Journal of Educational Policy and Entrepreneurial Research (JEPER). ISSN: 2408-6231
Vol.1, N0.4, December 2014. Pp 61-74

TRANSLATING EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH INTO ACTION: A FOCUS ON TEACHERS' COLLEGES IN HARARE, ZIMBABWE

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Abstract

The study sought to examine how educational research could be translated into action in selected Teachers' Colleges in Zimbabwe. Twelve (12) lecturers were conveniently selected to take part in this qualitative case study. The participants were interviewed using open-ended interviews. The study found that lecturers lacked awareness, knowledge and expertise with respect to how well educational can be translated into action. It also established that educational research informs Teacher Education instructional practices. Teacher Education curricular were found to be devoid of formal teaching of research methods across subject areas. The study concluded that exclusion of formal teaching of research methods from the Teacher Education curricular is an impediment to the translation of educational research into action. Another conclusion was that regular exposure to educational research methods and practice informs Teacher Education instructional practices. The study recommended that teaching of research methods across the Teacher Education curricular needs to be timetabled and become formalised. Further research needs to be conducted in the same area using diverse methodologies and experiences in all Teachers' Colleges.

Keywords: Educational research, Action research, Teachers' Colleges, Teacher education, Teacher educators

Background to the Study

The question whether or not research improves and supports teacher education instruction has haunted many a teacher educator (Prince, Felder and Brent, 2007). Those who say it does not cite many ways in which it can be translated into action. The other group seems to object this view on the grounds that they perceive a non-measurable link between research and action. According to Lewin and Shoemaker (1998, p. 4-5), a performance task as a result of one's exposure to action research has five key characteristics:

- Students have some choice in selecting or shaping the task.
- The task requires both the elaboration of core knowledge content and the use of key processes.
- The task has an explicit scoring system.
- The task is designed for an audience larger than the teacher, that is, others outside the classroom who would find value in the work.
- The task is carefully crafted to measure what it purports to measure.

Translating educational research is often associated with rigour. Recent research has even further influenced the nature of this performance task, the unit, and the overall course. For instance, Richard W. Strong, in *Teaching What Matters Most: Standards and Strategies for Raising Student Achievement*, emphasizes the importance of establishing rigour throughout the curriculum. Rigour is defined as "…the goal of helping students develop the capacity to understand content that is complex, ambiguous, provocative, and personally or emotionally challenging" (Strong, Silver and Perini, 2001, p.7). Referring to another study, David Perkins' *Smart Schools: Better Thinking & Learning For Every Child*, Strong states that "all students need schools to provide both rigorous content and direct instruction in the skills needed to manage that content (e.g., note taking, summarizing, glossing a text)" (Strong, p.7). Strong contends as well that rigour can be maintained in history courses by the analysis of primary documents. Such analysis has usually been reserved for senior students, yet, following Strong's advice, the students analyzed primary documents relating to the themes of the Diamond Jubilee.

The importance of using research theories in enhancing instructional practices is underlined by Marzano (2003) asserts that these theories should be used "…with caution and not overly applied in lieu of time-honored and well researched practices" (Marzano, 2003, p.107). According to recent research in cognitive psychology, the constructivist claim that learning must be an "active process" is accurate, but at times this principle is taken too far to mean that "…teachers should rarely (if ever) teach content to students (Marzano, 2003, p. 108). With Diamond Jubilee the students were therefore taught some of the more challenging content. For example, the Chanak Affair of 1922 occurred, as the British became embroiled in a dispute with Turkey over control of the Dardenalles, a major international trade route.

There seems to be paucity in research regarding whether educational research promotes a departure from traditional instructional practices. In an intriguing comparison between the traditional classroom and the differentiated classroom, she provides an excellent guideline for teachers so that they may establish the appropriate learning environment for all students (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 16). Many studies also indicate that students need an opportunity to reflect on their learning, and to examine their own learning over a long period of time. Assessment should involve an appraisal of student growth. Portfolios have proven to be effective tools in facilitating student learning and thereby improving teachers' assessment and evaluation practices (Tomlinson, 1999, p.93; Sprenger, 1999, p. 82-83, Torff, 1997, p.67-107; O'Connor, 2002, p.6-7; and Marzano, 2003, p.98-99).

