQEP. It was taken for granted by the MQEP planners that participants would simply engage in training without questioning anything. Contrary to this assumption, during one FGD session, my participants asserted, *"The MQEP should have discussed pre-intervention and post-intervention strategies, needs and conditions*". It was clear that no planning involving the initiators of the project and benefactors was undertaken. A participatory approach to development could have ironed out most of the queries raised by participants during FGDs. There was need for negotiations and compromises between project or intervention initiators and beneficiaries. Due to the absence of collective/collaborative planning, Tapiwa wrote in his life story that, "*SCN-Z should go beyond its present role of capacity building. Drop-outs have been numerous due to lack of incentives".*

Tapiwa's assertion reflected an appreciation for being capacitated in action research knowledge and skills. Moreover, the phrase '*should go beyond',* communicates that Save the Children Norway-Zimbabwe should have taken cognisance of factors that could have motivated or enhanced capacity development. Unfortunately, my participants attributed the dropping out by some participants to the absence of incentives. In other words, there should have been discussions on the provision of incentives during project planning, and on the mandate of SCN-Z as far as capacity development was concerned. If this had been done, participants would have had a common position whether to attend the workshops and held accountable for their attendance or absence.

There was an element of mistrust which appeared to have developed between the participants and facilitators during the MQEP. Participants felt deprived of what was rightfully theirs in the

form of '*incentives'*. This claim also arises in a focus group statement that, *"Food alone is not an adequate morale booster. Knowledge gained alone is motivating, but other incentives would further strengthen facilitator-participant relationship*". Participants saw food provided during workshops as nothing out of the norm; it was obvious that food would be provided at the beginning and end of the workshops. Participants wanted something that would make a difference to their pockets. These expectations were not fulfilled because they had never been discussed in the first place. Fullan (2006) suggests that if change is to succeed those who participate in the change process must be able to listen to each other.

The last incentive that participants expected was a certificate of attendance. Teacher educators are both academics and professionals for whom building personal and collective profiles is a priority. The acquisition of earned certificates cannot be downplayed. For two years, two days of each school term, my teacher educator participants attended workshops. Although there was no examination at the end, they expected a certificate of attendance. As Tendai wrote in her life story, *"To have certificates at the end of the intervention would have been a big gain".* Tendai referred not to *getting* certificates but to *having* certificates. Participants would then be able to attest to anyone and convince anyone that they had a certificate, not of attendance, but in action research. They would even claim to be qualified to tutor and consummate action research or add this 'qualification' to their curriculum vitae (CV). This was presumably why Tendai wrote that having certificates"---*would have been a big gain".* While the participants acknowledged that they gained knowledge and skills, they also wanted to gain a paper qualification. Once again, issues relating to attendance should have been discussed during the intervention planning stage. Teacher educators felt they had spent a lot of time doing workshops for which they were not rewarded. Teacher educators felt that the considerable amount of time they had spent doing workshops had not been recognized with a certificate.

Interestingly, the desire for incentives is not a recent phenomenon. As far back as 1861 when Reverend (Rev.) T. Thomas of the London Missionary Society established Inyati Mission in Matabeleland, the Ndebele people demanded incentives to be taught reading. Atkinson (1972, p.22) quotes Rev. Thomas as having said:

Others (the Ndebele people) have said they would learn if I would give them something for learning, which I always decline to do… my own view is that it is a most potent way of creating hypocrites.

Indeed, as was the case with the MQEP participants, the demand for incentives to be educated, empowered, skilled and emancipated sounded unprofessional. Teacher educators should have seen the lasting benefits of training in action research, just as the people around Inyati Mission should have seen the benefits of learning to read rather than being paid to read. I would, however, condone the action by the people around Inyati Mission for two reasons. Firstly, perhaps on account of the language differences between them and the missionaries, they may not have clearly understood the reason for learning to read then. Secondly, if it had been learnt that any of the Ndebele people had been taught how to read by the White people, they would have been killed by their leaders. Thus, Rev. Thomas writes "… it being their settled conviction that if it were known that they could read, they would be killed instantly" (Atkinson, 1972, p. 22).