The above observations lacked Teachers' College context-specificity. They were tailored to the importance of educational research in the teaching of history in the classroom rather than the lecture room. They did not address issues of how educational research can be translated into action in improving Teacher Education's instructional practices. This article debates how well educational research could be translated into action.

Statement of the Problem

Most Teachers' College lecturers teach educational research in the form of action research, but they seem not to use educational research to transform their teacher education instructional practices. Action research is not under-utilised in Teachers' Colleges only, but this problem also seriously manifests itself in primary schools in Zimbabwe as well (Mapolisa and Tshabalala, 2013). To make matters worse, teacher educators in Teachers' Colleges and

newly practising teachers in the primary schools theorise action research as they hardly implement its findings to improve their work-related practices (Chakanyuka, Chabaya and Ndamba, 2006). Also, faculty research was found to be associated with improving undergraduate teaching (Prince, Felder and Brent, 2007). Furthermore, teacher educators who supervised Diploma in Education students' action research projects were found to be lacking in the engagement of research-related activities, thereby, undermining their teaching and research supervision (Mapolisa, 2013). The current study sought to provide some answers to the following main problem:
To what extent can educational research be translated into action in selected Teachers' Colleges in Zimbabwe?

Research Objectives

The study intended to:

1. Establish how well educational research can be translated into action in selected Teachers' Colleges in Zimbabwe.
2. Examine the challenges faced by Teachers' Colleges lecturers in translating educational research into action in Teachers' Colleges in Zimbabwe.

Research Questions

The study was anchored on the following research questions.

1. How can educational research be translated into action?
2. How do teacher education instructional practices benefit from translating educational research into action?
3. What are the challenges (if any) faced by Teachers' College lecturers in translating educational research into action?
4. How can the challenges faced by Teachers' College lecturers in translating educational research into action be mitigated?

Research Methodology

The study was based on qualitative research methodology. The researchers preferred the use of qualitative research methodology because of its ability to enable researchers to document real accounts based on the participants' experiences (Silverman, 2014). A multiple case study of three colleges in Zimbabwe was employed as a research strategy. Use of a multiple case study was found laudable because it enabled researchers to generate data from diverse research sites (Leedy and Omroyd, 2012).The researchers were ambitious in their proposal abstract for this paper when they intended to target sixty Teachers' College lecturers. They reversed their thinking mode after having been advised that qualitative research does not generalise findings on the size of the sample by literature (Berg, 2010, Marshall and Rossman, 2011, Silverman, 2014). The researchers then conveniently sampled twelve lecturers from the three Teachers' Colleges in Harare. These participants responded to in-depth questionnaires that contained six items seeking their bio-data and three open-ended questions in search of participants' detailed perceptions regarding how well educational research could be translated into action. Bio-data detailing participants' age, sex, highest educational qualification, professional status, length of lecturing experience, area of specialisation, and area they supervise action research enabled the researchers to know the kind of participants taking part in this study. Open-ended interview questions derived from the research questions permit researchers to go to town about given phenomena under study (Seale, 2006). The researchers used open coding to code their participants from P1-P12 and Teachers' Colleges from TC1-TC3. Textual analysis in the form of thematic content analysis was used to fleece data from themes (Flick, 2009). Main themes and their sub-themes were tabulated. Direct quotes were used to give readers a sense of being present at the research sites (Thomas and Nelson, 2001).

Research Findings

Research findings are presented, described and interpreted using table in two sections namely, participants' bio-data and actual research findings.

Participants' Bio-data

Participants' bio-data comprised participants' participants' age, sex, highest educational qualification, professional status, length of lecturing experience, area of specialisation, and area they supervise action research. Their categories of data are presented in the Tables 1-7 and described accordingly.

Table 1: Distribution of research participants by sex (N=12)

Variable (Sex)	Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Male	6	50
Female	6	50
Total	12	100

The presentation in Table 1 indicates that fifty percent (50%) the participants who were interviewed were male, while the other fifty percent (50%) constituted female participants. The results indicate that there was a gender balance in terms of how well educational research could be translated into action at the studied Teachers' Colleges.

Table 2: Distribution of research participants by age (N=12)

Variable (Age in Years)	Frequency	Percentage Frequency
30-39	6	50
40-49	4	33
50+	2	17
Total	12	100

Data in Table 2 show that fifty percent (50%) the participants were aged between 30 and 39, while thirty-three percent (33%) of them were aged between 40 and 49, and seventeen percent (17%) of them were aged at least 50 years. These findings reveal that the participants in the research sites were relatively young.

Table 3: Distribution of research participants by highest educational qualification (N=12)

Variable (Highest Educational Qualification)	Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Master's Degrees	10	83
Bachelor's Degrees	2	17
Total	12	100

The trend in Table 3 depicts that most of the participants (83%) were holders of a Master's Degree, while only seventeen percent (17%) were holders of a Bachelor's Degree, but on a good note, they were studying for their Master's Degrees. These findings imply that the participants were exposed to some formal educational research during their studies which they were yet to translate into action at their workplaces.

Table 4: Distribution of research participants by their professional status (N=12)

Variable (Professional Status)	Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Principal Lecturers	4	33
Senior Lecturers	3	25
Lecturers-in Charge	3	25
Lecturers	2	17
Total	12	100

Table shows the distribution of the research participants by their professional status. The majority (33%) of the participants were Principal Lecturers, while twenty-five percent (25%) of them were Senior Lecturers, and another twenty-five percent (25%) of them were Lecturers-in –Charge. Only seventeen percent (17%) of the participants were lecturers. The results show that the majority (83%) were senior enough to have been exposed to educational research which by any small measure is being translated into action at their Teachers' Colleges.

Table 5: Distribution of research participants by their length of lecturing experience (N=12)

Variable (Length of Lecturing Experience in Years)	Frequency	Percentage Frequency
0-5	4	33
6-10	5	42
11+	3	25
Total	12	100

The scenario in Table 5 reflects that the majority of the research participants (42%) had a length of teaching experience ranging between 6 and 10 years, while twenty-five percent of them had spent at least 11 years of lecturing service. The other thirty-three percent (33%) of the participants consisted of lecturers who were less than five years old in the profession. The results portray a picture that the studied lecturers had a relatively long service assumed to enable them to translate educational research into action at their colleges.

Table 6: Distribution of research participants by their area of specialisation (N=12)

Variable (Professional Status)	Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Theory of Education	3	25,00
Professional Studies	3	25,00
Mathematics	3	25,00
Music	1	8,33
Art and Craft	1	8,33
Food Technology	1	8,33
Clothing Technology	1	8,33
Physical Education	1	8,33
Total	12	100,00

Table 6 displays research participants by their area of specialisation. Theory of Education, Professional Studies and Mathematics ranked top as they were popular with a rank score of twenty-five percent (25%) each among areas that the research participants specialised in at their colleges. The other subject areas namely, Music, Art and Craft, Food Technology, Clothing Technology and Physical Education in which the research participants specialised in at the research sites scored eight comma three percent (8,33%) each. These findings show that a variety of areas of specialisation were made part of the study in an effort to find out how the participants were translating educational research into action their subject areas.

Table 7: Distribution of research participants by area they supervise in action research (N=12)

Variable (Area Supervised in Action Research)	Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Art and Craft	2	17,00
Music	1	8,33
Home Economics	2	17,00
Shona	1	8,33
English Language	1	8,33
Environment Science	1	8,33
Social Studies	1	8,33
Religious and Moral Education	1	8,33
Food Technology	1	8,33
Clothing Technology	1	8,33
Total	12	100, 00

The findings in Table 7 reveal that Art and Craft (17%) and Home Economics (17%) had the highest number of research supervisors in the studied colleges. Music, Shona, English Language, Environmental Science, Social Studies, Religious and Moral Education, Food Technology and Clothing Technology had a percentage of eight comma three three (8,33%) each. The findings indicate that the participants supervised students' action research in different subject areas to help students improve their classroom performance, yet the lecturers themselves are yet to translate educational research into their instructional practices.