My interpretation of some of the participants' views on the MQEP was that they went into the project with the wrong motives. As such, their dropping out of the project was not a cause for concern. This was similar to Rev Thomas' experiences with reading classes in Matabeleland, about which Atkinson (1972) quotes him as saying:

> The first morning, a large number attended and the second morning not so many. The third morning, comparably few students attended. Besides the few men that come, there are perhaps half a dozen or eight women who profess to learn but are very irregular in their attendance and when they do come seem much more earnest at begging clothes, food etc., than at their lessons. It seems to be almost engraved in their nature that they are out to have some material recompense for attending to instruction (p. 23).

What Atkinson (1972) writes about black people around Inyati Mission between 1861 and 1867 compares very well with teacher educators' views during training in the MQEP 2008-2009.

I should be forgiven for suggesting that, in my view, the demand for monetary rewards seems to be the culture of Zimbabwean blacks. This could be poverty-driven or a result of ignorance or greed. I hold this view in respect of what Rev. Thomas is once again quoted by Atkinson (1972) as having said:

But every day, they (Ndebele people) asked for their pay before school-time and grumbled so much at being kept after they had done their school work that I yielded and paid them at once, and applied what moral evasion I could to induce them to remain for school and found that about one in ten remained.

Considering that Atkinson (1972) was writing during the time that the first missionaries arrived in the then Rhodesia, Blacks had to be persuaded to go to school and learn because formal school was a new phenomenon. However, the same cannot be said of teacher educators participating in a development intervention in the twenty-first century. When I reflected on the demands for incentives and rewards at Inyathi Mission in 1861-1867 and during the MQEP, I came up with several possible explanations for this. Zimbabwean blacks are happier receiving

than giving. I also found it difficult to view demands to be appreciated as representing empowerment. Rather, it was soliciting bribes, greed, simple lack of appreciation and the inability to separate business from social issues. Being trained in action research was, in my view, serious professional development while receiving rewards could be a social conjecture or appreciation.

Teacher educators should have perceived the MQEP as an opportunity for continuous professional development (CPD). While they generally saw it as such, they however tainted the SCN-Z's intervention by seeing it as an opportunity for monetary gains. Such expectations compromise the professionalism expected of teacher educators. Despite these culturally embedded expectations that my participants seemed to have been used to, that of being paid to be educated, the fundamental objective of equipping teacher educators with action research knowledge and skills was achieved. My thesis remains that the MQEP was a success and that action research has potential to improve teacher education. This theme thus answered the research question: What considerations should be made when planning donor-funded intervention programmes/projects in teacher education? The next theme addresses the same question, albeit under a different theme.

4.2.1.5 Conception and ownership of donor-funded intervention or development projects

This theme answered the research question- What considerations should be made when planning donor-funded intervention projects in teacher education? Data provided by the study participants through focus group discussions pointed to the need for serious consideration of some fundamental issues during the planning stage of donor-funded projects. The data were corroborated by evidence from these participants' life stories and interviews. During a FGD, participants conclude that:

The QEP should aim at improving the quality of education by taking the whole project to all teachers' colleges in the country and ensure that all lecturers receive this education before imparting the knowledge to student teachers.

By QEP, the participants are referring to the Masvingo Quality Education Project. The initiators of the project called it the QEP, arguing that if practitioners engaged in action research, the quality of their work was likely to improve qualitatively. It was because of this labelling that participants agreed that it '*…should aim at improving the quality of education'*. Teacher educators did not visualise the MQEP as improving the quality of teacher education only, but as also having ripple effects that ultimately would improve the quality of school education. This perception was based on the fact that, if teacher education improved, quality teachers were likely to be produced. If quality teachers were produced, there was likely to be quality teaching in schools. Over and above this, there was potential for teacher educators to engage in participatory action research in collaboration with teachers and even community members (Zeichner, 2006). I also made this observation against the background that what was happening in public learning institutions and public institutions of higher learning today where poor conditions of service had driven many good professionals out of teaching (Goodnough, 2001; Ingersell, 2003). Teachers, including teacher educators, have become easily replaceable technicians in the eyes of many policymakers because they were viewed as having no special skills. In an attempt to help revamp the quality of teacher education, my participants suggested that '*action research skills be taken to all teachers' colleges in the country so as to ensure that all lecturers receive them'.*

The MQEP was confined to the three Masvingo teachers' colleges. Participants regard the intervention as merely a drop in the ocean for quality teacher education to be realised throughout Zimbabwe. Ideally, *all* lecturers should receive action research knowledge and skills. My

participants also contended that the QEP '*should be taken to all teachers' college….'* The question that arises is: By who? I interpreted this to suggest that Save the Children Norway, which initiated the MQEP together with the University of Zimbabwe Department Of Teacher Education, were supposed to do that. Perhaps my teacher educator participants did not see themselves as sufficiently empowered to take the action research skills and knowledge to fellow teacher educators in and outside of Masvingo. However, participants agree on the idea of spreading these skills and knowledge so as to '*ensure all lecturers receive it'*.

Despite having been empowered, transformed and given other perspectives, my participants did not take it upon themselves to cascade the action research gospel to others. This thinking was not astonishing, since it was consistent with the donor syndrome. Once communities have been assisted by donors, they think this should be the norm or benchmark. Oino et al. (2015, p.7571) observe how unfortunate it is that:

Globally, billions of shillings have been spent in communities to enhance the living situation of the people. However, one of the most critical obstacles is the extent to which the projects are able to persist despite the exit of donors, while the beneficiaries reap dividends and appreciate their ownership role in the projects.

I saw two contradicting developments from the MQEP. The first one related to the nature of donor-driven projects, while the second one had to do with the conception of Save the Children Zimbabwe action research project. My major focus was on the latter. There was need to incorporate beneficiaries in an intervention or development project/programme planning in order to increase the probability of the sustainability of such projects (Adhiambo, 2012). In a study on *Factors affecting the effectiveness of donor-funded projects in promoting development* in Kibera, Kenya, Adhiambo (2012) recommends that the beneficiaries should be involved, and their needs identified if they were to be made accountable for sustainability. In the MQEP, there

was no needs assessment conducted by the donors together with the teacher educators. It seemed that the donors assumed teacher educators needed this education. Evidence of this assumption came from Tendai's interview statement that, *"We simply found ourselves having to attend workshops on action research".*

Through the words 'we *simply found ourselves',* participants were expressing their detachment from the project and their lack of involvement in pre-training activities. This often creates a negative attitude towards the project or intervention leading to a lack of commitment and accountability. As Adhiambo (2012, p.490) observes in her study:

> In terms of accountability, the study recommends that the donors should take account of the needs, concerns and capacities of community members and explain their actions and decisions to them. In doing this, the community should be involved by identifying their needs and coming up with a project in which they will be able to give feedback and the donors and community will learn in the process.

Although they acknowledged having been emancipated, empowered and transformed through their participation in the MQEP, teacher educators felt that *'institutional leaders should have also attended workshops so that they would know what was known by their juniors'.* Implicit in this FGD statement was that teacher educators felt that their managers were disadvantaged by not being invited to attend the workshop. As such, heads of institutions who had not been involved were likely to be at variance with their subordinates in terms of knowledge which would not be good for either the institutions or individual teacher educators. This situation could result in subordinates being perceived as undermining their superiors due to differences in perceptions over the change processes, leading to disharmony within institutions. The change

theory guiding my study holds that institutional leadership must understand the change process (Fullan, 2006) and re-culture the organisation during the change process.

The absence of the institutional leaders (college principals) from the MQEP workshops may also have sent signals to teacher educator participants that the intervention project was trivial. This, in my view, may have further affected the teacher educators' attitudes towards training and the intended change process, particularly given that the teacher educators had not been involved in the needs assessment and project planning.

It may be necessary to carry out a separate study on the state of sustainability of donor-initiated and donor-driven projects in Zimbabwe. Indeed, the MQEP provides a good starting point as it yielded more successes than failures.

4.3 Summary

In this chapter, all the research questions were answered. Five themes were identified as emerging from the data obtained. While the theme on the conception of donor-funded projects identified some flaws, the other four themes acknowledged more positives in relation to action research as a tool for empowering teacher educators and helping teacher educators reflect on their practices. It can be concluded that the MQEP was, therefore, by and large, a success. Indeed, the study also acknowledged that action research had the potential to improve education in general and teacher education in particular. The positive effects of action research on teacher education should have a downstream effect on both primary and secondary school practices, especially if teacher education impacted pre-service learner teachers.

The next chapter presents the summary, conclusions, and implications of the study as well as possible solutions.