Actual Research Findings

The actual research findings are presented, analysed and interpreted using Tables 8-9 showing main themes, their sub-themes and substantiations on the basis of the following research questions:

1. How can educational research be translated into action?
2. How do teacher education instructional practices benefit from translating educational research into action?
3. What are the challenges faced by Teachers' College lecturers in translating educational research into action?
4. How can the challenges faced by Teachers' College lecturers in translating educational research into action be mitigated?

How can educational research be translated into action?

For the above research question, participants were asked to highlight how they translate educational research into action in their subject areas of specialisation. Their perceptions are presented in the form of main theme(s), sub-themes and substantiations in the following Table 8.

Table 8: Research participants' perceptions regarding how educational research can be translated into action in their areas of specialisation

Main Theme(s)	Sub-theme(s)	Substantiations
1. Lack of awareness	1. Unaware of how to translate educational research into action	1. I am unaware of how I can translate educational research into action... (P1).
2. No knowledge	1. No knowledge of how to translate educational research into action	1. Personally, I have no knowledge regarding the translation of educational research into action... (P6).
3. Unsure of the subject under discussion	1. Unsure of how to translate educational research into action	1. ... I am not sure about how to translate educational research into action...(P4).
4. Lecture note making	1. Refined lecture note making	1. Educational research enables me to refine my lecture notes... (P9).
5. Relevant knowledge	1. Search for relevant knowledge	1. I use educational research to search for relevant knowledge (P12).

Table 8 presents five main themes namely; lack of awareness, no knowledge, unsure of the subject under discussion, lecture note making, and relevant knowledge. Their respective sub-themes are; unaware of how to translate educational research into action, no knowledge of how to translate educational research into action, unsure of how to translate educational research into action, refined lecture note making, and search for relevant knowledge. The sub-themes are discussed below.

Unaware of how to translate educational research into action

Translation of educational research into action appeared to be a grey area in the studied research sites. An awareness of how to translate educational research into action was observed from what one of the participants pointed out:

> *I am unaware of how I can translate educational research into action. I am yet to be made aware of such a development which I believe would improve my instructional practices (P1).*

The level of unawareness of how to translate educational research into action in the studied colleges is a clear indication of how formal teaching of research methods and the conducting of research by student teachers are marginalized in Teacher Education.

No knowledge of how to translate educational research into action

Related to lack of awareness about to translate educational research into action was lack of knowledge regarding to how to translate educational research into action. To demonstrate this position, here is what one participant had to say:

> *Personally, I have no knowledge regarding the translation of educational research into action. This kind of ignorance will close me out of the rest of the world (P6).*

Lack of knowledge as indicated by the above findings reveals that formal teaching of research methods is not timetabled in Teachers' Colleges. If the teaching of research methods was to be timetabled, it would imply that lecturers would find means to translate research into action.

Unsure of how to translate educational research into action

Underscoring unawareness and lack of knowledge, was another participant who indicated that he/she was unsure of how to translate educational research into action by remarking that:

> *... I am not sure about how to translate educational research into action... This lack of certainty is rife among most lecturers, I suppose (P4).*

It is emerging from the above findings that getting involved into educational research practices and conducts is one way of ensuring that lecturers become aware of how to translate educational research into action. They learn how to apply educational research to solve practical problems that negatively impact teacher education instructional practices.

Refined lecture note making

On the affirmative front, one participant commended educational research for enabling one to make refined lecture notes. Underlining this perception, the participant said:

> *Educational research enables me to refine my lecture notes. My notes capture new developments and knowledge. I am able to equip my students with new teaching practices (P9).*

An exposure to educational research capacitates lecturers with note making skills as they read widely to review related literature. Lecturers can even use journals and e-resources to prepare lecture notes for the benefit of the student teachers.

Search for relevant knowledge

Another way by which educational research can be translated into action was found to be through search for relevant knowledge. To demonstrate this position, one participant reported that:

> *I use educational research to search for relevant knowledge. Relevant knowledge is found in people and written material (P12).*

The revelation from the preceding findings is that the greatest source for relevant knowledge in regard to teacher education instructional practices is educational research. These findings agree with Strong et al (2001) observations that suggest that a department should be a "club for readers" in which teachers read and discuss non-pedagogical books pertinent to their subject.

How do teacher education instructional practices benefit from translating educational research into action?