CHAPTER 5

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND SOLUTIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the major findings of this study and the implications of those findings. Based on these implications, I proffer possible solutions for theory, practice, policy and subsequent research. In conclusion, I provide a reflection on my own experiences of doing this research.

5.2 Summary of findings

The summary of my research findings was based on the five themes that emerged from the study. It is important to emphasise that the five themes discussed in this study all emerged from my participants involvement in the MQEP. It is also necessary to point out that it appears the development of reflective thinking aided my participants' generation of data. There was overwhelming evidence of a manifestation of reflective thinking among teacher educator participants. The aha! experiences expressed by teacher educators showed that, having been afforded the opportunity to understand the theory of action research and engaging in action research activities, through the MEQP, teacher educators developed reflective thinking which, in turn, impacted on their practices.

I also established that interactive classrooms or lecture rooms were a source of joy for both the teacher educator and learner teachers. The active involvement of learners, at whatever level, kept learners alert, absorbed, engaged, motivated, disciplined and concentrating. This finding showed that the learning process was focused on the coordinated "teacher-learner" and "learner-learner" interaction (Panomariova & Vasina, 2016). While the teacher facilitates, the learner interacts, takes an active part in the learning process and does so at his/her own pace. Mastery and retention of what was learnt was therefore maximised.

Closely linked with the finding on the use of interactive methodologies was the fact that traditional education, including teacher education, was based on traditional methods of transmitting knowledge. This meant the teacher or teacher educator was the source of knowledge. From my study, I found that there was need for teacher educators to change from traditional to contemporary ways of teacher educating.

My study also established that, although teacher educators acknowledged professional benefits from their participation in the MQEP, they expected to be paid or incentivised for being trained. This was consistent with Fullan's (2006) theory of change guiding my study, which suggests that incentives be given to motivate the process of change.

My last finding relates to the conception of donor-funded projects. The major issue from this finding was that donor-funded projects must necessarily involve all stakeholders from their planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation until exit. There ought to be a clearly-defined action plan for each stage of the project, particularly if sustainability is to be realised. As Hofisi and Chizimba (2013) observe, if sustainability is to be achieved in donor-funded projects, it is then important that the design of all development or intervention projects articulate how they would work with and/or build the capacities of local governance and service structures in ways that ensure the effective delivery and sustainability of the project. A related finding was that the absence of the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education in the MQEP could also have given participants the impression that the intervention was not of significance. The ministry's involvement or presence might have lent weight to the intervention, as would the participation of institutional managers.

Below are the conclusions that I drew from the findings of this study.

5.3 Conclusions

Based on the findings articulated in this chapter, this study concluded that the Masvingo Quality Education Project was a success. I can safely conclude that action research has the potential to improve teacher education in Zimbabwe. This remained my thesis.

However, given that the MQEP was conducted in 2008-2009, and that my evaluative study was carried out two years issues related to timing of the study may be raised. However, it should also be appreciated that summative evaluation has no time limit. In this regard, I still think this study was worthwhile and the results or findings are valid. I also concluded that there was need to carry out a tracer study of the MQEP participants. This study would focus on whether the said teacher educators were practicing action research.

With this, this chapter presented a summary of the findings and recommends solutions that should see teacher education in Zimbabwe improve. It is my conviction that relevant education stakeholders with a desire to improve teacher education will consider the implications herein seriously so as to further enhance the quality of service delivery in teacher education.

In the paragraphs that follow, I present implications and possible solutions to the research findings.

5.4 Implications

If indeed action research has potential to improve teacher education, it should not be given peripheral treatment as was done in the MQEP. By their nature, projects are not meant to last forever, particularly if they are donor-initiated and/or donor-driven. In order to ensure sustainability, action research should be embedded in the Zimbabwean teacher education curriculum as a stand-alone programme, course or section. This idea resonates very well with Grossman's (2005) and Price's (2001) idea that action research has become a central part of

teacher education all over the world. Most teacher education programmes now require student teachers to conduct action research as part of their pre-service preparation programmes.

Findings from this study provide sufficient evidence to suggest that action research develops knowledge, skills and attitudes that help individuals and groups to institute informed change. As such, action research in teacher education must be systematic, oriented toward positive change in the institutional community, and must be practitioner-driven and participatory (Holter & Frabutt, 2012, in Hine & Lavery, 2014).

Part of what teacher educators should know is derived from research. This should be research that they carry out themselves on themselves as part of teacher education reforms. Action research should be part of the teacher education experiences. Goodwin et al. (2014) claim that the quality of teacher education depends on the quality of teacher educators, but minimal attention is paid to what teacher educators should know and be able to do. Action research will help teacher educators know what they know and what they do not know because it implies self-study.

However, for student teachers to learn and correctly conceptualise action research theory and practice, they ought to be taught correctly. In this regard, teacher educators ought to learn action research theory and practice first. This may be a challenge, considering that there is no institution where teacher educators are specifically trained in action research in the country. Zimbabwe, becoming a teacher educator is a form of promotion from being a primary or secondary school teacher. The authorities in charge of education, and teacher education training programmes in particular, pay minimal attention to what teachers and teacher educators should know and be able to do. There is therefore a glaring absence of a codified knowledge base for teacher educator preparation, particularly one that is responsive to shifting local and global contexts and places emphasis on research in/on practice (Goodwin et al., 2014).

Earlier on in this chapter, I observed that while teaching experience was typically the precursor to one becoming a teacher educator (Bullock & Christian, 2009, in Goodwin et al., 2014), it was generally assumed that a good teacher would also be a good teacher educator. There is therefore a need to establish in Zimbabwe a school that enables the transition from teacher to teacher educator. Indeed, this need was acknowledged at the University of Zimbabwe in two ways. Firstly, the DTE is responsible for developing would-be teacher educators through the various graduate and post graduate programmes, which are suitably tailored for this. They include the Bachelor of Teacher Education (Practical Subjects) and the Master of Education (Practical Subjects) (*Handbook for quality assurance in associate teachers' colleges*, 2015).Secondly, the University of Zimbabwe also acknowledges the need to provide further relevant development training for its teaching staff through the University Teaching and Learning Centre (UTLC). Staff recruited by the UZ may have their relevant academic qualifications but may not have professional teaching qualifications. To overcome this deficiency, the UZ subjects its teaching staff to further short-term teacher development courses through the UTLC, whose mandate is to develop "teachers" from academics. From this reasoning, teacher educating thus involves engaging in teacher education research that examines and informs pedagogy and andragogy of teacher educating as distinct from the pedagogy of teaching (Goodwin et al., 2014).

I therefore agree with Goodwin et al. (2014), who suggest that, if teacher educators are ill-prepared in the work of teacher educating, and if their work is perceived as peripheral to the so-called high status work or if research is dissociated from teacher education, they cannot be expected to design quality teacher preparation programmes and conduct meaningful and relevant research in teacher education. Becoming a teacher educator is not, after all, a simple two-step process, from teacher to teacher educator.

Grossman (2005) suggests that most teacher education programmes now require student teachers to conduct action research studies as part of their preparation programmes. In Zimbabwe, the teacher education curriculum for institutions in the UZ Scheme of Association under the Department of Teacher Education (*Handbook for quality assurance in associate teachers' colleges,* 2015, p. 31) indicates that student teachers are expected to submit projects as part of their final presentation. While this is possible with the UZ-controlled teacher education programmes, concern still remains that the UZ is not the only player in the production of teachers; hence it may not be possible to know how others educate their teachers.

The need to standardize the teacher education curriculum across institutions therefore remains desirable. This would make it possible to incorporate the component of action research and reflective thinking into the national teacher education curriculum. It should therefore be relatively easy and possible to make it mandatory for student teachers, even if they are taught various types of research, to do an action research study as part of their teaching practice (TP). Action research is very well suited to TP because it requires a sustained period of self-study. The two-term, one-year or five-term teaching practice stints done by students in the UZ DTE Scheme of Association are therefore long enough to provide student teachers with an opportunity for self-study.

The MQEP was initiated and driven by outsiders from Save the Children Norway and the University of Zimbabwe DTE staff. Scholars are generally agreed that teachers resist change that is initiated or mandated "by those who are external to the setting in which change is meant to take place" (Richardson, 1998, p. 2). Accordingly, "pressure to change without an opportunity for exploration and choice seldom results in experiences of joy and excitement in learning" (Marimoto, 1973, p. 255). As pointed out by Klein (1969, p. 499), in Richardson (1998, p. 2), "studies of change appear to be taken from the perspective of those who are the

change agents seeking to bring about change rather than of clients they are seeking to influence". There is therefore a need to carry out studies from the other perspective.