The research participants' perceptions are presented in the form of main theme(s), sub-themes and substantiations in the following Table 9.

Main Theme(s)	Sub-theme(s)	Substantiations
1. Resourcefulness	1. Teacher Educators become resourceful	1. Educational research enables me to become resourceful.... (P7).
2. New knowledge	1. Teacher Educators and students get exposed to new knowledge	1. Stakeholders in the Teachers' Colleges are exposed to new knowledge as a result of educational research (P3).
3. Knowledge creation	1. New knowledge is created through educational research	1.There are chances of new knowledge creation in my subject area (P8)
4. Current practices, theories and trends	1. Exposure to current Teacher Education theories, trends and practices	1. Educational research benefits lecturers and student teachers by exposing them to current theories, trends and practices in teacher education (P2).
5. Informed instructional practices	1. Educational research informs instructional practices	1. Teacher education instructional practices are best informed by educational research (P7).
6. Teacher Education products	1. Improved Teacher Education products	1. Research ensures that Teachers' Colleges churn out improved Teacher Education products (P10).
7. Service delivery	1. Quality service delivery	1. The quality of services obtaining in Teachers' Colleges is bound to be of the right quality as a result of research (P4).

Seven themes regarding the benefits of translating educational research into action emerged from the study. These are: resourcefulness, new knowledge, knowledge creation, current practices, theories and trends, informed instructional practices, Teacher Education products, and service delivery. Their relevant sub-themes are: Teacher Educators become resourceful; Teacher Educators and students get exposed to new knowledge, new knowledge is created through educational research, exposure to current Teacher Education theories, trends and practices, improved Teacher Education products, educational research informs instructional practices and quality service delivery. The discussion of these sub-themes is undertaken below.

Teacher educators become resourceful

Educational research was praised for its ability to make lecturers resourceful. In confirming this point of view, one participant commented:

> *Educational research enables me to become resourceful. I hardly run out of ideas to teach and I do not suffer from data deficiency syndrome (P7).*

It can be concluded that educational research enables lecturers to master their subject matter. They become fountains of knowledge and exercise their subject content mastery with a great distinction after consulting many and wide sources of information. The importance of using research theories in enhancing instructional practices is underlined by Marzano (2003) asserts that these theories should be used "…with caution and not overly applied in lieu of time-honored and well researched practices" (Marzano, 2003, p.107). The lecturers do not suffer from data deficiency syndrome.

Teacher educators and students get exposed to new knowledge

It also emerged from the study that educational research had the capacity to expose lecturers and their student teachers to new knowledge. In line with this observation, one participant remarked that:

> *Stakeholders in the Teachers' Colleges are exposed to new knowledge as a result of educational research. Lecturers become aware of new standard practices in Teacher Education, while student teachers are well prepared for the school environments of today and tomorrow (P3).*

It is arising from the above findings that lecturers and student teachers will academically and professionally conduct themselves with a renewed positive difference as a result of educational research. An exposure of lecturers and student teachers to new knowledge through educational research prepares them well for challenging academic and professional responsibilities. In a bid to benefit the student teachers through educational research, Stafford (2009) argues that students are given the opportunity to correct their own work and to track their own improvement.

New knowledge is created through educational research

The study's findings revealed that new knowledge is created through educational research. In view of this position, one participant reported that:

> *There are chances of new knowledge creation in my subject area. I can subject my instructional practices to educational research so that I will be able to determine their effectiveness (P8).*

The preceding observations indicate that new knowledge in any realm of education is a result of educational research. Teacher Education instructional practices are no exception. Lecturers and student teachers would find research as an enjoyable process as demonstrated by Stafford (2009) who observed that students completed research projects as well as organized the entire day with a complete meal, vaudeville acts, music and dance shows.

Exposure to current Teacher Education theories, trends and practices

It was also found out that related to the above three benefits, was an exposure to current Teacher Education theories, trends and practices. This position was given by the other participant in this way:

> *Educational research benefits lecturers and student teachers by exposing them to current theories, trends and practices in teacher education. Lecturers and student teachers become conversant with day-o-day teacher education practices (P2).*

The preceding observations reveal that educational research has the capacity to make lecturers and student teachers amenable and adaptive to change.