In his change management model, Adkar, in Kotter (1995/2002), suggests that change must be realistic, achievable and measurable. Change also needs to be understood and managed in a way that people can cope with. It is important that initiators and implementers of the MQEP check whether participants in the intervention agreed with the change process. There was therefore a need to put in place clearly-defined sustenance and scaling up measures. Over and above that, initiators and implementers of intervention programmes should also design clear monitoring, evaluation, feedback and feed forward procedures and processes.

Scholarly literature holds that action research requires an organizational community setting in which negotiation is the key element (Wilson, 1980). This implies that those wanting to institute an intervention should have agreed with the chief executive and staff of the organisation on the conditions and procedures applicable to each part. This seems not to have been done in the MQEP. There also appears to be no one left accountable for follow-ups, continuity and summative evaluation of the project. A clearer strategic or action plan for the whole project from inception to conclusion ought to have been put in place. Similarly, Harber & Stephens (2010, p. 9), who evaluated a similar project in Bikita, Zimbabwe; suggest that"…there is need for a clearer strategic quality education plan, which identifies a critical time line and outcomes."

After a study on practices in teacher education in Pakistan, Takbir (2011, p. 216) notes that in the absence of appropriate sustenance measures:

The valuable resources invested in teacher education are being wasted because the outputs in terms of school change and students' learning achievement continue to remain poor. It is time to reflect on and realise this failure and pursue serious efforts at national, regional, local and individual institutional levels towards transforming teacher education in the country.

What Takbir (2011) says about teacher education reform measures in Pakistan can also be said about the MQEP efforts in Zimbabwe. There are no quick fixes or shortcuts to improving the education system in general, and teacher education in particular. Part of the solution lies in empowering and capacitating those who institute change, but this ought to be done systematically, and without ignoring the buy-in factors.

Alternatively, Little (1992) proposes a staff development model that empowers teacher educators to become more responsible and accountable. He calls this staff development model "a community of practice" (Little, 1992, p. 156). This model develops joint work that brings practitioners together and creates interdependence among them. The model also helps practitioners to have the institution rather than the individual at heart. Instead of training fifteen teacher educators only from each teacher's college, "a whole institution, training including senior managers should have been the approach" (Harber & Stephens 2010, p. 9). This could have increased the chances of sustainability and the scaling up of the action research skills.

The MQEP organisers appear not to have underlined the benefits accrued from collaborative action research. This study strongly recommends that even as individuals might continue to engage in individual action research, collaborative action research might prove more beneficial. In that respect, teacher educators who engage in or adopt a collaborative approach to action research in which they identify problems, plan action and implement changes together were likely to realise more benefits from action research. Collaborative action should not only be between or among teacher educators. They can collaborate with student teachers, in-service teachers and even members of the larger community. This kind of collaborative action research will enable research not to focus primarily on classroom-based problems only. Researchers will be able to critically examine institutional and policy-related issues within their workplaces. By way of example, teacher educators could examine quality control measures and procedures by the University of Zimbabwe's Department of Teacher Education. Collaboratively, and even

across institutions, programme approval procedures, academic and teaching practice examining processes and many other issues related to teacher education can then be interrogated. In this way, teacher educators may be able to contribute towards the promotion of quality teacher education and social justice. Such collaborative research could also include teacher educators from the University of Zimbabwe and other universities.

On the other hand, if research becomes a culture in an organisation or a system, the idea of continuous improvement, which Kotter (1995/2002) calls "*kaizeen*", may be achieved. Conducting action research is not an easy task; it implies working hard. Teacher educators should never be satisfied with the status quo but should always be asking how else things could be done. Action research can provide answers to such questions.

As teacher educators transform, curriculum and practice should also transform (Burbank, Ramirez & Bates, 2012). Thus, teachers should not be trained for a straight-cut kind or a specific curriculum. Doing so would make them fail to teach if that curriculum is slightly changed or if it is meant to be used in a different environment to what these teacher educators were accustomed. A slight change in the curriculum might cause dis-equilibrations among such teachers. With this in mind, teacher education should not be dogmatic and prescriptive so as to allow teacher educators to be innovative and creative in the manner they teach. Efforts to ensure that teacher educators are reflective should therefore start with teacher educators.