Improved Teacher Education products

The study found out that translating educational research into action was associated with the production of improved Teacher Education products. In agreement with this view, one participant indicated that:

Research ensures that Teachers' Colleges churn out improved Teacher Education products. Such products are bound to be an asset to the nation because they would have been exposed to quality theories and practices of education (P10).

Educational research is the basis on which quality student teachers are nurtured.

Educational research informs instructional practices

One of the exciting findings from the study was that educational research informs instructional practices. This position was echoed by one participant who pointed out:

> *Teacher education instructional practices are best informed by educational research. Educational research provides alternative standard instructional practices for the benefit of Teacher Education in Zimbabwe (P7).*

It can be argued from the above findings that basing teacher education instructional practices on educational research is a sign of implementing informed instructional practices. Instructional practices usually focus on assessment. Assessment should involve an appraisal of student growth. In terms of previous research, portfolios

have proven to be effective tools in facilitating student learning and thereby improving teachers' assessment and evaluation practices (Tomlinson, 1999, p.93; Sprenger, 1999, p. 82-83, Torff, 1997, p.67-107; O'Connor, 2002, p.6-7; and Marzano, 2003, p.98-99).

Quality service delivery

Allied to the preceding benefits of educational research in Teacher Education, was quality service delivery. In confirming this line of thought, one participant said:

> *The quality of services obtaining in Teachers' Colleges is bound to be of the right quality as a result of research. Student teachers are exposed to best practices in theories and practices of education that will have been empirically tried and tested elsewhere (P4).*

The above findings signify the degree to which educational research refines the Teacher Education practices to the greatest benefit of not only the student teacher, but the nation as a whole.

What are the challenges (if any) faced by Teachers' College lecturers in translating educational research into action?

In the above research question, participants were asked to indicate the nature of challenges they were facing in translating educational research into action in their areas of specialisation. What they had to say about this question is presented using themes, sub-themes and their substantiations in the following Table 10.

Main Theme(s)	Sub-theme(s)	Substantiations
1.Inexperience in research	1.Lack of research experience	1. Lecturers are prone to lack of research experience (P3).
2.Research background	2.Poor research background	2. Lecturers are coming from a poor research background (P9).
3.Training opportunities	3.Limited training opportunities in research	3. Lecturers are rarely given research training opportunities (P1, P7, and P11).
4.Exclusive Teacher Education curricular	4.Teacher Education curricular that exclude the research component	4. One sad thing about the Teacher Education curricular is that they are devoid of the research component as a formal teaching requirement (P2, P8, P10 and P12).

Four challenges that undermine the translation of educational research into action emerged from the study namely, inexperience in research, research background, training opportunities and exclusive Teacher Education curricular. Their respective sub-themes are: lack of research experience, poor research background, and limited training opportunities in research and Teacher Education curricular that exclude the research component. The discussion of the sub-themes is given below.

Lack of research experience

One of the challenges that emerged from the study was lack of research experience among studied Teachers' College lecturers. One participant put it this way:

> *Lecturers are prone to lack of research experience. They only carried out research as part of their academic growth during their Certificate/Diploma in Education and Bachelor/Master of Education studies (P3).*

Experience is the best teacher in research. Lack of research experience is drawback to effective instructional practices.

Poor research background

Related to the challenge of lack of research experience, was lecturers' poor research background. One participant demonstrated this point of view by indicating that:

> *Lecturers are coming from a poor research background. Some have hardly published a research article, while others have never presented a research article at either a local or international conference (P9).*

It can be argued that Teachers' Colleges are the foundation for publishing research articles, but lecturers seem not to realise that, probably because of lack of proper research background. These findings are compatible with observations made by Mapolisa (2013) when he established that teacher educators who supervised Diploma in Education students' action research projects were found to be lacking in the engagement of research-related activities, thereby, undermining their teaching and research supervision.

Limited training opportunities in research

A big challenge that was found undermining how well educational could be translated into action in Teachers' Colleges was limited opportunities for training in research. This was illustrated by three participants who concurred that:

> *Lecturers are rarely given research training opportunities in Teachers' Colleges due lack of funding for research. They only carry out research when they are furthering and advancing their studies (P1, P7, and P11).*

On the basis of the above excerpt, it can be argued that limited training opportunities for research are hindrance to the promotion of effective instructional practices in Teachers' Colleges. Lecturers would continue inadequate and deficient in research skills to the detriment of effective instructional practices. In that regard, content is taught without any serious attempt at determining if all of the content deserves equal attention. The textbook is the guide. Instead, Wiggins and McTighe (1998) begin at what is traditionally tackled at the end: assessment and overall learning goals.

Teacher Education curricular that exclude the research component

Another great challenge letting down how well educational could be translated into action in Teachers' Colleges was that Teacher Education curricular exclude the research component in the formal teaching. Four participants agreed that:

> *One sad thing about the Teacher Education curricular is that they are devoid of the research component as a formal teaching requirement. Lecturers informally teach students research when they supervise them to carry out Action Research Projects (P2, P8, P10 and P12).*

The preceding findings show that student teachers may be given lecture notes drawn from textbooks, rather than from research journals because research is not given serious treatment in teacher education curricular when it comes to formal teaching. It is not timetabled in the same manner the other subject areas are. These findings are underscored by Stafford (2006) who found out that despite the success of the activity the teachers in the department, me included, were unaware of some serious flaws in curriculum design. Indeed curriculum design was not even a concern. No overall plan existed to integrate the formal teaching of the action research component in the Teacher Education curricular. The teaching of action research methods is left in the hands of individual supervisors who sometimes do not adequately guide the students because action research methods do not appear on the formal master's timetable of the Teachers' Colleges.

How can the challenges faced by Teachers' College lecturers in translating educational research into action?

For the last research question, research participants were asked about how they can mitigate challenges faced by Teachers' Colleges lecturers in translating educational research into action in their areas of specialisation. Their perceptions are presented in the form of main theme(s), sub-themes and substantiations in Table 11 below.

Main Theme(s)	Sub-theme(s)	Substantiations
1.Publishing research papers	1.Lecturers to gain research experience through publishing	1. I stand to gain the right research experience through publishing papers and presenting research papers at local and international conferences (P5).
2.Mentoring	1.Research mentoring to improve research backgrounds of lecturers	1. I need mentoring to improve my poor research background (P7).
3.Research training	1.Increased research	1. Research training opportunities and workshops are not an

and workshops	training opportunities and workshops	option (P6, P8 and P11).
4.Inclusive Teacher Education Curricular	1.Teacher Education curricular to be formally inclusive of a research component	1. Teacher Education curricular need to be thoroughly revised so that they would include research methods teaching component that is formally taught in each subject area (P3, P4, P8 and P10).
5.Collaborative research	1.Collaborative research between lecturers and students; students and students and lecturers and lecturers	1. Collaborative research between lecturers and students; students and students and lectures and lecturers would make teacher education instructional practices exciting (P6).

A five-fold theme with respect to measures to mitigate challenges faced by Teachers' College lecturers in translating educational research into action arose from the study. They were: publishing research papers, mentoring, research training and workshops, and collaborative research. Their respective sub-themes were: lecturers to gain research experience through publishing, research mentoring to improve research backgrounds of lecturers, increased research training opportunities and workshops, Teacher Education curricular to be formally inclusive of a research component, and collaborative research between lecturers and students; students and students and lecturers and lecturers. The discussion of these themes is undertaken below.

Lecturers to gain research experience through publishing

One of the mitigation measures to take care of limited research experience was an opportunity for lecturers to gain research experience through publishing. This line of thought was put across by one participant who said:

> *I stand to gain the right research experience through publishing papers and presenting research papers at local and international conferences. I believe that by being involved in research activities, I will get the research experience to make me a better teacher educator (P5).*

What is clear from the above findings is that research experience is not an overnight thing because research is a culture that is learnt over a long period of time. During the process of gaining research experiences, lecturers may polish up their research skills meant to improve their instructional practices.

Research mentoring to improve research backgrounds of lecturers

Research mentoring was found to be useful in alleviating poor research backgrounds for lecturers. One participant reported:

> *I need mentoring to improve my poor research background. I stand to learn the ropes to learn to research from experienced researchers (P7).*

From the above finding(s), it can be seen that research skills are best acquired from experienced and knowledgeable researchers who have gone through the mill. Experienced researchers act as guides for upcoming researchers who may be in need of improving their instructional practices.