In this regard, Schon (1987), in Sparks-Langer & Colton (1991), observes that:

While teachers acquire some professional knowledge from 'packaged' educational principles and skills, the bulk of their learning comes through continuous action and reflection on everyday problems (p.40).

The problem that I have, which I am certain other researchers also have, is to determine how teacher educators can be encouraged to accept and approach research in education, professional development and policy reform with open minds (Davis & Andrzejewski, 2012).

Teacher education ought to prepare would-be teachers for diverse school populations. In that regard, experiences with diversity should be part of all teacher education courses so that this aspect is not viewed as additive for teacher education, and that time is not wasted convincing student teachers of its importance (Milner, 2005).

Zeichner (2005, p.7) observes that "no other professional school is held accountable for the performance of its graduates after they have left the preparation programme". In view of Zeichner's observation above, variances in the way qualified teachers execute their duties and/or behave in Zimbabwean schools may need to be interrogated through action research.

Lastly, Sela and Harel (2012) acknowledge that teacher educators at teachers' college level generally lack experience in research. This limitation may also be applicable to my six study participants, who had an average experience of fourteen years in teacher education among them. I would like to think that these teacher educators, given their vast teaching experience, should have done better in research matters than was established by this study due to their limited exposure from the time they became teachers or teacher educators. It is true that changing beliefs, attitudes and practices may not be as easy a task or process as it appears, and this may become even more difficult, considering that some teachers become teacher educators by chance. Such teacher educators may not appreciate and put to good use staff development opportunities such as the Masvingo Quality Education Project afforded to them.

Literature holds that there are several characteristics of teacher education in many parts of the world today (Zeichner, 2007). Teacher education reforms should not only be applicable to the structure of teacher education programmes or models but should also include aspects relating

to curriculum and assessment. Kozol (2005) claims that there is a gap between those who learn to be thinkers and authentic problem solvers and those who are forced to learn out of context and interact with knowledge in artificial ways.

The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development in Zimbabwe should seriously consider the establishment of teacher educators' programmes such as those offered in the Department of Teacher Education at UZ. Alternatively, the establishment of a school for teacher educators may be an even better idea. If this happens, those teachers identified as suitably qualified and experienced to become teacher educators should be initiated into a teacher educator school before they are finally deployed to teachers' colleges. Beyond the teacher educator school, teacher educators should be continuously re-tooled for them to remain relevant in the face of dynamic and changing education and teacher education systems.

Universities, polytechnic and teachers' colleges should provide leadership in research in general and action research in particular. Sela and Harel (2012, p. 8) observe that "higher education institutions turning in this direction see their role not only as teaching and conducting research but also as having some social role and leading change in society in general and in the education system specifically". Teacher educators should therefore not confine themselves to academic research and research related to their profession only. They should also engage in research that is community-based so as to contribute to improving the social status of the communities in which they work.

Finally, I suggest that some tracer studies be conducted on those learner teachers who were taught by my teacher educator study participants in order to establish if they are really utilizing the action research skills and knowledge they gained from their lecturers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Letter Seeking Permission to Carry Out Study

Letter Seeking Permission to Carry Out Study

Chairman: Dr S. Matiure
Department of Teacher Education
Faculty of Education
University of Zimbabwe

21 July 2010

To whom it may concern

RE: Mr Mavundutse O PhD Research

This letter serves to inform you that Mr Mavundutse Oliver is a PhD candidate with the Department of Teacher Education, University of Zimbabwe. He is on schedule for field work and will be requesting for information from your institutions regarding teacher education programmes and activities.

Your assistance in this regard is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

……..
S. Matiure (Dr)

Appendix 2: Participant's Statement of Consent

Participant's Statement of Consent
Title of Research: The role of Action Research in improving teacher education in Zimbabwe: the case of three Masvingo teachers' colleges.

Dear teacher educator

This statement serves to inform you that I am a post graduate student with the University of Zimbabwe carrying out research on the above topic. My interest is on your experiences before, during and after your participation in the Masvingo Quality Education Project (MQEP). By participating in this study you will be:

- interviewed at least three times for about 45 minutes per session;
- observed teaching, discussing project work with students and just as you do your business around the institution and with fellow lecturers;
- engaged in focus group discussions (FGD) of 6 teacher educator participants;
- fourthly requested to provide a personal life story of your experiences before, during and after your participation in the Masvingo Quality Education Project (MQEP).