Increased research training opportunities and workshops

A great mitigation measure for limited training opportunities that emerged from the study was the need to mount increased research training opportunities and workshops. Three participants shared the perception that:

> *Research training opportunities and workshops are not an option. They need to be regularly mounted in the Teachers' Colleges to capacitate lecturers with research skills to enable them teach research in their areas of specialisation (P6, P8 and P11).*

It is clear form the preceding findings that research training opportunities and workshops are central not only in capacitating lecturers with research skills, but in advancing their diagnostic, conceptual, technical and human skills in teacher education's instructional practices. Teachers need to know what content and skills are important enough to remember and to develop before they plan lessons and units of study. In

terms of both skills and content, they must distinguish between what is worth being familiar with, important to know and do, and "enduring understandings" (Wiggins and McTighe, 1998, p.14-15).

Teacher Education curricular to be formally inclusive of a research component

Another key strategy for alleviating the absence of a research theory and practice teaching component in the Teacher Education curricular was to make the curricular formally inclusive of a research component as indicated by the following collective perception:

> *Teacher Education curricular need to be thoroughly revised so that they would include a research methods teaching component that is formally taught in each subject area. Every subject area in the Teacher Education curricular can become more qualitatively superior to the current situation if it included research theory and practice components in the actual teaching (P3, P4, P8 and P10).*

An emerging suggestion in the above findings is the fact that teacher education subject areas need to incorporate research methods and research practice components that must be formally taught as part of the subject areas' content. This would prepare student teachers for their Action Research projects.

Collaborative research between lecturers and students; students and students and lecturers and lecturers

It also emerged from the study that collaborative research between lecturers and students; students and students; and lecturers and lecturers was another mitigation measure for challenges that lecturers faced in translating research into action at the research sites. This observation was confirmed by one participant who said:

> *Collaborative research between lecturers and students; students and students and lecturers and lecturers would make teacher education instructional practices exciting (P6).*

It can be deduced that learning to learn how to research is not a selfish business. Collaborative research is the key route to any successful instructional practices. Students can be taught to learn to research in groups as students or with lecturers and report findings to create new knowledge; and so do their lecturers as well. The findings attest to the ensuing literature: New research also makes it clear that with this approach students are more likely to remember the significance of the content (Stafford, 2009; Wolfe, 2001). This is an extremely important point. Many teachers contend that the students remember little actual content. The focus is therefore on the skills. New convincing research indicates however that this is not the case. Furthermore, this research indicates that the 'understanding by design' approach is effective (Stafford, 2009). According to Marzano (2003) in *What Works In Schools. Translating Research into Action*, multiple exposures to content is critical if the students are to commit the information to their permanent memory (Marzano (2003). With Wiggins and McTighe's (1998) approach the students are aware of the significant "big ideas" to which the content of the course is connected. Consequently, the important content of the course is revisited, re-examined, and placed in a meaningful context for the students. They, in turn, will understand and remember this content.

Conclusions

On the basis of the foregoing findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Many lecturers in the studied Teachers' Colleges appear to lack knowledge and awareness regarding how well educational research can be translated into action.
2. Many lecturers appeared to lack research experience and expertise to translate educational research into action.
3. Exclusion of formal teaching of research methods from the Teacher Education curricular is an impediment to the translation of educational research into action.
4. Regular exposure to educational research methods and practice informs Teacher Education instructional practices.
5. Translating educational research into action is an avenue to quality Teacher Education instructional practices.

Recommendations

In the light of the preceding findings and conclusions, the researchers make the ensuing recommendations:

1. Teachers' Colleges need to source and mobilise research funds and other resources to enable them mount research training sessions and workshops meant to capacitate lecturers with research skills to enable them to translate educational research into action.
2. Teachers' College lecturers need to be mentored in research to raise their research expertise in order for them to translate educational research into action in their various subject areas.
3. The teaching of research methods across the Teacher Education curricular needs to be timetabled and become formalised.
4. Further research needs to be conducted in the same area using diverse methodologies and experiences in all Teachers' Colleges.

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