You will not be identified by your name and therefore, the information you provide will be attached to a pseudonym in place of your real name. The information you provide will be exclusively for this study hence it will be confidential. While I cannot promise to give you a personal copy of the thesis after completion, you will be able to access the final document in the University of Zimbabwe Libraries. Should you feel like opting out of the study, at any time, please feel free to do so without explaining anything.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for sparing your time to participate in this study. Should you need more information about this study, please contact me on 0773 521381/0772 754552.

Thank you

Oliver Mavundutse
Please sign below: I accept /do not accept the invitation to participate.
Name in full
……..Signature……Date……...

Appendix 3: Teacher Educators Interview Guide

Teacher Educators Interview Guide

Date	:	……
Time	:	……
Pseudonym of participants	:	……
Pseudonym of college	:	……
Duration of interviews	:	……..

1) Can you please briefly share with me your experiences in the Masvingo Quality Education Project (MQEP)?

---

2) What would you consider to be the major benefit you gained from the MQEP?

---

3) Generally, what is your evaluation of participants' opinions about the MQEP?

---

4) As beneficiaries from the MQEP, how much were you involved in the planning of the project?

---

5) In your opinion what would you consider as the major strengths of the MQEP?

---

6) On the contrary, what would you consider as the major weaknesses of the MQEP?

---

7) Please share with me your own conceptualisation of action research.

---

8) I understand that only fifteen lecturers were selected from each college to participate in the MQEP. What is your comment on this**?**

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9) Please share with me your personal evaluation of the whole MQEP from beginning to end.

---

10) If similar projects like the MQEP were to be carried out again in Masvingo, what aspects would you want changed and why**?**

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11) What is your view on the involvement of the Department of Teacher Education (DTE) staff as facilitators in the MQEP?

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12) What is your view on the involvement of Dr Tove Nagel of Save the Children Norway as a Facility in the MQEP?

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13) What is your view on the involvement of Mr Moses Mukabeta of Save the Children Norway as a facility in the MQEP?

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14) How did your participation in the MQEP impact your professional practices at teachers college level?

---

15) Kindly explain how those trained in the MQEP assisted colleagues who did not participate to gain action research knowledge and skills

---

---

16) What contribution do you think action research can make in the development of teacher education in Zimbabwe?

---

17) What personal benefits do you think you gained from participating in the MQEP?

---

18) How do you rate teacher educators' understanding of action research practices at your institution?

---

19) Would there be any action research aspects you think teacher educators at your institution need to be assisted to understand better?

---

20) Anything else you wish to share with me about the MQEP?

Appendix 4: Teacher Educators' Focus Group Discussion Schedule

Teacher Educators' Focus Group Discussion Schedule

Date : ……

Time : ……

Pseudonym of college : ……

Pseudonyms of participants : ……

Duration of discussion

1) Ladies and gentlemen, please share with me your own evaluation of the Masvingo Quality education Project (MQEP).

   ---
2) What would you consider as the major benefits you gained from the MQEP?

   ---
3) What would you consider as the major weaknesses of the MQEP? Give reasons for your answers
   ---

   ---
4) In your collective opinion, what organisational aspects would you consider were well done in the MQEP?

   ---
5) Please elaborate your responses to the issue of organisational aspects.

   ---
6) In your collective opinion, what organisational aspects would you consider to be not so well done in the MQEP?

   ---
7) Please elaborate your responses to the issue of organisational aspects.

   ---

8) What contribution do you think action research can make towards the improvement of teacher education in Zimbabwe?

---

9) What changes have you made in your teaching of teachers you would attribute to your participation in the MQEP?

---

10) How do you think the students you teach are benefitting from your participation in the MQEP?

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11) How do you think your participation in the MQEP has contributed to your interaction with students currently on campus?

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12) How do you think your participation in the MQEP has contributed to your interaction with students currently on teaching practice?

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13) How do you think your participation in the MQEP has contributed to your interaction with colleagues at your institution and other teachers' colleges?

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14) How do you think your participation in the MQEP has contributed to your interaction with your own family members?

---

15) Give a summary of your experiences in the MQEP,
